



Daily Report

Thursday, 25 May 2023

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 May 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 25 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

■ Attorney General: Holiday Leave

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[184414\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications of the Employment Appeal Tribunal ruling in the 2017 case of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council v Willetts & Ors for the calculation of holiday pay entitlement for staff in her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Government Legal Department [GLD] is considering available options in relation to calculating holiday pay with respect to overtime. The GLD aims to complete this work in the current financial year.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Competition and Markets Authority

Drew Hendry:

[\[186191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Competition and Markets Authority's press release entitled CMA update on action to help contain cost of living pressures, published on 15 May 2023, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the Competition and Markets Authority's regulatory enforcement powers in respect of ensuring businesses respond to the authority's requests for evidence.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Competition and Markets Authority has powers to issue civil sanctions for failures to comply with a requirement to produce information under Part 1 of the Competition Act 1998 and Parts 3 and 4 of the Enterprise Act 2002. The Government is strengthening these powers as part of the reforms in the Digital Markets Competition and Consumers Bill, including increasing the maximum penalty that can be imposed on a business.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Hotels

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[185832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's data entitled DIT's ePCS spending over £500 for December 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £1,357.78 for hotels on 14 December 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The hotel expenditure relates to 3 nights (12-14 Dec 22) accommodation for two UK Defence and Security Export (UKDSE) members of staff who supported Director UKDSE during his engagements at the International Chamber of Commerce in Saudi Arabia.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[185833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's data entitled DIT's ePCS spending over £500 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £3,265.60 for a hotel on 3 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The hotel expenditure relates to 10 nights (29 October – 07 November 2022) accommodation for Director UK Defence and Security Exports (UKDSE), and four UKDSE members of staff who supported Director UKDSE during his engagements at Indo Defence 2022 in Indonesia.

■ Energy Charter Treaty**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[185915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department has had recent discussions with (a) Ministers and (b) officials at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero on the Energy Charter Treaty.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Ministers and officials from the Department for Business and Trade have been engaging with ministers and officials from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero on the Energy Charter Treaty and will continue to do so, as appropriate.

■ Horticulture**Chris Green:**[\[905131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking to support garden centres.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Autumn Statement 2022 announced a package of changes to business rates worth £13.6bn over the next 5 years in lower bills. This includes a freeze to the multiplier, scrapping the downward revaluation cap and extending and increasing the generosity of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief from 50% to 75% in 2023-24.

This is in addition to the Energy Bills Discount Scheme; the increased Employment Allowance of £5,000 and setting the Annual Investment Allowance at £1 million permanently. This is a comprehensive package of support which will help protect businesses such as garden centres.

■ Industrial Strategy Council

Bill Esterson: [\[185553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to (a) re-establish and (b) give statutory status to the Industrial Strategy Council.

Nigel Huddleston:

In March 2021, the Government decided that the Industrial Strategy Council would no longer be needed to monitor the impact of the Industrial Strategy, following its transition to the then Plan for Growth.

Delivering economic growth in key sectors remains a priority. The Chancellor has identified five key growth sectors for the UK: Digital Technology, Green Industries, Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing and Creative Industries. The government has announced a £500 million per year package of support for 20,000 research and development (R&D) intensive businesses through changes to R&D tax credits, alongside 12 new investment zones. Earlier this month, the Department for Business and Trade announced regulatory measures that will reduce burdensome red tape and tailor rules to suit the UK economy, potentially saving employers around £1 billion yearly.

■ Iron and Steel: Sales

Bill Esterson: [\[186087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of launching a campaign to encourage the purchase of steel made in the UK that is similar to the Buy American Act in the US.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government wants UK businesses to be successful in bidding for UK public contracts. We also want UK businesses to be successful in competing for public contracts in other countries around the world, which we achieve by negotiating guaranteed market access for UK suppliers in many international free trade agreements. This reciprocal guaranteeing of market access means treating each other's suppliers in the same way as we treat domestic suppliers. The terms of these agreements mean that legally it is not possible for the UK to have a similar policy.

It is important to note that the Buy America policy does not apply to members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Government Procurement, which includes the UK, so our steel suppliers are not affected.

■ Palm Oil: Imports

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[185550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that there is no forced labour in the supply chains of (a) palm oil and (b) other palm-derived ingredients imported into the UK.

Nigel Huddleston:

The United Kingdom is one of the leading countries confronting the scourge of modern-day slavery, including forced labour. The UK is committed to working in partnership with producing countries to achieve sustainability in our supply chains, including for products such as palm oil, and supporting better outcomes for nature, climate, and people.

The Modern Slavery Act requires businesses with a turnover of £36m or more to publish modern slavery statements annually to report on the steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The Government also supports voluntary due diligence approaches by UK businesses as steered by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises.

■ Small Businesses: Electronic Commerce and Intellectual property**Sarah Olney:**[\[181746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of legislation to (a) support small businesses when trading online and (b) protect small businesses from infringement of their intellectual property rights.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008 protects businesses from misleading advertising by other businesses, and are enforced by Trading Standards.

The Government recently introduced the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill to establish a new pro-competition regime that will force the most powerful tech firms to treat businesses in the UK fairly – including small businesses.

The options available to a business which believes its intellectual property (IP) is being infringed online depend on the type of IP, where it is registered and where the alleged infringement is taking place.

■ Trade: Ukraine**Stephen Doughty:**[\[185917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking to forge lasting commercial links with Ukraine post-conflict.

Nigel Huddleston:

Supporting Ukraine remains a high Government priority including long-term strengthening of commercial links.

Last year the UK led the world in becoming the first country to fully liberalise tariffs with Ukraine which we have extended until early 2024.

This year we signed a landmark UK-Ukraine Digital Trade Agreement and launched a Guide to Doing Business with Ukraine, to support UK business in Ukraine and encourage greater trade flows.

We are working closely with the FCDO to mobilise private sector support for the Ukraine Recovery Conference in London next month, a global event and opportunity to strengthen commercial support for Ukraine.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Staff

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[185881\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2023 to Question 184900 on Office for Veterans' Affairs: Photography and Social Media, how many photographers and videographers work in the Cabinet Office as of 18 May 2023.

Alex Burghart:

The Cabinet Office Communications team employs two Digital Media Officers who support all Ministers in the Department. This is an essential part of helping to explain the Department's policies and priorities to a wider audience.

■ Civil Service: Political Impartiality

Jim Shannon: [\[184975\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that the impartiality rules operate in the same manner in each branch of the civil service across the UK.

Alex Burghart:

The Civil Service Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all civil servants to uphold the Civil Service's core values, which are integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. Impartiality, and in particular political impartiality, is one of the fundamental values of the Civil Service. Impartiality means all civil servants must serve the Government, whatever its political persuasion, to the best of their ability.

Civil servants working for the Scottish and Welsh Governments, and their agencies, have their own versions of the code. Similar codes apply to the Northern Ireland civil service and the Diplomatic Service.

■ Technology: Innovation

Charlotte Nichols: [\[185988\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department has spent on (a) marketing and (b) related activities for the Unicorn Kingdom campaign.

Charlotte Nichols:

[185989]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department has allocated for (a) marketing and (b) related activities for the Unicorn Kingdom campaign in the 2022-23 financial year.

Alex Burghart:

The Cabinet Office publishes expenditure, including on the GREAT campaign, on a rolling monthly basis on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) as part of routine government transparency arrangements. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-spend-data>.

■ Veterans: Homelessness

Rachel Hopkins:

[186276]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many homeless veterans his Department has supported into accommodation in each month of 2023.

Rachel Hopkins:

[186278]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on helping homeless veterans into accommodation in each month in 2023.

Johnny Mercer:

A record of how many homeless veterans supported into accommodation is not held centrally.

Up to £8m has been committed to the Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme which launched on 21 April. This programme is designed to fund veteran supported housing providers across the UK to address veterans homelessness and rough sleeping through the provision of specialist services such as mental health or employment support.

An additional £500k was provided to support Op FORTITUDE, the new referral pathway for veterans experiencing or facing homelessness.

Rachel Hopkins:

[186279]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the press release entitled Major new grants now available to fund specialist care for homeless veterans, published by his Department on 21 April 2023, how many and what proportion of the 900 veteran-supported housing places were in use in each month of 2023.

Rachel Hopkins:

[186280]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what specialist care services are provided to veterans who have accessed accommodation through the veteran homelessness programme.

Johnny Mercer:

The Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme launched on 21 April to offer funding to veteran supported housing providers across the UK, to address veterans

homelessness and rough sleeping through the provision of specialist services such as mental health or employment support. The programme was open for organisations to apply for funding until 22 May and applications will be assessed by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Successful applicants are expected to start their projects in September 2023.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Almshouses: Charities

Damian Green:

[\[185864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to help ensure that almshouse charities are regulated on a basis appropriate to small charities.

Stuart Andrew:

Both the Charity Commission and the Regulator of Social Housing have regulatory roles in relation to almshouse charities that are also registered providers of social housing.

Under charity law, the regulatory requirements that apply to charities are proportionate, with smaller charities subject to fewer or less detailed regulatory and transparency requirements. This includes almshouse charities.

Registration with the Regulator of Social Housing is voluntary for almshouse charities, and a number of almshouses do choose to register. Where almshouses are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, they are required to meet the Regulator's standards.

■ Cultural Heritage: Market Towns

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[186042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to provide funding to (a) Romford and (b) other historic charter market towns for the promotion of their (i) history, (ii) heritage and (iii) identity.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Heritage plays a vital role in communities across the United Kingdom. It makes places great to live and work in; helps to attract tourism and supports the local economy; and gives people pride in their community. The Government, our national agencies, local authorities, and the brilliant people working and volunteering in the sector all play a role in protecting and promoting our shared heritage.

The Government has invested £95 million in Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zones scheme, which targets 67 high streets across England to encourage economic growth and increase pride in place. Additionally, the £82 million Museum Estate and Development Fund, an open-access capital fund for non-national

accredited museums in England, provides funding to undertake vital infrastructure and urgent maintenance work.

We encourage heritage-related projects to consider applying to relevant schemes available through our Arm's-Length Bodies and partners where eligible, including Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

■ Theatre Royal Stratford East: Ethnic Groups

Sir John Hayes:

[186005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with Arts Council England on the potential implications for its funding of the Theatre Royal Stratford East of that theatre hosting a play to which white people have been asked not to attend.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Decisions made by Arts Council England (ACE) about the allocation of funding for National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), including the Theatre Royal Stratford East, are taken at arm's length from HM Government. This is in accordance with well established processes, and as such, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) does not review individual funding decisions. Management of these grants is a matter for ACE, including determining whether any grant terms and conditions have been breached.

Neither DCMS nor ACE are involved in the day-to-day running of the theatre or its artistic programme. However, ACE sets high standards for organisations it funds regarding inclusivity. It is a standard condition of Arts Council funding agreements for National Portfolio Organisations that they must "comply with any relevant laws or government requirements and comply with best practice in governance, reporting and operation. This includes (but is not limited to) [...] following best practice in having appropriate and effective policies and procedures in place concerning equality and diversity, harassment and bullying, and in complying with those policies and procedures; [...] having an equal opportunities policy in place at all times and act[ing] at all times without distinction and in compliance with all relevant equality legislation.". Arts Council England's relationship framework with its NPOs also sets out an expectation that organisations will be aware of these risks arising from programming decisions when planning activity and that they will be proactive with responses and mitigations to any risks that have been identified. Lord Parkinson, as the relevant minister, has requested further information on this case from Arts Council England.

■ Youth Services: Finance

Richard Foord:

[186256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the real-terms change to funding for youth services has been in each year since 2015.

Richard Foord:

[\[186257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government plans to make additional funding available for youth services in the UK.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government recognises the vital role that youth services and activities play in improving the life chances and wellbeing of young people. In England, between 2015 - 2021, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), including the National Citizen Service (NCS), provided over £1.1 billion to the youth sector. Over this Spending Review Period, DCMS is investing over £500 million in youth services to deliver the National Youth Guarantee, a government commitment that by 2025, every young person will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer.

As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to 'secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people'. This is funded from the Local Government settlement, the majority of which is un-ringfenced, allowing local authorities to spend on services according to local priorities, including on youth services. The settlement is anticipated to be almost £60 billion this year (FY 23/24) for councils in England - a 9% increase on the previous year. Details of all Local Authorities' annual spending on youth services in England can be found in Section 251 data published on gov.uk.

DCMS is committed to working with Youth Sector organisations and Local Authorities to review and improve the Local Authority Statutory Duty Guidance for Youth Services. We will publish the outcomes of the review in due course.

The devolved administrations of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are responsible for their own youth services.

DEFENCE

■ Ammunition and Guided Weapons: Expenditure

John Healey:

[\[186018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for (a) unguided ammunition and (b) guided weapons was for each service branch in each year since 2015.

James Cartlidge:

I will write to the right hon. Member with the requested information shortly.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

Luke Pollard:

[\[185855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled £173 million investment in hundreds of new homes for UK Armed Forces

families, published on 16 May 2023, how many and what proportion of the new homes will be graded in each of the nine charging bands.

James Cartlidge:

The £173 million investment has allowed the MOD to buy 310 brand new homes, and to acquire the freehold on a further 113 modern, high-quality homes that were previously held under bulk-lease hire arrangements due to expire in the next few years.

Each new home will require a Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) survey prior to allocation to Service Families. All new homes will be CAAS Band A, B or C which will be dependent on location (urban, intermediate, or remote).

All will be Decent Homes Plus standard, and all will have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of A or B.

■ **Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease**

Hilary Benn:

[\[185486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 December to Question 103013 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, when he plans to next review the ban on those at risk of developing Huntington's disease from serving in the Armed Forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As stated in the answer to Question 103013, all of the medical employment standards for the Armed Forces, including those relating to Huntington's Disease, are kept under periodic review, taking into account academic reviews of the field, subject matter expert consultation and consensus.

The evidence in policy correlates with national guidelines and there are currently no plans to change existing policy on Huntington's Disease.

Hilary Benn:

[\[185487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 December to Question 103010 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, what evidence would be accepted from an appropriately qualified and experienced specialist to show that a candidate would be unlikely to develop Huntington's disease during a Service career.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

A neurologist review would consider a candidate's genetic coding and prognosis, to indicate if the individual would be likely to develop Huntington's disease during a Service career.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

Hilary Benn:

[\[185484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his Answer of 9 December to Question 103014 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, if he will make an estimate of the average length of time recruits serve in the armed forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The table below details the average (mean) Length of Service of Trained (Royal Navy/Royal Marines and Royal Air Force) and Trade Trained (Army) UK Regulars on Exit (in years) by Service and Officer/Rank:

	1 JAN 2018-31 DEC 2018	1 JAN 2019-31 DEC 2019	1 JAN 2020-31 DEC 2020	1 JAN 2021-31 DEC 2021	1 JAN 2022-31 DEC 2022
Tri Service/Officer/Other Rank	12/19/11	13/19/12	13/20/12	14/21/12	13/21/12
RN/RM/Officer/Other Rank	12/20/11	13/20/12	13/21/12	14/21/13	13/21/12
Army/Officer/Other Rank	11/18/10	11/18/10	12/19/11	12/20/11	12/21/11
RAF/Officer/Other Rank	16/20/15	17/21/16	17/22/16	18/23/17	16/21/16

Hilary Benn:

[\[185485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December to Question 103014 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, what medical conditions are currently considered a bar to service.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Joint Service Publication 950 Leaflet 6-7-7 (JSP 950 Lft 6-7-7) provides a framework for the medical assessment of potential recruits and Serving personnel. I attach a copy.

Fitness to serve may be dependent on several medical conditions. An individual's final grading is determined by using the extensive content in JSP 950 Lft 6-7-7 combined with the judgement of occupational medicine specialists.

Attachments:

1. JSP 950 MEDICAL POLICY LEAFLET 6-7-7 [JSP 950 Lft 6-7- 7 JSMMF (v2.4 Oct 22).pdf]

■ Chinook Helicopters: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[186024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to take delivery of 14 new Chinook H-47 extended range helicopters.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[186025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the planned out of service dates are for his Department's (a) HC4, (b) HC5, (c) HC6 and (d) HC6A variants of Chinook helicopter.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[186027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 May 2023 to Question 185516 on Chinook Helicopters: Procurement, for what reason the delivery schedule for the new Chinook H-47 extended range aircraft is under review.

James Cartlidge:

The Department remains committed to procuring 14 new Chinook H-47 (Extended Range) airframes through the Chinook Capability Sustainment Programme. The delivery schedule is currently subject to review to ensure Defence requirements are best met. It would be inappropriate to comment on or pre-empt the outcome of this review, which will be presented in a Review Note to the Investment Approvals Committee in late 2023.

These new airframes will replace the most obsolescent aircraft at the earliest possible opportunity, as the HC5, HC6 and HC6a Chinook variants move toward their shared out of service date in 2040. There are no HC4 variants remaining in the current Chinook fleet.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[186026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department expects to take delivery of new Chinook H-47 extended range aircraft in 2026.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I provided to his Question 185516 on 22 May 2023.

Attachments:

1. Chinook Helicopters: Procurement [UIN 185516.docx]

■ HMS Vanguard

Dave Doogan: [\[186131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse of HMS Vanguard's Long Overhaul Period and Refuel was.

James Cartlidge:

Whilst HMS Vanguard has left His Majesty's Naval Base Devonport, the upkeep project continues with post refit sea trials. I am withholding the estimated cost as its disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

■ HMS Venturer

John Healey: [\[186021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department expects HMS Venturer to enter service with the Royal Navy.

James Cartlidge:

HMS VENTURER, the first Type 31 Frigate, is currently scheduled to be ready for operations in 2027.

■ HMS Victorious

Dave Doogan: [\[186132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse of HMS Victorious' Long Overhaul Period was; and how long the Long Overhaul Period lasted.

James Cartlidge:

HMS Victorious' Long Overhaul Period and Refuel started in January 2005 and was completed after three years and eight months. Information on the cost is not held in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Ministry of Defence: Land

John Healey: [\[186009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the report of the Committee of Public Accounts, Optimising the Defence Estate, HC 179, published on 12 October 2021, what his Department spent on the Defence Estate in 2022-23; and what his Department plans to spend on the Defence Estate in 2023-24.

James Cartlidge:

The Annual Reports and Accounts for Financial Year (FY) 2022-23 are currently being finalised and will be published later this year.

The planned MOD infrastructure spend for FY 2023-24 is £4.2 billion.

■ Nuclear Weapons: Procurement

Dave Doogan: [\[186133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the budget for the replacement warhead programme is.

Dave Doogan: [\[186134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timeline for the initial gate decision for the replacement warhead programme is.

James Cartlidge:

It is too early to provide cost estimates for the Replacement Warhead Programme as much will depend on the eventual design requirements, and information relating to the programme may be subject to commercial and national security constraints. Cost

estimates and funding arrangements for the programme will be considered at the next spending review.

■ Seabed

Grahame Morris:

[\[186081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of the seabed in the (a) UK Exclusive Economic Zone, (b) Crown Dependencies and (c) British Overseas Territories has been mapped since 1 October 2022; and what targets he has for seabed mapping in those waters in each year to 2030.

Grahame Morris:

[\[186082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with the Crown Estate on the potential for supporting the creation of jobs in the context of the leasing of seabed rights in (a) UK territorial waters, (b) the UK Exclusive Economic Zone and (c) the UK Continental Shelf; and if he will make a statement.

James Cartlidge:

Numerous public sector organisations undertake seabed mapping activities in support of their remits. There is also a range of activity within the private sector. There is currently no unified target for seabed mapping across these jurisdictions, other than to remain compliant with relevant international legislation.

Between the 1 October 2022 and the end of March 2023, the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) are aware of activity to map 1672 km² of seabed to modern international standards within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone around the British Isles. This equates to 0.3% of the UK EEZ, including the UK Territorial Seas and internal waters.

In the Crown Dependencies, who deliver their own mapping requirements with assistance from HMG, the UKHO are aware of 58 km² being mapped to modern standards during the same period, all within the Isle of Man, equating to 0.6% of their Territorial Sea.

In the UK Overseas Territories, the UKHO are not aware of any seabed mapping activities being undertaken during the period in question.

The creation of jobs in this sphere is not Ministry of Defence responsibility but the department is always willing to support other departments where appropriate and where it has capacity to do so.

■ Shipping: Employment

Grahame Morris:

[\[186079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with the UK Hydrographic Office on potential for supporting the employment of UK seafarers working on vessels from UK ports through its work.

James Cartlidge:

The employment of UK seafarers working on vessels from UK ports does not fall under the UK Hydrographic Office's (UKHO) remit. The UKHO supports UK Ports through the provision of products, services and expertise to enhance port operations and to ensure safe navigation through fast and efficient updates of official products and services from source data supplied by ports.

■ **St Helena: C-17 Aircraft****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[186056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason a RAF C-17 Globemaster plane was at St Helena Airport between the 19 May and 20 May 2023; what activities this plane has undertaken in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

An RAF Globemaster C-17 was conducting freight and passenger tasking in support of the British Forces in the South Atlantic Islands. As part of its itinerary, it was tasked to fly into St Helena to re-prove the viability of the airport for British Military Air Transport tasking.

The aircraft is part of the RAF's Air Mobility fleet and in the last 12 months has conducted a range of tasks including training flights, airlift and airworthiness flights together with time spent in depth maintenance.

■ **UK Centre for Seabed Mapping****Grahame Morris:**[\[186078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK Hydrographic Office has put out to tender public contracts for work connected with the UK Centre for Seabed Mapping between 1 October 2022 and 25 May 2023.

James Cartlidge:

The UK Hydrographic Office has established a contracting framework for seabed mapping activity on a worldwide basis to deliver support across our range of programmes. This includes the potential to support the new UK Centre for Seabed Mapping in the future if appropriate. Multiple companies have successfully competed to be on this framework which will be available until the end of financial year 2027-28.

■ **UK Centre for Seabed Mapping and UK Hydrographic Office****Grahame Morris:**[\[186080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual (a) funding and (b) staffing level is for the (i) UK Hydrographic Office and (ii) UK Centre for Seabed Mapping.

James Cartlidge:

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) employs approximately 1,050 personnel between its Taunton Headquarters and local offices overseas. The UKHO is primarily funded through sales of hydrographic products and services to commercial

customers through an international network of distributors. It also receives some central Government funding through its service level agreement with the Ministry of Defence for defence products and services, and also additional revenue from other Government Departments for specific overseas projects. Total revenue in 2021-22 was £163.9 million. The ongoing annual UKHO investment in the UK Centre for Seabed Mapping is approximately £250,000, which covers two full-time Secretariat posts and additional expertise from other UKHO teams as required.

EDUCATION

■ British Students Abroad: Sudan

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[185583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of facilitating access to home student finance to support UK national students who have been evacuated from Sudan and who are unable to continue higher education that they had been pursuing in that country to continue their higher education at UK institutions.

Robert Halfon:

The department knows that UK national students will be concerned about any disruption to their education as a result of the conflict in Sudan.

British nationals are considered settled in the UK and will be eligible to apply for home fee status and student support once they hold three years ordinary residence in the UK prior to the start of any higher education (HE) course. This requirement ensures that the support provided by the taxpayer is targeted at those who have a substantial and recent connection with the UK.

There is no discretion to waive the three-year ordinary residence requirement. Student Finance England will consider on a case-by-case basis whether a period of absence affects a person's ordinary residence.

To allow flexibility in dealing with the circumstances of individual applicants, HE providers can waive or reduce fees where they consider it appropriate to do so. The onus would be on individual applicants to provide a compelling and persuasive case to their individual university which would warrant the exercise of this discretion in their favour.

■ Carers: Young People

Dan Carden:

[\[185817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to increase support for (a) young carers and (b) their families.

Claire Coutinho:

Local authorities are required to identify young carers in their local area and undertake an assessment where they think there is a need for support, or when

support is requested by the parent or young carer. The local authority should consider the needs of the whole family when carrying out this assessment.

Early help services play a pivotal role in promoting safe, stable and resilient families. As set out in the children's social care reform implementation strategy, Stable Homes, Built on Love, the department will test how multi-disciplinary family help teams can improve the support children and families receive, including young carers, through the £45 million Families First for Children Pathfinder programme. The Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1147317/Children s social care stable homes consultation February 2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1147317/Children_s_social_care_stable_homes_consultation_February_2023.pdf).

■ Department for Education: Equal Pay

Imran Hussain:

[185677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if their Department will publish an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for financial year 2023-24 in line with the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance for employers published on 17 April 2023.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is currently considering the best way to approach Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting in the Civil Service and, although Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting is voluntary, the Department is keen to publish a report.

The Department, along with Civil Service HR colleagues and other government departments, is working through the details of the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance that was published on 17 April 2023. This is to consider the approach to a consistent methodology for producing the data. The outcomes of this development work will inform whether the Department is able to publish a report for 2023/24.

■ Education: Restraint Techniques

Alex Sobel:

[185835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of using alternatives to restraint in education settings.

Nick Gibb:

The Government recognises that the misuse of restraint or reasonable force can have a significant and long lasting effect on the pupils, staff members and parents involved and that this can potentially hinder the creation of a calm, safe and supportive school environment. The Department has commenced a programme of work which aims to minimise instances of the use of reasonable force, including restraint, in all schools in England.

The first stage of the programme is to conduct extensive research to understand the use of reasonable force, physical restraint, and restrictive practices in schools. This includes a call for evidence, which closed on 11 May 2023.

The evidence gathered will inform revisions to the 'Use of reasonable force' guidance (2013) to provide staff with advice on how to minimise the use of restraint, and in instances where it is absolutely necessary and lawful to use restraint, to do so as safely as possible. Recording incidents of reasonable force and reporting incidents to parents will also be made a legal duty for schools.

■ English Language: Assessments

Anthony Mangnall:

[185604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of enabling an Ukrainian student who is taking English language exams for the first time an additional 10 per cent of time to complete their papers; and what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that those taking exams in a second language have sufficient time to complete exam papers.

Nick Gibb:

Many awarding organisations and qualifications, including all GCSEs, AS and A levels and those awarding them, are regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). Ofqual sets the standards and rules that awarding organisations need to meet when they design, deliver and award regulated qualifications.

Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition (Condition G2) states that an awarding organisation must ensure that all pupils taking its qualifications in England are assessed in English, except where use of another language is permitted, for example, because it is one of the primary objectives of the qualification for the pupil to gain knowledge of, skills in, and understanding of that language. The full list of General Conditions is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-g-setting-and-delivering-the-assessment>.

Access arrangements may be appropriate for pupils with limited fluency in English, for example, the use of a bilingual dictionary. Applications for access arrangements are approved by awarding organisations ahead of the examination or assessment. The Joint Council for Qualification's Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments regulations sets out the assessment criteria and evidence required for different types of arrangements which examination centres can apply for on behalf of a pupil. The regulations are available at: https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/AA_regs_22-23_May23_revision_FINAL.pdf.

Schools and colleges are responsible for deciding which qualifications they enter pupils for, based on what is in their best interests. Schools will want to carefully consider the individual circumstances of pupils before deciding the appropriateness of an examination entry and will make these decisions on a case-by-case basis. Schools and colleges should also contact the relevant awarding organisation(s) to discuss the arrangements that may be suitable for individual pupils.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Sir David Evennett:

[\[185530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average funding per pupil in mainstream schools was in (a) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency, (b) the London Borough of Bexley and (c) England in each of the last three years.

Nick Gibb:

The table below shows the average funding per pupil provided for mainstream schools in the London Borough of Bexley, and England, through the Dedicated Schools Grant, the Schools Supplementary Grant (SSG) in 2022/23 only, and the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) in 2023/24 only, since the 2021/22 financial year.

Per pupil funding excludes growth funding.

FINANCIAL YEAR	BEXLEY	ENGLAND
2021/22	£5,211	£5,212
2022/23	£5,543	£5,534
2023/24	£5,890	£5,839

The Department, through the schools National Funding Formula (NFF), calculates notional funding allocations for each mainstream school. These are then aggregated for each Local Authority. National and Local Authority average per pupil figures are based on the actual funding schools receive from these aggregated allocations.

Each Local Authority then determines individual schools' final funding allocations through their own local formula. The Department does not hold this information, and therefore cannot calculate constituency-level per pupil averages.

The table below shows the average funding per pupil that mainstream schools in the Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency have attracted through the schools NFF since the 2021/22 financial year, rather than their actual allocations from their Local Authority.

FINANCIAL YEAR	BEXLEYHEATH AND CRAYFORD
2021/22	£5,285
2022/23	£5,435
2023/24	£5,738

On top of this funding through the schools NFF, all schools in Bexleyheath and Crayford received additional funding through the SSG in 2022/23, worth an average

additional £159 per pupil, and are receiving funding from the MSAG in 2023/24, worth an average additional £195 per pupil.

Conor McGinn:

[\[186222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average funding per pupil in mainstream schools was in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) the North West in the 2022-23 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

The average funding per pupil provided for mainstream schools in the North West through the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Schools Supplementary Grant (SSG) in the 2022/23 financial year was £5,524.

Per pupil funding excludes growth funding.

Through the schools National Funding Formula (NFF), the Department calculates notional funding allocations for each mainstream school. These are then aggregated for each Local Authority. Regional average per pupil figures are based on the actual funding schools receive, in total, from these aggregated allocations.

Each Local Authority then determines individual schools' final funding allocations through their own local formula. The Department does not calculate actual constituency level per pupil averages.

The average notional funding per pupil for mainstream schools in the St Helens North constituency through the schools NFF in 2022/23 was £5,289. On top of this funding, all schools in St Helens North received additional funding through the SSG in 2022/23, worth an average additional £156 per pupil.

Maintained schools are funded on a financial year basis, and academies are funded on an academic year basis.

■ Special Educational Needs

Helen Hayes:

[\[186206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance she has provided to schools on the requirements of the SEND and AP Improvement Plan for special educational needs coordinators.

Helen Hayes:

[\[186207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding available to schools for special educational needs coordinator training on the requirements of the SEND and AP Improvement Plan.

Claire Coutinho:

In the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, the department announced the introduction of a new National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCoS) as the mandatory qualification, replacing the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (NASENCo).

The NPQ for SENCOs will play a key role in achieving our ambition to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, by ensuring SENCOs consistently receive high-quality, evidence-based training. The SEND Code of Practice also continues to set out the roles and responsibilities of SENCOs.

Schools currently fund the NASENCO from their budgets. All arrangements around delivery of the new NPQ, including funding and start dates, will be communicated in due course.

■ Students: Loans

Munira Wilson:

[\[186139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department spent on the teachers' student loan reimbursement programme in each of the last three years for which data is available.

Nick Gibb:

The Teachers' Student Loan Reimbursement (TSLR) scheme was introduced in 2017 and allows eligible physics, chemistry, biology, languages or computing teachers to claim back the student loan repayments they made in the previous financial year, for up to 11 financial years, if they are teaching in one of 26 Local Authorities.

The amount the Department spent on TSLR payments to teachers in the last three years that are available (academic years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22) is provided in the attached.

Attachments:

1. TSLR payments [186139_TSLR_payments_table.pdf]

■ Teachers: Training

Munira Wilson:

[\[186138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department spent on initial teacher training for (a) bursaries and (b) scholarships for each subject in each of the last three years for which data is available.

Nick Gibb:

The Department offers tax free bursaries and scholarships for those completing Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses in subjects with the greatest need for new teachers. The amount the Department spent on ITT bursaries and scholarships for each subject in the last three years for which data is available (academic years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22) is provided in the attached.

The Department announced an ITT financial incentives package worth up to £181 million for 2023/24, which is a £52 million increase on the previous year. This includes bursaries worth £27,000 tax free and scholarships worth £29,000 tax free, to encourage talented trainees to teach in key subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing.

Attachments:

1. 186138_table [186138_ITT_bursaries_and_scholarships_spend_table.xlsx]

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Alternative fuels: Vegetable Oils****Anthony Mangnall:**[\[185597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps the Government are taking to facilitate the domestic use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil; and when he expects home owners to be able to convert existing fossil fuel and kerosene oil to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil for domestic use.

Graham Stuart:

The Government expects heat pumps will be the primary technology for decarbonising off-grid buildings. The Government recognises that not all off-grid properties will be suitable for a heat pump and there will be a role for alternative low carbon technologies where heat pumps cannot be used.

■ Blockchain**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[185769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has plans to encourage the use of blockchain technologies by business to help decarbonise the economy.

Graham Stuart:

Blockchain technologies may allow trading of low-carbon energy and account for emissions of greenhouse gases to facilitate decarbonisation. However, the concepts still need to demonstrate that they could offer advantages over technology using centralised ledgers in specific applications related to decarbonisation. Several companies have been funded by the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund Programme to innovate their blockchain decarbonisation concepts further and to demonstrate applications useful to achieving net zero.

■ Carbon Emissions**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[185538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment has the Department made of the availability of people with the necessary skills and knowledge to adequately staff Net Zero Hub projects across the UK.

Graham Stuart:

The Local Net Zero Hubs support local authorities, so that local authorities can develop a range of net zero projects and attract commercial investment. Local authorities manage their own workforce. The Government invests £5 million/year in the Local Net Zero Hubs Programme.

■ Carbon Emissions: Government Departments**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[185560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department are taking to help (a) coordinate and (b) measure the delivery of net zero projects across various Government Departments.

Graham Stuart:

The creation of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero means there is now a department dedicated to delivering on the Government's climate ambitions. The Department aligns with Cabinet committee structures; the Domestic and Economic Affairs (Energy, Climate and Net Zero) Committee ensures a coordinated approach to delivering net zero across government.

In March this year, the Government published the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan. It outlines the progress Government departments have made on delivering net zero and sets out the full package of proposals and policies to meet Carbon Budgets 4, 5 and 6.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[185561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress Government Departments have made on net zero project delivery.

Graham Stuart:

The Net Zero Growth Plan, published on 30 March this year, set out the Government's progress towards net zero, reported on 24 metrics as committed to in the Net Zero Strategy, and announced further progress on delivery such as the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[185562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department are taking to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing between Government Departments on reaching net zero goals.

Graham Stuart:

The creation of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero means there is now a department dedicated to delivering on the Government's climate ambitions. The Department aligns with Cabinet committee structures; the Domestic and Economic Affairs (Energy, Climate and Net Zero) Committee ensures a coordinated approach to delivering net zero across government.

The Department works closely with counterparts across government to coordinate action, working with Cabinet Office and HM Treasury to ensure net zero goals are prioritised in Government policy and decision-making, and align with other Government priorities.

■ Carbon Emissions: Local Government

Dr Matthew Offord:

[185563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will take steps to develop a strategic framework to help enable local authorities to deliver net zero within their areas.

Graham Stuart:

The Net Zero Strategy and the Net Zero Growth Plan set out the Government's commitments to enable local areas to deliver net zero.

■ Carbon Emissions: Roads

Dr Matthew Offord:

[185557]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on the potential merits of requiring National Highways to cooperate with local authorities on emission reduction schemes for major highways.

Graham Stuart:

The Department engages regularly with the Department for Transport on issues relevant to transport decarbonisation.

National Highways published its own plan, 'Net Zero Highways' in 2021, which provides details on how it will cut emissions from road construction, maintenance and operations, supporting the transition to zero emission vehicles. This can be found at: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/eispcjem/net-zero-highways-our-2030-2040-2050-plan.pdf>

■ Coal: Concessions

Stephanie Peacock:

[186246]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether it is his Department's policy that recipients of the National Concessionary Fuel Scheme will receive a reduction in their allowance under that Scheme if they change their fuel source from home coal to (a) gas or (b) electricity.

Graham Stuart:

Concessionary fuel entitlements are governed by historic agreements negotiated between the employer(s) and mining unions prior to the Government assuming responsibility for the liability.

Cash amounts are dependent on several factors, including the scheme the concessionaire belongs to and whether the entitlement arises from being a management or clerical grade.

Before switching from a solid fuel entitlement to cash-in-lieu, concessionaires should contact the National Concessionary Fuel Office which will advise them on the level of entitlement that applies to their individual circumstances.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Equal Pay**Imran Hussain:****[185678]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if their Department will publish an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for financial year 2023-24 in line with the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance for employers published on 17 April 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is currently considering the best way to approach Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting in the Civil Service. The Civil Service is looking to develop a consistent methodology to produce this data. The Government is working with Civil Service HR to work through the detail of the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance which was published on 17 April 2023

■ Electricity Generation: Carbon Emissions**Bill Esterson:****[186083]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if will make an estimate with Cabinet colleagues of the amount of electricity generation and electricity network capacity that will be required by (a) 2030, (b) 2040 and (c) 2050 to support the introduction and deployment of electric logistic vehicles in the context of the UK meeting its net zero targets.

Andrew Bowie:

Government has not estimated the additional electricity generation or network capacity required specifically from electric logistics vehicles. However, the government is working with fleets and industry bodies, including logistics companies, to understand and support the needs of the sector. This includes the required network capacity, their diverse charging needs and how these can be factored into local planning and transport strategies such as charging infrastructure planning.

■ Great British Nuclear**Alun Cairns:****[186356]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress Great British Nuclear has made on its first staged competition for Small Modular; and whether his Department has a timeline for its completion.

Andrew Bowie:

The first priority for GBN is to launch a competitive process to select the best Small Modular Reactor (SMR) technologies. This began in April with market engagement as the first phase. The second phase – the down-selection process - will be launched in the summer, with an ambition to assess and decide on the leading technologies by autumn.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Kerry McCarthy:

[186032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much and what proportion of funding awarded under Phase One of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme has been spent; and how many households are awaiting completion of projects awarded under those grants.

Graham Stuart:

£131.9 million (65.1%) was spent out of a total of £202.7 million awarded under Phase One of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme.

As of May 2023, there were no outstanding households awaiting completion of projects under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme.

Kerry McCarthy:

[186033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Release May 2023, published on 18 May 2023, what the delivery challenges were that required some Phase 1A delivery and funding to be moved to Phase 1B.

Graham Stuart:

The main delivery challenges that required some Phase 1A delivery and funding to be moved to Phase 1B included the impact of the Covid pandemic on access to tenant properties and the supply chain. Other challenges included shortages of labour and material and price increases.

■ Nuclear Power

Caroline Lucas:

[186088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 19 May 2023 to Question 184612 on Nuclear Power, whether his Department has made an assessment of alternative ways of providing stability to the grid which does not use nuclear power.

Andrew Bowie:

The Department has run thousands of power sector simulations; these are published in aggregated form in the “Modelling 2050 – Electricity System Analysis” paper.[1] The model used for this work, the Dynamic Dispatch Model,[2] is configured to ensure that the system always has a loss of load expectation of 3 hours or less. This work has shown that reducing nuclear capacity in the system tends to make system costs more expensive and increases the risk of not achieving Net Zero, as significant additional capacity for other technologies (e.g. wind, CCUS etc) is required to ensure security of supply and displace unabated gas generation.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modelling-2050-electricity-system-analysis>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dynamic-dispatch-model-ddm>

■ Offshore Industry: Skilled Workers**Olivia Blake:**[\[185654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many full-time equivalent hours officials in (a) his Department and (b) the predecessor Department have spent working on the alignment of training standards between the offshore (i) oil and gas and (ii) wind sectors in each year from 2018 to date.

Graham Stuart:

The Department does not hold this information. Skills and training standards are not a primary responsibility of the Department, and instead this falls to the Department for Education and is a devolved matter in Scotland and Wales.

■ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[185539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much funding will be made available for phase 3c of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The total available funding for Phase 3c of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will be announced in due course, alongside application guidance. The Government expects the scheme to open in Autumn 2023.

■ Renewable Energy**Sarah Jones:**[\[186241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that energy suppliers promptly remunerate customers who sell renewable energy back to the grid.

Graham Stuart:

Suppliers make payments to householders in line with their Smart Export Guarantee contract terms and conditions. Whilst some suppliers have chosen to make payments on a yearly basis to minimise the administrative costs associated with the very small amounts of export involved, there are other suppliers that offer more frequent remuneration.

■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[186034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much and what proportion of grant funding awarded under wave one of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund has been spent.

Graham Stuart:

Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund awarded around £179m of grant funding. Project delivery is progressing well with grant funding expected to be used

by 30 June 2023. Grant spend will be confirmed as data becomes available from June onwards as Wave 1 projects complete.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[186035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many and what proportion of households that were awarded funding under wave one of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund are awaiting completion of those works.

Graham Stuart:

Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will upgrade up to 20,000 social housing properties currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C rating. The latest official statistics published on gov.uk show that, at the end of March, 3,246 homes had been upgraded. There have been delays in lodging and reporting measure installations, which Department officials are working with grant recipients to address.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Plastics

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[185540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of recyclable agri-plastic films were (a) collected and (b) recycled in each of the last three years for which data is available.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra does not hold data on the amount of agri-plastic film collected or recycled.

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Mrs Sheryll Murray:

[\[905132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the Seasonal Worker visa on the adequacy of the number of people available to fill seasonal farming roles.

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[905133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to help tackle labour shortages in food and drink supply chains.

Mark Spencer:

This Government is committed to ensuring that the farming sector has the labour it needs to support food security, including supporting domestic workers and skills, and investment in automation.

We commissioned the Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain to consider how we can further support this, and look forward to receiving the report by the summer.

As set out at the recent UK Farm to Fork Summit, we will make 45,000 Seasonal Worker visas available for 2023 and 2024, with an additional 10,000 if needed.

■ **Air Pollution**

Geraint Davies: [185734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will publish a list of (a) date and (b) topics where her Department have emailed a media release to journalists or weather forecasters about air pollution in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019, (iii) 2020, (iv) 2021, (v) 2022 and (vi) 2023.

Geraint Davies: [185735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many times her Department emailed a media release to journalists in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020, (d) 2021, (e) 2022 and (f) 2023.

Rebecca Pow:

All press releases from Defra are published on Gov.uk at [News and communications - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/news-and-communications).

Geraint Davies: [185736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she plans to take to comply with the (a) National Emissions Ceilings Regulations 2018, (b) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and (c) Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Rebecca Pow:

The Environmental Improvement Plan sets out the actions we will take to continue improving air quality and meet our legally binding targets.

Geraint Davies: [185738]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to improve co-ordination between national, regional and local authorities on improving (a) indoor and (b) outdoor air quality.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has put in place a range of measures to improve coordination of actions to improve air quality, including creating Air Quality Partners, specific public bodies who are required to contribute solutions to air quality problems within their control. This includes neighbouring local authorities, upper tier authorities in areas with both district and county councils, the Environment Agency and National Highways. We have published a new Air Quality Strategy setting out our expectations of how local authorities should deliver air quality improvement, and issued extensive policy and technical guidance for local authority practitioners. This year we will continue to offer training and guidance to local authority officers, including workshops and template enforcement materials, in addition to providing funding through our Local Air Quality Grant programme, enabling high-quality locally-led air quality improvement schemes.

On indoor quality, we have set out ventilation requirements to maintain air quality as part of amendments to the Building Regulations. In our Air Quality Strategy, we highlighted guidance published by the UK Health Security Agency, in partnership with the National Institute of Clinical Excellence on indoor air quality and directed relevant local authority staff to this national guidance. We have also committed to reviewing our existing guidance on the health impacts of damp and mould in homes, and issuing new consolidated guidance tailored to the housing sector this year.

■ Chemicals

Allan Dorans:

[185971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to take steps to (a) monitor chemical trails discharged by aircraft and (b) analyse air quality and soil samples to identify chemicals and their potential impact on the (i) environment, (ii) food and (iii) health.

Rebecca Pow:

Emissions from aircraft are strictly regulated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). ICAO sets global standards to limit emissions of oxides of nitrogen, particulates and some other air pollutants from aircraft engines.

Most recently, ICAO set particulate emissions standards for aircraft engines in 2019, which have now been adopted into UK law and came into force on 1 January 2023. These were the first scientifically based global certification standards for aircraft particulate emissions.

Defra monitors air quality and assesses its impacts on an ongoing basis. Data from our nationwide monitoring networks can be found on [UK-AIR](#).

National soil monitoring under the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) programme began in 2022. NCEA will provide high quality data to assess the state and condition of natural capital assets, ecosystems, and biodiversity in terrestrial and freshwater environments. As part of this, up-to-date and comprehensive soils data is a priority of the programme and is being measured through projects such as the strategically sampled England Ecosystem Survey and the England Peat Map.

■ Countryside: Educational Visits

Rachael Maskell:

[185842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential merits of providing funding for (a) residential and (b) other school visits to nature rich environments.

Rachael Maskell:

[185845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential merits of teaching

(a) primary and (b) secondary school children about engagement with the natural environment.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[185847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will take steps with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to help promote low-cost visits and stays in the natural environment for targeted groups with the purpose of supporting individuals' wellbeing.

Trudy Harrison:

Within Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Environmental Stewardship (ES), we provide opportunities for school pupils and care farming clients to visit farms and engage with farming and the environment. There are approximately 800 live CS agreements and 500 live ES agreements offering educational access. We will continue to provide funding for educational purposes making it possible for more school pupils and care farming clients to access these nature rich environments.

The Department for Education launched the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for Education and Children's Services in April 2022. The strategy includes the National Education Nature Park which will bring together all the land from across education settings into a virtual nature park enabling children and young people to get involved in taking practical action to improve the biodiversity of their setting. This will start to roll out from Autumn 2023 and is being delivered in partnership with the Natural History Museum, the Royal Horticultural Society and its prestigious partners. The Climate Action Awards will also provide opportunities to recognise the great work that young people and settings do to improve their local environment. A Natural History GCSE will also be introduced in 2025.

The Government is also providing funding to offer the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) to all mainstream secondary schools in England by 2025, allowing many more young people to benefit from this experience. DofE offers opportunities for young people to spend time in nature, including through an outdoor expedition away from home.

With funding from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund the 16-month Generation Green project connected young people to nature through new jobs, training, volunteering roles, residential and outdoor and online learning experiences.

A number of England's National Parks and AONBs are undertaking initiatives to provide opportunities to connect young people with nature.

■ Environment Protection

Rachael Maskell:

[\[186177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to measure the outcomes of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

Trudy Harrison:

The Environment Act's statutory cycle of monitoring, planning and reporting ensures that government will take early, regular steps to achieve targets and can be held to account with regular scrutiny from the Office for Environmental Protection and Parliament. A key part of this cycle is the Annual Progress Report which describes what has been done to implement the Environmental Improvement Plan and considers whether the natural environment, or aspects of it, have improved over the reporting period. The latest APR was published on 20th July 2022.

In addition to other sources, the Annual Progress report utilises data from the Outcome Indicator Framework for the 25 Year Environment Plan which is a suite of outcome indicators that measure changes to the environment. The 2023 annual update to the Outcome Indicator Framework was published on 22 May 2023 and provides the latest data on environmental trends.

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 is the first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan. The Outcome Indicator Framework will be reviewed in 2024 to evaluate its ongoing suitability and consideration of best available evidence. This review will also consider the framework's alignment with the planned monitoring of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.

■ Fly-tipping**Scott Benton:**[\[905130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to tackle fly-tipping.

Rebecca Pow:

The Prime Minister's Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan sets out how we will support councils to take tougher action against those who fly-tip. This includes raising the upper limit of spot fines for fly-tipping to £1,000; delivering on our manifesto commitment to increase penalties.

We have also awarded councils nearly £1.2 million to purchase equipment to tackle fly-tipping, such as CCTV, and consulted on reforms to how waste is managed to stamp out criminal activity.

■ Food: Prices**Tim Farron:**[\[186397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people in her Department are working on tackling food price inflation.

Mark Spencer:

This information is not collected centrally in the format requested. Departmental staff work on multiple policy matters simultaneously.

■ Government Departments: Aviation**Kerry McCarthy:****[186036]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2023 to Question 184913 on Government Departments: Aviation, what the baseline data is for the emissions from domestic business flights in 2017-18; and what the source is for that data.

Trudy Harrison:

The baseline data for emissions from domestic flights in the 2017 to 2018 financial year will be published in the Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) annual report for 2021 to 2022, which we will publish this year. 2021-25 targets are set against a new baseline year of 2017 to 2018, which more accurately reflects the current government estate and ensures we build on the considerable progress already achieved. The [GGCs reporting requirements](#) sets out the process for baseline setting.

■ Horticulture: Peat**Peter Dowd:****[905129]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to take further steps to support the horticulture sector in developing responsibly-sourced high-quality alternatives to peat that can be produced at volume.

Trudy Harrison:

In 2011 we set a voluntary target for the horticulture sector to be peat-free by 2030. Since then, we have contributed towards research into peat-free alternatives including the Royal Horticultural Society's five-year, £1 million project supporting the transition to peat-free. Forestry England have also invested significantly in developing peat-free production methods.

The Government and industry will continue to support a Responsible Sourcing Scheme for Growing Media, which minimises any environmental footprint of peat alternatives.

■ Local Government: Environment Protection**Dr Matthew Offord:****[185253]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to monitor the environmental performance of local authorities.

Trudy Harrison:

The Office for Local Government (Oflog) is being established within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Oflog will be a data-driven body with the purpose of providing a transparent and authoritative source of information about the performance of local government. This will support greater accountability as well as driving efficiency. The focus of Oflog will be to bring together data on local government performance in a holistic way and draw

insight from it. By providing a single and authoritative source of the information about local government performance, it will support local leaders with decision-making and improvement; allow central government to maintain standards for good governance and leadership and identify how money is being used; and help communities to better understand what is happening in their area and whether services are being delivered effectively and represent value for their money.

We have been working with local government colleagues to co-design the set of measures Oflog will use, across just a small number of themes in the first instance. These initial themes have been selected to give coverage of different types of local authority; they do not suggest a prioritisation of services, and we will add more themes over time.

Oflog will enable comparison of local authority performance, including on the environment.

DLUHC is working towards launching Oflog early this summer. The first tranche of metrics is due to be agreed shortly, and includes waste metrics that Defra is providing. This will be just the first step in an iterative process of working with local government colleagues as we build Oflog's capabilities and develop metrics covering the breadth of local authority functions. An expanded group of environmental metrics is due to be agreed next year.

■ Rainforests

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[184624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to produce a Great British Rainforests Strategy.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the value of all woodlands, including temperate rainforest. This was demonstrated in 2021, when we published the England Trees Action Plan, which set an agenda up to 2025 that will benefit trees and woodlands of all kinds. Our commitment to delivering this action plan was reemphasised in our new Environmental Improvement Plan.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[184627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will ask Natural England to produce an official habitat classification for temperate rainforests.

Trudy Harrison:

Temperate rainforests are included in existing habitat classifications. The special features of woodlands through the western parts of Britain are recognised in the JNCC European habitat types which describe woodlands featuring old oak (*Quercus robur*) holly (*Ilex*) and fern (*blechnum*) that often fall into mosaic with Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines and Alluvial forests with black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

■ Rainforests: Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[184623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to designate all locations of temperate rainforests in England as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the value of these habitat to contribute to our environmental ambitions. Many of our temperate rainforests support rich assemblages of species and some of the best examples are in our series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. SSSI selection guidelines for woodlands are focussed on securing a representative series rather than protecting every example. Nevertheless, in addition to SSSI protection, many of these habitats are ancient woodlands, which are protected from development in all but wholly exceptional circumstances; we have committed in the England Trees Action Plan to increase protections in the planning system for long established woodland in situ since 1840.

■ Shellfish

Anthony Mangnall: [\[R\] \[185603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to improve the quality of shellfish harvesting waters.

Rebecca Pow:

Shellfish harvesting waters are included in protected areas within the Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plans. They can be affected by a number of different microbial sources like sewage discharges and agricultural land run off.

The Government is prioritising action to improve the water quality of the largest shellfish waters in England by 2030. This will require action (improvement, prevention of deterioration or investigation) at 63 shellfish waters between 2025-2030.

Anthony Mangnall: [\[R\] \[185605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she makes of the potential impact of discharge from storm overflows on the quality of shellfish harvesting waters.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency will require water companies to review what action is needed in the identified 63 priority shellfish areas, whether that is improvement, prevention of deterioration or investigation. This will lead to reductions in sewage discharges from storm overflows and disinfection of treated sewage.

Where the results of monitoring indicate any event which has increased faecal contamination in an area, prompt action is taken to protect public health either by pausing harvesting or introducing additional controls on shellfish from the area.

Anthony Mangnall:

[R] [\[185606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to take steps to compensate shellfish aquaculture businesses impacted by poor water quality.

Rebecca Pow:

There are currently no plans to take steps to compensate shellfish aquaculture businesses impacted by poor water quality. However, the Government is prioritising action to improve the water quality of the largest shellfish waters in England by 2030. This will require action (improvement, prevention of deterioration or investigation) at 63 shellfish waters between 2025-2030.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ African Union: G20

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[186169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's policy is on supporting the admittance of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20 intergovernmental forum.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK recognises that the multilateral system needs to change to accommodate new realities. As set out in the Integrated Review refresh, we support further African representation in multilateral institutions including the G20. We are clear that Africa's voice must be heard at the world's top tables and we welcome the proposal for an African Union seat at the G20. Decisions on G20 membership are for the G20 as a whole. We look forward to discussing next steps with the African Union and G20 members.

■ Baltic States: Security

Stephen Doughty:

[\[185916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Baltic states on regional security.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is committed to the security of the Baltic states, including through our enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia. The Foreign Secretary regularly speaks to his Baltic counterparts on regional security. He spoke to the Latvian Foreign Minister last month at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels and welcomed the Lithuanian Foreign Minister to London in February. The Foreign Secretary will also be speaking to Baltic counterparts around the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Oslo next month. We are also committed to Baltic security through the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) as shown by the Prime Minister's attendance at the Leader level JEF Summit in Riga in December.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sustainable Development

Julian Knight:

[\[186153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the economic (a) merits and (b) drawbacks to the Chagossian people of sustainable development in the Chagos Islands.

David Rutley:

Other than the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia, the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago is uninhabited. The issue of resettlement forms part of the ongoing sovereignty negotiations with Mauritius; we cannot provide detail on the content of the discussions or speculate on possible outcomes. Both the UK and Mauritius have expressed their commitment to the protection of the marine environment in the Indian Ocean. The UK Government remains committed to supporting Chagossians wherever they live through the Chagossian Support Package.

■ Colombia: Peace Negotiations

Tony Lloyd:

[\[186015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Colombian counterpart on mandatory requirements for the registration of civil society organisations as contained in the proposed Article 77 of the Colombian National Development Plan.

David Rutley:

As penholder at the UN Security Council, the UK consistently raises the importance of the participation of civil society to realise the full benefits of the 2016 Peace Agreement in Colombia and securing sustainable peace across the country. The UK's Global Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, also met with the Colombian Government to discuss UK support to civil society organisations and the importance of civil society's participation in the peace process during her visit to Colombia last month. Colombia is a Human Rights Priority Country and we will continue to monitor any impacts that limit our ability to support civil society organisations.

Tony Lloyd:

[\[186016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Colombian counterpart on ensuring participation by (a) civil society and people affected by the armed conflict and (b) women and ethnic communities in the peace talks with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional.

David Rutley:

During his visit to Colombia last week, the Foreign Secretary met with President Petro to discuss our ongoing support to Colombia's peace process and to addressing other security challenges. Since 2015, we have spent over £77 million through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to support the implementation of the

2016 Peace Agreement in Colombia, which includes strengthening the security and participation of the communities in conflict-affected areas. The UK's Global Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, also met with the Colombian Government and discussed the importance of civil society's participation in the peace process during her visit to Colombia last month.

■ Crimes of Violence: Children

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[186046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a special envoy on ending violence against children to help champion that issue and sustain high-level attention.

Leo Docherty:

The FCDO is committed to protecting vulnerable children and helping them to grow up free from violence. Ending violence is a core strand of our International Women and Girls Strategy. Alicia Herbert OBE is the UK's Special Envoy for Gender Equality and her role includes championing an end to violence against women and children. Helen Grant OBE MP is the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Girls Education and her advocacy includes tackling violence as a barrier to education. We also continue to make leading contributions to the global evidence base through our What Works to Prevent Violence programme, including interventions to prevent violence against children.

■ Humanitarian Aid: Children

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[186048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the psychosocial needs of children in (a) fragile, (b) conflict-affected and (c) humanitarian contexts are met appropriately.

Leo Docherty:

As part of our role on the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), we call for access to non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialised services, including psychosocial support for children affected by conflict.

The FCDO has recently funded a project to provide protection services for children in Yemen; over 1300 children accessed high quality and safe psychosocial support.

Our UNICEF funding supports children in humanitarian situations who experience or are at risk of sexual violence including projects like the Blue Dot Shelters, which provide a safe space for families and children on the move in emergencies.

■ Iran: Capital Punishment

Jessica Morden:

[\[185892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with Iranian counterparts on the execution of prisoners in

that country; and if he will make representations to (a) his Iranian counterparts and (b) other international counterparts on the alleged torture, and execution of Saleh Mirhashmi, Majid Kazemi and Saeed Yaqoubi on Friday 19 May 2023.

David Rutley:

The UK Government is firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and every country, especially Iran. We raise human rights issues at all appropriate opportunities, including with the Iranian Embassy in London and through our Ambassador in Tehran. We last raised our objections to the death penalty on 17 May. On 9 January and 8 December, the Foreign Secretary ordered the summoning of Iran's most senior diplomat in the UK, to protest Iran's continued imposition of the death penalty on protesters. We will continue to work closely with our international partners to ensure Iran is held to account on the world stage, including through the establishment of a UN Fact Finding Mission.

■ **Russia: UN Security Council**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[185918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with members of the United Nations Security Council on Russia's presidency of that body.

Leo Docherty:

We and partners worked to ensure Russia's presidency of the Security Council did not provide a platform for the further spread of disinformation around their unjust and illegal war on Ukraine. Throughout their presidency in April we continued to shine a spotlight on Russia's failure to meet the most basic obligations of a UN Member State and its contempt for the UN Charter. We challenged attempts to use their presidency to spread disinformation. This included blocking a UN webcast of a presidency meeting on the forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia due to be addressed by Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights who is subject to an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant.

■ **Transcaucusus: Roads**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[185919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking with international partners to help facilitate the lifting of the blockade of the Lachin Corridor.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has been vocal about the importance of re-opening the Lachin Corridor, including at the United Nations Security Council in New York on 20 December 2022 and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Vienna on 17 January and 27 April 2023. This message was conveyed by the Minister for Europe during his visit to Azerbaijan in February, and was discussed during his visit to Armenia in May. The UK Government will continue to support

constructive dialogue in further contacts with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments in the coming months.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products

Henry Smith:

[\[185240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the way the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and NHS England evaluate and adopt Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products as technologies with the potential to deliver significant health gains over long periods of time.

Will Quince:

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recently carried out a comprehensive review of its methods and processes for health technology evaluation to ensure that they were appropriate to emerging new technologies such as advanced therapeutic medicinal products (ATMPs). NICE published its updated health technology evaluation manual in January 2022 and has introduced a number of changes that ensure that its appraisal processes are suitable for emerging new medicines, including a broader severity modifier and changes to better respond to uncertainty. There are no plans for a further assessment of NICE's processes for evaluating ATMPs.

NICE's methods and processes have been proven to be suitable for ATMPs where companies are willing to price their products in a way that represents value to the taxpayer. NICE has recommended 80% of the ATMPs it has evaluated for use by the National Health Service and they are now available for the treatment of NHS patients, including through the Cancer Drugs Fund and managed access agreements negotiated between the NHS and the manufacturer.

■ Air Ambulance Services: Finance

John McDonnell:

[\[185876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has previously supported air ambulance charities with targeted funding support; and if he will provide funding specifically targeted at air ambulance charities.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[186031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to provide funding for the London Air Ambulance to purchase two new helicopters.

Rushanara Ali:

[\[186101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide funding to London's Air Ambulance Charity to help it maintain air ambulance provision.

Will Quince:

Air ambulances are not directly funded by the National Health Service. However, the Government has provided significant and sustained support to the sector. In 2019, the Department launched a three year capital grant programme which allocated £10 million to nine air ambulance charities across England, of which London's Air Ambulance Charity and Barts Health NHS Trust received £1,393,552.

In addition, the Department provided £6 million of COVID-19 emergency funding to all 21 air ambulance charities across the United Kingdom, to ensure that each charity could continue to provide their life-saving services during the pandemic. London's Air Ambulance Charity received £252,500 of this funding.

There are no current plans to provide further funding to the sector which operates through a longstanding and successful charitable model.

Bob Blackman:[\[185907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to meet representatives of London's Air Ambulance Charity to discuss their campaign for two new helicopters.

Will Quince:

Ministers have not currently received any invitations from London's Air Ambulance Charity to meet. If and when they receive an invitation, they will be considered in the usual way.

■ Air Pollution: Death**Geraint Davies:**[\[186281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 May 2023 to Question 183300 on Air Pollution: Death, what the evidential basis is for his Department's calculation of the fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution since the overall number of attributable deaths is not available.

Maria Caulfield:

An estimate of deaths attributable to long-term exposure to air pollution can be made by multiplying the fraction of mortality attributable to air pollution by the total number of deaths annually. The fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution is estimated through the adjustment of the unit relative risk factor (1.08), recommended for use in quantifying mortality associated with long-term exposure to fine particulate matter (COMEAP, 2022), to the air pollution levels.

■ Azelaic Acid**Rosie Duffield:**[\[185930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the availability of azelaic acid; and whether he plans to take steps to help increase the supply of that product.

Will Quince:

The Department is aware of a current supply issue affecting Skinoren (azelaic acid) 20% cream. However, suitable alternatives are available, and communications will be issued to the National Health Service providing details of the supply issue and advising on alternative treatments.

■ BUPA: Dental Services**Rachael Maskell:**[\[186159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the transfer of NHS patients to another practice following the closure of a BUPA dental practice in York.

Neil O'Brien:

The information requested is not held centrally. Unlike general practitioners' patients, dental patients are not registered to a particular practice. A dental practice can accept a patient for a course of treatment if they have capacity to deliver that treatment.

Following BUPA's notice to NHS England of closures, regional teams and integrated care boards across England are working together to ensure that patients continue to have access to National Health Service dental care.

NHS dentists are required to keep their NHS.UK profiles up to date so that patients can find a dentist more easily. This includes information on whether they are accepting new patients.

■ Cancer: Drugs**Grahame Morris:**[\[185908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many systemic anti-cancer therapy doses were delivered in England in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020, (d) 2021 and (e) 2022.

Helen Whately:

The following table shows the count of administrations in each year since 2018 to 2022.

ADMINISTRATION YEAR	COUNT OF ADMINISTRATIONS
2018	2,116,318
2019	2,511,014
2020	2,389,856
2021	2,682,346
2022 (January to November)	2,508,549
Total	12,208,083

Source: Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy dataset.

Grahame Morris: [\[185909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to reduce unwarranted variation between oncology departments in the delivery of systemic anti-cancer therapy.

Helen Whately:

Reducing variation in cancer patient care is a key strategic priority for the NHS Cancer Programme. The NHS Cancer Programme is working with Cancer Alliances to implement priority recommendations from cancer clinical audits, commissioned by NHS England, to reduce unwarranted variation. As part of this work, several Cancer Alliances are currently focussed on implementing quality improvement plans to reduce variation in the use of systemic anti-cancer therapy for patients with non-small cell lung cancer.

■ **Care Workers: Quarantine**

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[185958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of increasing financial support for people working in the social care sector who are required to self isolate with covid-19.

Helen Whately:

There have been no recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on this matter.

■ **Carers**

Dan Carden: [\[185674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the report by Centre for Care and Carers UK entitled Valuing Carers 2021, published in May 2023.

Helen Whately:

The Department has no plans to make such an assessment.

■ **Clinical Trials**

Patrick Grady: [\[184687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's planned timescale is for making the (a) Certifications, (b) Continuous Benefit Risk Assessment integrating Real World Evidence, (c) Enhanced Patient Engagement and (d) Novel Methodology and Innovative Clinical Trial Design tools available for Innovation Passport holders.

Will Quince:

The Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway (ILAP) was launched in January 2021, and has seen strong interest from both small and large companies in a variety of

therapeutic settings. Companies who successfully gain an Innovation Passport designation are able to apply for the next step which is the Target Development Profile (TDP).

The TDP interaction provides an opportunity for platform discussions with the ILAP partners on the Company's development programme and the resulting roadmap may make reference and or recommendation for use of one or more of the tools of the ILAP toolkit. Time scales for the delivery of these tools is subject to agreement with the ILAP partners, the stage of development of the product and availability of partner resources.

■ **Dementia: Care Homes**

Helen Morgan: [\[185853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people living in care homes have a dementia diagnosis as of 18 May 2023.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Dementia: Patient Transfer Service**

Rosie Duffield: [\[185698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people with dementia used a patient transfer service in 2022 to attend a medical appointment.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Dementia: Training**

Ben Everitt: [\[185858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of community mental health nurses have had training on dementia.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Advertising**

Stewart Hosie: [\[183356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on radio adverts in each of the the last five years broken down by radio station.

Will Quince:

The Department spent £6,755,238 on radio adverts in the last five years. The following table shows the amount of digital and broadcast radio costs in the last five years.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Broadcast	£248,447.00	£876,545.00	£1,124,992.00	£1,603,870.00	£1,083,520.00
Digital	£104,170.00	£193,561.00	£297,731.00	£682,033.00	£540,369.00
TOTAL	£352,617.00	£1,070,106.00	£1,422,723.00	£2,285,903.00	£1,623,889.00

From 1 October 2021 these costs also include spend for public health campaigns delivered by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, previously Public Health England (PHE). Prior to 1 October 2021, PHE was responsible for delivery of some health marketing campaigns. The Department does not hold data for PHE.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Artificial Intelligence

David Linden: [\[185337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department uses automated decision making.

Will Quince:

The Department does not use or deploy automated decision making on its staff or patients in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Equal Pay

Imran Hussain: [\[185683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if their Department will publish an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for financial year 2023-24 in line with the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance for employers published on 17 April 2023.

Will Quince:

The Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance was published on 17 April 2023 and is voluntary. The Department is currently considering the best way to approach Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting and working with Civil Service human resource colleagues and other Government Departments to work through the details of the guidance. In line with Gender Pay Gap Reporting, the Civil Service is looking to develop a consistent methodology to be used in Departments to produce the data. The outcomes of this will inform whether we are able to publish a report for 2023/2024. More generally the Civil Service is undertaking extensive work both centrally and within Departments to promote diversity across its workplaces, including ethnicity.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Ministerial Boxes

Emily Thornberry: [\[184026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many ministerial red boxes belonging to his Department have (a) been reported missing or lost or (b) had their

security features removed in order that they can be purchased for personal use by former ministers from 1 May 2018 to 30 April 2023.

Will Quince:

The records of the Department's Security Unit show no ministerial red boxes having been reported missing or lost in the timeframe requested.

It is a long-standing convention under successive administrations that Ministers may pay to retain red boxes as a memento of their time in their role, as long as the security features are removed. One ministerial red box was purchased in this manner during the timeframe requested.

■ **Diabetes: Health Services**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[185752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to improve access to diabetes technologies across local diabetes services in the North East.

Helen Whately:

The National Health Service across the North East is dedicated to supporting patients in monitoring and managing their lifestyle with cutting edge technology. This has resulted in a high proportion of type 1 diabetic patients in the North East utilising the latest glucose monitors and insulin pumps to manage their condition. Local services are being redesigned to improve access to the latest technologies and reduce variation in care for vulnerable patients living with type 1 diabetes.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is currently developing technology appraisal guidance on hybrid closed loop systems for managing blood glucose levels in type 1 diabetes, which considers their clinical and cost effectiveness. Should NICE recommend Hybrid Closed Loop and issue eligibility criteria, NHS England will then work with integrated care boards (ICBs) to support meeting their commitments.

It is not possible to list the ICBs in England which do not have a formal commissioning policy for real-time continuous glucose monitoring for adults and children with type 1 diabetes as this information is not collected.

ICBs must pay due regard to NICE guidance, however local decision making applies in terms of deciding whether to utilise their funding to implement the recommendation or not.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[185766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to ensure that Integrated Care Boards are able to implement the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's appraisals on hybrid closed loop systems for managing blood glucose levels in type 1 diabetes.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[185767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential long-term financial merits of a move to hybrid closed loop technology for people with type one diabetes who are clinically eligible to access that therapy.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[185768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list the Integrated Care Systems in England which do not have a formal commissioning policy for real-time continuous glucose monitoring for adults and children with type 1 diabetes.

Helen Whately:

The National Health Service across the North East is dedicated to supporting patients in monitoring and managing their lifestyle with cutting edge technology. This has resulted in a high proportion of type 1 diabetic patients in the North East utilising the latest glucose monitors and insulin pumps to manage their condition. Local services are being redesigned to improve access to the latest technologies and reduce variation in care for vulnerable patients living with type 1 diabetes.

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TARGET DATE 26/05/2023

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It is not possible to list the ICBs in England which do not have a formal commissioning policy for real-time continuous glucose monitoring for adults and children with type 1 diabetes as this information is not collected. ICBs must pay due regard to NICE guidance, however local decision making applies in terms of deciding whether to utilise their funding to implement the recommendation or not.

■ Disabled Facilities Grants

Imran Hussain:

[\[185650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to commence the consultation on increasing the upper limit of the Disabled Facilities Grant.

Helen Whately:

As with all aspects of the Disabled Facilities Grant, Government will continue to keep the upper limit under review. Local areas also already have discretion to increase the cap on the grant on a case-by-case basis or in line with a locally published housing assistance policy.

■ Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome: Health Services

Dan Carden:

[\[185821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to address inequalities of access to healthcare for people with (a) hEDS and (b) HSD in England.

Helen Whately:

The UK Rare Diseases Framework commits the four nations to ensure any impacts on health inequalities are considered when developing action plans for rare conditions, such as hypermobile Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder. Steps to reduce health inequalities have been embedded across the actions in England's 2023 Rare Diseases Action Plan. This action plan also includes a specific action to address health inequalities for people living with rare diseases by gathering the evidence needed to include rare diseases in NHS England's Core20PLUS5 Framework. This will enable integrated care systems to develop targeted actions to reduce these inequalities.

■ Health Services

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[185279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential (a) overall impact and (b) impact on each trust involved of the Improving Elective Care Coordination for Patients Programme on (i) waiting lists, (ii) staff performance, (iii) treating patients and (iv) theatre scheduling.

Will Quince:

The Improving Elective Care Coordination for Patients Programme is monitoring benefits against waiting lists, staff performance, treating patients and theatre scheduling.

These benefits are collected on a regular basis and will grow as more trusts embed the use of the tool in their operational processes. The programme is assessing benefits at a trust level, monitoring the delivery of the solution and levels of adoption. Benefits are discussed with Trusts and used to support the continued drive for adoption and use of the Care Coordination Solution. As of May 2023, the programme is delivering benefits in 24 trusts for data validation and 23 for theatre utilisation.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[185903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average weekly Healthy Start payment was for (a) individuals entitled to the scheme and (b) households with claimants receiving a digital card payment in March 2023.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 24 May 2023]: In March 2023, the average weekly Healthy Start payment for individuals on the scheme was £7.25 and the average weekly payment

for households was £7.86. This includes one-off back dated payments, which were made to some beneficiaries' pre-paid cards in March.

The average weekly payment for individuals on the scheme, not including back dated payments, was £5.03 and the average weekly payment for households, not including back dated payments, was £5.49.

■ Hearing Aids: Health Services

Christopher Pincher:

[\[185779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of qualified healthcare scientists in areas where there is a backlog in fitting hearing aids to patients; and whether he plans to take steps to increase the level of recruitment of those qualified healthcare scientists.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made. It is the responsibility of individual National Health Service employers to ensure appropriate staffing levels and recruit the number of staff required to meet service need.

To support the workforce as a whole we have commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan, including projections for the numbers of doctors, nurses, and other key professionals required over the next five, ten and fifteen years. The plan is for the whole of the NHS workforce; it will not provide detailed workforce assessments for individual services or for every staff group.

■ Hormone Replacement Therapy: Drugs

Layla Moran:

[\[185718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to secure the supply chain of (a) progesterone and (b) other hormone replacement therapy medication.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 23 May 2023]: We are aware of an issue with Utrogestan (progesterone) 100 milligram capsules, which will be in intermittent supply until late 2023. The supplier is taking steps to increase supply and we continue to work closely with them to monitor and drive progress. In the meantime, we have issued a Serious Shortage Protocol which allows pharmacists to dispense a maximum of two months' supply per prescription, to help support access to available stock.

There are over 70 hormone replacement therapy (HRT) products available in the United Kingdom and the vast majority are in good supply. We are regularly engaging with individual suppliers to prevent and mitigate supply issues in the short and long term. The HRT supply position has improved considerably since last Spring. Suppliers' responses to our calls for action to boost production in response to growing demand are having an effect. For example, the introduction of a new manufacturing facility for Oestrogel has meant that this product is now readily available for patients. Only two of the 22 Serious Shortage Protocols issued since

April last year remain as the supply disruptions with most products experiencing shortages have been resolved.

■ Hospital Beds: Standards

Wera Hobhouse:

[185803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of bed occupancy levels in hospitals across England.

Will Quince:

Occupancy levels for general and acute hospital beds have been persistently high over 2022/23, with around 95% of beds filled on average. The delivery plan to recover urgent and emergency care services, published in January 2023, recognises this pressure and commits to increasing the permanent bed base by 5,000 beds. The plan is backed by £1 billion of dedicated funding to support capacity.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Liz Kendall:

[185533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many discharges from step down beds were there in (a) October 2022, (b) November 2022, (c) December 2022, (d) January 2023, (e) February 2023 and (f) March 2023.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold data on the number of discharges from step-down beds.

■ Hospitals: Standards

Wera Hobhouse:

[185804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of publishing hospital level NHS performance data.

Will Quince:

We are not aware of official assessments made in relation to merits of publishing hospital level NHS performance data. However, our Department is committed to transparency and quality of health data in the public domain and makes a frequent assessment of trust level data availability, though recognises the need to balance quality, public value, disclosure and sensitivity of publishing more granular data in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Hospital Episode Statistics data is also published containing details about admissions, accident and emergency attendances and outpatient appointments at National Health Service hospitals in England. This is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-tools-and-services/data-services/hospital-episode-statistics>

■ Infectious Diseases: Screening

Dan Carden: [\[186242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of data gathered from the first year of opt-out blood-borne virus testing; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending that testing to all areas with a high prevalence of HIV.

Dan Carden: [\[186244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will make a decision on expanding opt-out blood-borne virus testing to all areas with a high HIV prevalence.

Neil O'Brien:

We are assessing all the evidence from the first year of the opt-out testing programme for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and blood-borne viruses in emergency departments, alongside the data on progress towards our ambitions to end new HIV transmissions and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and HIV related deaths within England by 2030.

This data will be used to examine the feasibility of further expanding the programme, including in areas with a high HIV prevalence and we will be sharing evidence as it emerges to support other areas of the country to make the case for implementing the same approach locally. A decision will be made in due course.

■ Medical Equipment: Registration

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[186029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) invitro diagnostic and (b) other medical devices that (i) are UK approved body certified and (b) self-declared under the Medical Devices Regulations 2002 are registered with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Will Quince:

The information requested has been verified by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) but has not been previously published. The following table shows the number of medical devices registered with the MHRA including United Kingdom approved body certified and self-declared under Medical Devices Regulations (MDR) 2002.

	IN VITRO- DIAGNOSTIC MEDICAL DEVICES	GENERAL MEDICAL DEVICES	ACTIVE IMPLANTABLE MEDICAL DEVICES	TOTAL
UK approved body certified	1	187	1	189
Self-declared MDR 2002	1	169	0	170

	IN VITRO- DIAGNOSTIC MEDICAL DEVICES	GENERAL MEDICAL DEVICES	ACTIVE IMPLANTABLE MEDICAL DEVICES	TOTAL
Total	2	356	1	359

The in-vitro diagnostic medical devices referenced were declared under part IV of the UK Medical Devices Regulations (MDRs) 2002, the general medical devices referenced were declared under part II of the UK MDRs 2002 and the active implantable medical devices were declared under part III of the UK MDRs 2002.

■ Memory Clinics: Staff

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[185577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people work in Memory Assessment Services in (a) Chesterfield constituency, (b) Derbyshire and (c) England.

Helen Whately:

The number of people that work in Memory Assessment Services in Derby & Derbyshire ICB is 23. The information requested is not collected by constituency, however Derby & Derbyshire ICB have advised that 5 people work in Memory Assessment Services in the North of Derbyshire.

The information requested for England is not held centrally.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Ian Levy:

[\[185380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to improve access to early mental health care for children and young people who have not yet had a medical diagnosis; and what progress he has made on the provision of early support hubs in the North East.

Maria Caulfield:

We are making good progress on expanding access to mental health care for children and young people year on year. 689,621 children and young people in England aged under 18 years old were supported through National Health Service funded mental health services with at least one contact in the year up to July 2022 compared to 618,537 in the year up to July 2021.

We are continuing the roll-out of mental health support teams, offering early support to children experiencing mild to moderate mental health concerns in schools and colleges across England. These teams also support the school in adopting a Whole School/College Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing and support the school to liaise with external specialists to help children get the right support to stay in

education. There are currently 26 mental health support teams planned or operating within the North East and North Cumbria integrated care system area.

The Government is working with the sector to understand the role of early support hubs in supporting children and young people. There are currently around 60 locally designed and funded hubs in England, which often provide several different services, for example, early intervention and prevention services, sexual health clinics or careers advice. Integrated care boards and local authorities work with local partners to understand local needs and commission services on that basis.

■ NHS England: Powers

Christine Jardine:

[186213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many times he has used powers to direct NHS England under section 45 of the Health and Care Act 2022; and in what context those powers were used.

Will Quince:

Following the transfer of functions from NHS Digital in February, section 13ZC of the NHS Act 2006 (as inserted by section 45 of the Health and Care Act 2022) has been used to direct NHS England on its functions relating to information systems.

Two directions in relation to establishing new information systems have been given, and existing directions previously given to NHS Digital, and now treated as given to NHS England, have been amended. These, and future directions relating to information systems, are available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/directions-and-data-provision-notice/nhs-england-directions>

The Secretary of State has not issued directions under section 13ZC in relation to any other matters.

■ NHS Trusts: ICT

Wera Hobhouse:

[185805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with software companies on charging NHS Trusts for IT upgrades.

Will Quince:

The Secretary of State has had no such meetings. However, through the course of normal business officials within the Department, NHS England, and individual trusts and local National Health Service organisations will have various engagements with suppliers concerning software costs, including but not limited to costs for upgrades.

■ NHS: Complaints

Rachael Maskell:

[\[186419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for the level of NHS complaints that are referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Maria Caulfield:

The referral of National Health Service complaints to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman occurs when a complainant in the NHS remains unhappy at the conclusion of the initial complaints process, for example, in an NHS trust or general practitioner practice. The level of referrals to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman will be impacted by a number of factors, including how the complaint is initially handled, or the extent to which NHS organisations highlight the complaints process and the consequent level of awareness amongst potential complainants.

■ NHS: Databases

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[183722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Federated Data Platform will ensure that all patient data is (a) held within the UK and (b) is subject to UK data protection law including the General Data Protection Regulation.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 15 May 2023]: The Federated Data Platform and Associated Services contract will stipulate that all data must be held within the United Kingdom and is subject to UK Data Protection Law including the General Data Protection Regulation.

■ NHS: Resignations

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[185245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include in the upcoming NHS workforce plan an estimate of the number of NHS staff who have left the NHS a result of (a) their mental health and (b) symptoms of the menopause in the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

The health and wellbeing of all National Health Service staff is a priority for the Government. NHS England have developed a number of health and wellbeing initiatives which include a wellbeing guardian role, a focus on healthy working environments, empowering line managers to hold meaningful conversations with staff to discuss their wellbeing, and a comprehensive emotional and psychological health and wellbeing support package.

While the Long Term Workforce Plan will include material about how to improve retention of staff, it will not include specific estimates of why staff have left within the last 12 months.

■ NHS: Staff**Jim Shannon:**[\[186061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help tackle shortages of (a) consultants and (b) other NHS staff.

Will Quince:

We continue to grow the National Health Service workforce. As of February 2023, there has been an increase of 1,689 full-time equivalent (FTE) consultants and over 12,300 more nurses than the same time last year. We are on track to deliver 50,000 more nurses across the NHS by 2024 and have almost 43,000 more nurses in February 2023 compared with September 2019.

The Government has funded an additional 1,500 undergraduate medical school places per year for domestic students in England, a 25% increase, taking the total number of medical school places in England to 7,500 each year.

Furthermore, a number of actions have been taken to retain NHS staff through the NHS People Plan and the People Promise pledge to build a more modern, compassionate and inclusive culture in the NHS to improve people's experience of working in the NHS, and the retention of staff.

To support the workforce as a whole we have commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan for the NHS workforce for the next 15 years. This plan will help ensure that we have the right numbers of staff, with the right skills to transform and deliver high quality services fit for the future.

■ Ophthalmology: Access**Bob Blackman:**[\[185922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has considered the potential merits of increasing access to eye care services for (a) care home residents, (b) young people enrolled in residential special schools and (c) other vulnerable people.

Neil O'Brien:

National Health Service funded access to domiciliary eye care services is already available to eligible individuals unable to leave home unaccompanied, including those living in residential care homes. Action is being taken to improve access to NHS sight testing services from high street optical practices for individuals with no fixed address.

The NHS Long Term Plan made a commitment to ensure that children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism in special residential schools have access to sight checks in school. NHS England commenced a proof-of-concept programme in 2021 to pilot and evaluate a potential sight testing service model. The pilot has been subject to evaluation and will inform decisions about the future sight testing service in special residential schools.

Beyond the provision of primary eye care services, the responsibility for ensuring secondary eye care services meet local identified needs rests with integrated care boards and in some cases NHS England. NHS England's transformation programme is also considering how eye care services should be commissioned to ensure future sustainability.

■ **Postnatal Depression: Fathers**

Catherine West: [\[186204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support fathers suffering from postnatal depression.

Catherine West: [\[186205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to introduce monitoring of postnatal depression for fathers during routine NHS health visits.

Neil O'Brien:

Supporting infant and family mental health, including for fathers, is already a core element of routine health visits.

In addition to this, the Government is investing approximately £100 million to support perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships. This will promote positive early relationships and provide mental health support for families in 75 local authorities in England as part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. This includes providing perinatal mental health support for fathers and co-parents, including those suffering from postnatal depression.

■ **Prescription Drugs**

Carolyn Harris: [\[185937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of products approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence did not appear on local formularies within 90 days of its approval in the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

Information on the inclusion of products recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on local formularies is not held centrally.

■ **Rheumatology: Education**

Peter Dowd: [\[185975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to increase the number of rheumatology medical school places as part of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

Will Quince:

The Government has funded an additional 1,500 undergraduate medical school places per year for domestic students in England, a 25% increase, taking the total number of medical school places in England to 7,500 each year. This expansion was

completed in September 2020 and delivered five new medical schools in England. This will help ensure a larger potential pipeline for rheumatology trainees in coming years.

In January 2023, Health Education England announced that nearly 900 additional medical specialty training posts have been created for this year, including five rheumatology posts.

As of January 2023, there were 694 full-time equivalent (FTE) consultants working in the rheumatology specialism in National Health Service trusts and commissioning bodies in England. This is an increase of 19 since last year.

To support the workforce as a whole, we have commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan for the next 15 years. This plan will help ensure that we have the right numbers of staff with the right skills to transform and deliver high quality services fit for the future.

■ Rheumatology: Health Professions

Peter Dowd:

[\[185978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of (a) rheumatology consultants, (b) rheumatology clinical nurse specialists, (c) specialist rheumatology physiotherapists, (d) psychologists, (e) podiatrists, (f) occupational health therapists and (g) specialist rheumatology pharmacists in England; and what steps he is taking to fill vacancies in these professions.

Will Quince:

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, by staff group, working in National Health Service trusts and integrated care boards in England, as of January 2023.

STAFF GROUP	NUMBER OF FTE STAFF
Rheumatology Consultants	694
Rheumatology Clinical Nurse Specialists	No data held
Specialist Rheumatology Physiotherapists	No data held
Psychologists (Applied Psychology)	8,349
Podiatrists	2,548
Occupational Health Therapists	16,351
Specialist Rheumatology Pharmacists	No data held

Source: NHS Workforce Statistics

To support the workforce, we have commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan for the NHS workforce for the next 15 years. It will look at the mix

and number of staff required and will set out the actions and reforms across the NHS that will be needed to reduce supply gaps and improve retention. This plan will help ensure that we have the right numbers of staff with the right skills to transform and deliver high quality services fit for the future.

On 10 of January 2023, Health Education England announced that nearly 900 additional medical specialty training posts will be created for this year, including an additional five rheumatology specialty training posts. Rheumatology is a popular specialty with a fill rate of over 95%.

Peter Dowd:

[185979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve levels of staff retention of healthcare professionals working in rheumatology services.

Will Quince:

The NHS People Plan and People Promise set out a comprehensive range of actions to improve staff retention. They provide a strong focus on creating a more modern, compassionate and inclusive National Health Service culture by strengthening health and wellbeing, equality and diversity, culture and leadership and flexible working.

NHS priorities and operational planning guidance 2023/24 has asked systems to refresh their 2022/23 whole system workforce plans to improve staff retention through a systematic focus on all elements of the NHS People Promise. Staff wellbeing should be strategically aligned with elective recovery plans, including workforce demand and capacity planning.

In addition, the NHS Retention Programme is continuously seeking to understand why staff leave, resulting in targeted interventions to support staff to stay whilst keeping them well. A staff retention guide has been updated and includes information on supporting staff in their late and early career with specific focus on induction, reward and recognition and menopause support.

These initiatives apply across all NHS staff groups, including healthcare professionals working in rheumatology services.

■ Rheumatology: Health Services

Peter Dowd:

[185976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to (a) increase access to podiatry services for rheumatology patients, (b) increase access to specialised psychology services for rheumatology patients, (c) increase the number of pharmacists working within rheumatology services, (d) increase the number of allied health professionals working within rheumatology teams, (e) increase the number of sports and exercise consultants, (f) increase access to sports and exercise medicine and (g) improve the skill mix in primary care to diagnose, treat and manage Musculoskeletal and rheumatic conditions.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made.

■ **Sexual Intercourse: Drugs**

Florence Eshalomi:

[186272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce risks to the (a) physical and (b) mental health of participants in chemsex.

Florence Eshalomi:

[186274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department provides specific (a) guidance, (b) advice and (c) other support for people who participate in chemsex.

Neil O'Brien:

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning substance misuse and sexual health services to meet local need. The Government has previously issued guidance for commissioners and providers of drug and alcohol services on meeting the physical and mental health needs of people who engage in Chemsex, this is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/substance-misuse-services-for-men-involved-in-chemsex>

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities continues to support local areas to implement this guidance and to share good practice. Additionally, information on the risks of taking drugs associated with chemsex is available on the Government's drug information service FRANK which signposts sources of support and advice.

Florence Eshalomi:

[186273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of chemsex on the level of HIV transmission; and what data his Department holds on the number of HIV transmissions linked to chemsex in each of the last five years.

Neil O'Brien:

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has a surveillance system that collects information related to people who have recently acquired human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and asks questions in relation to recent sexual behaviour, including chemsex. Further interviews and analyses are underway. The report will be published in 2024. We do not hold data on the number of HIV transmissions linked to chemsex in each of the last five years.

Florence Eshalomi:

[186275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether ambulance staff are provided with training on the potential impact of the practice of chemsex on patients.

Will Quince:

Ambulance staff are trained to respond to a wide range of drug related presentations, which may include chemsex. Standards of proficiency, conduct and performance of registered professionals such as paramedics are the responsibility of independent healthcare regulators rather than Government. In the case of paramedics, this is the Health and Care Professions Council.

■ Sleeping Pills: Prescription Drugs**Jim Shannon:**[\[186060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of people that have been prescribed sleeping pills in the last five years.

Will Quince:

No estimate has been made as the information requested is not held centrally.

■ Surgery: Standards**Neil Coyle:**[\[185598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of surgeries were cancelled by speciality in the latest period for which data is available.

Will Quince:

This data is not available in the format requested.

HOME OFFICE**■ Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986****Patricia Gibson:**[\[186154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will publish the outcome of the 2014 public consultation on section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government intends to bring forward proposals and engage with stakeholders this year on transparency and the protection of confidential information regarding the regulation of the use of animals in science.

By doing so the Government intends to clarify Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, taking account of the previous consultation.

■ Anti-social Behaviour: Kingston upon Hull East**Karl Turner:**[\[186367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to (a) tackle increases in antisocial behaviour in East Hull and (b) support local (i) authorities and (ii) communities in tackling it.

Chris Philp:

On 27 March, the Government published its Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Action Plan. The ASB Action Plan commits to tackling ASB across five key themes: stronger punishment, making communities safer, building local pride, prevention and early intervention, improving data, reporting and accountability for action.

This plan is backed by £160m of funding. This includes up to £60m to fund an increased police and other uniformed presence to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, targeting hotspots. Initially we will work with 10 police force areas, but from 2024 will support a hotspot approach across every police force area in England and Wales.

We are also providing up to £50m to support the provision of Immediate Justice, by issuing out of court disposals with conditions to swiftly repair any damage – the aim being for them to start within 48 hours of the offence. This will start in 10 initial trailblazer police force areas and be rolled out nationally in 2024.

The plan includes up to £2m to supercharge use of High Street Rental Auctions which will allow local authorities to sell off the rental rights for empty properties to willing tenants, with financial support to make sure that areas which need this the most are not priced out by prohibitive refurbishment costs to bring the properties up to standard.

We are providing up to £2.5 million to pilot High Street Accelerators in up to 10 areas which will incentivise and empower local people to work together to develop ambitious plans to tackle vacancy and reinvent their high streets so that they are fit for the future.

Humberside police force has recruited 365 additional uplift police officers against a total three-year allocation of 322 officers, as at 31 March 2023.

Humberside's funding will be up to £231.7m in 2023/24, an increase of up to £7.9m when compared to 2022/23.

■ Anti-social Behaviour: Portsmouth**Stephen Morgan:**[\[186442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in Portsmouth.

Stephen Morgan:[\[186443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help support local authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Stephen Morgan:[\[186444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help tackle the root causes of anti-social behaviour.

Stephen Morgan:

[186445]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help prevent young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour.

Chris Philp:

On 27 March, the Government launched the Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan giving the police, local authorities and other relevant agencies the tools they need to tackle anti-social behaviour.

This plan is backed by £160m of funding and focuses on stronger punishment, making communities safer, building local pride, and prevention and early intervention. Under the plan, one million extra hours of youth support will be made available in anti-social behaviour hotspots and we will invest more to intervene early with at risk young people via one-to-one support.

The volume of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by Hampshire police fell by 22% in the latest year (to March 2022). The latest available data covering year to March 2022 can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables>

■ Asylum: Housing

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[186230]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria her Department will use to assess whether asylum seekers are suitable to be housed (a) at former Ministry of Defence sites and (b) on barges.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office will ensure that all accommodation is safe, habitable, fit for purpose and meets all regulatory requirements. Upon arrival, asylum seekers' biometrics are captured and they undergo robust security checks against immigration and police databases. All asylum seekers also undergo health checks and a vaccination programme.

We will assess individual's suitability to reside at each location and will only accommodate individuals who are considered suitable to reside there. Each person's suitability will be assessed at regular intervals.

■ Asylum: Portland Port

Richard Drax:

[184979]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much Portland Port is being paid from the public purse to accommodate the migrant barge for an initial period of 18 months.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office cannot disclose commercially sensitive information.

■ Citizenship and Immigration: Applications

Rachael Maskell:

[\[186163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications for (a) asylum, (b) indefinite leave to remain and (c) citizenship were submitted more than 12 months ago; and how many and what proportion of such applications submitted in (i) 2007, (ii) 2008 and (iii) 2009 took more than 12 months to be processed.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Protecting the vulnerable and tackling MSHT is a top priority for Border Force. As First Responders, frontline Border Force Officers play a key role in identifying both victims and perpetrators of human trafficking as they seek to cross the UK border. Border Force work to prevent exploitation from happening, to safeguard and protect vulnerable persons and in collaboration with other law enforcement colleagues seek to bring to justice those who commit MSHT crime. All frontline Border Force officers are trained to spot the signs of MSHT and make necessary safeguarding referrals. Border Force also has a cadre of over 500 specialist Safeguarding & Modern Slavery (SAMS) officers.

All Border Force safeguarding and Modern Slavery training is reviewed and updated to ensure it continues to fulfil those ICIBI (Independent Chief Inspector for Borders & Immigration) and IASC (Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner) expectations which the Home Office has accepted.

■ Crime

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[186123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent trends in recorded crimes her Department has identified.

Chris Philp:

The best measure of trends in crime experienced by the general public is the Crime Survey for England and Wales as this is unaffected by changes in police recording practices, police activity or the propensity of victims to report to the police.

The latest statistics published by the Office for National Statistics show violent crime and neighbourhood crime is down 41% and 51% respectively since 2010.

Overall crime, (excluding fraud and computer misuse which was only added to the Crime Survey in 2016,) has fallen by 52% over that same period.

■ Home Office: Consultants

Dan Carden:

[\[186155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023 to Question 158848 on Home Office: Consultants, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of spending on consultants in the previous five years.

Chris Philp:

Home Office publishes its Annual Reports and Accounts which are available on gov.uk at [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/2021-22-ARA-Final.pdf).

Pg 107 of the 21/22 report sets out how we assure consultancy spend:

[Home Office ARA 21-22 Final - Gov.uk.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/2021-22-ARA-Final.pdf).

■ Home Office: Equal Pay**Imran Hussain:****[185685]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if their Department will publish an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for financial year 2023-24 in line with the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance for employers published on 17 April 2023.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is currently considering the best way to approach Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting along with the wider Civil Service. Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting is voluntary. We are working with Civil Service HR colleagues and other government departments to work through the details of the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance that was published on 17 April 2023.

In line with Gender Pay Gap Reporting, the Civil Service is looking to develop a consistent methodology to be used in departments to produce the data. The outcomes of this development work will inform whether we are able to publish a report for 2023/2024.

More generally the Department is undertaking extensive work that is aligned with central Cabinet Office led activity to promote diversity in all Civil Service workplaces, including ethnicity.

■ Home Office: Telephone Services**Henry Smith:****[186090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department provided to the (a) Refuge National Domestic Abuse Helpline, (b) National Perpetrator Helpline run by Respect, (c) Men's Advice Line, (d) Galop national LGBT+ victims' helpline, (e) National Stalking Helpline operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and (f) Revenge Porn Helpline operated by SWGfL in the (i) 2022-23 and (ii) 2023-24 financial years.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Home Office has provided over £3.7m of funding to the following helplines to provide advice and support to victims of domestic abuse, perpetrators of domestic abuse as well as victims of stalking since financial year 2022/23.

The breakdown of allocation by financial year is as follows:

Financial Year 2022/2023

- (a) National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge - £1,000,000
- (b) National Perpetrator Helpline, run by Respect - £200,000
- (c) Men's Advice Line, run by Respect - £200,000
- (d) National LGBT+ Victims' Helpline, run by Galop - £150,000
- (e) National Stalking Helpline operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust - £150,000
- (f) Revenge Porn Helpline operated by South West Grid for London - £160,430

Financial Year 2023/2024

- (a) National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge - £1,000,000
- (b) National Perpetrator Helpline, run by Respect - £200,000
- (c) Men's Advice Line, run by Respect - £200,000
- (d) National LGBT+ Victims' Helpline, run by Galop - £150,000
- (e) National Stalking Helpline operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust - £150,000
- (f) Revenge Porn Helpline operated by South West Grid for London - £160,430

In March 2022, we published the cross-Government Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan. The Plan will seek to transform the whole of society's response in order to prevent offending, support victims and pursue perpetrators, as well as to strengthen the systems processes in place needed to deliver these goals.

As part of the investment of over £140 million for supporting victims and survivors in the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, and over £81 million for tackling perpetrators, the Home Office committed to double funding for National Domestic Abuse Helpline, and further increase funding for all the national helplines it supports.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

John Healey:

[186022]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2023 to Question 184276 on Refugees: Afghanistan, what information her Department holds on the cost to the public purse of her Department's legal costs on Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy principals who were refused relocation to the UK by her Department after having been deemed eligible by the Ministry of Defence.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not hold this information in a reportable format.

Dan Jarvis:

[186096]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support (a) her Department and (b) the Ministry of Defence are providing to ARAP-eligible individuals who are

accommodated in hotels in Pakistan and who are being advised by the UK Government that while waiting in Pakistan they should source their own accommodation within the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The British High Commission in Islamabad is responsible for operational decision-making in relation to managing the accommodation and other support provided to those in Pakistan.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is responsible for supporting the movement of eligible persons out of Afghanistan and into third countries, assessing eligibility of applications under ARAP, and referring eligible persons with a Defence connection to charitable partners for Operation NEWHOPE support.

ARAP eligible individuals are provided with accommodation, food, medical treatment, and dedicated support from a team of MOD & FCDO caseworkers in Pakistan while they await relocation to the UK. When relocation becomes possible for individuals or family groups, we use commercial flights to bring individuals to the UK.

Dan Jarvis:

[186097]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many ARAP-eligible Afghans have (a) successfully managed to find their own accommodation and (b) have been relocated to the UK by following the guidance on independently sourcing accommodation.

Robert Jenrick:

The latest [Immigration System Statistics, year ending December 2022](#), published on 23 February, show that since their first arrivals in 2021, the ACRS and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) have resettled a total of 21,387 people.

They also show that over 9,000 people have now been supported into settled accommodation (This breaks down as c.8,500 moved into homes with an additional c.500 matched but not yet moved). The figures are not currently broken down into ACRS/ARAP individuals or families.

The government is providing £285 million of new funding to local authorities supporting the Afghan resettlement schemes. This includes £35 million which will go towards increasing the level of support available as well as a £250 million expansion of the Local Authority Housing Fund to help councils to source homes for Afghans currently in bridging accommodation.

This new, generous package of support comes in addition to the existing support available for people on the ACRS and ARAP schemes, including access to welfare system, the right to work and full access to public services.

The move from hotels into settled accommodation is in the best interests of families and individuals and will enable them to benefit from the freedoms of independent living that only suitable non-hotel accommodation can provide.

■ Refugees: Hotels

Dan Jarvis: [\[186099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in hotel bridging accommodation have been served an eviction notice; and what proportion of those people have rejected a principal offer of accommodation.

Robert Jenrick:

This is operational data, and we will not be providing running commentary on the numbers of Notice to Quits issued. We have started issuing three month notice periods to resettled Afghans living in hotels and serviced accommodation, alongside guidance explaining next steps and the extensive government support available so they can find their own accommodation. We will continue to do all we can to support Afghans, so they can carry on rebuilding their lives here.

■ Slavery: Victim Support Schemes

Alex Sobel: [\[185962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential effectiveness of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract and its support for victims of modern slavery.

Alex Sobel: [\[185963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's planned timescale is for the re-procurement of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract.

Alex Sobel: [\[185964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's estimated timeline is for the re-procurement of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract to the providers which issue support for victims of modern slavery.

Miss Sarah Dines:

We are working with a cross-departmental team to assess potential contract and policy options for a new model of modern slavery victim support for adults to replace that currently met through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) in England And Wales ending in June 2025. This new contracted service for victims of modern slavery will be offered for competitive tender.

We are planning both market and policy engagement events to gain input from a wide range of external stakeholders, with an initial early market supplier event held on 20 February 2023. This event included a range of potential suppliers who were notified via the publication of an early market engagement notice. The attendees included the incumbent supplier, and several of their supply chain partners.

Alex Sobel: [\[185965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has held recent discussions with the providers of the modern slavery victim care contract on the re-procurement process for that contract.

Miss Sarah Dines:

We are working with a cross-departmental team to assess potential contract and policy options for a new model of modern slavery victim support for adults to replace that currently met through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) in England And Wales ending in June 2025. This new contracted service for victims of modern slavery will be offered for competitive tender.

We are planning both market and policy engagement events to gain input from a wide range of external stakeholders, with an initial early market supplier event held on 20 February 2023. This event included a range of potential suppliers who were notified via the publication of an early market engagement notice. The attendees included the incumbent supplier, and several of their supply chain partners.

■ Visas: Afghanistan**Hilary Benn:**[\[186012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to issue visas to parents in Afghanistan whose children have leave to remain in the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK has made an ambitious and generous commitment to help relocate some of the most at-risk people in Afghanistan and, so far, we have brought around 24,500 vulnerable people to safety. This includes those evacuated during Operation Pitting and those relocated and resettled under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

For those evacuated from Afghanistan under the ACRS without their immediate family members, further information will be made available in due course about options for reuniting with them.

■ Working Holidays and Youth Mobility Scheme**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[186030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023 to Question 158878 on Youth Mobility Scheme, when changes to the (a) Youth Mobility Scheme and (b) Working Holiday Maker programmes are expected to come in to effect.

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 the FTA entering into force, which is set to take place on 31 May 2023.

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 and will publicise information, including implementation date, once jointly agreed.

JUSTICE

■ Ministry of Justice: Equal Pay

Imran Hussain:

[\[185687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if their Department will publish an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for financial year 2023-24 in line with the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance for employers published on 17 April 2023.

Mike Freer:

Alongside other government departments, we are currently considering the best way to approach Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting in the Civil Service. Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting is voluntary.

We are working with Civil Service HR colleagues and other government departments to work through the details of the Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting guidance that was published on 17 April 2023.

In line with Gender Pay Gap Reporting, the Civil Service is looking to develop a consistent methodology to be used in departments to produce the data. The outcomes of this development work will inform whether we are able to publish a report for 2023/2024.

More generally the Civil Service is undertaking extensive work both centrally and within departments to promote diversity across its workplaces, including ethnicity.

■ Rape: Victims

Ellie Reeves:

[\[185828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of victims of rape who are offered the support of an independent sexual violence adviser at (a) reporting stage, (b) trial and (c) in-between the reporting of a case and a trial commencing in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

We do not collect specific information on when a victim is offered the support of an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA); however, we know that ISVAs positively impact a victim's experience of the criminal justice system. For example, research involving 585 reported rapes found that victims who received support from services such as ISVAs were almost 50% less likely to withdraw from the criminal

justice investigation process compared to those who did not receive support. This is why the 24/7 Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Line includes signposting to ISVA services as well as vital information on emotional support, to ensure that ISVAs are signposted at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, we have quadrupled funding for victim and witness support services including using additional ringfenced funding to increase the number of ISVAs and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors by 300 to over 1,000 by 2024/2025 - a 43% on the number of ISVAs and IDVAs over this spending review period (2022/23 to 2024/25).

■ Sexual Offences: Reoffenders

Wera Hobhouse: [\[185798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were convicted of repeat offences for exposure in each year since 2015, broken down by sentence type.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[185799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people previously convicted for exposure were later convicted for a violent sexual crime in each year since 2015.

Edward Argar:

Numbers of people were convicted of repeat offences of exposure in each year since 2015, broken down by sentence type, are available in the attached table.

Information on numbers of people previously convicted of exposure who were later convicted of a violent sexual crime in each year since 2015 is not available centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Attachments:

1. Number of offenders convicted for repeat exposure [2023-05-25 PQ 185798 final table.xlsx]

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Levelling Up Fund

Judith Cummins: [\[186143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the first two rounds of applications to the Levelling-Up Fund.

Judith Cummins: [\[186144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to give greater weight to applications from areas of high deprivation as part of the decision process for the third round of the Levelling Up Fund.

Dehenna Davison:

The Department undertook a robust assessment and decision-making process for both Rounds 1 and 2 of the Levelling Up Fund, as set out in the published Explanatory Notes.

The third round of the Levelling Up Fund will provide further investment in vital infrastructure projects across the UK. We will set out further details in due course.

■ Parish and Town Councils: Council Tax**Mike Amesbury:**[\[185836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the number of (a) town and (b) parish councils that have increased precepts above the level of inflation in the last three years.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [180305](#) on 24 April 2023.

■ Property Management Companies**Christopher Pincher:**[\[185555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an estimate of the number of planning applications in England since January 2020 where responsibility for services such as public space management and litter collection and the charges for them reside with a management company rather than with the local council.

Christopher Pincher:[\[185556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to reduce council tax for people whose estate management and litter cleaning services reside with a management company rather than with the local council.

Lee Rowley:

The information on planning applications that is collected and published by the department does not contain the level of detail required to answer this question.

Decisions on the level of council tax are for local councils who have powers to offer discretionary discounts where they consider that appropriate.

■ Veterans: Homelessness**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[186277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the number of veterans who were homeless in each month in 2023.

Felicity Buchan:

Latest statutory homelessness data (HCLIC) for October to December 2022 was published on 10 May and can be found [here](#).

PRIME MINISTER■ **China****Catherine West:**[\[186174\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he discussed China during his meeting with Prime Minister Modi at the G7 Conference in Japan.

Rishi Sunak:

I spoke to Prime Minister Modi on 21 May 2023 at the G7 Summit. A readout is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-prime-minister-modi-of-india-21-may-2023>.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY■ **Data Protection****Stephanie Peacock:**[\[186235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure at the public bill committee for the Data Protection and Digital Information (No. 2) Bill, Official Report, column 148, how relevant stakeholders can make contributions on clause 13 for the Minister's consideration.

Sir John Whittingdale:

There were over 3,000 responses from stakeholders to our consultation, "Data: A New Direction". We continue to engage with stakeholders about these reforms, including through our business advisory group and in dedicated meetings with interested organisations. I encourage stakeholders to write to me, as the Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure, if they would like to share further views.

■ **Mobile Phones: Contracts****Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[186070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will make a comparative assessment of the affordability of mobile phone contracts based on the (a) Retail Price Index and (b) Consumer Price Index.

Sir John Whittingdale:

We recognise that this is a difficult time for families across the country who are struggling with their bills due to the rise in the cost of living.

A number of operators choose to link their annual price rises to either the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) and Retail Price Index (RPI). Due to the differences in the way they are calculated, RPI is traditionally higher than CPI. Whether CPI or RPI-linked, it is important that clauses within mobile contracts - such as price rises - are clear and transparent so consumers know what they are signing up to.

Ofcom, as the independent regulator, has a statutory duty to monitor ongoing household affordability in the sector, and Part C of their General Conditions require telecoms companies to provide clear information about their services.

On 9 February 2023, Ofcom announced a [review](#) into the transparency of in-contract price rises including those linked to CPI and RPI. Ofcom expects their review to conclude by the end of the year. We look forward to reading their findings.

■ Three and Vodafone Group: Mergers

Navendu Mishra:

[\[186201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential risk to national security from a merger between Three and Vodafone.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[186202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has had discussions with Vodafone on that company's proposals to cut 11,000 jobs.

Sir John Whittingdale:

In October 2022, Vodafone and Three announced that they were in talks to merge their UK businesses. As an open economy, we welcome investment where it supports UK growth and jobs, meets our stringent legal and regulatory requirements, and does not compromise our national security. We will not hesitate to use our powers, under the National Security and Investment Act, to protect national security if we identify concerns.

On 16 May, Vodafone Group, which operates across 21 countries, announced its annual financial results and strategy to improve performance. The strategy focuses on improving customer experience, growth and simplifying Group structures. Any redundancies as part of this process are a commercial decision for Vodafone Group.

TRANSPORT

■ Alternative Fuels: Logistics

Bill Esterson:

[\[186084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the forthcoming low carbon fuels strategy will cover all transport modes used by the logistics sector.

Bill Esterson:

[\[186086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made a comparative assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the cost of (a) low carbon fuels and (b) diesel and kerosene on the level of usage of those fuels by logistics businesses.

Jesse Norman:

The Department's forthcoming Low Carbon Fuel Strategy will cover all transport modes used by the logistics sector.

The Government supports the production of low carbon fuels through the Renewable Trade Fuel Obligation (RTFO), which reduces the cost of low carbon fuels in the long term. The Government published a cost benefit analysis for the RTFO in 2021, but has not undertaken a formal assessment of the impact of cost of different fuel types or the level of usage including for logistics businesses.

■ **Bus Services: Carbon Emissions**

Simon Lightwood:

[\[186267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the news story entitled UK on track to reach 4,000 zero emission bus pledge with £200 million boost, published by his Department on 26 March 2022, whether these buses will be provided to all regions of the UK.

Mr Richard Holden:

We are committed to supporting the introduction of 4,000 zero emission buses and achieving an all zero emission bus fleet across the entire UK. Across the UK, an estimated 3,400 zero emission buses have been funded since February 2020.

On 26 March 2022 the Department announced £198.3 million funding from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme for local transport authorities in England outside of London.

■ **Bus Services: Students**

Conor McGinn:

[\[186223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing bus fares for students aged between 16 and 19.

Mr Richard Holden:

In England, the majority of bus services outside London operate on a commercial basis, and decisions about offering reduced or discounted fares for commercial bus services are predominantly for operators to take. Many bus operators currently offer discounted travel cards for younger people. Our most recent set of statistics shows that operators in 70 out of 84 travel concession authority areas in England, outside London, offered some form of discounted travel for young people.

Policy for home to school transport sits with the Department for Education. However, the statutory responsibility for transport to education and training for those aged 16 to

19 rests with local authorities. This enables them to make reasonable decisions based on the needs of their population, the local transport infrastructure and the resources they have available

The Government introduced the £2 fare cap on 1 January to help passengers save on their regular travel costs and to help increase patronage on buses. This scheme was due to end on 30 June, however on 17 May we announced a further investment of up to £200 million to extend the current £2 bus fare cap in place on single tickets 1 July until 31 October. This will be followed by a longer term fare cap of £2.50 from 1 November 2023 to 31 November 2024

We are also investing in the bus sector to deliver the ambitions of the National Bus Strategy to make bus services more reliable and cheaper. We have allocated over £1 billion of funding for English Local Transport Authorities outside London to support the delivery of Bus Service Improvement Plans, some of which include the introduction of measures to reduce bus fares for young people. For example, the North East have recently introduced a £1 fare for single bus journeys for the under 22s.

■ Diesel Vehicles

Geraint Davies:

[\[185875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 May 2023 to Question 183297 on Diesel Vehicles, what information his Department holds on the correlation between the year a diesel car is first registered and the income decile of the owner.

Jesse Norman:

The following table presents estimates from the National Travel Survey showing, for households in each income quintile in 2019, the average age of diesel vehicles that households have continuous access to.

Average age of diesel cars by household income quintile: England, 2019

HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE	AVERAGE VEHICLE AGE (YEARS)	UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE SIZE:
		VEHICLES
Lowest real income level	8.98	360
Second level	8.49	472
Third level	7.83	643
Fourth level	7.59	814
Highest real income level	6.37	837
All income levels	7.61	3,126

Source: National Travel Survey

■ Driving Tests: Standards

Louise Haigh: [\[186231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the average national waiting time to secure a practical driving test in each year since 2019.

Louise Haigh: [\[186232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of people whose successful driving theory tests have expired without completion of a practical driving test in each year since 2019.

Louise Haigh: [\[186233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of extending the two-year validity period for driving theory tests in light of the backlog of practical driving tests.

Louise Haigh: [\[186234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the average waiting time to secure a practical driving test in each DVSA practical assessment centre.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) recognises there is a high demand for learner drivers who are wanting to take their car practical driving test. As of 22 May 2023, there were 546,135 tests booked and 54,808 tests available within the next 24 weeks.

As a result of the measures the DVSA has already taken, overall, since April 2021, the agency has created an estimated 813,000 additional test slots. On average, the DVSA is creating approximately 35,300 extra car test slots each month.

The validity period of the theory test certificate is 2 years.

Candidates may choose to not take a practical driving test for various reasons. It is therefore not possible to estimate how many theory test certificate have expired before a practical test was taken.

It is important road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point a person drives unsupervised for the first time.

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place to ensure a candidate's road safety knowledge and ability to identify developing hazards is current. This validity period is set in legislation and the Government has no plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the preparation of new drivers, who are disproportionality represented in casualty statistics. Learners will therefore need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

■ Electric Vehicles: Enfield North

Feryal Clark:

[185991]

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 Enfield North constituency.

Jesse Norman:

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

London – which includes Enfield North constituency – has been allocated £35.7 million in capital funding, and £3 million in capability (resource) funding through the LEVI Fund.

Local authorities can also apply for support from the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS). To date, The London Borough of Enfield has been awarded £115,380 to install 55 chargepoints through ORCS.

■ Fisheries: Older Workers

Luke Pollard:

[905118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of the medical fitness certificate on fisherman aged over 50.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Aviation, Maritime and Security) at the Department for Transport, recently met with The Right Honourable Mark Spencer MP, Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This meeting was to discuss the implementation of the medical certification requirement of the Work in Fishing Convention for those in the sector more broadly, as well as the medical fitness of those aged fifty and over.

Those working in the industry are assessed on their medical fitness, not their age, and there is no upper age limit for medical certification. Fishing remains one of the most dangerous professions in the UK, the risk level of commercial fishing in the UK is estimated to be 100 times greater than the general workforce. Medical certification ensures people don't put themselves, their crewmates or those who have to rescue them at unnecessary risk. Extensive grandfathered protection for those working in the sector, and, to date, none have been prevented from fishing as a result of certification.

■ Heaton Chapel Station

Navendu Mishra:

[\[186262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the quality of the facilities and infrastructure at Heaton Chapel railway station.

Huw Merriman:

Rail North Partnership (RNP) works closely with Northern Trains, Network Rail, Transport for the North and its members to identify opportunities to improve station facilities as part of the Operator Business Planning process.

■ Logistics: Carbon Emissions

Bill Esterson:

[\[186085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential role of hydrogen in reducing carbon emissions relating to the logistics sector.

Jesse Norman:

Hydrogen has an important potential role to play in decarbonising heavier applications such as HGVs. There are specific use cases where hydrogen can offer advantages over batteries, for example where vehicles need longer ranges and more rapid refuelling (longer distance HGVs) or greater energy density. The Zero Emission Road Freight Demonstrator programme will showcase zero emission HGV technologies, including hydrogen fuel cells, at scale, on UK roads. The programme will build a strong evidence base to enable strategic, long-term, national infrastructure decisions to be made.

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) supports the supply of renewable hydrogen used in transport by placing obligations on suppliers to ensure a percentage of the fuel supplied in the UK is from renewable sources where it can provide valuable carbon savings. The Government has expanded this support to include not just road vehicles, but also trains and shipping. Fuels supplied under the RTFO scheme deliver a third of domestic transport carbon savings under current carbon budgets.

■ Motorway Service Areas: Charging Points

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[185913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made a recent estimate of the number of rapid chargers for electric vehicles publicly available at motorway service stations in England.

Jesse Norman:

There are currently more than 400 open access (can be used with any electric vehicle), rapid (50kW+) chargepoints at MSAs across England. Over 200 of these are ultra-rapid chargepoints (150kW+), which can deliver around 120-145 miles of range

in just 15 minutes for a typical electric vehicle, compared to around 45 minutes for a rapid (50kW) chargepoint.

■ **Northern Trains and TransPennine Express: Mergers**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[186199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of merging the TransPennine Express with Northern Rail as part of his review of transport in the North of England.

Huw Merriman:

No such assessment has yet taken place. The Secretary of State is currently considering the scope of the review of services in the north referenced in his statement on 11th May 2023.

■ **Railways: Cambridgeshire**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[186137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact on the UK economy of the Ely area capacity enhancement scheme.

Huw Merriman:

Economic appraisals of the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme have been undertaken by Network Rail as part of the Outline Business Case developed for the proposal.

■ **Railways: WiFi**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[186125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with rail industry stakeholders on the provision of WiFi on passenger trains.

Huw Merriman:

Previous assessments were made by the DfT of the benefits of providing free passenger Wi-Fi and discussions have been held with DfT-franchised train operators on options for the on-going provision of on-train wifi for operational and passenger use.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[186180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to help support train operators to update the wifi network on trains in England.

Huw Merriman:

Previous assessments were made by the DfT of the benefits of providing free passenger Wi-Fi and discussions have been held with DfT-franchised train operators on options for the ongoing provision of on-train wifi for operational and passenger use.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[186185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the provision of free Wi-Fi on trains for passengers.

Huw Merriman:

Previous assessments were made by the DfT of the benefits of providing free passenger Wi-Fi and discussions have been held with DfT-franchised train operators on options for the on-going provision of on-train wifi for operational and passenger use.

■ **Shipping: Crew**

Grahame Morris:

[\[186069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Departments report entitled UK Seafarer Projections: 2016 to 2026, published 25 January 2017, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the covid-19 pandemic on that report's estimates.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department remains committed to future proofing seafarer training and growing the UKs seafaring population. A Cadet review was published in June 2021 and is currently in implementation phase. A Ratings Review is currently underway. Both reviews have been led by the Maritime Skills Commission.

■ **Shipping: Medical Certificates**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[186228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average cost is of the medical assessment that is required to obtain an (a) ENG1 and (b) ML5 certificate in each (i) nation and (ii) region.

Mr Richard Holden:

The ENG1 fee for medicals conducted in the United Kingdom is set by the Merchant Shipping (Fees) Regulations 2018 at £115. Overseas approved doctors charge a range of prices reflecting the geographical locations of the doctor.

The ML5 fee is not set and evidence suggests this fee can range from £65 to £250. There is no evidence that there are significant differences between nations and regions.

■ **Shipping: Rescue Services**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[185600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) deaths, (b) serious injuries and (c) emergency service call outs for medical emergencies have been recorded for incidents at sea among the inshore fishing fleet in the last five years.

Mr Richard Holden:

In the past five years (2018 – 2022), 18 serious injuries and 12 deaths occurred on UK registered fishing vessels with a registered length of less than or equal to 10m have been reported to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. These statistics do not include deaths or injuries that resulted from medical illnesses and the definition of serious injury is in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, as amended.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch does not record data for emergency service call outs for medical emergencies, as these are not reportable marine accidents in accordance with The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, as amended.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions**Ben Lake:****[186147]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to help ensure the accuracy of the information published online setting out the carbon footprint of different modes of transport; and whether his Department has made an estimate of the reduction of emissions for the aviation sector in the UK delivered through use of sustainable aviation fuel by (a) 2030, (b) 2040 and (c) 2050.

Jesse Norman:

The Department for Transport publishes journey emissions comparisons as part of its annual Transport and the Environment publication. These are Official Statistics, held to the standards laid out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Detailed information for users regarding the strengths and weaknesses of these statistics, as well as [information on the underlying methodology](#) from the Department for Transport, and the Green House Gas [conversion factors](#) published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero used to produce these statistics, are available at the links given below:

Department for Transport, Journey emissions comparisons: Methodology and guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-energy-and-environment-statistics-notes-and-definitions/journey-emissions-comparisons-methodology-and-guidance>

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2022, methodology:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2022>

The Jet Zero Strategy, published in July 2022, set out the Government's approach to achieving net zero for the UK aviation sector by 2050. Four analytical scenarios were produced as part of the strategy, setting out a range of emissions pathways for the

sector, under various assumptions on the likely uptake of different decarbonisation technologies, including SAF.

Further detail on the Jet Zero Strategy and the underpinning analysis can be found here: [Jet Zero strategy: delivering net zero aviation by 2050 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/jet-zero-strategy-delivering-net-zero-aviation-by-2050)

More recently, the Government has published a second consultation on a SAF mandate, to be introduced from 2025.

Further detail on the SAF mandate can be found here: [Pathway to net zero aviation: developing the UK sustainable aviation fuel mandate - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/pathway-to-net-zero-aviation-developing-the-uk-sustainable-aviation-fuel-mandate)

■ **Transport: Freight**

Charlotte Nichols:

[186136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with (a) businesses, (b) industry representatives and (c) other stakeholders on encouraging a move from road to rail for the transport of goods.

Huw Merriman:

Ministers and senior officials engage regularly with businesses, industry representatives and other stakeholders on a range of initiatives to encourage a move from road to rail for transporting goods. For example, initiatives currently include setting a rail freight growth target and a review of the current Mode Shift Revenue Support (MSRS) scheme, which runs until 31 March 2025.

■ **Veterans: Blue Badge Scheme**

Dan Jarvis:

[186095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Minister for Veterans' Affairs has had discussions with ministerial colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on taking steps to ensure veterans injured from service are entitled to blue badges.

Mr Richard Holden:

People who have served in the Armed Forces qualify automatically for a Blue Badge if they receive a War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement or if they have been both awarded a lump sum benefit at tariffs 1-8 of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and certified as having a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking. Other veterans who do not qualify automatically for a badge may still be eligible and should apply to their local authority in the normal way.

TREASURY■ **Mutual Societies****Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[186089\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many officials in his Department work on policies relating to mutual societies.

Andrew Griffith:

The Treasury allocates resources based on the priorities of the department, and officials within the Financial Services Group of HM Treasury provide advice to ministers on issues related to the mutuals sector. Resourcing is kept under regular review to ensure priorities are delivered.

The government recognises the value that mutuals bring to the UK economy. That is why we are taking appropriate steps to ensure that the legislative framework in which mutuals operate under is both a modern and supportive business environment.

As part of the Financial Services and Markets Bill, the Government is amending existing legislation so that credit unions in Great Britain can offer a wider range of products and services. In due course the government will also bring forward legislation to amend the Building Societies Act 1986, which will give building societies further flexibility in raising funds and modernise corporate governance requirements.

In addition, the government is supporting Sir Mark Hendrick's Private Member's Bill which would allow co-operatives, mutual insurers, and friendly societies further flexibility in determining for themselves the best strategies for their business, relating to their surplus capital and restrictions on the use of these assets.

Furthermore, the government is in active discussions with the Law Commission on options to proceed with a review of both the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and the Friendly Societies Act 1992 with a view to launching the reviews in the next financial year.

■ **National Insurance Contributions: Young People****Julian Knight:**[\[186161\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has accrued to the public purse from national insurance contributions from people aged under 30 in each of the last five years.

Victoria Atkins:

The table below provides estimates and projections of the liabilities from National Insurance Contributions from people aged under 30 for the years 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. This includes Class 1 (not including employer NICs), Class 2 and Class 4 National Insurance Contributions.

The 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 figures are outturn figures, based on the 2018-19, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Survey of Personal Incomes (SPI) respectively. The 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 estimates are all based on the 2019-2020 SPI, projected in line

with economic assumptions consistent with the Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2022 Economic and Fiscal Outlook and are therefore consistent with the Income Tax liabilities published in June 2022.

NATIONAL INSURANCE
CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PEOPLE
AGED UNDER 30 (£MILLION)

2018-19	9,210
2019-20	9,550
2020-21	8,740
2021-22	9,160
2022-23	9,430

■ **Shipping: Fuels**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[186229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 May 2023 to Question 183926 on Shipping: Fuels, how many marine voyages relief claims were submitted in each of the last 12 months; and how many and what proportion of those claims (a) required additional security checks and (b) were processed within 30 days.

Gareth Davies:

The information requested is provided in the table below:-

CLAIM TYPE	MONTH/YR	TOTAL NO OF CLAIMS PROCESSED FOR PAYMENT	NUMBER OF CLAIMS VERIFIED	PERCENTAGE OF CLAIMS VERIFIED	NO OF CLAIMS PROCESSED WITHIN 30 DAYS	PERCENTAGE OF CLAIMS PROCESSED WITHIN 30 DAYS
Marine Voyages (HO50)	Apr-22	395	395	100	276	70%
	May-22	387	387	100	286	74%
	Jun-22	246	246	100	39	16%
	Jul-22	434	434	100	89	21%
	Aug-22	314	314	100	156	50%
	Sep-22	495	495	100	332	67%

CLAIM TYPE	MONTH/YR	TOTAL NO OF CLAIMS PROCESSED FOR PAYMENT		NUMBER OF CLAIMS VERIFIED	PERCENTAGE OF CLAIMS VERIFIED	NO OF CLAIMS PROCESSED WITHIN 30 DAYS	PERCENTAGE OF CLAIMS PROCESSED WITHIN 30 DAYS
	Oct-22	357		357	100	319	89%
	Nov-22	184		184	100	132	72%
	Dec-22	139		139	100	19	14%
	Jan-23	186		186	100	11	6%
	Feb-23	252		252	100	5	2%
	Mar-23	198		198	100	1	1%
	Apr-23	271		271	100	15	6%

HMRC aims to pay Oils Relief Repayment claims within 30 days of receipt or as soon as possible with interest accrued outside of the 30-day period. In November 2022, an internal restructure was put in place, moving the work to a different business stream to enhance HMRC's capacity to deal with these claims efficiently. However, the new team inherited a significant backlog of claims and, to deliver the best customer service in these circumstances, worked the oldest claims on hand first. Additional resources have now been deployed and are being trained to action claims, with a view to clearing the remaining backlog and processing all new claims received from 1st June 2023 within agreed timeframes. Customers who are concerned they have not heard from HMRC regarding their claims can contact them via their email address MorcExciseEast@hmrc.gov.uk which is monitored daily. They will receive a response to their queries within 5 working days.

All claims are checked against supporting documentation required. No records have been kept on the number of claims which require further information or security checking.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Human Rights: Transgender People

Alex Cunningham:

[184964]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether her Department is taking steps to promote a respectful discourse on the rights of trans people.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is clear that we want people who are transgender to be able to live their lives as they wish. We must also protect free speech and allow open and tolerant discussion.

The UK has a robust legislative framework to protect the rights of trans people, including the Gender Recognition Act 2004. Recently, the government modernised the process for obtaining a gender recognition certificate by reducing the fee and moving the application process online. We have also committed to banning conversion practices, including for transgender people.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Asbestos: Inspections****Imran Hussain:****[184409]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many inspections relating to asbestos the Health and Safety Executive conducted in each year since 2010.

Mims Davies:

HSE grants licences to a small number of companies which carry out high risk types of asbestos work. HSE then visits a sample of these sites to ensure standards are met safely.

Historically HSE has only conducted inspections of organisations who hold a HSE granted asbestos

licence. Inspections of other, non-licensed work with asbestos such as cleaning up small quantities of asbestos-containing materials or drilling holes into asbestos insulating boards were not routinely recorded. Following the Work and Pensions Committee inquiry into HSE's approach to asbestos management, non-licensed asbestos inspection activity will be recorded separately for 2023/24. Further information is available on HSE's website [here](#).

The table below show the number of inspections conducted by HSE of organisations holding an asbestos licence each year from 2010:

YEAR*	NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS
2010 - 2011	1873
2011 - 2012	1755
2012 - 2013	1522
2013 - 2014	1275
2014 - 2015	1065
2015 - 2016	1109

YEAR*	NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS
2016 - 2017	1028
2017 - 2018	1052
2018 - 2019	1001
2019 - 2020	907
2020 - 2021	893
2021 - 2022	870
2022 - 2023	882**

*HSE Work Year from 1 April to 31 March - **Provisional

Since 2010, the number of license holders has reduced by 30% along with a 29% reduction in the jobs they carry out, consequently requiring less inspections. HSE also moved to a centralised, electronic system to facilitate improved targeting to asbestos inspections during this period ensuring the right number of inspections to each licensee.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Complaints

Sir Stephen Timms:

[186000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the waiting time for the Independent Case Examiner to commence an investigation of a complaint relating to the Child Maintenance Service was as of 22 May 2023; and if he will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

The ICE process has several stages. Once a case has been accepted, ICE will attempt to resolve it without a full evidence gather. If a resolution cannot be brokered, the case awaits allocation to an investigator who will judge, once the evidence is available, whether an attempt to settle without a full investigation is appropriate. If this is not appropriate, or if settlement action cannot be agreed with the complainant, a full investigation is conducted.

The rate at which complaints can be allocated to an investigator depends on a number of factors, including the volume and complexity of complaints received, as well as available investigative resource.

Post-Covid, ICE has seen an increased number of referrals accompanied by an increase in the number of cases it has accepted. In the year April 2021 to March 2022, there was a 17% increase in the number of complaints being referred to ICE and a 68% increase in the number of complaints being accepted for examination, compared to the previous reporting year. In 2022-23 ICE received and accepted broadly similar volumes of cases referred and accepted.

The average time taken, as of 23 May 2023, from complaint receipt to allocation to an investigator (based on all current live cases being investigated) is 71 weeks for CMS cases.

The ICE office is continuously reviewing its processes and operating model to improve productivity and reduce the length of time investigations take to be concluded, without compromising quality. Since 1 April 2022, the ICE office has recruited an additional 18 investigators who will become increasingly productive as they consolidate initial training. A further 5 staff are due to join the team from July. Additional resource will be focused on CMS work.

■ Cost of Living Payments: Disability

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[186104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of people who qualify for the 2023-24 Disability Cost of Living Payment in (a) each region of the England, (b) each country of the UK and (c) the UK as a whole.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[186105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of people who will receive the 2023-24 Disability Cost of Living Payment after 4 July 2023 in (a) each region of the England, (b) each country of the UK and (c) the UK as a whole.

Tom Pursglove:

Table (a) shows the estimated number of individuals eligible for the Disability Cost of Living Payment by region of England. Table (b) shows the estimated number of individuals eligible for the Disability Cost of Living Payment for each country of the UK and the UK as a whole.

The number of people who will receive the 2023-24 Disability Cost of Living payment after 4 July 2023 is not readily available. The proportion of disability payments that are not recorded as having entitlement, but are subsequently assessed as having been eligible on the qualifying date, is estimated to be 4%.

Table (a) - Estimated number of individuals eligible for the Disability Cost of Living Payment by region of England

REGION	CASES (THOUSANDS)
London	653
South West	524
South East	733
Eastern	535
West Midlands	606

REGION	CASES (THOUSANDS)
East Midlands	484
North West	878
North East	349
Yorkshire and The Humber	574

Table (b) - Estimated number of individuals eligible for the Disability Cost of Living Payment by country of the UK

COUNTRY	CASES (THOUSANDS)
England	5,336
Wales	433
Scotland	639
Northern Ireland	340
Total	6,748

Source: [Social Security \(Additional Payments\) \(No. 2\) Bill Impact Analysis](#).

Notes:

- These estimates are driven by historical benefit receipt and underlying forecasts of claims to disability benefits and, like all forecasts, they may differ from the final number of payments made.
- Estimates of the number of payments that will be made have been generated by using the forecasted caseloads for each of the qualifying benefits at various points in time. For illustrative purposes we have used February 2023, September 2023 and February 2024. An adjustment of 4% has then been made to account for disability benefit claims which, at the point of assessment, are not recorded as having an entitlement but subsequently are assessed as having been eligible on the qualifying date – for example where a successful appeal leads to a backdated entitlement.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[186106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of disabled people who (a) were not in receipt of a qualifying benefit on 1 April 2023 and (b) will not receive the Disability Cost of Living Payment in financial year 2023-24 as a result of not being in receipt of a qualifying benefit on that date.

Tom Pursglove:

Information on how many disabled people were not in receipt of, and not paid, a disability benefit on 1 April 2023, and therefore how many will not receive the Disability Cost of Living Payment in financial year 2023-24, is not readily available. Survey estimates of the number of disabled people in the population are not available for the period specified.

Successful claimants who registered their claim to a qualifying disability benefit before the qualifying date and were paid for 1 April 2023, will receive the Disability Cost of Living Payment even if the claim was awarded after the qualifying date. It is estimated that 6.7 million individuals are eligible for a Disability Cost of Living Payment.

Source: Social Security (Additional Payments) (No. 2) Bill Impact Analysis, [SocSec\(AdditionalPayments\)IA.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#).

■ Disability**Caroline Nokes:****[185576]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, if he will list which of those report's recommendations that have not been paused as a result of legal action has been (a) fully, (b) partially and (c) not been implemented by (i) action and (ii) Department responsible.

Tom Pursglove:

In January 2022, the High Court declared the National Disability Strategy was unlawful because the UK Disability Survey, which informed it, was held to be a voluntary consultation that failed to comply with the legal requirements on public consultations.

We are disappointed by, and strongly disagree with, the High Court's finding, and the Secretary of State has been granted permission to appeal the Court's declaration.

As the NDS was found to be unlawful, we are unable to provide you with the information in the format you have requested, as we do not centrally track commitments included in the NDS.

We are fully committed to supporting disabled people in the UK through creating more opportunities, protecting their rights and ensuring they fully benefit from, and can contribute to, every aspect of our society. To support this, we will be providing details of the Government's recent achievements to improve disabled people's lives in the forthcoming Disability Action Plan consultation due for publication in the summer.

Ahead of this, I will write providing a list of these achievements and will place a copy in the House Library.

■ Disability Living Allowance: Children

Lee Anderson: [\[185854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his department is taking to improve the speed of processing Disability Living Allowance decisions for children.

Tom Pursglove:

We are currently experiencing higher than forecast demand for claims to Disability Living Allowance. We have already increased resources and have on-going recruitment to increase this further, which will speed up clearance times moving forward.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Self-employed

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[186240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of benefit levels for self-employed people on sick leave claiming New Style Employment and Support Allowance compared to employed individuals claiming Statutory Sick Pay.

Tom Pursglove:

Depending on their specific circumstances, self-employed people may be eligible for financial support through new style Employment and Support Allowance.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is both administered and paid entirely by employers at a rate of £109.40 per week. It provides a measure of earnings replacement to eligible employees who are sick and incapable of work, and is payable from the fourth qualifying day of sickness absence.

SSP is just one part of our wider Government offer to support people in times of need. Where an individual's income is reduced, and they have a health condition or disability which restricts the amount of work they can do, or prevents them from working altogether and they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit or new style Employment and Support Allowance, where they meet the entitlement criteria. The level of entitlement would be determined by the individual's circumstances.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[186243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the accessibility of the process for self-employed people on sick leave to claim New Style Employment and Support Allowance.

Tom Pursglove:

A self-employed person can make a new claim for new style ESA using the online application form or, where they are unable to claim online, by calling the Jobcentre Plus new claims helpline. In order to qualify, they will need to satisfy the basic entitlement and National Insurance contribution conditions.

Self-employed customers follow the standard customer journey. The online claim process gathers employment information and asks them to identify whether they are (or were) employed or self-employed. Customers identifying as self-employed are assessed by a decision maker to determine their eligibility to claim ESA based on the claim data. If the decision maker requires further information, they contact the customer to obtain relevant details. The claim is then processed as per the standard claim process and payment is issued if appropriate.

■ Employment: Disability

Rachael Maskell:

[\[186157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he plans to take to help train Disability Employment Advisors to support people with complex disabilities into employment.

Tom Pursglove:

All DWP Disability Employment Advisors (DEA) undergo comprehensive learning to support customers with additional or complex needs, particularly disabilities, and they continue to build on this in the workplace through accessing point of need learning products.

The learning provides DEAs with the knowledge and skills to enable them to:

- Treat each claimant as an individual;
- To be aware and support claimants with their disability and the impacts of their condition;
- Help overcome any barriers; and
- Support them into moving closer to the working environment.

Technical learning enables DEAs to determine what is required and never assume to know and to cultivate effective communication skills, including the sensitive use of questions, to reach joint decisions with the claimant.

In addition to this, all Disability Employment Advisors (DEA) are provided with learning products in the workplace to enable them to continue to build their knowledge and skills; these products include supporting customers with additional or complex needs.

The learning also provides them with an understanding of assisted digital, and how they can effectively coach claimants who find using digital services a challenge.

They are also signposted to tools, guidance support and websites to effectively use resources from both internal and external sites. This ensures that they access the most up to date advice and expertise on a particular health condition.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[186158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department plans to take to train Work Coaches to support jobseekers with complex disabilities.

Guy Opperman:

All new DWP Work Coaches undergo comprehensive learning to support customers with additional or complex needs, particularly disabilities and they continue to build on this in the workplace through accessing point of need learning products.

The learning also provides the work coach with an understanding of assisted digital, and how they can effectively coach claimants who find using digital services a challenge.

Work coaches are also signposted to tools, guidance support and websites to effectively use resources from both internal and external sites. This ensures that they access the most up to date advice and expertise on a particular health condition.

■ Jobcentres: Disability**Rachael Maskell:**[\[186156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he plans to take to make job centre computers accessible to people who require (a) refreshable braille displays and (b) other accessibility hardware to use computers.

Guy Opperman:

The Department provides computers for customer use in Jobcentres which have assistive technology such as screen readers and screen magnification built into them. Customers are able to access a wide range of services which can support their needs such as braille and large print documents being made available upon request.

■ Pension Wise**David Linden:**[\[186124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the midlife MOT review announced in the Spring Budget 2023 on improving the uptake of Pension Wise guidance.

Guy Opperman:

The new digital Mid-Life MOT tool is designed to help people understand what their employment choices mean for planning for later life.

We will be working with employers and pension providers to make the most of this new tool for everyone.

■ Personal Independence Payment**Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[186001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May to Question 184871 on Personal Independence Payment: Applications, who is taking part in the small-scale test of the digital PIP service; and whether organisations supporting disabled people can offer to contribute to it.

Tom Pursglove:

As we test the new online apply service for PIP, it is currently being offered to a small number of claimants who call the department to begin a new claim. Currently, we are offering the service to 60 claimants a day.

Only those claimants who are able to apply online, and feel comfortable doing so, are offered a digital application. Call agents offer this voluntary option to new PIP claimants within scope of the current service until the daily limit is met.

The following user groups are not currently in scope:

- Anyone applying in an official capacity (e.g. appointees);
- Anyone with a Welsh or Northern Ireland postcode;
- Anyone applying for special rules;
- Anyone with a previous or existing PIP or DLA claim; and
- Those without a NINO or with a GY or JY postcode.

As we gradually expand the service, we will incrementally bring more user groups in scope. This approach is allowing us to build, develop and design the service safely.

The department is committed to working with stakeholder organisations as we develop the new online new online apply service for PIP. Their input will be vital to its delivery. To date, three workshops dedicated to the service have been held, engaging with 16 different key stakeholder organisations. These workshops are contributing to the design and the delivery of the service and will continue as we gradually expand the service.

■ Self-employed: Sick Leave**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[186245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the overall financial support available for self-employed people (a) over and (b) under 25 who are on sick leave.

Guy Opperman:

No assessment has been made.

■ Social Security Benefits: Telephone Services**Emma Hardy:**[\[185632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of wait times for the Disability Service Centre helpline on arthritis sufferers.

Tom Pursglove:

We are currently experiencing higher than forecast call volumes to the Disability Services telephony enquiry lines. We have recruited additional staff onto our telephony teams and have on-going recruitment to further increase resources.

However, the department is unable to make a specific assessment of the impact of wait times in respect of arthritis sufferers.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Telephone Services

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[185824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many calls to the Future Pension Centre helpline have been (a) received, (b) answered and (c) disconnected in the last 12 months.

Laura Trott:

[Holding answer 23 May 2023]:

Period of calls made to the Future Pension Centre Helpline	Calls to Helpline	Calls Answered	*Calls Blocked	**Calls Abandoned	Average speed of answered calls	Average time to abandon calls
23/05/2022 - 19/06/2022	50,049	40,180	493	9,376	00:08:41	00:07:23
20/06/2022 - 17/07/2022	53,235	40,851	864	11,520	00:09:01	00:07:47
18/07/2022 - 14/08/2022	46,392	35,793	5	10,594	00:09:11	00:08:31
15/08/2022 - 11/09/2022	44,606	35,614	18	8,974	00:07:50	00:07:38
12/09/2022 - 09/10/2022	41,263	32,636	2	8,625	00:08:20	00:08:07
10/10/2022 - 06/11/2022	88,884	39,053	29,644	20,187	00:18:03	00:12:38
07/11/2022 - 04/12/2022	63,500	40,902	4,947	17,651	00:14:53	00:10:22

05/12/2022 - 36,452 01/01/2023	25,589	999	9,864	00:13:19	00:09:48
02/01/2023 - 202,996 29/01/2023	41,508	128,885	32,603	00:27:26	00:15:48
30/01/2023 - 516,861 26/02/2023	45,613	442,845	28,403	00:27:31	00:17:11
27/02/2023 - 1,007,868 26/03/2023	47,345	942,517	18,006	00:28:46	00:23:23
27/03/2023 - 389,395 23/04/2023	47,300	326,892	15,203	00:22:44	00:23:41
24/04/2023 - 252,100 21/05/2023	42,439	196,899	12,762	00:22:19	00:22:44

Please note information has been provided in 4 weekly periods for the previous twelve months.

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

** Calls Abandoned refers to the instances when a customer decides to end the call whilst in the call queue.

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

Jonathan Ashworth:

[185825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what is the average length of time it took for a phone call to the Future Pension Centre to be (a) answered and (b) disconnected in the last 12 months for which data is available.

Laura Trott:

[Holding answer 23 May 2023]:

Period of calls made to the Future Pension Centre Helpline	Calls to Helpline	Calls Answered	*Calls Blocked	**Calls Abandoned	Average speed of answered calls	Average time to abandon calls
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12/09/2022 - 09/10/2022	41,263	32,636	2	8,625	00:08:20	00:08:07
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07/11/2022 - 04/12/2022	63,500	40,902	4,947	17,651	00:14:53	00:10:22
05/12/2022 - 01/01/2023	36,452	25,589	999	9,864	00:13:19	00:09:48
02/01/2023 - 29/01/2023	202,996	41,508	128,885	32,603	00:27:26	00:15:48
30/01/2023 - 26/02/2023	516,861	45,613	442,845	28,403	00:27:31	00:17:11
27/02/2023 - 26/03/2023	1,007,868	47,345	942,517	18,006	00:28:46	00:23:23

27/03/2023 - 389,395	47,300	326,892	15,203	00:22:44	00:23:41
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■ **Statutory Sick Pay: Social Services**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[185957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the adequacy of statutory sick pay for people working in the social care sector who are required to self isolate with covid-19.

Tom Pursglove:

No such discussions have taken place. Most care workers are employed by private sector providers who set their pay and terms and conditions.

■ **Unemployment: Chronic Illnesses**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[186107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made the potential effect of NHS waiting times on the number of working-age people who are economically inactive due to long-term sickness.

Tom Pursglove:

The department monitors trends in economic inactivity and works closely with other departments and organisations to understand the relationship between health and economic inactivity.

There are a number of factors that could be contributing to a rise in economic inactivity, such as changes in [population demographics](#) and the [prevalence of work-limiting health conditions](#), as well as NHS waiting times. However, these factors are complex and may interact with one another and further work is required to establish whether, and to what extent, there is a relationship between the growth in NHS waiting lists and long-term sickness in the labour market.

■ Universal Credit: Childcare

Simon Lightwood: [\[186268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what his timescales are for introducing upfront payments for childcare costs for people on Universal Credit.

Guy Opperman:

The changes to the Universal Credit childcare element will be introduced from Summer 2023.

■ Universal Credit: Housing

Charlotte Nichols: [\[186562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will increase the housing costs element of Universal Credit in line with increases in the cost of rents.

Mims Davies:

LHA rates are not intended to cover all rents in all areas. The level of LHA rates is reviewed annually by the Secretary of State, usually in the Autumn.

In 2020 we spent almost £1 billion increasing LHA rates to the 30th percentile. The significant investment at that time has been maintained ensuring that everyone who benefited continues to do so.

We recognise that rents are increasing. However, the challenging fiscal environment means that difficult decisions have been necessary to ensure support is targeted effectively.

In the social rented sector rent increases were capped at 7% for 2023/24.

For those who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs and need further support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available from local authorities. Since 2011 the Government has provided nearly £1.6 billion in DHP funding to local authorities.

■ Workplace Pensions

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[186108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to minimise the number of people (a) pausing or (b) reducing their employee contributions to workplace pensions.

Laura Trott:

We closely monitor workplace pension participation, and it has remained resilient during what have been unprecedented economic times. We regularly publish the [Workplace Pension Participation and Savings Trends](#) data on gov.uk which shows that the proportion of pension savers who actively cease saving each month remains below 1%.

If an individual makes the decision to pause or cease contributions, the AE framework requires their employer to re-assess and re-enol their eligible employees every three years, which prevents individuals from falling out of pension saving in the medium to long term.

If savers are considering reducing or ceasing pension contributions, then guidance is available before taking action, services such as MoneyHelper are available to provide support and guidance.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Update on Contingent Liabilities in respect of the compulsory liquidations of UKCloud Ltd and Virtual Infrastructure Group Ltd**

Minister for the Cabinet Office and HM Paymaster General (Jeremy Quin):

[\[HCWS810\]](#)

I am pleased to report that, following the compulsory liquidations of UKCloud Ltd and Virtual Infrastructure Group Ltd, His Majesty's Government have successfully enabled the continuity of public services. On 26 October 2022, I laid a departmental minute to notify the House of two contingent liabilities incurred by the Cabinet Office: to indemnify the Official Receiver for any costs and expenses incurred by him in carrying out the proper performance of his duties as liquidator of UKCloud Ltd, and its parent company, Virtual Infrastructure Group Ltd; and an indemnity for any claims made against him in respect of the same. This was followed by written statements from myself and Baroness Neville-Rolfe in each of our respective Houses.

At the time of the statements, it was not possible to reliably estimate the size or maturity of either contingent liability.

In respect of costs incurred, the Official Receiver now expects the peak funding requirement of the liquidations to be £20 million and the liquidation to conclude in the first half of 2024.

In respect of the claims indemnity provided to the Official Receiver, I would like to assure the House that the Official Receiver has not been notified of any potential claims that may require a call on the indemnity, and that all UKCloud Ltd customers have now successfully migrated their services on to alternative platforms with no unexpected disruptions to public services. As such, it is deemed unlikely any claims on the indemnity will be made post-liquidation. We, therefore, assess that it is unlikely that there will be any cost to the public purse as a result of this contingent liability.

EDUCATION

■ **Level 3 Qualifications Review Update**

The Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert Halfon):

[\[HCWS808\]](#)

Today I am announcing an update to phase 2 of the Government's reforms to post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England – removing funding from technical qualifications that overlap with T Levels. We are publishing a provisional list:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wave-3-t-levels-overlapping-qualifications>, of 92 technical qualifications that have been assessed to overlap with wave 3 T Levels:

Business and Administration; Engineering and Manufacturing; and Finance and Accounting.

The assessment of overlapping qualifications is carried out by independent assessors, who carry out in-depth reviews of qualifications. This is the same process as for waves 1 and 2 T Levels. Subject to the outcomes of an appeal process which gives awarding organisations the opportunity to contest a qualification's placement on the list, we will withdraw public funding at 16-19 from these qualifications for new starts from August 2025. On the provisional list of 92 qualifications, we know there were 36 qualifications which had no enrolments and a further 24 had fewer than 100 enrolments in 2020/21 academic year, highlighting the need to streamline the qualifications system. The final overlap list for wave 3 T Levels will be published in the autumn.

We are reforming technical qualifications at level 3 as the current qualifications do not consistently progress young people to related employment. In the future technical qualifications will be based on IfATE's occupational standards which have been designed by employers and which set out the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that employers need.

Removing funding from technical qualifications which overlap with T Levels will ensure young people can feel confident that they are studying technical qualifications which will prepare them for jobs in their chosen occupation. The breadth and depth of T Levels is unmatched, giving students a thorough understanding of the sector and the skills needed to work in specific occupations, as well as an industry placement which gives them valuable experience.

T Levels are being scaled up in a managed rollout, with 16 subjects currently available at over 160 providers across England, with 24 T Levels in total planned by 2025. We are continuing to build on the success of T Levels and have put in place extra measures to support providers, employers and students. We are providing a 10% uplift in funding to providers delivering T Levels for the 2023-24 academic year, a new £12m Employer Support Fund and extra funding for providers to provide careers guidance on T Levels. The Gatsby Charitable Foundation is also supporting providers as they make the move to T Levels. This includes a new Technical Education Networks Programme to offer subject-specific support for T Level teaching, and providing grant funding to the Baker Dearing Educational Trust to support UTCs in their transition to T Levels.

We are supporting more learners to access T Levels through the T Level transition programme. This is a high quality, holistic study programme for learners who would benefit from the additional study time and preparation that it will give them before they start their T Level. Learners on the programme develop a broad range of knowledge, skills and behaviours to prepare them for T Levels. This includes the national technical content developed for the programme, through which learners gain industry-relevant technical knowledge and practical skills aligned to T Levels, as well as gaining valuable work experience and preparation for the workplace, English, maths and digital skills, developing their study skills and wider personal development. In total, close to 9,800 students have enrolled on the programme in the first three years, since 2020, and

provisional estimates show that c.49% of the first cohort subsequently progressed onto level 3 or higher outcomes.

The removal of public funding from qualifications that overlap with T Levels at 16-19 forms a small part of our wider technical education reforms. Our new integrated funding approval process means that from 2025, awarding organisations can develop and submit new technical qualifications for funding, which are based on occupational standards approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

Awarding organisations with qualifications on the wave 3 overlap list have been notified, as have the Federation of Awarding Bodies and Joint Council for Qualifications.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Government Response to the Rock Review on Agricultural Tenancies

Minister of State (Mark Spencer):

[\[HCWS806\]](#)

I am repeating the statement made yesterday by my noble friend the Minister, Lord Benyon.

Following the UK Farm to Fork Summit last week, the government has today set out its next steps to support tenant farmers who are at the heart of our rural economy. The Government supports tenant farmers because there is no better way to bring new people into the sector.

We are today publishing the government response to the Rock Review of tenant farming in England. From day one of the agricultural transition, we have worked with tenant farmers as we co-designed our farming schemes, utilising their knowledge and experience. This is the next step, alongside significant work to date, to support farmers in all corners of the country to produce world class food, while protecting the environment. The government supports tenant farmers, because it is one of the best routes to bring new people into the sector.

I would like to thank Baroness Rock and the Tenancy Working Group for their time and dedication in producing the Review. Recognising how critical the tenanted sector is to a successful agricultural transition, we commissioned the Group, chaired by Baroness Rock, to carry out a comprehensive review of tenant farming in England.

Today's response builds on the considerable progress that we have made since the Review was commissioned to implement their ongoing feedback. For example, we have designed the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) to be as accessible as possible to tenants, with the addition of six new standards in 2023 and shorter agreements. Further, half of the 22 Landscape Recovery projects selected in the first round involve tenants and we are delivering the aims of the Local Nature Recovery (LNR) scheme by evolving Countryside Stewardship (CS) instead of building an entirely new scheme.

As announced at Budget 2023, we launched a consultation on extending inheritance tax relief. We have opened a Call for Evidence on the taxation of ecosystem service markets

to understand the commercial operations and the areas of uncertainty in respect of taxation.

We have also published the [Nature Markets Framework](#), which provides greater clarity on the principles that will guide the development of UK market mechanisms for carbon and other ecosystem services and set out next steps including arrangements to develop a suite of investment standards for nature markets. These consultations, combined with the Nature Markets Framework, should give tenants and landlords more confidence to invest in and securely access payments from these new markets, opening up new revenue streams for the sector.

We strongly agree with the review that tenant farmers should be able to access farm offers; make their essential contribution to restoring the natural environment; and produce food for the nation. We are therefore taking forward the majority of Baroness Rock's recommendations and setting out the next steps to implement them today.

Today we are announcing a new Farm Tenancy Forum to put in place more formal engagement and feedback structures between Defra and the tenanted sector. This will allow the tenanted sector to work with us, to provide regular feedback on trends in tenant/landlord agreements and report any emerging issues that may need addressing. We will effectively monitor trends in landlord-tenant relationships. We are inviting industry organisations who represent tenant farmers, agricultural landlords and professional advisors who work in the sector to be members of this group. The Forum will support the implementation of the Government Response to the Rock Review, feeding back real-world experience and insight on progress. A Terms of Reference for the group has been published alongside this government response.

We will be launching a call for evidence this summer to explore the proposal for a tenant farming commissioner in England in more detail. This will examine the benefits and impacts of how a Tenant Farming Commissioner might work in practice and how the role would fit within existing procedures and regulations.

We agree with the Review that the tenanted sector has an essential role as a route into farming for new entrants. We will work to embed the views of the tenanted sector in the development of our New Entrant Support Scheme, working closely with the new Tenant Farming Forum.

Our response sets out the significant progress we have made to ensure our new farming schemes work for every type of farmer. We are supporting those with shorter tenancies or where there is a change of land manager/owner by removing penalties and increasing flexibility in agreement lengths, where it still provides value for taxpayer money. We are also introducing a requirement in Countryside Stewardship for landlords to engage with their tenant prior to applying in order to obtain their support.

The legacy of the Review will mean that tenant concerns are heard and addressed through our policies and schemes, and we will continue to engage with the Forum and the wider sector as we implement its recommendations and move through the agricultural transition.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Hong Kong Six-monthly Report**

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly): [\[HCWS812\]](#)

The latest Six-monthly Report on the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong was published today. It covers the period from 1 July – 31 December 2022. The report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. A copy is also available on the [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website](#).

I commend the report to the House.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Delivering for Patients**

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay): [\[HCWS811\]](#)

I refer hon. Members to the Oral Statements I will make in the House today, 25 May 2023, on Patient Choice and New Hospitals.

JUSTICE**■ Government Response to Legal Aid Means Test Review**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice (Mike Freer): [\[HCWS809\]](#)

My noble friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice (Lord Bellamy KC) has made the following Written Statement:

‘Legal aid is fundamental to a fair justice system and underpins the rule of law. It ensures equality of arms, so that people can access justice and enforce their legal rights. Means testing is a crucial component of the justice system as it ensures those on lower incomes receive help with paying their legal costs, and that those who can afford to contribute towards their legal costs do so.

The Government has today published its response to the consultation which reviewed the entire system of legal aid means testing. The comprehensive suite of changes we will now be implementing to civil and criminal legal aid means tests will significantly widen eligibility for legal aid and ensure continued access to justice.

Changes we will be making include:

- Increasing income and capital thresholds for legal aid eligibility, so they better reflect essential living costs and different household compositions. This means that 3.5 million more people will be eligible for criminal legal aid in the magistrates’ court and 2.5 million more people will be eligible for civil legal aid;
- Introducing a £500 per month earnings threshold for applicants in receipt of Universal Credit. If exceeded, applicants will need to complete a full income assessment in the

same manner as applicants not in receipt of benefits. This replaces the interim position adopted in 2013, when Universal Credit roll out began. This policy is designed to deliver fair eligibility according to applicants' means, regardless of the source of those means;

- Removing the upper income threshold for legal aid at the Crown Court, meaning that all Crown Court defendants will be eligible for legal aid. Those on higher incomes will be asked to pay more towards their legal aid, ensuring taxpayer resources are directed at those most in need;

- Excluding assets such as the family home from the means test where they are the subject matter of the case or where coercive control has denied applicants use of their shared marital assets, making it easier for domestic abuse victims to access legal aid;

- Removing the means test for three areas of civil legal aid: civil representation for under-18s, civil representation for parents or those with parental responsibility facing the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment from their child, and legal help for inquests involving a potential breach of rights under the ECHR (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998) or where there is likely to be a significant wider public interest in the individual being represented at the inquest.

The MTR will be implemented in phases. Phase 1 will deliver changes to non-means tested areas. The rest of the new civil means test will be implemented in phase 2, followed by the new criminal means tests in phases 3 and 4. Changes to the regulations will be laid in 2023/24, coming into force in 2025. This timeframe allows digital build and testing of the new assessments by the legal aid agency and legal aid providers.

This has been an open and collaborative review and we are grateful for the invaluable contribution of a wide range of interested parties throughout the consultation period and during the course of the review.'

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Local Government Update

Minister for Local Government and Building Safety (Lee Rowley): [\[HCWS813\]](#)

I would like to update the House on action the Government is taking in relation to two local authorities. In the case of Woking Council, Government is taking decisive action given clear evidence that the best interest of taxpayers is not being served. In the case of Tees Valley Combined Authority, in response to a request from the Mayor, the Secretary of State has decided on an exceptional basis to commission an external assurance review.

Woking Borough Council

Woking Borough Council is a small district that has engaged in commercial investment activities since 2016. As a result of this, as of December 2022 the Council had debts of £1.9 billion, with plans to increase it to almost £2.4 billion by 2024/25, and now faces significant impairments against key assets. This makes Woking the most indebted council in England compared to its financial size, with a net budget of £24 million and core

spending power of £14 million. In its most recent budget report Woking Borough Council recognises that this debt, and the Council's reliance on commercial income to fund services, places it in an extremely challenging financial position. The Department considers that this is, based on current evidence, the most challenging financial position of any local authority in England.

The Government is introducing new powers through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that will allow direct intervention where authorities are exposed to excessive risk from borrowing and investment practices. Ahead of that, since May last year, we have been engaging with Woking, given that it is likely to fall within scope of those powers. As a result of our engagement, the Department has been increasingly concerned about the level of risk the Council is carrying and how that is being managed.

External Assurance Review

As a result of the Department's concern about the specific situation in Woking, in January 2023 the Department commissioned an External Assurance Review covering the Council's governance, finance and commercial issues. This review was carried out by Jim Taylor, Carol Culley OBE and Mervyn Greer, with fieldwork taking place over January and February. The review team was asked to provide an external assessment of Woking's governance arrangements, financial situation, commercial investments and their capacity and capability to manage these in the immediate and longer-term.

The Council made the Department aware of further developments in their commercial and finance arrangements in April 2023, following which the Department requested that the review team undertake further fieldwork in April and May. The resulting report reflects all review work undertaken from January to May 2023 and will be published on gov.uk and copies have been deposited in the libraries of both Houses. This report has been redacted in places in light of the commercially sensitive nature of some of its contents. The full report, including the commercially sensitive information, has been considered by the Secretary of State in taking his decisions in relation to Woking.

Failure to Comply with Best Value Duty

Evidence within the review shows that Woking Borough Council is failing to comply with its best value duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, as required by the Local Government Act 1999. The financial challenge is acute, and the review has concluded that the Council cannot become financially self-sustaining without considerable Government support.

To quote the review:

"The scale of this issue is unprecedented."

"From the historic base, the sheer scale and complexity of the investment and commercial activity of the council, means that the Council will never have the capacity to effectively manage all the commercial and economic considerations..."

“Commercially, the council is overstretched and remains reliant on further support in the form of additional skills and capacity to continue to find a resolvable solution to its commercial position.”

“There is no realistic route to the Council returning to financial sustainability alone... The Council will need to undertake significant service transformation and consider their future operating model.”

“The new leadership of the Council is taking the right steps. However, it does not have the capacity or capability to address a challenge of this scale without additional support...on the current trajectory the Council will not rectify these issues itself and will continue to fail its best value duty. The Council will require significant support, including statutory oversight.”

“There are critical decisions that need to be taken in the next 2-3 months, for which immediate expert support is required.” “...the financial issues are more severe and immediate than initially thought [when undertaking work in January and February]”

“...This leads to the conclusion that, despite many initiatives and advice being actioned there is no overarching strategy for the whole situation under the council’s control.”

In addition to the work of the reviewers, the Department has had direct engagement with Woking Borough Council in relation to its financial situation. It is the Department’s view that the Council has failed to provide assurance that it is taking the necessary actions to comply with its best value duty and address the serious issues noted in the review. Nor have they given the Department assurance that they have capacity to take the necessary action, or develop an adequate strategy to resolve the situation – when considering the scale and pace of the response required.

The Council is aware of the gravity of the situation and has made clear in published papers for its meeting on 23 February 2023 that it is at risk of issuing a Section 114 notice, with public statements attributing this to issues relating to shortfalls in commercial income and cost pressures.

Statutory Intervention in Woking

The Secretary of State is satisfied that Woking Borough Council is failing to comply with its best value duty. The Secretary of State considers it necessary to put in place an intervention package immediately to secure the Council’s future and sustainable compliance with its best value duty. The intervention will consist of the appointment of Commissioners to oversee specific functions of the Council, alongside directions to the Council. The Secretary of State is confident that this package will address the failings identified, and is necessary for the Council to secure compliance with its best value duty.

It is the Secretary of State’s view that the situation in Woking is sufficiently urgent to justify forgoing the usual period of representation. He considers that there is a pressing case for urgent government action to protect the interests of the residents and tax-payers of Woking, and the public purse. The scale of Woking’s financial challenges is unprecedented, and we have serious concerns about their commercial arrangements; the Secretary of State is concerned that further evidence of failure could come to light

imminently and require further immediate action. The appointment of Commissioners and the Directions set out below will therefore take effect from today.

Appointment of Commissioners

The Secretary of State is appointing the following individuals as Commissioners to exercise certain functions as required:

- Jim Taylor (Lead Commissioner) - Jim is an ex-Chief Executive Officer of three metropolitan borough local authorities and was appointed in March 2022 by the Secretary of State as a commissioner at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. He also conducted a governance review of Slough Borough Council for the Secretary of State in 2021.
- Carol Culley OBE - Carol is the current Deputy Chief Executive and section 151 officer at Manchester City Council. She is CIPFA Junior Vice President, a member of the CIPFA Council and Chair of the CIPFA Public Financial Board; and
- Mervyn Greer - Mervyn is a Crown Representative at the Cabinet Office where, amongst other responsibilities for strategic suppliers to HMG, is the appointed Crown Representative for Local Government Commercial and the LGA. His background is in property and built asset management in the private sector, where he was responsible for major outsourcing and property related commercial contracts. He retired from the private sector in 2016. He was a member of the team which conducted the statutory Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council in 2021.

The Secretary of State has taken the unusual step of appointing the three individuals who carried out the External Assurance Review as Commissioners. This reflects the acute situation in Woking, and the urgent need for Commissioners to begin work immediately to ensure that the Council takes steps to secure compliance with their best value duty. The Secretary of State considers that these individuals are best placed to take up these roles in the immediate term, due not only to the knowledge acquired during their time reviewing the Council, but also their individual knowledge and experience in local authority leadership, governance, and commercial development. Our understanding of the situation in Woking is likely to change throughout the period of intervention. Their appointments are therefore for 12 months and will be reviewed within six months or at such a time as the Secretary of State determines necessary.

The scale of the financial challenge in Woking means that the Council must take immediate steps to address their commercial and financial challenges, and to make transformative change across its entire operations. The Commissioners will therefore exercise the following functions:

- those associated with the source of Woking's failures – financial governance and decision making, commercial decision making and management of commercial projects, regeneration and property;

- those where the Council will need to make changes as a result of these failures – functions associated with the Council's operating model and service redesign to achieve value for money and financial sustainability; and
- those that will ensure the Council has the right skills and structures to make ongoing improvements across the entire organisation – governance and scrutiny of strategic decisions; and the appointment, dismissal and performance management for senior and statutory officer positions.

Directions to Woking Borough Council

Alongside this, Woking Borough Council will be directed to prepare and agree an Improvement and Recovery plan to the satisfaction of Commissioners. This must include, as a minimum, plans to:

- achieve financial sustainability and reduce debt;
- ensure value for money when exiting commercial arrangements;
- ensure compliance with financial management rules and guidance;
- reconfigure services; and
- ensure the Council has the necessary skills, capabilities and capacity to carry out this work and achieve compliance with their best value duty.

As with other interventions led by the Department, the Council are directed to meet the costs of the Commissioners. The fees paid to individuals are published in appointment letters which are available separately on gov.uk. I am assured this provides value for money given the expertise that is being brought, and the scale of the challenge in councils requiring statutory intervention.

The Government is committed to making sure the residents of Woking have what they need from their local council, including confidence in its service delivery, financial management and governance.

I will publish the Directions and Explanatory Memorandum associated with this announcement on gov.uk, and place copies in the libraries of both Houses.

Independent Review: Teesworks

Yesterday, the Secretary of State confirmed that he has made the exceptional decision to support the commissioning of an independent review to consider the specific allegations made, and Tees Valley Combined Authority's oversight of the South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) and Teesworks joint venture.

The Tees Valley Mayor approached Government some time ago regarding the possibility of an independent review of STDC and Teesworks. He raised concerns regarding the allegations made in Parliament by Andy McDonald MP of 'dubious dealings' and 'industrial-scale corruption'. The Mayor was, understandably, particularly concerned about the damaging effects that these allegations could have on investment and job creation across Teesside.

My colleague, the Minister for Levelling Up, explained in her letter of 17 May to Andy McDonald MP that the Department has so far seen no evidence of corruption, wrongdoing, or illegality. This is still the case.

The Secretary of State's decision has been taken in response to Mayor Houchen's previous request for an independent review to address these allegations and reflects his recognition that the continued allegations of 'corruption' poses a real risk to the shared ambitions to deliver jobs and economic growth in Teesside.

In line with established practice, a Review Panel will be appointed by the Secretary of State to undertake the independent, external assurance review. The members of the Panel will be announced shortly as will detailed terms of reference. Since serious allegations of corruption, wrongdoing and illegality have been made, I will ask the Panel to address these accusations directly, and to report on the governance arrangements at STDC including how decisions are made, as well as looking at the value achieved for the investment of public money on the site.

The Secretary of State yesterday wrote to the Tees Valley Mayor explaining his decision, a copy of his letter has been placed in the Library of the House of Commons. He also wrote to the Chairs of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Business and Trade Select Committees, and to the Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Any interested party, including Members of Parliament, will be invited to make representations to the Panel as part of their evidence gathering. The report and any recommendations will of course be published in line with usual practice.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Health Transformation Programme update

Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work. (Tom Pursglove):
[\[HCWS807\]](#)

I would like to update the House on the outcome of the procurement of new health and disability benefit assessment contracts – the 'Functional Assessment Services' contracts – for the period 2024 to 2029. These important new contracts have been subject to a rigorous and competitive process in line with public contract regulations.

In the Health and Disability White Paper published in March, I set out the actions this Government will take to ensure disabled people, and people with health conditions, can lead independent lives and fulfil their potential. Firstly, by reforming the benefits system for the future so it focuses on what people can do, rather than on what they cannot. Secondly, by investing in our employment offer to help more disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work. And thirdly, by ensuring people can access the right support at the right time and have a better overall experience when applying for, and receiving, health and disability benefits.

To support these important commitments, the Health Transformation Programme is modernising benefit services to vastly improve the claimant experience, build trust in our services and the decisions we make, and create a more efficient service for taxpayers. As part of this, the programme will deliver improvements I announced through the White Paper.

The Health Transformation Programme is developing a new Health Assessment Service and transforming the entire Personal Independence Payment (PIP) service, over the longer term. The Health Assessment Service is being developed on a small scale initially and will gradually replace the different services we and our assessment providers use to undertake health assessments across all benefits. It will be fully integrated with other systems, including the transformed PIP service, with the aim of creating a much-improved experience for people who apply for support.

The Functional Assessment Services contracts will provide the foundation for the new Health Assessment Service, replacing the separate contracts for Health and Disability Assessment Services and PIP assessments with single contracts for all assessments in a geographic area. The contracts will ensure continuity of service for claimants while we safely develop the new Health Assessment Service and provide the flexibility to introduce it gradually before we roll it out nationally from 2029.

We have informed bidders that the successful bidders in each geographic lot are as follows:

Lot 1 (North England and Scotland): Maximus UK Services Limited

Lot 2 (Midlands and Wales): Capita Business Services Limited

Lot 4 (South East England, London and East Anglia): Ingeus UK Limited

Lot 5 (Northern Ireland): Capita Business Services Limited

Procurement activity in Lot 3 (South West England) is continuing and we will announce the outcome in due course.

We will work with providers to ensure that the transition to the new service is as smooth as possible. We will also work with the Functional Assessment Services providers to deliver structural reform, removing the Work Capability Assessment via a phased approach over the lifetime of the contracts, as announced in the White Paper.

This represents a positive step forward in delivering our ambitions for disabled people and people with health conditions. It shows that this Government is committed to delivering a more effective health and disability system for people now and in the future.