



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 July 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 17 July 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	CHURCH COMMISSIONERS	13
ATTORNEY GENERAL	7	■ Church of England: Finance	13
■ Attorney General: Remote Working	7	■ Church of England: Greater Manchester	14
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	■ Church of England: Technology	14
■ Cetaceans: Faroe Islands	7	■ Churches: Repairs and Maintenance	15
■ Companies: Registration	8	■ Religion: Education	15
■ Environment Protection: Export Credit Guarantees	8	■ Religious Freedom	16
■ Imports: Israeli Settlements	9	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	16
■ Trade: Southern African Development Community	9	■ Community Development and Sports: Finance	16
CABINET OFFICE	10	■ Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	17
■ Ageing	10	■ Cricket: Discrimination	17
■ Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust	10	■ Cricket: Girls	18
■ Equal Pay: Greater London	11	■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Remote Working	19
■ Government Departments: Consultants	11	■ Swimming Pools: Greater Manchester	19
■ Government Departments: Discrimination	11	■ Vacancies	19
■ LGBT Veterans Independent Review	12	DEFENCE	20
■ Public Sector: Contracts for Services	12	■ Ammunition: Exports	20
■ Public Sector: Pay Settlements	13	■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme	20
■ Veterans: Advisory Services	13		

■ Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust	21	■ Pupils: Bullying	36
■ Armed Forces: Electric Vehicles	21	■ Schools: Buildings	36
■ Armed Forces: Private Education	21	■ Schools: Registration	37
■ Armed Forces: Procurement	23	■ Secondary Education: Vocational Guidance	37
■ Germany: Military Alliances	23	■ Sign Language: Adult Education	39
■ Israel: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps	23	■ Sign Language: Education	39
■ Israel: Military Alliances	23	■ Special Educational Needs	40
■ LE TacCIS Programme	24	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	41
■ Ministry of Defence: Annual Reports	25	■ Carbon Emissions	41
■ Ministry of Defence: Northern Ireland	25	■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Remote Working	41
■ Ministry of Defence: Senior Civil Servants	27	■ Energy Bills Rebate: Travellers	42
■ Ministry of Defence: Temporary Employment	27	■ Energy: Meters	42
■ National Security: Climate Change	28	■ Energy: Social Tariffs	43
■ Ukraine: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps	28	■ EURATOM	43
■ Ukraine: Military Aid	28	■ Hydrogen	43
■ Veterans: Food Banks	28	■ Industrial Energy Transformation Fund	44
■ War Pensions	29	■ Industrial Energy Transformation Fund: Scotland	45
EDUCATION	30	■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme	45
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	30	■ Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project	47
■ Academies: Cricket	32	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	48
■ Holiday Play Schemes	33	■ Agricultural Machinery	48
■ Postgraduate Education: Stem Subjects	33	■ Animals: Imports	48
■ Pre-school Education: Finance	34	■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control	48
■ Public Libraries: Education	35	■ Flood Control	49
		■ Flood Control: Finance	50

■ Horses: Imports	50	■ Department of Health and Social Care: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education	61
■ Reservoirs: Yorkshire and the Humber	51	■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment	62
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	52	■ Endoscopy: Cumbria and South Tyneside	62
■ Afghanistan: Refugees	52	■ Endoscopy: Essex	63
■ Climate Change	52	■ Fractures: Health Services	64
■ Climate Change: Expenditure	52	■ General Practitioners: Halton	65
■ Climate Change: Finance	53	■ General Practitioners: Stockport	65
■ Colombia: Conflict, Stability and Security Fund	53	■ Health Professions: English Language	65
■ Czechia and Poland: Holocaust	54	■ Low Emission Zones: Health	66
■ Developing Countries: Debts	54	■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People	66
■ Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill	55	■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists	67
■ Ghana: LGBT+ People	55	■ Mental Health: LGBT+ People	67
■ Israel: Palestinians	56	■ MMR vaccine	67
■ Land Mines	56	■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: General Practitioners	68
■ Multinational Companies	56	■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Health Services	68
■ Nnamdi Kanu	57	■ NHS: Staff	69
■ Nuclear Weapons	57	■ Obesity: Children	70
■ Uganda: Homosexuality	58	■ Postural Tachycardia Syndrome: Medical Treatments	70
■ Uganda: LGBT+ People	59	■ Primary Health Care: Crimes of Violence	71
■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland	59	■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination	71
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	59	■ Restless Legs Syndrome: Drugs	71
■ Cancer: St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust	59		
■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments	60		
■ Dementia: Research	61		
■ Dental Services: Halton	61		

■ Social Services: Crimes of Violence	72	■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel	84
■ Strokes: Health Services	72	JUSTICE	84
■ Surgery	72	■ Courts: Fines	84
■ Transport: Exhaust Emissions	73	■ Crime Prevention: Young People	86
■ Widnes Urgent Treatment Centre	73	■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Income	87
HOME OFFICE	73	■ Ministry of Justice: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education	88
■ Asylum: Rwanda	73	■ Offenders: Employment	88
■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation	74	■ Offenders: Rehabilitation	89
■ Banque du Liban	75	■ Prisoners: Education	89
■ British Nationals Abroad: Sudan	75	■ Prisoners: Police Custody	90
■ Commission for Countering Extremism	75	■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence	90
■ Cybercrime	76	■ Probation: Nationalisation	91
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Smuggling	77	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	91
■ Home Office: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education	77	■ Housing: Standards	91
■ Human Trafficking: Exploitation	78	■ Innovation	92
■ Migrants: Domestic Abuse	79	■ Land Use	92
■ National Crime Agency: Staff	79	■ Leasehold: Ground Rent	92
■ Offenders: Deportation	80	■ Members: Correspondence	93
■ Overseas Students: Visas	80	■ Private Rented Housing: Guarantees	93
■ Police Custody: Children	80	■ Social Rented Housing: Repairs and Maintenance	93
■ Prostitution: Internet	82	■ Travellers	94
■ Refugees: Afghanistan	82	TRANSPORT	94
■ Refugees: Rwanda	83	■ Bus Services	94
■ Short-term Holding Facilities: Managers	83	■ Bus Services: Finance	95
■ Undocumented Migrants	84	■ Bus Services: Rural Areas	95
		■ Cycling	96
		■ Department of Transport: Public Consultation	96

■ Driving Licences: Older People	97	■ Public Works Loan Board	111
■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists	97	■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services	111
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	98	■ Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions	112
■ Great British Railways: Software	98	■ Tax Avoidance: Romford	112
■ Members: Correspondence	98	■ Treasury: Disclosure of Information	113
■ Parking	99	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	113
■ Railways: Highlands of Scotland	99	■ Equal Pay	113
■ Railways: North East	99	WORK AND PENSIONS	114
■ Railways: Tickets	100	■ Child Maintenance Service: Complaints	114
■ Roads: Environment Protection	103	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Dahua Technology and Hikvision	114
■ Speed Limits	104	■ Employment Schemes: Disability	114
■ Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project	104	■ Health and Safety Executive: Inspections	115
TREASURY	104	■ Jobcentres	115
■ Apprentices: Finance	104	■ Parents: Cost of Living	116
■ Apprentices: Taxation	105	■ Pension Credit: Take-up	117
■ British-American Parliamentary Group: Royal Bank of Scotland	105	■ Pensions: Consumer Information	117
■ Central Bank Digital Currencies: Wales	106	■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations	118
■ Energy: Profits	108	■ Unemployment: Chronic Illnesses	119
■ Financial Services: Environment Protection	109	■ Unemployment: Older People	119
■ Income Tax	109	■ Universal Credit	119
■ Individual Savings Accounts	110	■ Universal Credit: Employment	119
■ Individual Savings Accounts: Tax Allowances	110	■ Universal Credit: Greater London	120
■ National Savings and Investments: Environment Protection	111	■ Universal Credit: Parents	120
■ Public Expenditure: Disclosure of Information	111	■ Universal Credit: Private Rented Housing	121

WRITTEN STATEMENTS	123	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	130
BUSINESS AND TRADE	123	■ Update on Fisheries	130
■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry: Interim Report	123	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	131
■ UK signs Accession Protocol to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership	123	■ 0.7 per cent of GNI on ODA target 2022	131
CABINET OFFICE	125	■ Support to the people of Afghanistan	132
■ Transforming Public Procurement Part 2 Consultation on draft regulations to implement the Procurement Bill	125	HOME OFFICE	134
DEFENCE	126	■ Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules	134
■ Camp BAGNOLD Gifting to the UN	126	■ Updating the Code of Practice on non-compliance with the biometric registration regulations	137
■ The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Quinquennial Review and Independent Review of UK Government Welfare Services for Veterans	127	JUSTICE	138
EDUCATION	128	■ Review of the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014	138
■ Minimum School Week	128	TRANSPORT	139
■ School Funding Update	128	■ Transport Update	139
		TREASURY	141
		■ South Yorkshire Advanced Manufacturing Investment Zone	141

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: Remote Working

Julian Knight:

[\[193143\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to the civil service headquarters occupancy data, updated on 6 July 2023, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of occupancy rates on her Department's performance during June 2023.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) regularly reviews its ways of working, considering a variety of factors including current performance. Hybrid working arrangements are nothing new. For some time, the AGO have worked on a basis of a ratio of desks to staff.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Cetaceans: Faroe Islands

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[193471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions she has had with her counterpart in the Faroe Islands on the hunting of whales and dolphins; and whether she plans to take steps through the UK's trade relationship with the Faroe Islands to discourage that practice.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is strongly opposed to the hunting of whales and dolphins. UK Officials have raised concerns about this through many engagement channels including at the International Whaling Commission and through the Faroese Embassy in London. My Department continues to utilise the opportunities provided by our Trade Agreement to engage the Faroese government on this important matter, including through specifically raising our serious concerns with the practice at the Joint Committee of the agreement that took place in February 2023.

We continue to use our diplomatic relationship to lobby the Faroes to stop this practice altogether.

■ Companies: Registration

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[193194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what is the largest number of companies registered to a single address in the UK.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The largest number of limited companies registered to a single address is 77,634.

Many companies may choose the address of an agent or mail-forwarding company as their registered address for entirely legitimate administrative reasons.

Nevertheless, provisions in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill 2002 currently before Parliament will give the Registrar of Companies new powers to verify the identity of those incorporating all companies and to require evidence that the address at which they propose to register the company is an appropriate one.

■ Environment Protection: Export Credit Guarantees

Ruth Cadbury: [\[193351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many applications were received by UK Export Finance for green energy projects in (a) 2022 and (b) each of the previous four years; and how many and what proportion of those applications were successful.

Nigel Huddleston:

The number of formal applications received by UK Export Finance (UKEF) for support for either projects featuring renewable energy generation or companies involved in the green energy sector, and the number of applications that were successful, were as follows:

CALENDAR YEAR	FORMAL APPLICATIONS	
	RECEIVED	SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS
2018	1	1
2019	1	1
2020	3	3
2021	2	2
2022	3	1

This does not include trade finance support for UK exporters operating in the green energy sector, which is typically lower value (facilities valued up to £25 million) and shorter-term (with maximum repayment terms of up to 5 years).

Other businesses made enquiries to UKEF about the nature of support available, but did not make formal applications for support.

■ Imports: Israeli Settlements**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[192388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing a ban on importing goods produced in Israeli settlements which the UK considers to be illegal; and if she will make an estimate of the quantity of goods imported from those areas in the last 12 months.

Nigel Huddleston:

There are no import sanctions on goods originating from Israeli settlements and no plans to introduce any bans. The UK government has always been clear on this. Under the existing UK-Israel trade agreement, goods originating from illegal Israeli settlements are not entitled to tariff and trade preferences under either the agreement between the UK and Israel, nor the agreement between the UK and the Palestinian Authority. I can confirm that this will not change in the upgraded free trade agreement with Israel.

■ Trade: Southern African Development Community**Ruth Jones:**[\[192926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent steps she has taken to increase trade with countries in the Southern African Development Community.

Nigel Huddleston:

This month my department launched the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), which lowers tariffs and simplifies trading rules to increase exports and support growth in 65 countries, including 37 African countries. Changes to rules of origin in the DCTS will make it easier for these countries to source raw materials regionally and still pay zero tariffs. All Southern African Development Community (SADC) nations are now covered by either the DCTS or our two Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

We are using our two EPAs (covering 9 SADC nations) to grow trade and have a team of experts across the region helping British businesses to increase trade and investment. This is in addition to country-specific activity across SADC, including the inaugural UK-Mauritius Strategic Trade Partnership this past April, led by UK Trade Envoy Mr Andrew Selous MP.

Furthermore, in 2024, the Prime Minister will host the second UK-African Investment Summit to showcase investment opportunities and advance two-way trade.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Ageing****Lilian Greenwood:**[\[193594\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 24 April 2023 to Question 181258 on Ageing, what assessment his Department have made of the adequacy of cross-government preparedness for an increase in the older population.

Alex Burghart:

The UK's changing demographic profile, of which our ageing population is a part, is a significant long-term challenge facing the UK.

Work to protect our older population is cross-cutting and stretches across the whole of Government. Individual departments take responsibility for the delivery of relevant policies in their jurisdiction. For example, policies that relate to the physical and mental health of older generations are delivered through the Department of Health and Social Care. In the Cabinet Office, the Equalities Hub leads on the Equality Act 2010 which provides strong protection from age discrimination across a variety of settings.

I also refer the Hon lady to PQ HL8000, which discusses the work occurring across the government, and my response to PQ 181258 that refers to the 'The Future of an Ageing Population' report from 2016.

■ **Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust****Rachel Hopkins:**[\[193534\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department supports (a) training, (b) services and (c) activities of grant recipients of the Armed Forces Covenant Trust's Veterans Places, Pathways and People programme.

Johnny Mercer:

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT) is responsible for administering the HM Treasury funded Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. The Ministry of Defence is the sponsor department for the AFCFT.

The Veterans' Places, Pathways and People (VPPP) programme is funded through the Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, which awarded £9 million to 14 major projects through the VPPP programme.

The VPPP programme aims to deliver significant improvements in mental health and wellbeing services for veterans and also to ensure that the people who work with veterans, including paid staff and volunteers, can access good quality training and support themselves.

■ Equal Pay: Greater London**Feryal Clark:** [\[193043\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment she has made of trends in equal pay in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon Lady's Parliamentary Question of 7th July is attached.

Attachments:

1. UK Statistics Authority [PQ193043.pdf]

■ Government Departments: Consultants**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[193457\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the total cost to the public purse of spending on consultancy by Departments in each year from 2019 to 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

Data on the cost of consultancy spend across government is not centrally held and is held by each department. There is a legitimate case for consultancy spend in certain circumstances, where it represents value for taxpayer money.

Each department will publish their total consultancy spend as part of their own Annual Reports and Accounts which are available on Gov.uk.

■ Government Departments: Discrimination**Caroline Lucas:** [\[192982\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to review all Government documents to ensure that they do not contain (a) racist and (b) other prejudiced terms; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

We do not tolerate racist, homophobic, sexist or any similarly unacceptable language in any form, including in Government documents or on our webpages.

The Government has issued guidance on how to write about race and ethnicity and promoted this across departments, including through a letter from the Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service to all Permanent Secretaries in December. That guidance is on gov.uk here: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity>

This is part of wider work to implement the Inclusive Britain Action Plan, the Government's response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which was published in March 2022. The Government issued an update to Parliament in April 2023 summarising the progress that has been made in delivering this plan.

Cabinet Office will be writing to Permanent Secretary colleagues to remind them of this guidance and asking them to ensure that it is easily accessible to all employees within their department and associated organisations.

Recent media coverage has highlighted language in two documents dating back to 2006 and 2012, and a 2015 comment on a publicly accessible Government web page, on which anyone is able to comment. The 2006 document was written by an external contractor for use by their own staff, the 2012 document used the language within a quote from a non-civil service scientific paper published in 1990. Both documents are no longer in use and the comment has been removed from the web page.

■ **LGBT Veterans Independent Review**

Dave Doogan: [\[193745\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 3 July 2023 to Question 191383 on Veterans: LGBT+ People, when he plans to publish the findings of the LGBT Veterans Independent Review.

Johnny Mercer:

The Office for Veterans' Affairs and Ministry of Defence jointly commissioned an independent review to better understand the impacts and implications of the pre-2000 policy relating to LGBT people serving in HM Armed Forces.

Lord Etherton has concluded this work and submitted his report to the Government.

We are carefully considering the findings and, in line with the review's terms of reference, shall publish the report and an initial Government response in due course.

■ **Public Sector: Contracts for Services**

Grahame Morris: [\[193583\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department is taking steps to prevent public contracts being awarded to companies that blacklist workers.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[193808\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department is taking steps to prevent public contracts being awarded to companies that blacklist workers.

Olivia Blake: [\[193823\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department is taking steps to prevent public contracts being awarded to companies that blacklist workers.

Alex Burghart:

The Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations 2010 prohibit the compilation, usage, sale or supply of blacklists. The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 contain exclusion grounds which allow contracting authorities to exclude suppliers from procurements where their tender does not comply with labour law or where the supplier is guilty of grave professional misconduct. A breach of the

Blacklists Regulations on a particular tender would render the supplier liable to exclusion and a breach more widely may amount to grave professional misconduct.

In all cases, individual departments and other public sector bodies are responsible for their own decisions on these matters

The Procurement Bill introduced by the Government, currently in the final stages of debate in Parliament, builds on and clarifies the exclusions measures in the existing regime. This includes specific measures enabling the exclusion of suppliers for labour market misconduct and professional misconduct.

■ Public Sector: Pay Settlements

Grahame Morris: [\[193582\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what criteria his Department has in place for appointing personnel to Pay Review Bodies.

Alex Burghart:

The pay review bodies are listed in the Schedule to the Public Appointments Order in Council. Appointments to these bodies are therefore regulated under the Order in Council and should be made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments published by the Cabinet Office. This has been the case under successive administrations.

■ Veterans: Advisory Services

Rachel Hopkins: [\[193817\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, to which organisations his Department provides funding to operate the Veterans' Gateway.

Johnny Mercer:

The Veterans' Gateway enables veterans and their dependents to access state and charity support services in areas including physical and mental health, financial support, assistance with independent living, housing, and employment.

Whilst the Government currently provides the Royal British Legion with funding to support delivery of this service which has already supported over a million veterans, the Veterans' Gateway will be run by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA), at the heart of government, next year.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Church of England: Finance

Julian Knight: [\[193110\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to ensure transparency and accountability in its financial operations.

Andrew Selous:

The Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners are accountable to the General Synod where their annual reports and spending plans are debated and reviewed. Additionally the Church Commissioners lay their annual report before Parliament for consideration, copies of which are available in the Library and on the Church of England Website. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/church-commissioners-for-england-annual-report-2022.pdf> As Second Church Estates Commissioner, I answer to the House of Commons for matters that include the operational and financial activities of the National Church Institutions.

Church of England: Greater Manchester**James Daly:****[193187]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how many Parishes currently have interregnums in the Diocese of Manchester.

Andrew Selous:

The appointment of parish priests is a matter for diocesan bishops. The information is not held centrally by the National Church Institutions.

You may wish to enquire with the Manchester Diocese:

<https://www.manchester.anglican.org/about-us/our-staff/>

or with the Bishop of Manchester: <https://www.manchester.anglican.org/about-us/bishops/bishopmanchester.php>

Church of England: Technology**Julian Knight:****[193113]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to use (a) digital platforms and (b) other technologies to connect with wider audiences.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England, through the work of its central Communications team, has a presence on the majority of social media channels and is producing content for a variety of different audiences and age groups. It has developed a smart speaker app which is useable with 'Alexa', provides liturgical resources via the Daily Prayer App, and recorded services to enable people who may not be able to attend a church in person to still participate in worship.

In the month of May 2023, the most recent for which material is available, Church of England content received 8.6 million impressions and the audience using the materials grew by an additional 4,000 unique users. Nearly three-quarters of a million people engaged with materials developed for the Coronation and the Church of England received 40,000 enquiries from the public via its various social/digital media platforms.

■ Churches: Repairs and Maintenance

Julian Knight:

[\[193112\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to (a) preserve and (b) restore (i) historic church buildings and (ii) heritage sites.

Andrew Selous:

In 2020 the Church of England assessed the volume of work needed in its churches and cathedrals for preservation, repair and maintenance. The pandemic caused a considerable delay in the ability of parish churches and cathedrals to undertake repairs, which has caused a backlog of work. The Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the National Church Institutions assists parishes, dioceses and cathedrals in assessing the nature and priorities of the work required and supports them with guidance and advice.

The work of preservation, repair and maintenance is predominantly undertaken at a local level by thousands of unpaid volunteers, with financial help and support from donors and local grant-making charities.

By means of an amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the Government has recently agreed to clarify the law on churches being able to access Local Authority grants. This is very welcome and comes in response to many years of advocacy by church, heritage and Local Authority groups. The removal of ambiguity means that Local Authorities and parish councils in England will be able to issue grants to churches that will enable seed funding to repair, restore and upgrade facilities, which will enable churches to continue to serve their local communities as worship spaces, community hubs, and through social action projects.

■ Religion: Education

Julian Knight:

[\[193111\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to support (a) education and (b) the promotion of values-based learning in schools.

Andrew Selous:

Church of England Schools provide an education to approximately one million children a day. A quarter of all primary schools, 1,540 academies, 280 Multi Academy Trusts, and 500 independent schools across England have a Church of England ethos.

The Church of England Foundation for Education Leadership supports teachers, headteachers and senior management teams alongside 22,500 governors to develop the skills they need. More information about the Foundation is available here:

<https://www.cefel.org.uk/>

In each diocese a Diocesan Board of Education supports church schools, which represents an annual investment of over £15 million

The Church of England vision for education focuses on the development of the common good for the whole community, prioritising the development of four key areas: wisdom, hope, community and dignity. More information about the vision, including detail about how it is lived out in schools, is available here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/vision-education>

■ Religious Freedom

Julian Knight:

[193114]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to help (a) tackle religious persecution and (b) protect religious freedom.

Andrew Selous:

Last month the Bishop of Truro, the Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of a joint UK / UAE Government resolution highlighting threats to Freedom of Religion or Belief. The steps taken by the UK Government followed a review authored by the Bishop at the invitation of the then Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, the implementation of which has since become Government Policy. In a vote, the Security Council adopted the proposal, which will see the UN Secretary General produce an oral report on Freedom of Religion or Belief related threats to international peace and security. The initial deadline is 14th June 2024, with the intention of such a statement becoming an annual event.

Religious persecution and freedom of religion were on the agenda at the gathering of the global Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference in 2022. At the Conference a range of 'calls', or priorities for the Church worldwide, were made to tackle these issues. The documents relating to Freedom of Religion and religious persecution can be found under the Inter-Faith, Christian Unity and Human Dignity sections, here: <https://www.lambethconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/The-Lambeth-Calls-English-2023.pdf>

The Church of England remains closely involved with the work of the FCDO in supporting the work of His Majesty's Ambassadors and diplomats and the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. More information about the work of the International Panel can be found here:

<https://www.ippforb.com/about/>

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Community Development and Sports: Finance

Jamie Stone:

[192399]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to increase funding for (a) community groups and (b) sports clubs.

Stuart Andrew:

Community groups and grassroots sport play an important role in local areas, and supporting them is a priority for the Government.

Last year, Sport England received almost £350 million from the Government and National Lottery to fund grassroots sports projects so that everyone is able to access quality sport and physical activity opportunities, and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits that exercise provides.

We are investing £300 million to develop thousands of state-of-the-art multi-use sports facilities across the UK. The Government has also committed £30 million a year for three years to school sport facilities in England, and over £20 million with the Lawn Tennis Association to renovate park tennis courts across England, Scotland and Wales.

At the Spring Budget, we also announced a £63 million package to address the cost pressures facing some public swimming pool providers, and provide investment in energy efficiency measures to make facilities sustainable in the long-term. These interventions will help ensure that people across the UK are able to get active.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is taking a number of steps to support community groups. This includes support from the National Lottery Community Fund for a range of community projects, including £615m awarded in the last financial year. In addition, and among other measures, the Government announced a package of over £100m at the Spring Budget to support charities and community organisations in England with cost of living pressures.

■ Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[193310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Sir John Whittingdale:

His Majesty's Government is fully committed to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the UK.

As with any international treaty, ratification of UNESCO Conventions should be considered fully, including assessing their adequacy and value for money to the UK taxpayer. This process is making good progress, and ministers expect to take a decision on the merits of ratification soon.

■ Cricket: Discrimination**Navendu Mishra:**[\[193493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to support the foundation of a specialist charity for tackling all forms of discrimination in cricket.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is clear that there is absolutely no place for racism, discrimination, bullying or harassment in sport or society. We are reviewing the findings of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket report, and we welcome the ECB's commitment to bring forward a plan to tackle these serious issues, which must be addressed fully.

There are a number of organisations and initiatives that aim to tackle discrimination and improve diversity and inclusion in cricket.

This includes the African-Caribbean Engagement Programme (ACE), which addresses the decline in cricket participation by members of the Black community in cricket, and has received £540,000 of Sport England funding between 2020 and 2023.

The Chance to Shine foundation, which receives funding from Sport England, is focussed in areas with a lack of accessible clubs and green spaces, making cricket accessible to young people throughout England and Wales.

■ Cricket: Girls**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[193455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to encourage girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to take up cricket.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is committed to supporting women's sport at every opportunity including pushing for greater participation.

There has been real progress in the number of women and girls taking up cricket in recent years, and wider developments in the women's game, as noted by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket report. Initiatives like Chance to Shine, which receives funding from Sport England, play an important role in that. The project is focussed in areas with a lack of accessible clubs and green spaces making cricket accessible to young people throughout the country. More widely, Sport England's This Girl Can campaign has already inspired millions of women and girls to get active regardless of shape, size and ability.

However, we recognise that there is more to do. The Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket report notes that while progress has been made in the women's game, there are still areas for concern. Clearly the sport needs to reflect carefully on these findings and consider how best to deliver clear and sustained cultural change across cricket. The Government will review the findings of the report and we welcome the ECB's commitment to bring forward a plan to tackle these serious issues, which must be addressed fully.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Remote Working

Julian Knight:

[\[193145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the civil service headquarters occupancy data, updated on 6 July 2023, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of occupancy rates on her Department's performance during June 2023.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Occupancy rates averaged 61% in June and during this period the performance and regular activity of the Department continued as usual.

Occupancy data for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is based upon our Departmental HQ building only and does not capture employees working in our other locations, or remotely. Our data accounts for DCMS staff who have recently joined the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, as a part of the Machinery of Government changes in February 2023, as we remain in the agreed transitional period.

■ Swimming Pools: Greater Manchester

Navendu Mishra:

[\[193492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 4 July 2023 to Question 191212 on Swimming Pools: Greater Manchester, how much and what proportion of the additional £60 million support package will be allocated to local authority-run swimming pools in Greater Manchester.

Stuart Andrew:

Funding allocations for the Swimming Pool Support Fund will be made after a competitive application process, the first phase of which is now open and will close on 11 August. All Local Authorities with swimming pools are encouraged to apply. The second phase - covering capital investment - will follow this.

After the application process closes, grants will be made directly by Sport England to successful local authorities. As the application process is currently ongoing, no decisions on the allocation of funding have yet been made. Further details on the Swimming Pool Support Fund, including information on how to apply, can be found on the [Sport England website](#).

■ Vacancies

Lucy Powell:

[\[193361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of the number of vacancies in (a) broadcasting, (b) theatres, (c) graphic design, (d) tourism and (e) sport and leisure sectors; if she will make an assessment on adequacy of availability of skilled workers in each of those sectors; and if she will make a statement.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not have official estimates on the number of vacancies for these sectors.

DEFENCE**■ Ammunition: Exports****Rachael Maskell:**[\[193418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that British-made munitions which are exported are not used against civilians in any jurisdiction.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence is an advisory Department to the Department of Business and Trade who are the licensing authority for strategic export controls. Export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria which provides a thorough risk assessment framework and require us to carefully consider the impact of the export of items and their capabilities.

In accordance with the Criteria, the Government will not grant a licence where it determines there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law or human rights. We also do not license items where we determine there is a clear risk that the items would, overall, undermine peace and security, including internal peace and security, or there is a risk of diversion to an undesirable end use.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme**Esther McVey:**[\[193638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to ensuring that the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) delivers for those who make a claim and there are mechanisms of assessment and accountability in place to ensure that this is the case.

The AFCS Quinquennial Review (QQR) takes place every five years to ensure the AFCS remains fit for purpose and to identify opportunities for improvement. The final report was published today:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quinquennial-review-of-the-armed-forces-compensation-scheme-2023-headline-findings-and-progress-report>

The MOD will consider the recommendations of the AFCS QQR, and the Government's response will be published later this year.

■ Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

Rachel Hopkins: [\[193533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department supports (a) training, (b) services and (c) activities of The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust Veterans' Places, Pathways and People programme grant recipients.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence supports the work of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust in delivering the Veterans' Places, Pathways and People (VPPP) programme, which is funded through the Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund.

To date, the VPPP programme has awarded £9 million to 14 major projects. This programme supports projects to encourage the development of safe, welcoming places for veterans to go in their local area, support for staff and volunteers in organisations that support veterans to access good quality training, and to connect veterans into wider pathways, including for mental health support and treatment.

■ Armed Forces: Electric Vehicles

Karl McCartney: [\[193380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many vehicles within the armed forces are (a) currently electric (b) scheduled to be electric by 2030.

James Cartlidge:

The vast majority of vehicles used by the Ministry of Defence are leased through a contract known as Phoenix II. As of 12 July 2023, there are 760 fully electric vehicles in the armed forces' inventory of non-operational vehicles - known as the "white fleet". Vehicles that are not part of the Phoenix II fleet will be operational vehicles, used in roles where the type of vehicles provided under the Phoenix II contract are not appropriate.

We are now working toward converting 100% of our car and van fleet (up to 3.5t) to be fully zero emissions at the tailpipe by 31 December 2027.

It is not possible to retrieve and compile the information requested on vehicles that sit outside of the Phoenix II contract without incurring disproportionate cost.

■ Armed Forces: Private Education

Emily Thornberry: [\[193334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department allocated to the Continuity of Education Allowance to fund school places in the UK in 2022-23; and how many children were covered by that funding.

Emily Thornberry: [\[193339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department allocated to the Continuity of Education Allowance to fund places at (a) Winchester College, (b) Eton College, (c) Rugby School, (d) Millfield School, (e) Charterhouse School, (f) Harrow

School, (g) Sevenoaks School, (h) Oundle School, (i) Stowe School, and (j) Gordonstoun in 2022-23.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 20 April 2023 to question 181072 to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard).

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces: Private Education [UIN 181072.docx]

Emily Thornberry:

[193335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the maximum level of Continuity of Education Allowance payments provided by his Department were for (a) primary and (b) secondary pupils in the UK in 2022-23.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Rates of all variants of Continuation of Education Allowance (CEA) are published in the annual Chief Defence Personnel Armed Forces Remuneration Directed Letter "Rates of Entitlement for Allowances for Service Personnel", and can be found in JSP 752, Chapter 3. This information was last updated in July 2023 and is in the public domain at the following gov.uk link:

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1167569/20230701-JSP_752_v55_Jul_23.pdf

The Maximum Payable Education Allowances Rates per child for 2022-23 are shown below:

EDUCATION ALLOWANCE	FROM 1 AUGUST 2022 MAXIMUM PAYABLE PER CHILD
CEA (Board) - Senior	£8,047 per term
CEA (Board) - Junior	£6,380 per term
CEA SENA SP	£12,023 per term
CEA (Day) - Senior	£4,835 per term
CEA (Day) - Junior	£3,614 per term
CEA SENA (Day)	£7,719 per term
CEA (Guardians)	£10.00 per day
Day School Allowance (North Wales)	£6,255 per term

■ Armed Forces: Procurement**John Healey:** [\[193297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to publish its Major Projects Portfolio data for 2023.

James Cartlidge:

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority expects to publish the 2022-23 Major Projects Portfolio data on 20 July.

■ Germany: Military Alliances**John Healey:** [\[192490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to strengthen the UK's defence strategic partnership with Germany since February 2022.

James Heappey:

We recognise Germany as an essential defence partner. We continue to engage with Germany across defence domains and to exploit new opportunities to operate together. This has included Joint NATO Air Policing over the Baltic States, including mutual aircraft maintenance, a first for NATO Allies. In addition, we participated in the German-run Exercise Air Defender, the largest concentration of Allied Air Power in Europe since the Second World War; and closely coordinated our evacuations from Sudan.

The 2018 UK-Germany Defence Joint Vision Statement provides a framework for the defence relationship across all domains, supported by regular meetings of our Vice-Chiefs of Defence Staff, who last met in June 23. Additionally, the Ministerial group on Equipment and Capability Co-operation (MECC) has continued to meet regularly.

■ Israel: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**Gareth Bacon:** [\[192204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Israel on the security impact of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

James Heappey:

The Secretary of State for Defence has engaged with the Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on a range of issues.

■ Israel: Military Alliances**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[193414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the agreement for military cooperation signed by the UK and Israel in December 2020.

James Heappey:

In December 2020, the UK and Israel signed a joint agreement to strengthen the defence relationship between the two nations. The agreement is an important piece

of defence diplomacy that formalises and deepens cooperation. Both the UK and Israel share a commitment to improving and integrating capabilities in maritime, land, air, space, and cyber and electromagnetic domains. The cooperation includes defence medical training, organisational design and concepts, and defence education. The Ministry of Defence is not publishing the agreement for national security reasons.

■ LE TacCIS Programme

Chris Evans: [\[193342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2023 to Question 188871 on LE TacCIS Programme, what assessment he has made of the capabilities to be delivered by Evolve to Open system which are not available through the Bowman communications system.

James Cartlidge:

MORPHEUS is a project within the Land Environment Tactical Communications & Information Systems (LETacCIS) Programme to deliver the next generation of Communication and Information Systems to forces operating in a Land Tactical Environment. Over time, MORPHEUS will replace the closed, proprietary, in-service Bowman system, with an open architecture system driving value through commercial competition for the incremental and evolutionary delivery of future Land Environment tactical communications solutions.

Chris Evans: [\[193343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2023 to Question 188871 on LE TacCIS Programme, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the time taken to deliver Evolve to Open on the initial operating capability of the Morpheus programme.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 20 June 2023 to Question 188872 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey). I can confirm the Ministry of Defence will continue to meet all of its operational requirements, providing secure Battlefield Communication and Information Systems (CIS) until MORPHEUS is fielded.

Attachments:

1. LE TacCIS Programme [UIN 188872 - LE TacCIS Programme.docx]

Chris Evans: [\[193344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2023 to Question 188871 on LE TacCIS Programme, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of delays to Evolve to Open on the cost of the Morpheus programme.

James Cartlidge:

These matters are commercially sensitive, and it would be inappropriate to comment further until discussions have concluded.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Annual Reports****John Healey:**[\[193286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish his Department's annual report and accounts for 2022-3.

James Cartlidge:

The department will publish the Annual Reports and Accounts for 2022-23 in due course.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Northern Ireland****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[193520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) officials of his Department and (b) members of the Armed Forces were based in Northern Ireland in each year since 1999.

James Heapey:

The number of Ministry of Defence (MOD) Civilians and Armed Forces Regular Service personnel stationed in Northern Ireland since 1 April 1999 are below:

Number of MOD personnel [i] [ii] stationed in Northern Ireland [iii] [iv] since 1999

	ARMED FORCES REGULARS	MOD CIVILIANS
1 July 1999 e	9,000	3,200
1 April 2000	8,390	3,250
1 April 2001 e	8,100	3,100
1 April 2002 e	7,100	3,100
1 April 2003[v] [vi]e	7,100	3,200
1 July 2004	7,700	3,500
1 April 2005	7,490	3,460
1 April 2006	6,800	3,290
1 April 2007	4,770	2,940
1 April 2008	3,730	2,150
1 April 2009	4,390	1,890

	ARMED FORCES REGULARS	MOD CIVILIANS
1 April 2010	4,140	1,930
1 April 2011[vii]	4,010	1,850
1 April 2012	3,740	1,610
1 April 2013	2,530	1,500
1 April 2014	2,340	1,450
1 April 2015	2,190	1,280
1 April 2016	2,120	1,240
1 April 2017	2,030	1,120
1 April 2018	1,980	950
1 April 2019	1,910	930
1 April 2020	1,780	900
1 April 2021	1,760	900
1 April 2022	1,700	930
1 April 2023[viii]	1,580	880

[i] Military Personnel are UK Regulars. UK Regulars comprise full time service personnel, including Nursing Services, but excluding Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel, Gurkhas, Mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Non-Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) personnel. Includes both trained and untrained personnel.

[ii] Civilian figures are reported as Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

[iii] The figures are based on Service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence..

[iv] Country as recorded in Joint Personnel Administration (JPA).

[v] Figures for 2003 are estimates as they have been calculated by adding two rounded figures.

[vi] Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 to prevent inadvertent disclosure. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias. For the years 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 figures have been rounded to the nearest 100. "e" denotes an estimate.

[vii] Where data from 1 April is not available, it has been substituted for data from 1 July. Military and Civilian figures between 1 July 1999 - 1 April 2011 have been taken from the UK Defence Statistics Compendium available here:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140116145634/http://www.dasa.mod.uk/index.php/publications/UK-defence-statistics-compendium>

[viii] Military and Civilian figures between 1 April 2012 - 1 April 2023 have been taken from the Annual Location Statistics, the latest edition of the publication is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-statistics-for-uk-regular-armed-forces-and-civilians-2023>

■ Ministry of Defence: Senior Civil Servants

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[193566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the advertisement for Senior Responsible Owner - Armoured Cavalry Programme on the gov.uk website, whether this is the first time a vacancy for a senior responsible owner in his Department has been advertised externally.

James Cartlidge:

This is not the first time the Department has advertised externally for senior responsible owner roles. The Department uses the most appropriate recruitment route to fill these key roles with suitably skilled and experienced individuals, in line with Civil Service and military recruitment and appointment processes.

■ Ministry of Defence: Temporary Employment

Chris Evans:

[\[193362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on temporary staff in each year from 2015.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Expenditure on temporary staff (by financial year(FY)) can be found in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts. The most recent figures are:

FY 2021-22 £483.318 million

FY 2020-21 £418.950 million

FY 2019-20 £272.385 million

FY 2018-19 £110.530 million

FY 2017-18 £122.660 million

FY 2016-17 £135.400 million

FY 2015-16 £112.700 million

■ National Security: Climate Change**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[193415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of climate change on national security.

James Cartlidge:

I would like to refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question 107708. It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

I would also like to refer the hon. Member to the list of current Cabinet Committees and the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach (publishing.service.gov.uk) which sets out our wider climate security ambitions. Further, I am pleased to confirm that on Friday 14 July I signed the Defence Aviation Net Zero Charter committing the MOD to Net Zero by 2050.

Attachments:

1. Climate Action Strategy Committee [107708 - Climate Action Strategy Committee.docx]

■ Ukraine: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**Gareth Bacon:** [\[192205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Ukraine on the security impact of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

James Heapey:

The Secretary of State for Defence regularly holds discussions with Defence Minister Reznikov on a range of issues.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid**John Healey:** [\[193552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much has the Government contributed to the NATO Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine as of 12 July 2023.

James Heapey:

Since Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the Government has contributed over £82 million to the NATO Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine, providing much needed non-lethal operational support.

■ Veterans: Food Banks**Esther McVey:** [\[193631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the use of food banks by former service personnel who were medically-discharged in the last five years.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not collect or hold information on the use of food banks by either current military or civilian personnel, or by Armed Forces veterans. Any decision to use a food bank is a private and personal matter for the individual concerned.

To support those leaving Service, including those medically discharged, the MOD provides points of contact for veterans who are facing challenges when transitioning back into civilian life. The Defence Holistic Transition Policy was introduced to support a whole range of life-changing issues, which affect both the Service Person and their immediate family upon leaving the Services. This could include help with life's basic needs such as registering with a doctor or a dentist, or it could be much more intensive for those with complex needs (including housing, budgeting, debt, wellbeing, and children's education).

Defence Transition Services (DTS), which is part of the MOD's Veterans UK, was established at the same time as the transition policy to provide information and support for those service leavers and their families who are most likely to face challenges as they leave the Armed Forces and adjust to civilian life:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-for-service-leavers-and-their-families>. DTS will be there as a safety net for up to two years after leaving Service, and self-referrals can be made through the gov.uk website or by contacting Veterans UK direct.

In addition, the Veterans Welfare Service, part of Veterans UK, provides telephone and face to face assistance from four UK welfare centres to veterans in need of support: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/veterans-welfare-service>

■ War Pensions**Rachel Hopkins:****[193809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to make an assessment of the adequacy of the delivery of the War Pension Scheme.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Delivery of the War Pension Scheme is reported on monthly against a set of agreed Key Performance Indicators and is reviewed by wider Ministry of Defence (MOD) at Functional Delivery Boards. The Scheme is also monitored by the Defence Business Services Corporate Board. A dedicated complaints team monitor and track issues that arise with an internal 'lessons identified' process to drive improvement.

Ways to improve the delivery of the War Pension Scheme for the benefit of customers are constantly being sought, and around £40 million is currently being invested by the MOD in an ongoing Transformation Programme as part of the Service Delivery Contract to digitise existing paper-based processes.

EDUCATION■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Christine Jardine:****[906018]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of students graduating from universities without receiving their degree classification.

Robert Halfon:

Unlike some education sectors, where the government has taken part in negotiations with trade unions, universities are autonomous. They are therefore responsible for the pay and pension provision of their staff. Whilst the government plays no formal role, we are concerned about the potential impact of the marking and assessment boycott on students, particularly those who are coming up to graduation, and looking to enter the jobs market or progress to further study.

The department understands that the majority of students will remain unaffected by the industrial action and, in most cases, will receive their full results on time and progress and/or graduate as normal.

The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) has published research findings which surveyed 49% of higher education (HE) institutions in the New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff. These institutions provided feedback on the impact of the marking and assessment boycott on students at their institutions:

- Over 70% of HE institutions said that 'less than 2% of students' will be unable to graduate this summer due to the boycott.
- A further 20% were 'unsure' of the number.
- 4% of HE institutions said 'between 2% and 9% of students' would be impacted.

These research findings can be accessed at: <https://www.ucea.ac.uk/news-releases/23june23/>.

On 22 June 2023, I met with Universities UK (UUK), the Russell Group, and UCEA to better understand the impact of the boycott and the mitigating actions their members are taking to protect students' interests. I have also written to the Russell Group and UUK, encouraging them to continue to do everything within their powers to protect the interests of students.

On 27 June 2023, I met with a number of HE representative groups to discuss the marking and assessment boycott, including the mitigating actions HE institutions are taking.

HE institutions are working on minimising disruption to students in a variety of ways, including reallocating marking to other staff members, and hiring external markers. Many HE institutions can award degrees when they have enough evidence of a student's prior attainment to do so. Others will be able to assign provisional grades to

students to allow them to progress and, once all papers have been marked, degree classifications will either remain as provisionally assigned or be uplifted to reflect the student's achievements.

The government believes students should be at the heart of the HE system. This is why we set up the Office for Students (OfS) to regulate the HE sector in England, protect student rights, and ensure the sector is delivering real value for money. The OfS published guidance to students on their rights during industrial action at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-rights-and-welfare/student-guide-to-industrial-action/>.

On 12 June 2023, the OfS wrote to institutions affected by the boycott to reiterate its expectations in relation to its conditions of registration. The OfS will continue to monitor this situation through their normal regulatory mechanisms.

The Department continues to engage with the HE sector and we hope all parties can reach an agreement that delivers good value for students, staff and universities, so further industrial action can be avoided.

Douglas Chapman:

[906020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had recent discussions with her counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the potential merits of providing additional financial support for (a) school and (b) higher education students in the context of increases in the cost of living.

Robert Halfon:

Last month, I met representatives from across the UK where we discussed this very topic. In England, we have put in place a significant amount of support to help students and families alike with the cost of living. This year alone, this government will spend around £37bn on cost of living support.

I take my role of giving children the very best start in life incredibly seriously. This Government spends more than £1 billion annually delivering free school meals to pupils in schools. More than one third of pupils in schools in England now receive a free meal. We have expanded the Holiday Activities and Food programme so that disadvantaged children in England will be offered free healthy meals and enriching activities over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. This expansion was built on previous programmes, including last summer's, which supported around 600,000 children across 152 local authorities.

I also recognise the cost-of-living pressures that have impacted students. That is why we have earmarked £276 million of student premium funding this year to support disadvantaged students who need additional help. We have continued to increase living costs support each year for English-domiciled students with a 2.3% increase to maximum loans and grants for living and other costs for this academic year, and a 2.8% increase for the 2023/24 academic year.

In addition, we have frozen maximum tuition fees for the current academic year and also for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will

have been frozen for seven years. We believe that a continued fee freeze achieves the best balance between ensuring the system remains sustainable, offering good value for the taxpayer, and reducing debt levels for students.

As well as keeping tuition fees flat, we have introduced and boosted degree apprenticeships, where, if people want to earn and learn, they can get their degrees paid for by their apprenticeship.

■ **Academies: Cricket**

Bridget Phillipson: [\[193345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number and proportion of state schools that offer cricket as part of games and sports lessons.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[193346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made of an estimate of the cost to the public purse of cricket equipment procured by academy schools in each year since 2010.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[193347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an estimate of the cost to the public purse of cricket equipment procured by local authority maintained schools in each year since 2010.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[193348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on the number of pupils in academies playing cricket each week in school hours in each year since 2010.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[193349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on the number of pupils in local authority maintained schools playing cricket each week in each year since 2010.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not routinely collect data on which sports schools offer and how much they are spending to deliver them during physical education (PE) lessons and extracurricular time.

Schools can organise and deliver a diverse and challenging PE and school sport offer which best suits the needs of their pupils. Factors influencing that decision include the spaces available for sports, along with available equipment.

Where schools want to provide specific sports, they can draw on support from the relevant national governing body. The England and Wales Cricket Board offer a wide range of resources and age appropriate guidance and advice for delivering cricket in schools.

On 8 March 2023, the Department announced over £600 million across the next two academic years for the Primary PE and Sport Premium, and £57 million up to March 2025 for the Opening School Facilities programme. Schools can use this funding to increase provision and raise the quality of sports such as cricket.

■ **Holiday Play Schemes**

Conor McGinn:

[\[193500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the participation of young people in (a) summer schemes and (b) clubs during the school holidays; and what funding she has provided to help such activities in St Helens.

Claire Coutinho:

The department's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, backed by £200 million per year to 2025, provides healthy meals, enriching activities and free childcare places to children from low-income families over the holidays. Local authorities have flexibility in how the programme can be delivered to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or additional needs who are in receipt of free school meals, ensuring it is tailored to meet the needs of those children and their families.

HAF is a voluntary programme for eligible children, and families can therefore choose whether their children attend. It is pleasing that the programme reached so many children last summer.

This year, the department has allocated £751,570 to the St Helens local authority, building on the £743,290 that was allocated to them for 2022/23.

■ **Postgraduate Education: Stem Subjects**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[193644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the (a) cost and (b) eligibility of childcare on the diversity of PHD candidates studying STEM subjects.

Claire Coutinho:

The department does not hold information relating to the potential impact of cost and childcare eligibility relating to the diversity of PhD students studying science, technology, engineering or mathematics.

The department knows that for families with younger children, childcare costs are often a significant part of their household expenditure, which is why we are committed to improving the cost, choice and availability of childcare.

At the Spring Statement 2023, the department announced the single largest investment in childcare in England ever. This begins from September, with £204 million of additional funding to uplift the rates for existing entitlements.

By the 2027/28 financial year, the government expects to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education. These are transformative plans helping families with young children with their childcare costs.

In addition to the 30 hours, the department remains committed to continuing the universal 15 hours of free early education, which this year helped over 1 million children get a positive start to their education. Students who are parents are eligible for the universal 15 hours of free early education which is available to all 3 and 4-year-olds, regardless of family circumstances.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Helen Morgan:

[\[193824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to offer additional funding to areas where the Early Years Supplementary Grant results in below national average funding for early years education.

Claire Coutinho:

At the Spring Budget 2023, the Chancellor announced an increase to the funding for the existing early years entitlements for two, three and four-year-olds of £204 million from this September, and £288 million in 2024/25, for local authorities to increase the rates paid to childcare providers.

On 7 July 2023, the department confirmed that the £204 million for 2023/24 would be distributed via a new Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG), and the hourly funding rates that each local authority will receive from September 2023.

This additional funding through the EYSG, coming on top of local authorities' existing allocations, will allow an increase to an average of 32% for the current two year old entitlement, and by an average of 6.3% for the three and four-year-old entitlements. For two-year-olds, this means that the average hourly rate received by local authorities will rise from the current £6 per hour in 2023/24, to an effective £7.95 per hour. The three and four-year-old national average hourly rate will rise from £5.29, to an effective £5.62 from September 2023.

In order to recognise cost variations between local authority areas, the existing funding formulae for two, three and four-year-olds has been used to determine the EYSG rates for individual local authorities. This means there will be variation around the average increases stated above.

For three and four-year-olds, as with the 2023/24 early years national funding formula (EYNFF) rates, the department is including protections to ensure that all local authorities see an increase in the effective combined hourly funding rate (September to March) they receive. The minimum increase that local authorities can see between their effective combined hourly rate (September to March) and their 2023/24 EYNFF hourly rate is +1%. Without this protection, some areas would see very low percentage increases, or decreases, compared to their 2023/24 rates based on the pre-protection calculation.

For two-year-olds, no protection or gains cap have been applied in calculating the effective combined hourly funding rates, because all local authorities will see a substantial increase to their hourly funding rates.

■ Public Libraries: Education

Rachael Maskell:

[193005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of public libraries on children's educational outcomes.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises the role of public and school libraries in supporting children's access to books and the development of reading for pleasure.

The National Curriculum promotes reading widely and often, both for pleasure and information, with evidence showing that reading for pleasure is more important for children's educational development than their parents' level of education. This evidence can be found here: <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Readingforpleasurestoppress.pdf>.

In 2018, the Department launched the £60 million English Hubs Programme to improve the teaching of reading, with a focus on phonics, early language development and reading for pleasure. The English Hubs have delivered intensive support to 1,700 schools to date, with a focus on supporting those children making the slowest progress in reading, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Department recognises the importance of both public and school libraries in increasing children's access to books and promoting reading for pleasure. A National Literacy and Chase survey conducted in December 2022 reported that nearly 30% of parents stated they were borrowing more children's books from libraries, and a quarter said they were asking their children to borrow more books from school libraries. Findings from the survey can be found at: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-young-people-book-access-cost-of-living/>.

The Department welcomes schemes such as the Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge, which looks to improve reading for pleasure and children's access to books in school and public libraries. The Challenge encourages nearly three quarters of a million children into libraries, and keeps them reading over the summer holidays, ready for the start of the new academic year.

The 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) data reported that pupils' confidence on the 'Confidence in Reading' scale in England is related to the number of books they reported having in their home. Pupils in England who reported having more books at home had considerably higher scores in PIRLS than those reporting that their homes had fewer books. The PIRLS data can be found at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1156633/PIRLS_2021_-_national_report_for_England_May_2023.pdf.

The Autumn Statement 2022 announced that funding for mainstream schools and high needs is £3.5 billion higher in 2023/24, compared to 2022/23. That is on top of the £4 billion, year on year increase provided in 2022/23. This is an increase of £7.5 billion, or over 15%, in just two years.

It is for individual schools to decide how to manage their budgets, including how best to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils. Many head teachers recognise the important role school libraries play in improving literacy and ensure that suitable library facilities are provided.

■ Pupils: Bullying

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[193019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much her Department has spent on anti-bullying initiatives for schools in England in the last 12 months.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is providing over £3 million of funding, between 10 August 2021 and 31 March 2024, to five anti-bullying organisations to support both primary and secondary schools to tackle bullying. Over the last 12 months, £1.16 million in funding has been provided to the five organisations as part of year two of the programme. This three-year funding programme includes projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those who are victims of hate related bullying and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic based bullying.

■ Schools: Buildings

Munira Wilson:

[\[193456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.15 of the Condition of school buildings report, HC1516, published by the National Audit Office on 28 June 2023, whether her Department has recommended that any of the schools that may contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete to close (a) permanently or (b) temporarily one or more school buildings.

Nick Gibb:

The safety of pupils and staff is vital. Where it is suspected that reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is present in a school, the Department takes swift action based on professional advice.

It is the responsibility of academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary aided school bodies, to manage the maintenance of the schools they run and alert the Department if there is a concern with a building. Local Authorities and academy trusts do not need to report building closures to the Department, but the Department provides support on a case-by-case basis, working with the sector when it is alerted to a serious safety issue.

In cases where RAAC is confirmed, the Department provides rapid support to schools on the advice of structural engineers. This could include funding capital works to remove any immediate risk and, where absolutely necessary, the provision of

temporary buildings. Where RAAC poses an immediate risk to occupants, Responsible Bodies are advised to take spaces out of use with immediate effect, based on the professional advice of structural engineers. Decisions to close one or more buildings at a school are made by the school's Responsible Body. Longer term remediation of RAAC is supported by capital funding provided to the sector, the Department's rebuilding programme, and urgent capital support.

The Department provides support to schools and Responsible Bodies and has allocated over £15 billion since 2015 to keep schools safe and operational. This includes £1.8 billion committed this financial year, informed by consistent data on the school estate. In addition, the Department's School Rebuilding Programme will transform 500 schools over the next decade, prioritising schools in poor condition.

The Department will continue to work with Responsible Bodies, schools, and colleges to support them through the process of investigation, assessment, and management of RAAC.

■ Schools: Registration

Tim Farron:

[\[193325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the average time taken to register a new school; and whether she is taking steps to reduce processing times.

Nick Gibb:

The Department acts as the regulator of independent schools on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. The Department's registration guidance document is clear that the process for registering a new independent school can take around six months from receipt of a complete application. The Department is content that this target is being met. For the period February to June 2023, it has taken on average 23 weeks to reach a decision on registration from the date on which a complete application was submitted.

The Department follows a robust set of processes that aim to safeguard and protect children and ensure that only applications that are likely to meet all of the independent school standards (ISS) are approved for registration. Schools not meeting the ISS are not providing a safe and suitable education for children. The Department's processes include a mandatory pre-registration inspection conducted by Ofsted on the degree to which the ISS are likely to be met in this school. Any proposal to reduce the processing time must ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children is not reduced through more limited scrutiny of new applications.

■ Secondary Education: Vocational Guidance

Munira Wilson:

[\[193424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of section 42B of the Education Act 1997 on the number of pupils entering post-16 technical education or apprenticeships.

Munira Wilson:

[\[193446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to provide secondary school pupils with information about the opportunities available to study (a) T-Levels, (b) apprenticeships, and (c) other post-16 applied, technical and vocational qualifications.

Robert Halfon:

On 1 January 2023, legislation came into force that strengthens the provision originally introduced in 2018, in section 42B of the Education Act 1997. This provider access legislation, sometimes known as the 'Baker Clause', specifies that schools must provide at least six opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to speak to all pupils, during school years 8-13.

However, even before the strengthened legislation came into force there were grounds for optimism, as young people had more encounters with providers of technical education last year, including apprenticeships. In 2022, awareness of apprenticeships doubled by Year 11 with 39% of young people reporting awareness in Year 7, increasing to 81% in Year 11. In 60% of reporting schools, young people met independent training providers. This has risen from 45% in 2020/21, and 44% in 2018/19.

The department is aware of the importance of provider access legislation following a report from the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC). This report showed uptake of apprenticeships was 16% higher in the schools that provided information on apprenticeships to most, or all, of their pupils, compared with the schools that provided information to a small minority.

The department is investing approximately £34 million in careers provision for young people, including a grant of up to around £32.5 million for the CEC to support secondary schools and colleges to improve their careers programmes.

The department also continues to increase outreach of apprenticeships to pupils of all ages and backgrounds through our Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme. The ASK programme, funded at £3.2 million per year, provides schools and further education colleges across England with a free bespoke package of comprehensive information and support about apprenticeships. Furthermore, the department's new 'Career Starter Apprenticeships' campaign is raising awareness of apprenticeships which offer great opportunities for those looking for their first role after leaving full-time education.

Additionally, Get the Jump, a digital campaign provided by the National Careers Service, brings together all the different education and training pathways open to young people at post-16 and post-18. The campaign helps to support informed choice and raise awareness of technical education options, including T Levels, traineeships, apprenticeships, and higher technical qualifications.

■ Sign Language: Adult Education

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[193216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many parents of deaf children participated in British sign language courses that were funded through the adult education budget in Greenwich and Bexley in each of the last three years.

Claire Coutinho:

About 60% of the adult education budget (AEB) has been devolved to Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority, which includes Greenwich and Bexley. Devolved areas decide how to make best use of AEB provision to meet learner needs of their areas and decide which providers to contract with to deliver AEB-funded learning.

According to data held by the department on the Individualised Learner Record, there were 10 adult (19+) education and training learning aim enrolments in the 2021/22 academic year by learners living in the London Borough of Bexley or the London Borough of Greenwich with 'British Sign Language' or 'BSL' in their aim title. In 2020/21, there were 10 enrolments and in 2019/20 there were 20. The department does not hold information as to whether the learners taking these aims have deaf children. Further clarity on use of the AEB in London may be provided by the Greater London Authority.

These figures do not correspond to learners, as learners may enrol on multiple aims. Additionally, these are funded adult (19+) education and training aim enrolments, so they will include AEB-funded learning, as well as other funding provision, such as advanced learner loans.

■ Sign Language: Education

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[193217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps she has taken to help parents of deaf children to be able to learn sign language; and if her Department is coordinating work with local authorities on this issue.

Claire Coutinho:

The government understands the great importance of British Sign Language (BSL) for bridging barriers to communication between hearing and deaf people. The department appreciates the vital need for families with deaf children to be able to access BSL courses, as early access to language is essential to help children learn and thrive.

Funding is available through the adult education budget (AEB) for qualifications in or focussing on BSL up to and including level 2. These qualifications include, for example, the Level 1 Award in BSL, which allows learners to communicate in BSL on a range of topics that involve simple, everyday language use, thereby giving them the basic skills and confidence in production and reception of BSL. It will depend on an

individual's circumstances as to whether they are entitled to free provision or expected to meet part of the cost, through co-funding.

For some BSL courses, advanced learner loans (ALLs) are available, and parents can find more information about which qualifications are eligible at:

<https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/Search>. More general information about the provision of ALLs is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan>.

For parents learning BSL on an AEB-funded course, there is also additional support available. The AEB provides funding to colleges and providers to help adult learners overcome barriers preventing them from accessing learning. Providers have discretion to help learners meet costs such as transport, accommodation, books, equipment, and childcare. Learning support funding also helps colleges and training providers to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the costs of reasonable adjustments, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

About 60% of the AEB has been devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority. These authorities determine which provision to fund for learners who live in their areas. The Education and Skills Funding Agency provides the remaining funding for learners who live in non-devolved areas. It is up to providers to decide what provision they offer. Where community learning providers offer BSL courses, those providers are responsible for determining the course fees, including levels of fee remission.

■ Special Educational Needs

Tim Farron:

[193326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase SEND support in schools.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is determined that all children and young people receive the support they need to benefit from their education and progress to the next stage of their lives. All teachers should be confident in identifying and supporting pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The SEND Code of Practice:0-25 Years (2015), sets out what schools should do to fulfil their duties to identify and support all children with SEND, regardless of whether they have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. The SEND Code of Practice can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf.

The department published the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan in March 2023. Quality teaching and support are vital for children with SEND to reach their full potential. As part of this a new leadership level Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) National Professional Qualification will be introduced for schools. The department is also taking steps to build teacher expertise in meeting the

needs of children with SEND through a review of the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework and Early Career Framework.

The most recent Ofsted education inspection framework also places greater emphasis on what schools are doing to support children and young people with SEND to progress and achieve their goals.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Emissions

Bill Esterson:

[\[193393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy on levels of domestic carbon emissions as of 11 July 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy (March 2021) set out a plan for decarbonising industry in line with the government's net zero goals, including an indicative Carbon Budget 6 (CB6) pathway. These plans were updated in the Net Zero Strategy (NZS) (October 2021) and further updated in the Net Zero Growth Plan (NZGP) (March 2023).

Industry emissions are expected to fall:

- by 15% to 25% on average over 2023-27, 41% to 52% by 2030 and 62% to 75% on average over 2033-37, compared to 2021 levels, and
- by 87-96% by 2050, down to 3-10 MtCO₂e [2], to meet the net zero goal.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Remote Working

Julian Knight:

[\[193148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the civil service headquarters occupancy data, updated on 6 July 2023, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of occupancy rates on his Department's performance during June 2023.

Graham Stuart:

Occupancy data for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is combined with the data for the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology for those staff previously employed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). This is due to the Machinery of Government changes forming both Departments in February 2023.

In June 2023, the occupancy rates for former BEIS headquarters were as follows:

WEEK COMMENCING 05 JUNE 2023	WEEK COMMENCING 12 JUNE 2023	WEEK COMMENCING 19 JUNE 2023	WEEK COMMENCING 26 JUNE 2023
60%	64%	58%	58%

During this period, the performance and regular activity of the Department continued at its usual level.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Travellers

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[193256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will publish disaggregated data on the number of Gypsies and Travellers living on sites who have (a) applied for and (b) received the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding payment since the scheme was introduced.

Amanda Solloway:

As of 11th July 2023, the cumulative number of those who self-declared as travellers (fixed) that had applied for the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding (GB & NI) was 12,040, of whom 8,120 had received their payment for the support.

■ Energy: Meters

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[193605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what guidance his Department has prepared for energy suppliers when a customer declines a smart meter installation on multiple occasions.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[193606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of a customer's right of refusal to install a smart meter on the progress of the ongoing rollout.

Amanda Solloway:

Independent evidence from Smart Energy GB shows that 37% of people in Great Britain without smart meters would seek or accept, if offered, a smart meter installation within the next six months, and many of those that say they wouldn't, go onto have them installed. So, there remains good consumer demand for energy suppliers to convert into installations.

To facilitate this, the Government has identified and shared good practice with energy suppliers on effective consumer engagement and operational delivery. Ofgem has also provided guidance on its expectation that suppliers have appropriate re-contact strategies for consumers that have not yet taken up their smart meter offer.

■ Energy: Social Tariffs

Drew Hendry:

[\[193499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the compatibility of the social energy tariff system in Italy with the UK energy market.

Amanda Solloway:

As set out in the autumn statement, the Government is exploring the best approach to consumer protection from April 2024, as part of wider retail market reforms. The Government has looked at a range of international comparators, including Italy, although as energy markets and consumer circumstances vary between countries, the specific situation in the UK will need to be assessed.

The Government will set out its proposals in due course.

Up to then, in response to higher prices, the Government has put in place the Energy Price Guarantee and provided significant additional support to help those who need it most through this winter and into 2023-24.

■ EURATOM

Chi Onwurah:

[\[193378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of seeking association with the Euratom Research and Training Programme.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[193633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of not associating with the Euratom Research and Training Programme on domestic science and research capability.

Andrew Bowie:

Association to Euratom R&T would need to provide value to the UK's fusion sector, nuclear researchers and taxpayers. As such it must reflect the lasting impact of two years of delay when UK researchers and businesses were not able to engage in the Euratom R&T Programme or compete for contracts at ITER.

We have been working with the UK Atomic Energy Authority to design an ambitious expansion of activity to secure delivery of the UK's Fusion Strategy, including support for public and private sector projects. If we cannot agree terms for association these new measures will be implemented.

■ Hydrogen

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[193540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether it remains his policy for the hydrogen economy to develop large cluster networks, large scale storage

and integration with gas networks by 2028-2030 as set out in the UK Hydrogen Strategy, published in August 2021.

Graham Stuart:

Yes the Government is committed to the ambitions set out in the UK Hydrogen Strategy.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[193544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 4 July 2023 to Questions 191725, 191726 and 191727 on Hydrogen, what the additional considerations associated with transmission level blending are.

Graham Stuart:

Any policy decision on transmission blending will be determined by economic and safety assessments and wider strategic considerations. Additional considerations associated with transmission level blending include the impact of blends and/or varying blend rates on industrial end users connected at transmission-level.

Government will also need to consider the blending plans of countries that we share interconnectors with.

■ **Industrial Energy Transformation Fund**

Bill Esterson:

[\[193388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, How much of the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund has been allocated to the manufacturing industry in the last 12 months.

Graham Stuart:

The £289m Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) supports companies in the manufacturing sector as well as mining and quarrying, recycling, and data centres. To date, we have allocated funding across five competitive application windows.

Between July 2022 and July 2023, the IETF has allocated £46.6m of funding to the manufacturing sector alone.

Bill Esterson:

[\[193389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund.

Graham Stuart:

Phase 1 of the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) opened in 2020, and the final window of Phase 2 closed at the beginning of 2023.

A process evaluation was undertaken for Phase 1 of the IETF that concluded that the delivery of the IETF supported its objectives. Recommendations for improvements were addressed for Phase 2 as described in the Phase 2 Policy Statement.

Deployment projects supported by the IETF will begin delivering energy and carbon emissions savings by 2027. We intend to publish a full impact evaluation of the IETF once data is available.

■ Industrial Energy Transformation Fund: Scotland

Bill Esterson: [\[193390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much of the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund has been invested in Scotland.

Graham Stuart:

The £289m Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) supports industrial sites located in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Scottish sites are supported by the Scottish IETF. The £34m SIETF budget is administered by the Scottish Government and we do not hold the data on allocations.

■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Justin Madders: [\[193022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much time an operator has to return an overallocation of free carbon allowances.

Graham Stuart:

Where a notice is issued by one of the scheme regulators requesting the return of overallocated free allowances, the relevant regulator will set the deadline for the operator to make their return. If an appeal is made this suspends the effect of a return notice until the appeal is determined or withdrawn.

Justin Madders: [\[193024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the process is for amending the allocation of free carbon allowances to operators when they change their inputs and outputs.

Graham Stuart:

Free allocations to individual operators are managed dynamically via the Activity Level Changes (ALC) process to reflect significant increases and decreases in production accurately. Operators must submit a verified Activity Level Report to their UK ETS regulator annually. If the data shows an increase or decrease in activity of more than 15% from historic activity levels (calculated from the previous 2 years' activity levels), free allocation of allowances will be recalculated.

Justin Madders: [\[193025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Government has made any amendments to the EU Emissions Trading System installation cessation rules since setting up the UK Emissions Trading System.

Graham Stuart:

The UK ETS Authority sought to ensure continuity for businesses in setting up the UK Emission Trading Scheme. The rules on cessations have been kept substantially the same within the UK Emissions Trading Scheme as they were in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, with only minor administrative amendments to reflect that this is a domestic scheme and the role of the UK ETS Authority.

Justin Madders:[\[193026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what regulations cover the sale of free carbon allowances by installations that have been offline for a calendar year.

Graham Stuart:

If an installation has been offline for a calendar year and has reported a permanent cessation of activity, then free allowances are not distributed in the year after activity is permanently ceased. However, installations will retain free allowances they were entitled to in the final year during which they operate. Installations can choose whether to use these allowances for future compliance, or to sell them on the secondary market.

Where an operator does not report a permanent cessation and instead restarts activity after being offline, these free allowances will be subject to the Activity Level Change process. They can either use free allowances for compliance, sell them or retain them.

Justin Madders:[\[193027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether there is an obligation on an installation to return unused carbon allowances when the facility is inactive.

Graham Stuart:

In cases of permanent cessation of activity, free allowances are no longer distributed to an operator in the year after activity is permanently ceased. However, installations will retain free allowances they were entitled to in the final year during which they operate. In cases where an installation has not permanently closed but reports a reduction in production greater than the 15% Activity Level Changes threshold, free allowance allocations are adjusted, ensuring that they are reflective of actual production levels. In these cases, over-allocated allowances must be returned.

Justin Madders:[\[193028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether there is an obligation on an installation to report to his Department on the (a) retention and (b) sale of free carbon allowances.

Graham Stuart:

Free allowances are provided to qualifying operators to mitigate the risk of carbon leakage. These can be used to meet compliance obligations under the UK Emissions Trading Scheme, sold on the secondary market to other participants or held by

operators in their accounts. There is no legal obligation for installation operators to report on their retention or sale of free carbon allowances.

All transactions under the UK ETS are recorded in the UK Emissions Trading Registry.

■ **Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project**

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[193289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the number of supply chain jobs that will be created in (a) Devon and (b) the UK from the installation of a subsea electricity generation and storage connection to Morocco by 2030.

Graham Stuart:

As the Government set out in the Energy Security Plan, we are actively exploring the potential for international projects to provide clean, affordable and secure power. We are interested in the Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project and are considering – without commitment – the viability and merits of the proposal to understand if it could contribute to the UK's energy security.

We have established a team in the department to assess the project through a Business Case process that will consider potential economic benefits, including jobs.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[193290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress has been made on the Morocco-UK Power Project; and how many hours staff in his Department have spent working on the project in the last 12 months.

Graham Stuart:

As the Government set out in the Energy Security Plan, we are actively exploring the potential for international projects to provide clean, affordable and secure power. We are interested in the Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project and are considering – without commitment – the viability and merits of the proposal to understand if it could contribute to the UK's energy security.

We have been engaging with the developer over the past 12 months, and in January established a departmental team to assess the project through a Business Case process that is ongoing. The team has spent an estimated around 9,500 hours on this project.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agricultural Machinery****Sir John Hayes:****[193550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of British farming machinery has been (a) built domestically and (b) imported from overseas since 2010.

Mark Spencer:

Defra does not hold the requested information.

The Office for National Statistics publishes data on UK manufacturers' sales by product: [UK manufacturers' sales by product - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk). This dataset can be used to find specific types of farm machinery. Data for 2022 will be released on 24 July.

HM Revenue and Customs publishes information on Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics, which is available via its dedicated website (www.uktradeinfo.com). From this website, it is possible to [build data tables](#) based on bespoke search criteria. All goods imported are given a classification code. These are available from the [UK Trade Tariff](#).

■ Animals: Imports**Kenny MacAskill:****[193010]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to consult on changes to the non-commercial importation of live animals.

Trudy Harrison:

There are no policy changes to the imports of non-commercial live animals. Importers from EU member States and EFTA countries currently benefit from a transitional period. At the end of the transitional period, we will be operating a global model for goods from the European Union and the rest of the world based on risk.

The Draft Target Operating Model (TOM) published by the Government on 5th of April does not apply to non-commercial movements of pet animals defined by Regulation 576/2013. Later in 2024, we will expect these pet animals to be checked at designated points of entry while commercial movements of animals will be subject to veterinary checks at Border Control Posts.

■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control**Daniel Zeichner:****[192820]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the value for money provided by the flock depopulation measures carried out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency during the 2022-23 outbreak of avian influenza.

Daniel Zeichner:

[192821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact of the flock depopulation measures carried out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency during the 2022-23 outbreak of avian influenza on bio-security.

Mark Spencer:

Avian influenza, once introduced into a premises, spreads rapidly through birds present. As set out in the [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#) swift and humane culling of poultry and other captive birds on infected premises coupled with good biosecurity is used to prevent the amplification of avian influenza and subsequent environmental contamination, reduce the risk of disease spread from infected premises and mitigate any public health risk these infected birds may pose. Defra's disease control measures seek to contain the number of animals that need to be culled, either for disease control purposes or to safeguard animal welfare. Current policy reflects our experience of responding to past outbreaks of exotic animal disease and is in line with international standards of best practice for disease control.

During the 2022/23 outbreak 5.4 million birds have died or been culled and disposed for disease control purposes, a small proportion of overall poultry production (c.20m birds slaughtered for human consumption per week).

At each infected premises the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carry out veterinary investigations to identify, as far as possible the likely source of infection, and establish how long the disease may have been present on the infected premises together with identifying and investigating potential routes of spread from the premises. We have recently published the [2021/22 highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak](#) which provides a summary of the outcomes of these investigations. The report for 2022/23 will be published in due course.

Epidemiological investigations to date show that the introduction of infection to poultry premises is almost entirely by direct or indirect spread from wild birds and that there has been no transmission between poultry premises apart from where they are located close together and are part of the same integrated company or business, and share staff and equipment. Key findings from these investigations help drive assessment and improvements in biosecurity best practice on poultry and other captive bird premises.

■ Flood Control

Helen Morgan:

[193826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to protect cross-border communities in England and Wales from flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency works closely with Natural Resources Wales to ensure [Flood Risk Management Plans](#) in the border areas of England and Wales follow a river catchment-based approach. Together they have worked with partner agencies

to develop the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme and a plan to increase resilience to English and Welsh communities across the Upper Severn catchment.

The Environment Agency, Defra, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) work together, and have regular discussions, to deliver a [joint programme of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Research and Development](#). Much of the Environment Agency's research relates to both England and Wales. In 2021 research into [understanding effective flood and coastal erosion risk governance in England and Wales](#) was published. This included reviewing the cross-border Severn Estuary Coastal Group.

Helen Morgan: [\[193827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on flooding in rivers that cross the English-Welsh border.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State has regular meetings with counterparts in the Devolved Administrations to discuss a range of issues.

■ Flood Control: Finance

Helen Morgan: [\[193825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to provide further funding to local communities under the Frequently Flooded Allowance.

Rebecca Pow:

On 5 April 2023, the government announced the first communities to benefit from the £100 million Frequently Flooded Allowance (FFA), with over £26 million allocated to 53 projects. Further FFA projects will be selected as part of the Environment Agency's annual refresh of the £5.2 billion floods capital programme, which sets out the latest information on projects in the programme. All Risk Management Authorities can consider and put forward eligible projects as part of this process.

■ Horses: Imports

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[192230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many horses were recorded entering the UK via (a) Dover and (b) other ports in each year from 2016 to 2023.

Mark Spencer:

PORT	2021	2022	2023
Birkenhead	6	0	0
Cairnryan	45	10	3

PORT	2021	2022	2023
Dover	6672	8465	3497
Fishguard	100	243	100
Folkestone	743	1550	644
Harwich	488	601	341
Holyhead	7993	9485	4742
Hull	0	2	0
Immingham	13	3	12
Killingholme	101	112	41
Liverpool	0	9	2
Newcastle	0	2	0
Newhaven	3	37	3
Pembroke	597	952	411
Portsmouth	673	1197	464
Other	1058	939	215
Total	18,492	23,607	10,475

The data provided is in respect of GB imports only.

We do not hold data on the port of entry into GB prior to 1 January 2021 as this information is not available on TRACES NT System.

■ **Reservoirs: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[193568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of reservoir capacity (a) in and (b) serving Yorkshire.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given on 26 June 2023, PQ [190522](#).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****John Healey:**[\[193567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2023 to Question 192253 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) eligible principals his Department has placed on commercial flights from Pakistan to the UK for relocation under the ARAP scheme.

Leo Docherty:

Since 1 December 2022, the number of Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) - eligible persons placed on commercial flights from Pakistan to the UK is 35 (this includes 4 principals and 31 dependents).

■ Climate Change**Dan Carden:**[\[193199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking internationally to protect (a) children and (b) women from the impact of climate change.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We have committed £165 million to address the dual challenges of gender inequality and climate change. This includes the Community Resilience Partnership Programme which will help empower local communities and grassroots women's groups in Asia and the Pacific. We are also investing in programmes to build women's climate resilience through our Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. In 2022, the FCDO launched a new approach to addressing the climate, environment and biodiversity crisis in and through girls' education. It provides a new framework for priority actions for education sector actors to build school systems that are resilient to climate change.

■ Climate Change: Expenditure**Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[193284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of his Department's climate finance budget was (a) reallocated from the Official Development Assistance budget, (b) reallocated from other budgets held by his Department and (c) new spending in (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

UK International Climate Finance (ICF) is Official Development Assistance and is managed as part of a single budget allocation through the spending review process.

■ Climate Change: Finance

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[193283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the UK International Climate Finance Strategy, published on 30 March 2023, how much his Department spent on international climate finance in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23; and how much he plans to spend in each financial year to 2025-26.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK spent over £1.4 billion on international climate finance over the course of the 2021-2022 financial year, supporting developing countries to reduce poverty and respond to the causes and impacts of climate change. Figures for financial year 2022-2023 and subsequent years will be published in due course.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[193285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of his Department's spending on climate finance has been allocated to (a) mitigation and (b) adaptation in the (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23 financial years; and what proportion of his Department's planned spending on climate finance is expected to be spent on (A) mitigation and (B) adaptation in (1) 2023-24, (2) 2024-25 and (3) 2025-26.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

In financial year 2021-2022 approximately 64% of UK international climate finance was spent on mitigation and 36% on adaptation. Figures for financial year 2022-2023 and subsequent years will be published in due course. The UK is committed to achieving balance between adaptation and mitigation spending. In support of this and to support the most vulnerable who are experiencing the worst impacts of climate change, we will triple our funding for adaptation from £500 million in 2019 to £1.5 billion in 2025.

■ Colombia: Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[193553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the cost-effectiveness of the work of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund in Colombia.

David Rutley:

We continually monitor the impact and effectiveness of our Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) programming in Colombia which has been consistently evaluated as high performing, including in our most recent Annual Review. Since 2015, the UK has committed £82 million through the CSSF to support the peace process and improve stability and security in Colombia. Our funding is providing valuable support to the Colombian Government's rural development and reintegration programmes, transitional justice mechanisms, and strengthening law enforcement capability to counter narcotics and illicit finance both in Colombia and across Latin America. The most recent programme summaries of CSSF programmes in Colombia

are published on GOV.UK. [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conflict-stability-and-security-fund-programme-summaries-for-the-americas-2021-to-2022>]

■ Czechia and Poland: Holocaust

Bob Blackman:

[\[192983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) the Czech Republic and (b) Poland on compensation for properties and possessions that were seized during the Holocaust.

Leo Docherty:

The UK continues to meet its commitments under Terezín Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets. Lord Pickles, the UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, raises these issues with his Polish and Czech counterparts at every appropriate opportunity, most recently with Czechia at the June International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary in Dubrovnik. In March, Lord Pickles hosted a meeting of his counterparts where the Foreign Secretary also spoke. In November 2022, Lord Pickles chaired a discussion on property restitution in Czechia. The UK will continue to encourage partners, including Czechia and Poland, to ensure that any restitution or compensation claims are addressed.

■ Developing Countries: Debts

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[193406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the International Development Committee's Eighth Special Report of Session 2022–23, HC1393, published on 8 June 2023, whether his Department commissioned research to assess the level of private sector lending to low-income countries in the last decade to support his Department's conclusion that a legislative approach to debt relief is not needed.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recognises the importance of private sector lending to low-income countries. Government borrowing can be a positive source of development finance if done sustainably.

At this time, the Government is focused on delivering a market-based (contractual) approach to private sector participation in debt restructuring.

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) Review in September 2020 found this approach has been largely effective. As such the UK led the recent development of Majority Voting Provisions for private loans.

The UK, alongside international partners, expect private creditors to participate in debt restructurings on terms at least as favourable as bilateral (i.e. country) creditors.

■ Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

Beth Winter:

[\[193279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with their counterparts in the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Department on the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill and its compliance with UN Security Council resolution 2334.

David Rutley:

Yes. FCDO officials have been in regular contact with their counterparts from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities throughout the development of the bill. They have discussed a number of issues, including the compliance with UNSCR 2334.

Layla Moran:

[\[193478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department provided advice to the Prime Minister on the Economic Activities of Public Bodies Bill.

David Rutley:

Yes. FCDO officials have been involved throughout the development of the bill and have provided advice to all relevant departments, including No 10. The bill will implement a manifesto commitment and ensure that the UK speaks with one voice internationally and the taxpayer only has to pay for foreign policy once. Public bodies should not be pursuing their own foreign policy agenda.

■ Ghana: LGBT+ People

David Mundell:

[\[192976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the proposals for a bill restricting LGBT+ rights in Ghana; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of placing sanctions on people promoting this bill.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK continues to monitor the Private Members Bill [on the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values], which would further criminalise consensual same-sex relationships and undermine the human rights and freedoms of LGBT+ people and allies.

The UK routinely encourages Ghana to confirm its opposition to all forms of discrimination and uphold the human rights provisions enshrined in Ghana's Constitution, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the principles of both the African and Commonwealth Charters. I [Andrew Mitchell] raised the Bill with partners in June 2023. We continue to consider options in the event the Bill is approved by Parliament and granted assent.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[193412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last made a statement calling on Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian territories.

David Rutley:

A negotiated peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians leading to a two-state solution means the end to the occupation. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution, resulting in a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states. The FCDO Minister for the Indo-Pacific most recently reaffirmed our support for a two-state solution on 4 July.

■ Land Mines

Rachael Maskell:

[\[193416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help support the development of safe means for defusing (a) landmines and (b) unexploded munitions.

Leo Docherty:

The Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP), the FCDO's main vehicle for tackling the threat posed by landmines, cluster munitions, and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), currently funds demining in eight countries. GMAP has a confirmed budget of £14.8 million for this financial year. The FCDO requires all GMAP implementing partners to be fully compliant with National and International Mine Action Standards (NMAS/IMAS) and to review regularly their Standard Operating Procedures. GMAP encourages implementing partners to utilize innovative methods to improve the effectiveness and safety of demining.

■ Multinational Companies

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[193413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what account he takes of the interests of multinational companies with headquarters in the UK in setting his foreign policy priorities.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office consistently maintains relationships with, and routinely consults with a range of business interests, including multinational corporations, to support foreign policy formulation and delivery. This includes through our network of Embassies and High Commissions. The precise nature of consultation depends on the policy and objective in scope. We work closely with other government departments - for example the Department of Business and Trade, to coordinate business engagement.

■ Nnamdi Kanu

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[192974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 July 2023 to Question 191531 on Nnamdi Kanu, what representations he has received on legal action to seek the release of Nnamdi Kanu.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has received a number of representations calling for a range of actions in relation to Nnamdi Kanu's case. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office maintains that its current approach is the most effective route to maintaining consular access to Nnamdi Kanu and ensuring he is treated in line with international standards.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[192975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 July 2023 to Question 191529 on Nnamdi Kanu, what discussions he has had with his Commonwealth counterparts on whether the Nigerian government has upheld the principles set out in the Charter of the Commonwealth of Nations in its treatment of Nnamdi Kanu.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Secretary of State has not had any discussions with Commonwealth counterparts on whether the Nigerian Government has upheld the principles set out in the Charter of the Commonwealth of Nations in its treatment of Nnamdi Kanu. Ministers and officials have raised Nnamdi Kanu's case with the Nigerian authorities on multiple occasions, most recently with the Foreign Secretary who raised his case with the then Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama on 14 March 2023, and our High Commissioner with then Minister Onyeama on 22 May 2023.

■ Nuclear Weapons

Rachael Maskell:

[\[193417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons and (b) fulfil the UK's obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Leo Docherty:

Alongside reinforced deterrence and defence, the UK champions strategic risk reduction. The UK participates in expert level meetings among nuclear-weapon States on strategic risk reduction and nuclear doctrines to reduce the risk of misinterpretation and miscalculation. HMG also promotes dialogue between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. The UK remains committed to the full implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and will work at the upcoming NPT Preparatory Committee to make progress. This will include pushing for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and expanding access

to peaceful nuclear technologies to support sustainable development through our Sustained Dialogue initiative.

■ Uganda: Homosexuality

Sir Conor Burns:

[\[193084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on LGBT+ Rights has had with the Ugandan Government on that country's Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023.

Sir Conor Burns:

[\[193085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department's High Commission in Uganda has provided to the LGBT+ community in that country since the adoption of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

I [Andrew Mitchell] issued a statement on 29 May strongly condemning the Government of Uganda's decision to sign the deeply discriminatory Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 into law. I met with the Ugandan Foreign Minister on 14 March and 4 May 2023, and the Ugandan High Commissioner on 1 June 2023, to underline the strength of our opposition to the Act and highlight its impacts on the safety of LGBT+ people in Uganda. The Prime Minister has also spoken with the Foreign Minister, as has the Foreign Secretary with the High Commissioner. The British High Commission in Uganda has made the strength of the UK's opposition to this Act clear across its engagements with the Ugandan Government, and is engaging with the LGBT+ community and human rights defenders to understand the impact of the Act on the safety of LGBT+ people and support their efforts to protect the rights of vulnerable communities.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[193192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to introduce (a) travel bans and (b) sanctions on politicians promoting the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 in Uganda; what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on coordinating potential sanctions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

I issued a statement on 29 May strongly condemning the Government of Uganda's decision to sign the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 into law. The UK does not speculate on future sanctions designations, as to do so would reduce their impact. We will continue to stand up for human rights and freedoms in Uganda and around the world.

■ Uganda: LGBT+ People**Dan Carden:** [\[193014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Uganda on the safety of LGBT+ human rights activists in Uganda.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

I [Andrew Mitchell] issued a statement on 29 May strongly condemning the Government of Uganda's decision to sign the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 into law. I spoke to the Ugandan Foreign Minister on 14 March and 4 May 2023 to underline the strength of our opposition to the Act and highlight its impacts on the safety of LGBT+ people in Uganda. The Prime Minister has also spoken to the Ugandan Foreign Minister, as has the Foreign Secretary to the Ugandan High Commissioner to the UK. The UK has met with members of the LGBT+ community and human rights defenders to understand the impact of the Act on their safety and support their efforts to protect the rights of vulnerable communities.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[193315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times consignments of goods were returned to Great Britain from Northern Ireland because of a failure to comply with European Union requirements in (a) 2021 and (b) 2022.

Leo Docherty:

No consignments were returned once they had entered Northern Ireland for customs purposes. Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) controls are the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA). In 2021, approximately 180 consignments were returned by DAERA, or less than 0.001 per cent of the total. In 2022, approximately 140 consignments were returned by DAERA, or less than 0.0001 per cent of the total.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Cancer: St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust****Derek Twigg:** [\[193298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of cancer patients of St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust who received an urgent referral received their first treatment within 62 days of that referral in (a) March and (b) April 2023.

Derek Twigg: [\[193299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of cancer patients of Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

who received an urgent referral received their first treatment within 62 days of that referral in (a) March and (b) April 2023.

Will Quince:

The following tables set out the number and proportion of patients who received treatment within 62 days of an urgent general practitioner referral at St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in March 2023 and April 2023.

ST HELENS AND KNOWSLEY TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

Month	Number of Patients treated within 62 days	62-day standard performance
March 2023	89.5	79%
April 2023	83.5	82%

WARRINGTON AND HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

Month	Number of Patients treated within 62 days	62-day standard performance
March 2023	24.5	50.5%
April 2023	20.5	48.2%

Note: Partial numbers are patients that have received treatment across two different National Health Service trusts.

Cancer waiting time standard statistics are published on the NHS England website, and are available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/cancer-waiting-times/>

■ **Cannabis: Medical Treatments**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[193547]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will meet members of the Medcan Family Foundation to discuss the availability of advanced unlicensed medicinal cannabis for those people who had been diagnosed with childhood epilepsy.

Will Quince:

Health Ministers have met with families and patients and have discussed the challenges around the use of unlicensed cannabis-based medicines at great length in Parliament., Ministers are focused on galvanising research to determine if these products are safe and effective and might be funded within the National Health Service.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research and NHS England will be supporting two world-first randomised control trials on cannabinoids in the treatment of epilepsy. When further details on the trials is available, we will ensure the Medcan Family Foundation are informed.

■ **Dementia: Research**

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[193215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on doubling dementia research funding by 2024-5.

Helen Whately:

We will double funding for dementia research to £160 million per year by 2024/25. This will span all areas of research, from causes and prevention to treatment and care, delivering evidence to help prevent, diagnose and treat dementia, enabling the best possible care and quality of life for people with dementia.

In 2021/22, the total Government spend on dementia research was £80.3 million. Recent progress to meet the commitment includes the launch of the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission, which aims to speed up the development of new treatments, supported by £95 million of Government funding; £131 million committed to the next five years of the UK Dementia Research Institute; and £11 million investment into digital innovations to detect and diagnose dementia.

■ **Dental Services: Halton**

Derek Twigg: [\[193300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of dentist practices in the Borough of Halton are taking on new adult NHS patients.

Neil O'Brien:

National Health Service dental practice profiles at NHS.UK show whether practices are currently accepting new patients. This information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education**

Caroline Nokes: [\[192979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department produced a ministerial response under the write round process to the Department for Education's review of the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum.

Will Quince:

The Secretary of State for Education has been clear she is very concerned about reports of inappropriate materials being used to teach relationships and sex education (RSHE). The Government has brought forward the review of the RSHE

statutory guidance as a result, including conducting a public consultation as soon as possible.

The statutory guidance clearly states that the guidance will be reviewed every three years from first teaching (September 2020) and so the decision to review the guidance does not require collective agreement. The Secretary of State for Education will seek collective agreement to the consultation documents through a write-round process, before publishing the consultation in the autumn. This process is not yet underway.

■ **Diabetes: Medical Equipment**

Catherine West:

[\[193748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with type 1 diabetes have access to new diabetes technology.

Will Quince:

In March 2022 the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended that all adults and children with type 1 diabetes should have access on the National Health Service to continuous glucose monitoring. Both intermittent and real-time Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGMs) are available to people with type one diabetes under the NHS. CGMs can be provided under NHS prescription and sensors collected from local pharmacies.

NICE is currently developing technology appraisal guidance, which considers clinical and cost effectiveness, on hybrid closed loop systems for managing blood glucose levels in people with type 1 diabetes.

In 2022/23, funding worth £36 million was allocated to integrated care boards, weighted by local levels of deprivation, to support more people to receive all recommended diabetes care processes, alongside other NHS Long Term Plan diabetes commitments. The Diabetes Programme national and regional teams monitor progress and provide support to systems through national guidance and clinical networks.

■ **Endoscopy: Cumbria and South Tyneside**

Kate Osborne:

[\[193793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to reduce endoscopy waiting lists in (a) the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System and (b) South Tyneside.

Kate Osborne:

[\[193794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System plans to take to increase the availability of endoscopy procedures for patients in Jarrow constituency.

Will Quince:

£2.3 billion was awarded at the 2021 Spending Review to transform diagnostic services over the next three years to increase diagnostic capacity, including for endoscopy services. This funding will also increase the number of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) up to 160 by March 2025, including a number delivering endoscopy services.

Cutting National Health Service waiting lists, including for endoscopy services, is one of the Government's top priorities. This is a shared ambition amongst integrated care systems (ICSs), including the North East and North Cumbria ICS. Priorities are set locally through joint strategic needs assessments as part of joint forward plans across the ICS and partnering NHS trusts.

NHS North-East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board is working closely with partner organisations to produce a Joint Forward Plan for 2023/24 to 2028/29, which is due to be published soon. The plan will include a significant focus on improving pathways, capacity and ultimately patient experience across diagnostic pathways, including endoscopy.

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, the main provider of diagnostics for South Tyneside and Jarrow, plan to deliver a 4% increase in elective activity from their 2019/2020 levels. This includes endoscopy services.

■ Endoscopy: Essex**Mr John Baron:**[\[193563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce endoscopy waiting lists in (a) Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System and (b) Basildon and Brentwood constituency.

Mr John Baron:[\[193564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System plans to take to increase the number of endoscopy procedures for patients in Basildon and Billericay constituency.

Will Quince:

£2.3 billion was awarded at the 2021 Spending Review to transform diagnostic services over the next three years to increase diagnostic capacity, including for endoscopy services. This funding will also increase the number of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) up to 160 by March 2025, including a number delivering endoscopy services.

Cutting National Health Service waiting lists, including for endoscopy services, is one of this Government's top priorities. This is a shared ambition amongst integrated care systems (ICSs), including the Mid and South Essex ICS. Priorities are set locally through joint strategic needs assessments as part of joint forward plans across the ICS and partnering National Health Service trusts.

As the principal provider of diagnostic services in the ICB footprint, Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust is currently formulating and confirming its recovery plans with the integrated care board. The Trust intends to increase both internal capacity and insourcing with external support.

Additional endoscopy capacity from new Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) currently being established across the ICS will start to come onstream later this year. On the border of the Basildon and Billericay constituency, the Pitsea area will host Pitsea CDC. Once open, endoscopy services may be offered to the local population, where convenient, to improve their access to diagnostic care, including endoscopy services.

■ Fractures: Health Services

Matt Hancock: [\[192564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that the Major Conditions Strategy identifies Fracture Liaison Services as an exemplar of good practice to be deployed across Integrated Care Systems.

Helen Whately:

Musculoskeletal conditions which includes osteoporosis is one of the group of conditions included in the Major Conditions Strategy. The strategy will aim to identify actions in the areas of prevention, treatment and long term management of care to improve outcomes for individuals across the six major condition groups.

To inform the development of the strategy and to ensure a wide range of experiences are considered, the Department launched a call for evidence to seek wider views and ideas from the public and organisations.

Matt Hancock: [\[192818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce fragility fractures; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Fracture Liaison Services on reducing (a) re-fracture rates and (b) hip fractures.

Matt Hancock: [\[192819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) identify and (b) treat osteoporosis patients to avoid re-fracture; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the use of Fracture Liaison Services.

Will Quince:

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

The Government recognise the value of quality assured secondary fracture prevention services, including Fracture Liaison Services. NHS England is working with commissioners to support the mobilisation and implementation of Fracture

Liaison Services in each area and to establish a greater number of clinics. This includes their work through the Getting it Right First Time Programme, with a specific workstream on musculoskeletal health, and they are exploring how best to support integrated care systems in the diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis. This includes a focus on improving provision of and equity of access to high quality, secondary fracture prevention services, such as Fracture Liaison Services, which help to identify those most at risk and offer preventative support.

To help support trends in the identification rate for patients with osteoporotic fracture and to improve early identification of osteoporosis, the Quality Improvement Partnership commissions and manages the Falls and Fragility Fracture Audit on behalf of NHS England. This includes the Hip Fracture Database, as well as an audit focusing on Fracture Liaison Services. This audit has developed the Fracture Liaison Service Database to benchmark services and drive quality improvement.

■ **General Practitioners: Halton**

Derek Twigg:

[\[193301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GPs retired before the age of 65 in the Borough of Halton in each year since 2015.

Neil O'Brien:

The data requested is not held centrally.

■ **General Practitioners: Stockport**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[193425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2023 to Question 192213 on General Practitioners: Stockport, if he will start collecting data on the average waiting time for a referral by a GP to a specialist in Stockport constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

There are currently no plans to collect data at constituency level. Data on waiting times is routinely collected at trust level, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/>

■ **Health Professions: English Language**

Luke Pollard:

[\[193665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the current time limit to complete Occupational English Tests on medical professionals sitting the test in (a) the South West and (b) the rest of the UK; and whether he has plans to change the time limit.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made by the Department to address time limits in English language exams, or on the number of medical professionals this impacts in the

United Kingdom. Neither the Department nor the healthcare regulators set the content or time limit of English language exams. The content and time limit of English language exams is set by the organisation carrying out the assessment.

■ Low Emission Zones: Health

Rachael Maskell: [\[192663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of ultra low emissions zones on health outcomes.

Neil O'Brien:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Munira Wilson: [\[193528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS England's proposal that children, young people and their families and carers presenting to community-based mental health services should start to receive help within four weeks from referral, whether his Department has set a date for implementing that proposal.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with NHS England on the introduction of this new waiting time standard for children and young people's community-based mental health services as part of its clinically led review of National Health Service access standards. A date for its introduction has not yet been set.

Colleen Fletcher: [\[193604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the average waiting time for children and adolescent mental health services in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting lists for those services in those areas.

Maria Caulfield:

No such estimates have been made as a national access and waiting times standard for children and young people's mental health services in England has not yet been defined or set. However, we are aware that the rise in demand for children and young people's mental health services has meant an increase in waiting times for some people.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to increasing investment into mental health services by at least an additional £2.3 billion a year by March 2024. This will allow 345,000 more children and young people, including children and young people to access National Health Service-funded mental health support and improve waiting times.

NHS England has also consulted on the potential to introduce a waiting time standard for children, young people and their families/carers presenting to community-based

mental health services, to start to receive care within four weeks from referral. We are now working with NHS England on the next steps.

■ **Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[193603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the length of waiting lists for mental health services in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made as national access and waiting times standards for these services in England has not yet been defined or set.

We are working with NHS England on the introduction of new waiting time standards for both children and young people's community-based mental health services and urgent referrals across all ages to community-based mental health crisis services as part of its clinically led review of National Health Service access standards. A date for their introduction has not yet been set.

■ **Mental Health: LGBT+ People**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[193018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on research into LGBTQ+ mental health in the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). In 2021/22, NIHR spent approximately £120 million on mental health research, reflecting a significant year-on-year increase in investment.

The NIHR is currently supporting 11 research studies into LGBT mental health with an approximate total award value of £9.6 million.

■ **MMR vaccine**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[193554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of children have been given the measles, mumps and rubella vaccination in each of the last three years.

Maria Caulfield:

Coverage of childhood vaccines is measured when children reach their first, second and fifth birthdays.

The following table shows annual data from 2019/20 to 2021/22 for MMR vaccine coverage (percentage uptake) in England:

	MMR1 AT TWO YEARS		MMR1 AT FIVE YEARS		MMR2 AT FIVE YEARS	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2021/22	552,604	89.2%	641,941	93.4%	588,853	85.7%
2020/21	569,675	90.3%	654,197	94.3%	601,053	88.6%
2019/20	589,306	90.6%	651,969	94.5%	598,626	86.8%

Source: NHS Digital 'Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics'

■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: General Practitioners

Virginia Crosbie: [\[193472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many musculoskeletal first contact practitioners were working in general practice as of 11 July 2023.

Neil O'Brien:

There were 1,894 full-time equivalent first contact physiotherapists in March 2023 working in general practices and primary care networks.

■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Health Services

Sir George Howarth: [\[193303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include musculoskeletal services in the Getting It Right First Time programme.

Will Quince:

The Department does not directly set the scope of the Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme as it sits within NHS England's formal structure. The scope of workstreams for the programme is directed by NHS England, in discussion with key stakeholders.

The programme undertakes clinically led reviews of specialties, including musculoskeletal (MSK) services. These reviews combine wide-ranging data and analysis with the input and expertise of senior clinicians to examine effectiveness of current services and identify opportunities for improvement.

In 2021, NHS England launched The BestMSK Health Collaborative, which aimed to recover and rebuild high-quality, high-value personalised MSK provision, integrated across primary, community and secondary care and with mental health, social services and third sector organisations. This programme closed at the end of September 2022, and key workstreams were subsumed by the GIRFT programme from October.

■ NHS: Staff

Rachael Maskell: [\[193771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding provided for the NHS Workforce Plan will be for professional development of (a) medical staff and (b) non-medical staff.

Will Quince:

It is the responsibility of individual employers to invest in the future of their staff and provide continuing professional development (CPD) funding.

To supplement local employer investment for CPD, the Government announced in September 2019 a £210 million funding boost to provide every nurse, midwife and allied health professional (AHP) working in the National Health Service in England with a personal budget of £1,000 over the three years to 2022/23.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan sets out NHS England's commitment to continue national CPD funding for nurses, midwives and AHPs. The operation of this scheme will be kept under review, to ensure subsequent funding is in line with workforce growth and inflation, well targeted and achieving the desired outcomes.

Rachael Maskell: [\[193772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to review the workforce planning data in the NHS Workforce plan.

Will Quince:

We will continue to develop the modelling underpinning the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. We will publish a refreshed projection every two years, or aligned with fiscal events as appropriate.

Rachael Maskell: [\[193773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce a delivery strategy for (a) the retention proposals in and (b) other aspects of NHS Workforce Plan.

Will Quince:

We are currently finalising the design of the governance framework following the publication of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. This will include governance of the retention proposals.

Rachael Maskell: [\[193774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle childcare issues faced by NHS staff.

Will Quince:

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan sets out the importance of supporting staff to access childcare by making use of the changes announced in the Spring Budget 2023 that extended childcare support to working parents over the next three years.

The intention set out in the 2023 Budget will dramatically increase the availability of childcare and reduce costs to families.

The plan also recognises the high proportion of women in the workforce that are likely to have parental/caring responsibilities and sets out the importance of developing an approach to embed a culture of flexible working to support the National Health Service workforce

■ **Obesity: Children**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[193565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on reducing rates of childhood obesity.

Neil O'Brien:

New regulations on out-of-home calorie labelling for food sold in large businesses, including restaurants, cafes and takeaways, came into force in April 2022.

Restrictions on the placement of less healthy products in key selling locations in store and online came into force on 1 October 2022. The location restrictions are the single most impactful obesity policy for reducing children's calorie consumption and are expected to accrue health benefits of over £57 billion and provide National Health Service savings of over £4 billion over the next 25 years.

We are also working with the food industry to make further progress on reformulation and ensure it is easier for the public to make healthier choices. We have seen important successes, including the average sugar content of drinks subject to the Soft Drinks Industry Levy decreasing by 46% between 2015 and 2020. There has also been success in some categories of the sugar reduction programme, including a 14.9% reduction of sugar in retailer- and manufacturer-branded breakfast cereals and a 13.5% reduction in yoghurts and fromage frais.

■ **Postural Tachycardia Syndrome: Medical Treatments**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[193511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of IV fluid interventions on patients with Postural tachycardia syndrome; and if he will take steps to support this treatment at York Hospital.

Will Quince:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made no assessment of the potential impact of IV fluid interventions on patients with postural tachycardia syndrome. Therefore, there are no plans to support this treatment at York Hospital.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has published guidance on myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) and recommends being aware that people with these conditions may experience orthostatic intolerance, including postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. It does not make

any recommendations on management or treatment; however, it does recommend that people with ME/CFS should maintain fluid intake as part of healthy diet.

■ **Primary Health Care: Crimes of Violence**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[193016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of assaults against LGBTQ+ staff members in primary care settings in the last 12 months.

Neil O'Brien:

The data requested is not held centrally.

■ **Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[193585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer 6 July 2023 to Question 192041 on Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination, when he expects to announce his policy position on respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme.

Maria Caulfield:

Policy options based on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice on a potentially expanded respiratory syncytial virus vaccination programme are being developed. If policy is approved, only then will Government announce its plans.

■ **Restless Legs Syndrome: Drugs**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[193409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the efficacy of prescribed medications for (a) restless leg syndrome and (b) periodic leg movement disorder.

Will Quince:

Before a medicine is licenced, an assessment of quality, safety and efficacy data is carried out by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). A Marketing Authorisation will only be granted if the overall benefit of taking the medicine outweighs any risks. Licensed medicines that are indicated for the treatment of restless leg syndrome include ropinirole, pramipexole and rotigotine.

The restless leg syndrome indication for oxycodone/naloxone combination products was reviewed as part of the Commission on Human Medicines' Opioid Expert Working Group review of dependence and addiction with opioid medicines in 2019. The review concluded that that oxycodone/naloxone was effective in the treatment of restless leg syndrome and that there had been a lack of evidence of harm from the use of oxycodone/naloxone in this indication.

Following approval, the safety of the medicine is monitored by the MHRA using the Yellow Card scheme. Should it come to the attention of the MHRA that the efficacy of a medicine is reduced, the MHRA are able to review and take appropriate action as necessary. Product information of drugs approved by the MHRA, and public assessment reports, are available on the MHRA website, which is available at the following link:

<https://products.mhra.gov.uk/>

■ Social Services: Crimes of Violence

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: **[193015]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many assaults against LGBTQ+ staff members in social care settings there were in the last 12 months.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold data on assaults against staff members in social care settings and does not hold data on the number of people who work in adult social care who identify as LGBT.

■ Strokes: Health Services

Andrew Gwynne: **[193587]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients are admitted to a specialist stroke bed within 72 hours of a stroke.

Will Quince:

It is not possible to provide data of how many and what proportion of patients are admitted to a specialist stroke bed within 72 hours of a stroke, as that metric is not measured by NHS England.

NHS England Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme showed that between January to March 2023 showed that 96.8% or 14,759 patients arrived at hospital within 72 hours of onset of symptoms of stroke. The median time from onset of symptoms to arrival at a stroke unit was 11 hours and eight minutes.

91.9% of patients went to a stroke unit as the first admitting ward, being admitted with a median of four hours and 55 minutes from arrival at the hospital.

■ Surgery

Virginia Crosbie: **[193473]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department planned timeline is for providers to deliver Perioperative Care Co-ordination teams.

Will Quince:

From April 2023, providers have been asked to establish Perioperative Care Co-ordination teams. These are multidisciplinary teams who will assess health needs to proactively inform pre- and post-operative care and identify surgical risk factors, in order to reduce the chance of cancellations and to improve patient outcomes.

■ Transport: Exhaust Emissions

Rachael Maskell: [\[192662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to use transport emission data to inform public health interventions.

Neil O'Brien:

Local authorities have powers over local transport and have a strategic planning function, and therefore play an important role in addressing the impact of transport-related air pollution. Local authorities are responsible for assessing their air quality for specified pollutants and must take proactive action to improve air quality. Where local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan or Air Quality Strategy, Directors of Public Health should be involved in the preparation of these documents.

■ Widnes Urgent Treatment Centre

Derek Twigg: [\[193302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for patients attending the Widnes Urgent Treatment centre in each month since January 2023.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally. Average median waiting time data is only held at National Health Service trust level and is for all accident and emergency (A&E) service types, including type 1 major A&E services and Urgent Treatment Centres.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Charlotte Nichols: [\[191967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of appealing the decision in the case of AAA and others v. the Secretary of State for the Home Department to the Supreme Court.

Robert Jenrick:

On 29 June, the Court of Appeal handed down its judgment in the Judicial Review of the UK's Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda.

No precise estimate has been made of the cost of appealing the Court of Appeal decision. The costs of taking this matter to the Supreme Court will be dependent on the complexity of the litigation and on the final outcome of the case which will determine each party's liability for costs. An accurate estimate at this point is therefore not possible.

Our current asylum system is under extreme pressure and costing the country £3 billion a year and rising, including over £6 million a day on hotel accommodation. We cannot afford not to act.

Julian Sturdy: [\[192993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to facilitate family reunions for asylum seekers who are sent to Rwanda.

Robert Jenrick:

Everyone considered for relocation to Rwanda will be screened and have access to legal advice. Decisions will be taken on a case-by-case basis and nobody will be removed if it is unsafe for them.

We will thoroughly consider the circumstances of cases involving families with children according to our policy, statutory and international obligations. A full equality impact assessment has been published on gov.uk.

Individuals with family in the UK may still be relocated to Rwanda subject to a detailed consideration of their Article 8 rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

For those with family links in the UK who want to be considered for entry to the UK, they should seek to do so via safe and legal routes.

■ **Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[193541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have absconded from hotels or other similar accommodation since 1st January 2023; and in how many of those cases her Department has lost contact with the asylum seeker.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[193542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers absconded from (a) hotels and (b) other similar accommodation since 1 January 2023; and in how many and what proportion of those cases was all contact with her Department lost.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates the number of adult asylum seekers leaving accommodation providing under Section 98. We have a statutory duty to provide support and accommodation to destitute asylum seekers while their claim for asylum is being considered. The Home Office does not hold or detain asylum seekers in hotels or any other asylum accommodation. Individuals are free to leave if they wish and the Home Office has no power to detain those who wish to leave.

■ Banque du Liban**Dame Margaret Hodge:** [\[193281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the National Crime Agency has assessed a dossier submitted by the right hon. Member for Barking in April 2021; and whether that Agency has opened an investigation into the activities of the Lebanese Central Bank.

Tom Tugendhat:

We can confirm that the NCA received the report in April 2021. The NCA does not routinely confirm or deny the existence of investigations.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Sudan**Hilary Benn:** [\[192971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to enable British citizens who have been evacuated from Sudan to be reunited with family members who (a) remain in the country and (b) have fled to third countries.

Robert Jenrick:

Close family members of individuals who are in the UK with permission to stay as a refugee may be eligible to apply under the family reunion arrangements. Details can be found at: [Application for UK visa \(family joining refugee\): appendix 4 VAF4A - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Commission for Countering Extremism**Caroline Lucas:** [\[193322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the letter sent on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, Sir Matthew Rycroft, reference TRO/0589899/23, dated 29 June 2023, if she will provide the relevant wording in last update to the Charter made on 8 November 2021 which formed the basis for the statement in paragraph 4 that the Commission for Countering Extremism's Charter and priorities were applicable during the term of the first Commissioner; and if she will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas: [\[193323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the letter sent on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, Sir Matthew Rycroft, reference TRO/0589899/23, dated 29 June 2023, what the basis is for the statement in that letter that the Commission for Countering Extremism's Charter is not applicable to the current Commissioner; and if she will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas: [\[193324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the process is for making changes to the charter for the Commission for Countering Extremism; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Tugendhat:

An update was made to the Commission for Countering Extremism's GOV.UK website, inserting a note regarding the Commission's Charter, on 8 November 2021.

The note reads "the terms of this charter and priorities were applicable during Sara Khan's term as Commissioner (January 2018 to March 2021). This will be updated in due course."

The update can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charter-for-the-commission-for-countering-extremism>

Caroline Lucas:**[193350]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Commissioner for Countering Extremism has (a) operational independence and (b) a remit covering (i) Prevent and (ii) other counter-terrorism policies; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) provides the government with impartial, expert advice and scrutiny on the tools, policies and approaches needed to tackle extremism.

The CCE supports the public sector, communities, and civil society to confront extremism wherever it exists; and promotes a positive vision around core, shared values.

The Commissioner is a non-statutory public appointment by the Home Secretary and operates independently from government, supported by a small secretariat of civil servants. The Commissioner reports directly to the Home Secretary.

As set out in the Government Response to the Independent Review of Prevent on 8 February 2023, the Home Secretary will look to the Commissioner for Countering Extremism to provide independent scrutiny, expertise and thought leadership as we deliver the review's recommendations.

■ Cybercrime**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[193311]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, How much funding has the Government allocated to tackling cyber crime in the next twelve months.

Tom Tugendhat:

Tackling cyber crime is at the heart of the Government's National Cyber Strategy which is supported by £2.6 billion of investment over the three year Spending Review period. The [National Cyber Strategy](#) (2022-2025) has set the direction and ambition for investment and efforts across the UK cyber ecosystem. Delivery of the Strategy is being supported by the National Cyber Fund. This programme has allocated investment to lead government departments to support delivery of the objectives set out in the strategy.

In the financial year 23/24, the Home Office is receiving £18,243,506 from the National Cyber Fund to provide a range of capabilities and resource to tackle cyber crime. The National Crime Agency receives a further £30,300,000 from the National Cyber Fund, which includes building and maintaining high-end capabilities that allow a cross-system response to the most harmful cyber crimes, such as ransomware.

This funding is supplemented by a further £16,103,000 of Home Office funding under the Police Settlement Programme. This funding continues to build law enforcement capabilities at the national, regional and local levels to ensure they have the capacity to deal with the impacts of increasing volume and sophistication of cyber crime. This includes ensuring local police officers have the skills to investigate these crimes.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Smuggling**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[193586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests have been made in the last 12 months related to the sale of illegal vapes.

Chris Philp:

The information requested is not held.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on arrests in England and Wales, as part of the 'Police powers and procedures' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police powers and procedures: Stop and search and arrests, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

However, the data are broken down by wider offence group, therefore data on more specific offences such as the sale of illegal vapes is not available.

■ **Home Office: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education**

Caroline Nokes:

[\[192980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department produced a ministerial response under the write round process to the Department for Education's review of the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Secretary of State for Education has been clear she is very concerned about reports of inappropriate materials being used to teach relationships and sex education (RSHE). The Government has brought forward the review of the RSHE statutory guidance as a result, including conducting a public consultation as soon as possible. The statutory guidance clearly states that the guidance will be reviewed every three years from first teaching (September 2020) and so the decision to review the guidance does not require collective agreement. The Secretary of State for Education will seek collective agreement to the consultation documents through a write-round process, before publishing the consultation in the autumn. This process is not yet underway. As part of the review, an expert panel has been established to advise the Secretary of State on what topics should and should not be taught in

school and the introduction of age limits. This will provide clear guidance for teachers about when certain topics can be addressed.

In tandem to this work, the Oak Academy is producing a suite of materials to support teachers to create age-appropriate lessons plans and ensure that they have access to appropriate materials.

The Government is determined to make sure RSHE teaching leaves children equipped to make informed decisions about their health, wellbeing and relationships, in a sensitive way that reflects their stage of development.

The Government expects new statutory guidance to be released in the coming months. It will then be subject to public consultation to conclude by the end of the year, coming into statutory force as soon as possible after that.

■ Human Trafficking: Exploitation

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[193571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which charitable organisations (a) Ministers and (b) officials from her Department have met with to discuss how to prevent trafficking for sexual exploitation on Adult Services Websites; and on how many separate occasions they met for this purpose in each calendar year since 2017.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[193572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many victims of trafficking who have been exploited on adult services websites (a) officials and (b) Ministers from her Department have met with in each calendar year since 2017.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[193573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions (a) officials and (b) Ministers from her Department have met with victims of trafficking for (i) labour, (ii) sexual and (iii) criminal exploitation in each calendar year since 2017.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Stakeholder engagement is a normal and routine part of the government business across officials and Ministers. These engagements are not centrally recorded.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[193576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to paragraph 2.2.11 of the UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery, how much funding was provided for prevention work to raise awareness of the risks and signs of sexual exploitation among users of Adult Services Websites; which organisations received that funding; and if she will publish the (a) results and (b) evaluation of this campaign.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Home Office provided a grant of £10,000 in 2020/21 to fund a 3-month campaign targeted at UK-located sex buyers and those using adult service websites. The intention of the campaign was to increase their understanding of how adult service websites are used by offenders to advertise victims of sexual exploitation.

The campaign provided informative messaging on how to spot indicators, how sex buyers can help victims, and increasing confidence in reporting pathways with the aim to uplift reporting levels among UK located buyers of sexual services.

The recipient of the grant cannot be shared publicly as it compromises the intentions of the campaign itself. The campaign was evaluated; however, the results have not been published as it would potentially compromise future campaigns of this nature.

■ Migrants: Domestic Abuse

Daisy Cooper:

[\[193208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to publish the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme evaluation's final report.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot ran for 12 months from April 2021 to March 2022, during which time 425 victims were supported. The pilot and independent evaluation by Behavioural Insights Ltd aimed to ensure that we built a robust evidence base to inform any future policy decisions.

The Home Office is considering the findings of the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot evaluation and will communicate next steps in due course.

Funding has been extended for the scheme until March 2025 with up to £1.4 million allocated in financial years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, ensuring we maintain support for migrant victims of domestic abuse.

■ National Crime Agency: Staff

Drew Hendry:

[\[193490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of staffing levels in the National Crime Agency.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government is committed to tackling serious and organised crime in and against the UK. The National Crime Agency plays a critical role in this mission, and we have made significant progress in strengthening the Agency. The NCA's budget has increased by at least 21% in the last two years to over £860m, which will help it develop and maintain the critical capabilities and skilled workforce it needs.

The Crime and Courts Act 2013 gives the Director General of the Agency overall responsibility for staffing decisions. The NCA's Strategic Workforce Plan sets out its staffing needs over the next 3-5 years, to ensure the skills, size and shape workforce are appropriate to protect the public from serious and organised crime.

■ Offenders: Deportation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[193474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 July 2023 to Question 191940 on Offenders: Deportation, for what reasons her Department do not hold data on the average waiting time to return foreign offenders to their country of origin under the Facilitated Return Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The average time to return a Foreign National Offender who has been accepted for the Facilitated Return Scheme (FRS) is not available as automated data and would require a manual check of individual cases to calculate the average. The cost of collating the data would be disproportionate.

■ Overseas Students: Visas

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[193677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on and (b) estimate she has made of the number of international students studying in the UK who are required to depart the UK to obtain a further student visa and who have been affected by the University and College Union marking and assessment boycott.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[193678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to introduce concessions to enable students currently residing in the UK on a student visa to apply for a new student visa without departing the UK when an award for their current course has been deferred as a result of the University and College Union marking and assessment boycott.

Robert Jenrick:

The marking boycott is the result of a dispute between education institutions and their employees. The impacts at individual institutions vary and it is not possible for the Home Office to estimate the number of students affected.

■ Police Custody: Children

Janet Daby: [\[193747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the extent of the use of (a) intermediaries and (b) communications specialists for child suspects in police custody in England and Wales.

Janet Daby: [\[193749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has had recent discussions with the Northern Ireland Department of Justice on the use of (a) intermediaries and (b) communications specialists for child suspects in police custody.

Janet Daby:

[193750]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of appropriate adults acting in a (a) voluntary and (b) paid-for professional capacity for children in police custody.

Chris Philp:

Police custody is a core element of the criminal justice system and is critical for keeping the public safe. The Government is clear that children should only be detained in custody when absolutely necessary, and opportunities to divert children away from custody must be considered.

We expect forces to act in accordance with the statutory safeguards for children in custody, including the provision of appropriate adults. Police custody is governed by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Codes of Practice which sets out the legal framework for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers. PACE Code C is clear in Section 11.17 that appropriate adults should facilitate communication with children being interviewed. Authorised Professional Practice guidance on the operational management of custody suites is produced by the College of Policing.

We are aware of the recent Nuffield Foundation report, Examining the impact of PACE on the detention and questioning of young suspects, and its recommendation relating to the provision of intermediaries and speech and language therapists to children in custody. The Home Office is a member of the steering group for this research and officials are considering the report carefully.

The Home Office does not currently collect data on the type or status of the person who acted as an appropriate adult, but our Police Powers and Procedures bulletin published on 17 November shows that, for the forces who provided data to us, an appropriate adult was called for 99% of children in custody. We hold regular discussions with policing and wider stakeholders on the availability of appropriate adults and custody policy in general and this has included recent dialogue with the Northern Ireland Department of Justice on a range of issues.

Local authorities have a duty under Section 38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to provide appropriate adults provided for children. The role of the appropriate adult is to safeguard the rights, entitlements and welfare of juveniles and vulnerable persons in accordance with the Codes of Practice.

The Home Office provides annual funding to the National Association of Appropriate Adults (NAAN), which supports organisations providing appropriate adult services to young people and vulnerable adults in police custody. More information regarding standards and training can be found at <https://www.appropriateadult.org.uk/>. Home Office officials regularly engage with NAAN to discuss the provision of training to appropriate adults across England and Wales.

■ Prostitution: Internet**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[193590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2022 to Question 72950 on Home Office: Vivastreet, what discussions her Department has had with Adult Services Websites on developing a code of conduct for the operation of their industry; and whether she plans to publish that code.

Chris Philp:

As committed to in the Violence Against Woman and Girls Strategy, published in July 2021, the Government is working with adult service websites to explore a set of voluntary principles to counter exploitation on their sites. The principles will encourage adult service websites to take reasonable and practical steps to prevent modern slavery and exploitation on their platforms and work collaboratively with law enforcement.

The voluntary principles are still under development and will be published in due course.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Daisy Cooper:**[\[193510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help support Afghan refugees who are not able to secure housing before their bridging hotels close in August 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK made an ambitious and generous commitment to help resettle those fleeing persecution and those who served the UK. Since June 2021, we have brought 24,500 people to safety to the UK.

Bridging hotels are not and were never designed to be permanent accommodation. Long-term residency in hotels has prevented some Afghans from properly putting down roots, committing to employment and fully integrating into communities.

From the end of April 2023, individuals staying in hotels and serviced accommodation began to receive legal notice to leave their temporary accommodation by a certain date. A dedicated cross-government casework team, made up of Home Office Liaison Officers and DWP staff, are based in hotels and work alongside local authority officials to provide advice and support to Afghans.

The government is providing £285 million of new funding to local authorities supporting the Afghan resettlement schemes. This includes £35 million in new cash for local authorities, which will go towards increasing the level of support available and overcoming key barriers in accessing the housing system and employment and a £250 million expansion of the Local Authority Housing Fund to help councils to source homes to house Afghans currently in bridging accommodation. There are no bridging hotels in your consistency.

■ Refugees: Rwanda**Julian Sturdy:**[\[192994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that refugees who have used safe and legal routes of entry are not inadvertently deported to Rwanda.

Robert Jenrick:

As set out in the Home Office's Inadmissibility guidance, an asylum claimant may be eligible for removal to Rwanda if their claim is inadmissible under this policy and (a) that claimant's journey to the UK can be described as having been dangerous and (b) was made on or after 1 January 2022. A dangerous journey is one able or likely to cause harm or injury. This would therefore not include those who have arrived in the UK through safe and legal routes of entry.

A case-by-case assessment will take place for every individual considered for relocation. No one will be relocated if it is unsafe for them.

■ Short-term Holding Facilities: Managers**Beth Winter:**[\[193482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to page 1 of Annex B: Service Improvement Plan to HMIP Report on an unannounced inspection of STHFS Western Jet Foil, Manston and Kent Intake Unit, published on 6 June 2023, when the Wellbeing and Safeguarding Manager for Manston and Kent Intake Unit was appointed.

Robert Jenrick:

Our contractor appointed a Wellbeing and Safeguarding Manager in April 2023.

Beth Winter:[\[193483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to page 1 of Annex B: Service Improvement Plan to HMIP Report on an unannounced inspection of STHFS Western Jet Foil, Manston and Kent Intake Unit, published on 6 June 2023, on what dates the Minister for Immigration had meetings with the Wellbeing and Safeguarding Manager for Manston and Kent Intake Unit.

Robert Jenrick:

The position of wellbeing and safeguarding manager is a contractor-employed operational management role rather than a Home Office official. The wellbeing and safeguarding manager reports into the Home Office senior leadership team and, if appropriate, their work might feature in advice to Ministers. However, the wellbeing and safeguarding manager is not someone who would report to, or ordinarily engage with, the Ministers.

■ Undocumented Migrants

Jim Shannon:

[\[193000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to collaborate with devolved Governments on tackling illegal migration.

Robert Jenrick:

Immigration is a reserved matter and representatives from across Government meet with their counterparts and will continue to do so as part of regular engagement with the Devolved Administrations.

The Home Secretary chaired the Home Office's Interministerial Group with the Devolved Administrations on 11th July 2023, where one of the items for discussion was the Illegal Migration Bill.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Julian Sturdy:

[\[192995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Court of Appeal's decision of 29 June 2023 on the UK's migration and economic development partnership with Rwanda, whether she has taken recent steps to consider alternative options for housing people arriving in the UK who have crossed the English Channel in small boats.

Robert Jenrick:

While we are disappointed with the Court of Appeal's ruling in relation to deficiencies in Rwanda's asylum system that risk returning people inappropriately when they have a need for protection, we have been granted permission to appeal this judgement to the Supreme Court.

We continue to bring forward alternative accommodation options to reduce hotel use. We are standing up alternative accommodation sites including the sites of Scampton and Wethersfield.

In addition, the government is also seeking to use vessels to provide accommodation in line with the approach taken by countries like the Netherlands.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Fines

Steve Reed:

[\[193601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of court fines have been written back in each year since 2010.

Mike Freer:

Financial penalties imposed by the courts will often consist of multiple elements including, amongst others, compensation, victim surcharge, prosecutor's costs and a fine.

The Government takes the recovery and enforcement of all financial impositions very seriously and remains committed to ensuring impositions are paid. The courts will do everything within their powers to trace those who do not pay and use a variety of sanctions to ensure the recovery of criminal fines and financial penalties.

In very limited scenarios, HMCTS may decide to administratively write-off the debt, the circumstances in which this can happen are severely restricted and occur only when there is no opportunity for the debt to be collected, for example, when a company has been dissolved with no distributable assets. The debt is written off for administrative purposes only, the imposition is still legally enforceable and if in the future it becomes apparent that assets are available to pay the debt then the account is written back. In 2016-17, HMCTS commenced a project to enforce accounts that had previously been written off, this resulted in a period of three financial years where a large number of accounts were written back. There also remain specific and limited situations where the Court can legally cancel any debt.

The table below details the estimated volume and value of the fine element of an imposition that has been administratively written back for each financial year from 2013-14 to 2022-23. Data is not readily available prior to 2013.

FINANCIAL YEAR	ESTIMATED VOLUME OF ACCOUNTS (ESTIMATED DUE TO COMPLEXITY OF CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS)	VALUE OF FINE ACCOUNTS WRITTEN BACK £	VALUE OF FINE ACCOUNTS WRITTEN OFF £	VALUE OF FINES WRITTEN BACK AS PERCENTAGE OF AMOUNTS WRITTEN OFF IN YEAR
2022-23	1,888	605,307	12,748,036	4.7%
2021-22	1,974	616,156	9,096,490	6.8%
2020-21	1,584	645,262	9,411,764	6.8%
2019-20	2,986	1,480,343	10,938,117	13.5%
2018-19	69,322	16,583,176 – larger value due to historic debt project	8,261,350	200%
2017-18	297,269	56,548,650 - larger value due to historic debt project	12,107,194	467%
2016-17	Data not currently available	20,782,112- larger value due to	3,057,882	679%

FINANCIAL YEAR	ESTIMATED VOLUME OF ACCOUNTS (ESTIMATED DUE TO COMPLEXITY OF CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS)	VALUE OF FINE ACCOUNTS WRITTEN BACK £	VALUE OF FINE ACCOUNTS WRITTEN OFF £	VALUE OF FINES WRITTEN BACK AS PERCENTAGE OF AMOUNTS WRITTEN OFF IN YEAR
		historic debt project		
2015-16	Data not currently available	7,854,674	37,582,739	20.9%
2014-15	Data not currently available	2,457,203	47,801,989	5.1%
2013-14	Data not currently available	2,292,379	70,505,888	3.2%

■ Crime Prevention: Young People

Steve Reed:

[\[193366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's publication entitled £300 million to cut youth crime and make streets safer, published on 20 May 2022, if he will publish a breakdown of (a) what this funding has been spent on and (b) how much of this funding has yet to be spent.

Damian Hinds:

In May 2022, this Government announced £300 million in funding over 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 to prevent and tackle youth offending. That package has three components:

- Youth Justice Sports Fund: in 2022/23, we provided £5 million in funding to grassroots charities and organisations that use sport to support young people at risk of (re)offending. The fund supported almost 8,000 children and we are currently awaiting an independent evaluation as to its impact and findings;
- Turnaround programme: our flagship early intervention programme is providing multi-year funding to 155 Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) across England and Wales to provide targeted, wraparound support to up to 17,500 children to stop them going down a path of criminality. We provided £9 million in Turnaround funding in 2022/23, and will provide £23.75 million in 2023/24 and £23.75 million in 2024/25;
- Core YOT grant funding: the remaining funding is to YOTs for the operation and provision of youth justice services in their local area. This core funding provides YOTs with resources to undertake their statutory role in supervising children subject

to court orders, as well as to undertake work with children subject to out of court disposals. We provided £88.5 million in core YOT funding in 2022/23. Allocations for 2023/24 will be confirmed to YOTs very shortly, and their 2024/25 funding allocations will be confirmed in due course.

■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Income

Steve Reed:

[\[193632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the net fee income of His Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service in each of the last 10 years.

Mike Freer:

The table below shows this information for the last 10 years for which figures are available.

YEAR	NET FEE INCOME (£000s)
2012/13	477,092
2013/14	506,666
2014/15	583,673
2015/16	673,039
2016/17	741,946
2017/18	742,609
2018/19	738,057
2019/20	724,168
2020/21	562,183
2021/22	655,080

The net income shown here represents fees collected net of remissions under the Help With Fees scheme. However, figures are not adjusted for the impact of subsequent refunds under the Employment Tribunal, Council Tax Liability Order, New Burden settlement and other refund schemes.

Figures for 2022/23 are not available as the Annual Report and Accounts for this year have not yet been laid before Parliament. All figures are in nominal terms.

■ Ministry of Justice: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education**Caroline Nokes:**[\[192981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department produced a ministerial response under the write round process to the Department for Education's review of the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum.

Mike Freer:

The Secretary of State for Education has been clear she is very concerned about reports of inappropriate materials being used to teach relationships and sex education (RSHE). The Government has brought forward the review of the RSHE statutory guidance as a result, including conducting a public consultation as soon as possible.

The statutory guidance clearly states that the guidance will be reviewed every three years from first teaching (September 2020) and so the decision to review the guidance does not require collective agreement. The Secretary of State for Education will seek collective agreement to the consultation documents through a write-round process, before publishing the consultation in the autumn. This process is not yet underway.

As part of the review, an expert panel has been established to advise the Secretary of State on what topics should and should not be taught in school and the introduction of age limits. This will provide clear guidance for teachers about when certain topics can be addressed.

In tandem to this work, the Oak Academy is producing a suite of materials to support teachers to create age-appropriate lessons plans and ensure that they have access to appropriate materials.

The government is determined to make sure RSHE teaching leaves children equipped to make informed decisions about their health, wellbeing and relationships, in a sensitive way that reflects their stage of development.

The Government expects new statutory guidance to be released in the coming months. It will then be subject to public consultation to conclude by the end of the year, coming into statutory force as soon as possible after that.

■ Offenders: Employment**Mr Jonathan Lord:**[\[193352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of people in employment six months after release from prison.

Damian Hinds:

I am pleased to say that the proportion of prisoners released from custody who were employed at six months from their release has more than doubled between April 2021 and March 2023, from 14% to over 30%. In March 2023, 715 people released 6 months previously were in the workforce and contributing to the economy, an increase from 394 in April 2021.

We know that employment reduces the chance of reoffending significantly, by up to nine percentage points. That is why we are determined to increase the number of prison leavers securing employment on release to cut their chances of reoffending and so we can keep the public safe.

We are offering more offenders the chance to work in prison and on release from custody, supported by our new, dedicated Prison Employment Leads, who are now in post at 92 prisons. They provide case-level employment support, match prisoners to roles on release, and head up our new Employment Hubs, where prisoners can access support with job applications and CVs.

We are building stronger links with employers, including through our prison Employment Advisory Boards, which are chaired by local business leaders. They will provide challenge and advice on how to align the skills delivered in prisons with labour market demand. Chairs have now been appointed to 92 Employment Advisory Boards.

Data on the number and proportion of people in employment after release from prison is published regularly and can be found on the Gov website at [Employment Rates following Release from Custody - Ad Hoc - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-rates-following-release-from-custody).

■ Offenders: Rehabilitation

Martyn Day:

[\[193222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department are taking steps to expand rehabilitation programmes for offenders.

Damian Hinds:

Our rehabilitative offer is focused on making sure we take the right approach with the right person at the right time, based on risk and need. Our rehabilitation services take many forms, ranging from accredited programmes and interventions, to enabling a person to access education, healthcare, substance misuse support, suitable accommodation, and the means to earn a living. Some rehabilitative activity is delivered in-house, and some via commissioned services. We keep these under constant review to ensure we are acting in line with the available evidence whilst also meeting the rehabilitative needs of the people we work with.

■ Prisoners: Education

Steve Reed:

[\[193368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the proportions of eligible prison population that have (a) completed a course below level 2, (b) completed a course at level 2 or higher, (c) completed an initial (i) Maths and (ii) English assessment, (d) achieved a grade in a functional skills course and (e) completed an accredited programme as of July 2023.

Damian Hinds:

Because of the complex relationship between data on education outcomes and prison population statistics, it is not possible to provide this information in the form requested.

We do, however, publish data on the number of courses and programmes completed and the number of assessments undertaken. The most recent publication is at: [Prison Education and Accredited Programme Statistics 2021 - 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-education-and-accredited-programme-statistics-2021-2022). We plan to publish the data for 2022-23 in September.

Prisoners: Police Custody**Steve Reed:****[193369]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the implementation of Operation Safeguard.

Damian Hinds:

The Ministry of Justice has made provision to fund up to 400 police cells a day from within the overall departmental budget. The use of police cells is part of normal business: recently, however, there has been a significant increase in demand, prompting the formal request to implement Operation Safeguard to ensure a higher level of availability.

The actual cost of Operation Safeguard for the period since activation in February to June 2023 is £25.4m.

The total cost to the Ministry of Justice will depend on the actual number of cells occupied under Operation Safeguard each and how long they are occupied for, the requirement is kept under regular review.

Prisons: Crimes of Violence**John McDonnell:****[193050]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister of State on 4 July 2023, Official Report, Col. 760, if he will list the key performance indicators used to measure violence in prisons; and whether his Department plans to introduce any sanctions for prison operators failing to meet these targets.

Damian Hinds:

Prison governors and senior leaders use a variety of measures to understand violence within prisons. The 2021/2022 Prisons Performance Framework (PPT) rated the performance of all public and private sector prisons in England and Wales. It contains two violence Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which prisons are assessed against. These are:

- Prisoner on prisoner assaults – rate per 1,000 prisoners, and;
- Assaults on staff - rate per 1,000 prisoners.

These are available on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-performance-ratings-2021-to-2022>. The prison performance ratings for 2022/2023 will be published on 27 July 2023.

HMPPS monitors performance against these KPIs on an ongoing basis and takes action if this is deemed necessary.

Private prison contracts are managed by operational contract managers who assure delivery against performance and contract measures.

■ Probation: Nationalisation

Steve Reed:

[\[193367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the (a) privatisation and (b) subsequent renationalisation of probation services since 2012.

Damian Hinds:

It is not possible to disaggregate the full cost of implementing the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms in 2015 and then the unification of the Probation Service in 2021 from the wider costs of delivering probation services.

We are investing an additional £155m a year in the unified Probation Service to support improved quality of supervision, rehabilitation and other probation functions. This is a 15% increase on funding in 2019/20 when probation was operating under the structures introduced by the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms. This investment is supporting improved ways of working and increased staffing levels. We have exceeded our recruitment targets for the last three years, with more than 1,500 trainee probation officers starting their training in each of 2021/22 and 2022/23.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Housing: Standards

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[193595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his timetable is for (a) the second consultation on the decision to make the design standard for all new homes accessible and adaptable and (b) the implementation for that decision.

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[193596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure there is a sufficient supply of accessible and adaptable homes for older and disabled people who require such housing.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answers give to Question [UIN 183870](#) on 11 May 2023, to Question [UIN 187138](#) on 12 June 2023 and to Question [UIN HL8422](#) on 26 June 2023.

■ Innovation

Chi Onwurah: [\[193394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the potential changes in the level of (a) employment and (b) private sector co-investment in R and D projects since the end of European Regional Development Fund support for innovation.

Dehenna Davison:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a successor, and not a replacement, to the former European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund.

Each place was tasked with working with local partners - including businesses and education and innovation providers - to develop an investment plan. Places could choose from a range of interventions, including investment in research and development (R&D). It is for places to decide how they use their allocation for R&D, and this will depend on locally identified priorities.

Each place was also strongly encouraged to consider match funding from the private, public and third sectors and leverage options to maximise fund impact.

■ Land Use

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[193570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of designated green belt land that meets the criteria for registration as brownfield land.

Rachel Maclean:

Relevant information is published in [Live Table 401a](#) .

■ Leasehold: Ground Rent

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[193008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of leaseholders that have (a) doubling and (b) other forms of multiplying ground rent.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[193009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to take steps to support existing leaseholders who have (a) doubling and (b) other forms of multiplying ground rent.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has legislated via the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022 to protect future leaseholders from ground rents and we are due to bring forward further leasehold reforms later in this Parliament.

We do not hold the information requested centrally. The department conducted an Impact Assessment for the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022, which

included data on the number of properties in England and Wales that may charge ground rent, and may have doubling review clauses. The [Impact Assessment](#) is available on the UK Parliament website.

We understand the difficulties some existing leaseholders face with high and escalating ground rents. Unfair practices have no place in the housing market. This is why we asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms in the leasehold sector.

The CMA have secured commitments benefiting over 20,000 leaseholders, including commitments to return doubling ground rent terms to original rates. The CMA continue to engage with a number of firms and we urge other developers to follow suit.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rachel Hopkins: [\[193811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Luton South, dated 28 June 2023.

Dehenna Davison:

A response will be issued to the Hon. Member in due course.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Guarantees**

Helen Hayes: [\[193470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 10 July 2023 to Question 192669 on Private Rented Housing: Guarantees, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Renters Reform Bill on family members, acting as a guarantor, who are being pursued for rent payments in the event of the death of a tenant.

Rachel Maclean:

The Renters (Reform) Bill will generally abolish fixed-term tenancies so that a rental agreement can be ended with 2 months' notice at any point, meaning parties will not be obliged to pay rent for lengthy fixed terms.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Repairs and Maintenance**

Rachael Maskell: [\[193001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that sustainable materials are used to retrofit existing public housing stock.

Dehenna Davison:

The Government is taking action on supporting the production and use of sustainable construction materials and on retrofitting our existing social housing stock.

■ Travellers**Alex Sobel:** [\[193742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to change the definition of Gypsies and Travellers in the document published by his Department entitled Planning policy for traveller sites in 2015 to that used in the 2012 version.

Rachel Maclean:

The Secretary of State is carefully considering the policy contained in the Planning Policy Traveller Sites 2015 following the court judgment in Lisa Smith v SSLUHC [2022].

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services****Stephen Morgan:** [\[193465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to mandate local transport authorities which have received an initial Bus Service Improvement Plan settlement to support those bus services.

Stephen Morgan: [\[193466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to introduce accountability mechanisms for local transport authorities deployment of initial Bus Service Improvement Plan settlements.

Stephen Morgan: [\[193468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage partnership working between local transport authorities and bus operators to deliver bus services.

Mr Richard Holden:

As we announced on 17 May, Local Transport Authorities can use a proportion of their BSIP revenue funding to support existing services subject to approval, where required, from the Department.

The Department has set out BSIP monitoring and accountability arrangements in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by all LTAs that have received BSIP allocations.

Bus operators and Local Transport Authorities are expected to work in cooperation as they develop and implement their Enhanced Partnerships or franchising plans.

■ Bus Services: Finance

Stephen Morgan:

[\[193467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department had made of the potential impact of (a) reduced or (b) higher levels of funding to bus operators in the extension of the Bus Recovery Grant funding settlement.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Government provided over £2 billion in emergency and recovery funding for bus services in England outside London from March 2020 through to 30 June 2023, when the Bus Recovery Grant ended. On 17 May, the Government announced a long-term approach to support and improve bus services with an additional £300 million from July 2023 until April 2025. £160 million of this funding is going to Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to protect and enhance bus services, and support local fares initiatives, and £140 million will go to bus operators to protect services.

The Department carefully considers the impact on the bus sector of all funding decisions alongside value for money for the taxpayer for any interventions.

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

Grahame Morris:

[\[193581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to support unprofitable bus routes in hard-to-reach rural areas.

Mr Richard Holden:

Yes. The Department provides around £200 million every year through the Bus Service Operators Grant to help bus operators run services that might otherwise be unprofitable and could lead to cancellation. In addition, £42 million every year goes directly to local authorities to subsidise bus services, including socially and economically necessary services, helping to ensure communities can stay connected and access vital local services.

On 17 May, the Government announced a long-term approach to supporting bus services, backed by £300 million of funding from July 2023 to April 2025. £160 million will be provided to local transport authorities to protect and improve services and fares while £140 million will go directly to operators to help protect essential services across England. This funding will also help support longer routes, such as those in rural areas, where some services are less likely to be commercially sustainable without additional funding.

We are also trialling 16 innovative demand responsive minibus services in 15 local authority areas, supported by the £20 million Rural Mobility Fund (RMF). The RMF provides us with an opportunity to better understand the challenges associated with introducing bookable bus services in rural and suburban settings.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[193802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to support unprofitable bus routes in hard-to-reach rural areas.

Mr Richard Holden:

Yes. The Department provides around £200 million every year through the Bus Service Operators Grant to help bus operators run services that might otherwise be unprofitable and could lead to cancellation. In addition, £42 million every year goes directly to local authorities to subsidise bus services, including socially and economically necessary services, helping to ensure communities can stay connected and access vital local services.

On 17 May, the Government announced a long-term approach to supporting bus services, backed by £300 million of funding from July 2023 to April 2025. £160 million will be provided to local transport authorities to protect and improve services and fares while £140 million will go directly to operators to help protect essential services across England. This funding will also help support longer routes, such as those in rural areas, where some services are less likely to be commercially sustainable without additional funding.

■ Cycling**Rachael Maskell:**[\[193158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential effect of the provision of bicycles through active travel schemes on people's physical fitness.

Jesse Norman:

I met with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Chief Medical Officer in May, alongside the CEO of Active Travel England, to discuss how the departments can work together in promoting active travel and realise its health benefits. The departments will continue to work together on a number of projects to support this shared goal.

The Department for Transport has already announced £13.9 million of funding for 11 Active Travel Social Prescribing pilots in local authorities across England. These pilots are being managed by Active Travel England and will provide a range of non-clinical services to enable active travel, including cycle libraries and cycle loans.

■ Department of Transport: Public Consultation**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[193003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department uses best practice guidance when setting the duration for which consultations are open.

Jesse Norman:

The Department, its executive agencies and arm's-length bodies publish a large number of consultations and calls for evidence.

The Department conducts consultations in line with the Government Consultation Principles. These state that consultations should last for a proportionate amount of time. The length of any consultation is decided based on legal advice and taking into account the nature and impact of the proposal.

With regard to the current consultations on railway ticket offices, these are industry and not Government proposals. The train companies are consulting on proposals to make changes to ticket offices under the established Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) process.

■ Driving Licences: Older People

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[193070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to expedite the processing of priority medical driving licence renewal cases.

Mr Richard Holden:

The length of time taken to deal with a driving licence application where the applicant has declared a medical condition depends on the medical condition(s) involved and whether further information is required from third parties. This can include NHS healthcare professionals or the applicant themselves, before a licensing decision can be made. In around 50% of cases, the DVLA is awaiting information from a third party before any further action can be taken.

The DVLA triage applications when they are received and are prioritised on a case-by-case basis, for example if the customer needs a licence quickly for work or travel purposes.

To help reduce waiting times for customers, the DVLA has introduced a simplified licence renewal process for some medical conditions. This change has significantly reduced the need for further information from medical professionals and enabled more licensing decisions to be made based on the information provided by the driver. The DVLA is considering if more medical conditions can be added to this process in the future.

■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

Gill Furniss:

[\[193486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people waiting for a practical driving test.

Gill Furniss:

[\[193487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the current average waiting time for a practical driving test in each region.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's recovery measures have created over 39,000 extra car practical driving test slots each month, and, since April 2021, over 1 million additional test slots.

As of 10 July 2023, there were 547,076 car practical driving tests booked, and 39,535 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

The average waiting time for a car practical driving test nationally (June 2023 average) is 18.4 weeks.

- England: 19 weeks
- Scotland: 16.7 weeks
- Wales: 14.5 weeks

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Gill Furniss:

[\[193770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of public electric vehicle charging points that have a speed of less than (a) 8kW and (b) 50kW.

Jesse Norman:

Data on public electric vehicle charging devices in the UK, held by the Department for Transport, is sourced from the electric vehicle charging platform Zapmap.

The data supplied to the Department from Zapmap does not break down the speed of a public charging device as requested within this question.

■ Great British Railways: Software

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[193124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to release tender documents for the Great British Railways app.

Huw Merriman:

As set out in the Plan for Rail, we recognise that the current multitude of train company websites with different standards of service is confusing to passengers. We are continuing to review the best way to address this and are working closely with the rail sector to do this.

We want to see a more competitive retail market and will break down the systems and structural barriers to entry so it is easier to enter the market to sell rail tickets.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[193535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Luton South dated 28 June 2023.

Jesse Norman:

A response was sent on 12th July.

■ Parking

Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg:

[\[193387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the (a) effectiveness of regulations on parking restrictions in residential areas and (b) the impact of those regulations on residents in Bath and North East Somerset; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Richard Holden:

Local traffic authorities have the power to introduce parking restrictions by implementing Traffic Regulation Orders and around 98% of local authorities have the power to undertake civil parking enforcement, including Bath and North East Somerset Council. Responsibility for traffic management and parking enforcement on local roads rests with the relevant local authority, as they are best placed to consider how local needs can be effectively met. It is entirely a matter for individual authorities to decide on the nature and scope of parking policies and to balance the needs of residents, emergency services, local businesses and those who work in and visit the areas.

■ Railways: Highlands of Scotland

Julian Knight:

[\[193140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions the Government has had with the Scottish Government on the Caledonian Sleeper service; and if he will make it his policy to support use of the Caledonian Sleeper by local passengers in the Highlands for services between towns.

Huw Merriman:

There have been no recent discussions with the Scottish Government on the Caledonian Sleeper, although Departmental officials are meeting with Transport Scotland officials this month. The specification of the Caledonian Sleeper, its calling patterns and whether it can be used by local daytime passengers between stations in Scotland is a devolved matter for the Scottish Government.

■ Railways: North East

Andy McDonald:

[\[193659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has been made of the potential impact of the potential closure of train station ticket offices in Middlesbrough on the (a) safety and (b) accessibility of passenger rail travel in the North East.

Huw Merriman:

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours, including closures, operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of all passengers; and to include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups. We would also expect operators to consider other equality related needs and make this clear in the notice sent to other operators and passenger groups.

Together with industry, we want to improve and modernise the passenger experience by moving staff out from ticket offices to provide more help and advice in customer focused roles. No currently staffed station will be unstaffed as a result of industry changes, and train operators will ensure staff are well located to meet passenger needs in future.

■ Railways: Tickets

Julian Knight:

[\[193121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department holds data on the number of passengers that buy tickets from railway stations on the (a) West Coast Mainline and (b) Chiltern Mainline.

Huw Merriman:

Rail ticket sales data are commercially sensitive and managed by the Rail Delivery Group on behalf of train operators; the Department is therefore not able to provide this information.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[193246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number of rail tickets sold through ticket offices in the last 12 months.

Huw Merriman:

In 2022/23, around 1 in 10 transactions occurred at a ticket office; this is down from around 1 in 3 a decade earlier and equates to 13 per cent of total current revenue.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[193248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number of representations received by his Department (a) for and (b) against its policy on ticket office closures.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[193249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of public consultation on his Department's policy on ticket office closures.

Huw Merriman:

Train operators proposing any changes to the opening hours, or the closure of ticket offices, must follow the process set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, which is available to view on the Rail Delivery Group's website. This is an industry process and consultations are led by each train operator.

Train operators are required to put notices at stations advising passengers of any proposals and what changes could mean for them. If passengers have any objections these can be raised via the passenger bodies (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) for consideration within 21 days of the notice being posted.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[193250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of potential job losses resulting from ticket office closures.

Huw Merriman:

This is an industry-led process. The outcomes of the consultations will not be known until the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement process has been concluded.

Train operating companies will discuss employment matters with the trade unions as part of their own collective bargaining processes.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[193251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is his Department taking to ensure that the current level of passenger assistance for disabled people will be maintained following the closure of railway ticket offices.

Huw Merriman:

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours, including closures, operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of passengers who are disabled, and to include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups. We would also expect operators to consider other equality related needs and make this clear in their consultation.

Together with the industry, we want to improve and modernise the passenger experience by moving staff out from ticket offices to provide more help and advice in customer focused roles. No currently staffed station will be unstaffed as a result of industry changes, and train operators will ensure staff are well located to meet passenger needs in future.

Station staff will still provide face-to-face services on the railways, which assists those who need additional support, and cannot or do not want to use contactless or mobile tickets. All staff in customer facing roles or with management responsibilities are already required to undertake enhanced disability awareness training.

The Department recently hosted roundtable discussions with industry and accessibility and transport groups to discuss this matter and ensure their views are understood. We have been engaging with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee throughout the process.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[193252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of closures of railway ticket offices on levels of passenger numbers on trains.

Huw Merriman:

Industry is getting on with modernising our railway and bringing it more in tune with modern consumer expectations. Together with industry, we want to improve and modernise the experience for passengers by moving staff out from behind the ticket

office screens to provide more help and advice in customer focused roles and additional support to those who need it. We have been clear that no currently staffed station will be unstaffed as a result of this reform.

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours, including closures, operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of all passengers; and to include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[193253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will introduce a requirement for minimum levels of staffed ticket office provision in future railway franchise contracts.

Huw Merriman:

Ticket Offices are regulated in line with the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement. As per the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, train operators are required to make it clear to passengers when ticket offices will be staffed. This will continue to be the case where ticket offices remain open.

Munira Wilson: [\[193444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an estimate of the potential cost savings arising from the proposed closure of Network Rail ticket offices.

Huw Merriman:

This is an industry-led process. The outcomes of the consultations will not be known until the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement process has been concluded.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[193445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has he made of the adequacy of the accessibility of the consultation process on station ticket office reforms.

Huw Merriman:

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours, including closures, operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of passengers who are disabled; and to include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups.

Under the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) process, train operators are required to put notices at stations advising passengers of any proposals and what changes could mean for them. Train operators have also made information relating to their consultations available on their websites. We would expect train operating companies to make sure their consultations are accessible.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[193447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has held discussions with (a) London Travel Watch and (b) Transport Focus on the consultation process for the proposals on the closure of railway station ticket offices.

Huw Merriman:

Department officials regularly engage with London TravelWatch and Transport Focus on a range of issues, including on their roles under the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) process.

Luke Pollard:[\[193666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter to the Great Western Railway Managing Director, Mark Hopwood, on 30 May 2023, on the railway ticket offices consultation.

Huw Merriman:

The letter is not appropriate for the House Libraries.

Emma Hardy:[\[193728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) train tickets, (b) season tickets and (c) railcards were sold through ticket offices from 2015-2022.

Huw Merriman:

In 2022/23, around 1 in 10 transactions occurred at a ticket office, this is down from around 1 in 3 a decade earlier and equates to 13 per cent of total revenue.

There were around 1.4 billion passenger journeys (of which around 210 million were made using season tickets) in 2022/23 compared to 1.7 billion (of which around 707 million were made using season tickets) in 2015/16.

The Department has not made an estimate of the number of railcards or season tickets sold via ticket offices. That information is held by the rail industry.

■ Roads: Environment Protection**Caroline Lucas:**[\[193074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report by the Climate Change Committee entitled 2023 Progress Report to Parliament, published on 28 June 2023, if he will accept the Committee's recommendation to make an assessment of the impact of (a) current and (b) planned future road building projects on the Government's environmental targets; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is considering the views of the Climate Change Committee and will respond in the Autumn.

With regards to road building and environmental targets, the Government has a clear plan to reach net zero, as set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. In this plan, the Government set out its approach to decarbonising cars and vans through the introduction of a world leading zero emission vehicle mandate. Alongside this, the Government has already spent more than £2 billion in supporting the switch to zero emission vehicles through delivering infrastructure and grants to reduce the upfront cost of these vehicles.

The Government remains committed to continuing its road investment strategy in a way that is consistent with the UK's environmental targets.

■ Speed Limits

Virginia Crosbie: [\[193479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department have made of the impact of 20 mph zones have on traffic speed.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department's comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph signed only limits was published in 2018. It found there has been a small reduction in median speed (less than 1mph).

■ Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[193291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Morocco-UK Power Project on the number of maritime jobs in the UK.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport does not plan to make an assessment of the potential impact on the Morocco-UK Power Project on the number of maritime jobs in the UK.

TREASURY

■ Apprentices: Finance

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[193105\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 June to Questions 188238, 188239 and 188240 on Apprentices: Finance, whether the (a) Scottish, (b) Welsh and (c) Northern Ireland government receives funding under the Barnett formula for the provision of apprenticeships.

John Glen:

The devolved administrations receive Barnett consequentials as a result of changes to UK government department DEL associated with spending in devolved areas. Rather than receiving funding for specific programmes or policy areas, the devolved administrations receive block grants from the UK Government. It is generally for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their block grant funding in devolved areas.

A full breakdown of how the block grants for the devolved administrations are calculated is published in Block Grant Transparency (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/block-grant-transparency-december-202>) which will be updated on 20th July. The Statement of Funding Policy ([Statement of Funding Policy update Feb 2023.pdf](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118442/Statement_of_Funding_Policy_update_Feb_2023.pdf) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk))

also lists the breakdown of comparability factors for each programme the devolved administrations receive funding from.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Mr Toby Perkins:

[193102]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts that the Apprenticeship Levy will raise in (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25.

John Glen:

The latest receipts forecast for the Apprenticeship Levy is published by Office for Budget Responsibility which can be found online at:

<https://obr.uk/download/march-2023-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-charts-and-tables-annex-a/?tmstv=1689069106>

■ British-American Parliamentary Group: Royal Bank of Scotland

Sir Christopher Chope:

[193293]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make representations to the Royal Bank of Scotland on its refusal to approve a credit card for the British-American Parliamentary Group on the grounds that the three signatories on the group's bank account are hon. Members who are deemed to be politically exposed persons; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Griffith:

The issue of Politically Exposed Persons' (PEPs) access to essential banking services is one that we are taking extremely seriously. The case the Hon Member raises sounds concerning.

The Government's position is clear that financial institutions' must not deny services to PEP customers solely on the basis of their PEP status. The recently passed Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 commits the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to conduct a review into financial institutions' adherence to their guidance on PEPs, and the appropriateness of that guidance, within twelve months of Royal Assent. This review will assess the extent to which lower-risk PEPs are being denied access to services in an inappropriate and disproportionate manner, and the FCA will take action where it identifies serious failures.

The Government has also taken action through the Financial Services and Markets Act to commit the Treasury to amend the Money Laundering Regulations to explicitly distinguish between domestic and non-domestic PEPs in law. This amendment will make clear that, in the absence of other high-risk factors, domestic PEPs must be treated as lower risk than non-domestic PEPs and have a lesser degree of enhanced due diligence applied to them.

Earlier this month, I wrote to the FCA to underline the importance of the FCA's review and make clear that the Government expects it to be prioritised over the coming

months. I am clear that the FCA's review and the Government's amendment to the Regulations should lead to a more proportionate and appropriate treatment of PEPs in future.

My Treasury colleague, Baroness Penn, has also written to the FCA to emphasise the Government's expectation that their review should consider to what extent financial institutions are taking a blanket approach and refusing to offer services to customers solely due to their PEP status.

■ Central Bank Digital Currencies: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[193753\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he expects to publish the findings of the consultation on the digital pound.

Ben Lake: [\[193754\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the (a) the Welsh Government and (b) stakeholders representing those who rely on access to cash are engaged through the (i) Central Bank Digital Taskforce, (ii) the Central Bank Digital Currency Engagement Forum and (iii) The Central Bank Digital Currency technology forum on issues relating to a Central Bank Digital Currency.

Ben Lake: [\[193755\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Welsh Government on the potential implications of a Central Bank Digital Currency on Welsh citizens in the context of (a) areas with poor digital connectivity and (b) Wales' age demographics.

Ben Lake: [\[193756\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking ensure that stakeholders who (a) rely on cash and (b) choose to use cash are engaged in the next steps following the publication of the Government's response to the consultation on the digital pound.

Ben Lake: [\[193757\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy that a Central Bank Digital Currency will not be rolled out until all (a) households and (b) businesses in Wales have the ability to access a stable internet connection.

Ben Lake: [\[193758\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any costs will be associated with accessing the proposed Central Bank Digital Currency; and if he will make a statement.

Ben Lake: [\[193759\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the introduction of a Central Bank Digital Currency will be complementary to the cash infrastructure.

Andrew Griffith:

HM Treasury and the Bank of England judge that a UK central bank digital currency (CBDC), the “digital pound”, is likely to be needed in the future. However, a final decision on its introduction has not yet been made and will be informed by public consultation and future work.

On 7 February 2023, HM Treasury and the Bank of England published a joint consultation paper setting out analysis on the case for the digital pound and consulting on the key features of a potential model. The consultation closed on 30 June, and we are now assessing the responses. We are committed to being transparent about the views and issues raised by respondents and we will publish a consultation response publication in due course.

As we enter the design phase of work following the closure of the consultation, HM Treasury and the Bank of England will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders across the United Kingdom, including with civil society groups and consumer representatives, on the digital pound proposal and as part of our efforts to have an open and national conversation about the future of our money.

The CBDC Engagement Forum consists of senior stakeholders from industry, civil society including consumer groups, and academia to gather strategic input on policy considerations and functional requirements pertaining to the digital pound. The Forum will continue to play an important role in the design phase, helping the Bank and HM Treasury understand the practical challenges of designing, implementing and operating a digital pound. The Technology Forum engages stakeholders and gathers input on all technology aspects of CBDC from a diverse cross-section of expertise and perspectives. The Forum helps the Bank to understand the technological challenges of designing, implementing and operating a digital pound. The membership of these Forums is available on the Bank of England website.

The digital pound would sit alongside cash, not replace cash, and would be subject to rigorous standards of privacy and data protection. UK authorities remain committed to protecting access to cash. In recognition that cash continues to be relied on and used by many people, including vulnerable groups and the elderly, the Government has legislated to protect access to cash across the UK as part of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023. The Act establishes the Financial Conduct Authority as the lead regulator for access to cash with responsibility and powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of withdrawal and deposit facilities.

Regarding costs associated with the digital pound, further work will be undertaken through the design phase to evaluate the commercial proposition. The digital pound would be widely accessible to the public, and exist alongside and be easily exchangeable with cash and bank deposits. We would therefore expect there to be no additional costs to consumers accessing a digital pound compared to existing payment methods.

Financial inclusion will continue to be an important consideration for HM Treasury and the Bank as the next phase of work on the digital pound begins. We have

consulted and will continue to engage with a wide range of organisations, including those representing vulnerable groups, in order to get their feedback on the proposal. We understand that not everyone has access to a stable internet connection or smartphone, or that some people may find smartphones difficult to use. We are therefore looking at how the digital pound could be delivered through options such as physical cards, in a way that would help to support financial inclusion and accessibility. We will also continue to explore options for offline payments.

The Government's ambition is to connect at least 85% of UK premises to gigabit-capable broadband by 2025, and for nationwide connectivity (at least 99%) to be realised by 2030. Project Gigabit is the government's £5bn programme that will ensure the whole of the UK benefits from gigabit connectivity by providing subsidy to deliver gigabit-capable connectivity to uncommercial premises, which are typically in rural or remote locations. The Government is also ensuring that very hard to reach areas will have access to improved broadband, even where gigabit is not possible, with an £8m fund for new satellite connectivity connecting 35,000 of the most remote premises.

■ Energy: Profits

Grahame Morris: [\[193580\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to tackle excess profits in the energy sector.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[193800\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to tackle excess profits in the energy sector.

John Glen:

The Government introduced the Energy Profits Levy (EPL) to respond to the exceptional profits being made by the oil and gas sector driven by global circumstances. The EPL is a temporary 35 per cent surcharge on the exceptional profits being made by the sector and comes on top of the default 40 per cent headline tax rate applied to profits from UK oil and gas production, bringing the overall combined tax rate to 75 per cent. The EPL will end in 2028 if the Energy Security Investment Mechanism (ESIM) is not triggered.

Additionally, the Government introduced the Electricity Generator Levy (EGL), a temporary 45% tax on extraordinary returns made by some UK electricity generators from 1 January 2023. The levy will end in 2028. EGL is applied to extraordinary returns defined as selling electricity for a period at an average price of more than £75/MWh, which is approximately 1.5 times the average price of electricity over the last decade and well beyond pre-crisis expectations.

At its most recent forecast, the OBR forecasted that together, the EPL and EGL would raise approximately £40 billion while in force. This significant source of tax revenue has helped fund vital cost of living support.

■ Financial Services: Environment Protection

Caroline Lucas: [\[193093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of the Green Financing Programme on (a) the net zero target and (b) the sixth carbon budget.

Andrew Griffith:

The Green Financing Programme has raised more than £29bn since its launch in 2021. Financing raised from the programme is earmarked towards eligible green expenditures.

The expenditures earmarked to the Green Financing Programme in the 2021-22 financial year are listed in the Government's 'UK Green Financing Allocation Report', published in September 2022. The environmental impact of these expenditures is being evaluated and will be presented in the Impact Report due for publication in September 2023.

Caroline Lucas: [\[193096\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with the Bank of England on ensuring financial services sector support for the delivery of the UK's nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is committed to delivering the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution and transforming the economy in line with its target to reach net zero by 2050.

Recognising the importance of the financial services sector in the transition, we have published the 2023 Green Finance Strategy – Mobilising Green Investment, where we set out a framework for the UK's ambition to become the world's first Net-Zero-aligned Financial Centre. Through the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023, the Government has also added the UK's net zero target and environmental targets into the regulatory principles of the financial services regulators, including embedding the consideration of these across the full breadth of the Prudential Regulation Authority's general functions and the Bank of England's functions as a regulator of certain financial market infrastructure.

■ Income Tax

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[193313\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of how many people who did not pay income tax in 2021/22 will pay basic rate income tax in 2023/24.

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[193314\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of how many people who paid income tax in 2021/22 will pay higher rate income tax in 2023/24.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC's Income Tax liabilities statistics publish a breakdown of the number of individual Income Tax payers by marginal rate in Table 2.1.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1165820/govuk_table2_1.xlsx

These figures are based on the 2019 to 2020 survey of personal incomes, projected in line with Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) economic determinants.

Individual Savings Accounts**Sir Stephen Timms:****[193829]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the Lifetime Individual Savings Account first home property value limit in line with average house prices on the level of house purchases by first time buyers.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is committed to supporting people of all incomes and at all stages of life to save, and to making the aspiration of home ownership a reality for as many households as possible.

Data from the latest UK House Price Index demonstrates that, although the average price paid by first-time buyers has increased, it is still below the LISA property price cap in all regions of the UK except for Inner London, where the average price paid is affected by Boroughs with very high property values.

The Government keeps all aspects of the savings tax regime, including the merits of increasing the LISA property value limit, under review.

Individual Savings Accounts: Tax Allowances**Caroline Lucas:****[193095]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing new rules for ISAs requiring that savings be invested in Government-backed green bonds to be eligible for tax relief.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government plans to issue £10.0 billion of green gilts in 2023-24, subject to demand and market conditions. This is alongside the NS&I's retail Green Savings Bonds which retail investors can purchase to contribute to financing the fight against climate change and other environmental challenges.

The Government recognises the popularity of ISAs, which provides savers a generous tax-free allowance of up to £20,000 per annum. Around 11.8 million Adult ISA accounts were subscribed to in 2021 to 2022. ISAs form part of the Government's commitment to support all people at all stages of life to save, and it is important that ISAs continue to be a core savings and investment product that incentivises greater saving.

The government has no plans to restrict ISAs to government backed green bonds.

■ National Savings and Investments: Environment Protection

Caroline Lucas: [193094]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much money was invested in National Savings and Investments green savings bonds in the financial year 2022-23.

Andrew Griffith:

During the 2022-23 Financial Year, £622,660 million was invested in NS&I's Green Savings Bonds.

■ Public Expenditure: Disclosure of Information

Caroline Lucas: [193097]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the Whole of Government Accounts for the financial years (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 have not been published; and when he plans to publish those accounts.

John Glen:

As set out to the Public Accounts Committee in December 2022, delays to the publication of the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) have been caused by IT system performance issues and delays to the timeliness of data returns.

The letter to PAC also set out a future delivery timetable for WGA that was formed in collaboration with the National Audit Office (NAO). This set out the plan to publish the 2020-21 WGA in quarter 3 of 2023 and the 2021-22 WGA published in spring 2024.

■ Public Works Loan Board

Stephen Flynn: [193442]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Public Works Loan Board (a) principal and (b) debt repayments were for local authorities in the (i) 2020-21, (ii) 2021-22 and (iii) 2022-23 financial year.

Andrew Griffith:

Figures for principal and interest repayments to the Public Works Loan Board for the financial years 2020-21 to 2022-23 are published in their annual reports and accounts. Links to those reports can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-work-loans-board-annual-report-and-accounts>.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [193171]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on (a) customers and (b) helpline call levels of closing the self assessment help lines between 12 June and 4 September 2023.

Victoria Atkins:

This quarter is the quietest for Self-Assessment (SA) queries. HMRC is piloting the temporary and time-limited closure of the SA helpline so that c.350 advisers can be moved to other helplines which experience heavier demand at this time of year.

The SA helpline will reopen on 4 September, five months prior to the SA filing deadline of 31 January.

Around two-thirds of all Self-Assessment calls can be resolved online by customers; piloting a seasonal Self-Assessment helpline is about positively encouraging people to use these services when they can.

This will free up HMRC advisors to help those with more urgent queries or who cannot access digital services, and to work on correspondence.

It is very early in the trial, but already more people are using HMRCs digital services while HMRCs advisors are doing more work elsewhere. HMRC have increased the number of advisors on webchat, where the wait time is about a third of what it was on the Self-Assessment Helpline.

■ Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions**Drew Hendry:**[\[192681\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2021 to Question 62867 on Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions, if he will provide details of the people who were prosecuted for offences relating to the Loan Charge.

Victoria Atkins:

Promotion or operation of mass marketed tax avoidance schemes is not in, or of itself, a criminal offence. However, there are a range of offences which might be committed by those who promote tax avoidance schemes or advise on their use.

On that basis, to date, while there have been no prosecutions of individuals related to schemes subject to the Loan Charge, a number of individuals are currently under criminal investigation by HMRC for offences linked to schemes subject to the Loan Charge.

In addition to schemes subject to the Loan Charge, since 1 April 2016, more than 20 individuals have been convicted for offences relating to arrangements which have been promoted and marketed as tax avoidance. These have resulted in over 100 years of custodial sentences, the majority of which relate to promoters.

Prosecutions are only one type of intervention available to HMRC where they identify concerns.

■ Tax Avoidance: Romford**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[193328\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number of people in Romford constituency that have been affected by the Loan Charge scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

Information on the number of individuals subject to the Loan Charge is not held at constituency, borough or regional level.

In April 2023, HMRC published an updated issue briefing on disguised remuneration and the loan charge. The issue briefing contains information at UK level and is available on GOV.UK here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-issue-briefing-disguised-remuneration-charge-on-loans/hmrc-issue-briefing-settling-disguised-remuneration-scheme-use-and-or-paying-the-loan-charge#customers-subject-to-the-loan-charge>.

■ Treasury: Disclosure of Information**Julian Knight:****[193908]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is taking steps to ensure that staff in his Department who are under investigation for alleged misconduct are not named before those allegations are proven.

John Glen:

HM Treasury's Disciplinary Policy states that all disciplinary matters are strictly confidential.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Equal Pay****Charlotte Nichols:****[193804]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps the Government taking to help close the (a) gender, (b) ethnicity and (c) disability pay gap.

Olivia Blake:**[193821]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent steps the Government has taken to close the (a) gender, (b) ethnicity and (c) disability pay gaps.

Maria Caulfield:

Over the last decade the gender pay gap has fallen by approximately a quarter and mandatory gender pay gap reporting has helped motivate employers to improve workplace gender equality. To accelerate progress we have supported legislation to: enhance flexible working, extend redundancy protection for those on maternity leave, and introduce carer's leave.

On ethnicity pay gaps; in April this year we published guidance for employers on how to voluntarily calculate and publish their ethnicity pay gaps. This will allow businesses to report accurately and in a consistent manner, and to address any unfair ethnicity pay gaps within their workforce.

With regard to the disability pay gap, we recognise that one of the greatest challenges is opening up opportunity in the workplace. In March 2023, the

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper. This sets out how DWP will: support more disabled people to start, stay and succeed in work.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Maintenance Service: Complaints

Olivia Blake: [\[193815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints were (a) made and (b) upheld about the Child Maintenance Service in each year since 2018.

Mims Davies:

DWP publish complaints received data on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk.

The data is currently published up to March 2023 and is available [here](#).

The Child Maintenance complaints received data is published on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk, this information can be found within Table 12 [here](#).

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Dahua Technology and Hikvision

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[193434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether their Department has purchased products manufactured by (a) Hikvision and (b) Dahua in the last three years.

Mims Davies:

We can confirm that the DWP has not contracted directly with either of the named suppliers during the period in question. As has been the case under successive administrations, it is not government policy to comment on the government's security arrangements. This includes any specific details regarding the make and model of security systems, which are withheld on national security grounds. Each Department is responsible for their own procurement decisions. Details of Government contracts above £10,000, and £25,000 in the wider public sector, are published on Contracts Finder [here](#).

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[193641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 July 2023 to Question 192317 on Employment Schemes: Disability, if he will publish further details on the expected timeline for returning the number of Disability Employment Advisors to the Department's core demand level.

Tom Pursglove:

The department is actively planning to restore the number of "Disability Employment Advisors (DEA)" to our core demand level, through recruiting a significant number of people into EO graded roles; this recruitment exercise is progressing well with 1900 additional EOs expected to join by September 30th and a forecast of 1600 for the

remainder of the calendar year. The increased level of recruitment will incrementally improve the EO shortfall in all areas, including “Disability Employment Advisors (DEA)”.

■ Health and Safety Executive: Inspections

Grahame Morris: [\[193579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to increase the number of inspections carried out by the Health and Safety Executive.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[193799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of inspections carried out by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mims Davies:

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) does not measure its impact by counting the number of inspections. HSE uses a variety of methods to influence change and help people manage risks at work including providing advice, information and guidance, working with stakeholders, carrying out investigations and taking enforcement action to prevent harm and hold those who break the law to account

HSE’s published business plan for 2023/2024 outlines the targeted interventions it plans to deliver in areas of greatest risk to assess dutyholder compliance with the law, this can be found [here](#). In carrying out this work HSE is planning to deliver a minimum of 14,000 inspections.

■ Jobcentres

Mr Jonathan Lord: [\[193360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to expand the support available through Jobcentres.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for getting people into work and making work pay. We want everyone to be able to find a job, progress in work and thrive in the labour market. In addition to our core regime of job centre support we also announced a wide-ranging package of measures at Spring Budget designed to support people to enter work, increase their working hours and extend their working lives. We also announced specific support targeted on those with disabilities or health issues, and together the package represents an investment of £3.5bn over 5 years.

■ Parents: Cost of Living**Claudia Webbe:****[194088]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to help support parents of (a) twins and (b) other multiples with increases in the cost of living.

Mims Davies:

The Government understands the pressures people, including parents, are facing with the cost of living and is taking action to help. Overall, we are providing total support of over £94bn over 2022-23 and 2023-24 to help households and individuals with the rising cost of bills.

From April 2023, everyone who receives a state benefit or pension will have seen their benefit rates increase by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions, the benefit cap levels have also increased by the same amount.

To support parents who are in work, from 1 April, the National Living Wage (NLW) increased by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour for workers aged 23 and over - the largest ever cash increase for the NLW.

We recognise that high childcare costs can affect parents' decisions to take up paid work or increase their working hours. That is why, as announced at the Spring Budget, we are investing billions in additional childcare support for parents of toddlers, investing in wraparound childcare in schools, and increasing financial support for, and expectations of, parents claiming Universal Credit.

Households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments. The first £301 payments have been issued to 8.3 million households, and two further payments will follow this autumn and in spring 2024. In addition, 6.4 million individuals on eligible 'extra-costs' disability benefits have also recently received a further £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment meaning households with more than one disabled person will receive multiple Disability Cost of Living Payments.

For people who require additional support, in England, the Household Support Fund will continue until March 2024. This year long extension allows Local Authorities in England to continue to provide discretionary support to those most in need with the significantly rising cost of living. The guidance for Local Authorities can be found [here](#). Local Authorities have the discretion to design their own local schemes within the parameters of this guidance and grant determination that DWP have set out for the fund. Local Authorities are expected to support households in the most need, and in particular those who may not be eligible for the other support Government has recently made available, however, are nevertheless in need. The Devolved Administrations will receive consequential funding as usual to spend at their discretion.

■ Pension Credit: Take-up**Mr Jonathan Lord:**[\[193359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to increase the uptake of Pension Credit.

Laura Trott:

Our extensive communications campaign has been running since April 2022 and there is a strong indication that it is having a positive effect. The number of Pension Credit applications is up by around 75% in the 12 months to May compared to the same period last year.

Earlier this year we boosted our campaign with extensive television adverts which highlight that Pension Credit is worth £3,500 a year on average – as well as up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments. For the Pension Credit ‘Week of Action’ in June, DWP joined forces with a whole range of partners to raise awareness and promote take-up of Pension Credit. I held an event to raise awareness of Pension Credit in my constituency and wrote to all MPs encouraging them to hold their own community event.

Today [Monday 17 June] I am pleased to announce the launch of an innovative “Invitation to Claim” trial across 10 local areas in Great Britain. Approximately 2,500 pensioner households already in receipt of Housing Benefit, but who are not claiming Pension Credit are being targeted during the trial. The first letters and ‘call to action’ leaflets will start landing on doorsteps this week inviting pensioners to apply for Pension Credit. Evaluation of the trial will help show whether targeting households in this way can be an effective way of reaching these households and increasing take-up.

■ Pensions: Consumer Information**Nick Smith:**[\[193574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the cost of the (a) development of the Pensions Dashboard Programme to date and (b) programme on completion.

Laura Trott:

MaPS has been allocated £91.1M for the delivery of the Pensions Dashboards Programme (PDP) through the relevant Spending Review periods covering financial years 2019/20 to 2024/25.

The Pensions Dashboards Programme (PDP) has spent £45.3M between 2019/20 and the end of May 2023 (with spend relating to 2022/23 and to 2023/24 subject to final audit). Further spend for the programme will be available on an annual basis.

Expenditure allocations for years beyond 2024/25 will be the subject of future Spending Review processes.

Nick Smith:

[\[193575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he plans that the Pensions Dashboard Programme will be ready for use.

Laura Trott:

The Dashboards Available Point will be when the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is satisfied that the dashboards ecosystem – which is being developed by the Pensions Dashboards Programme – is ready to support widespread use by the general public. This will come following consultation with the Money and Pensions Service, the Pensions Regulator and the Financial Conduct Authority.

The Pensions Dashboards Regulations 2022 specify that the Secretary of State will provide notice of at least six months ahead of the Dashboards Available Point. The Secretary of State will consider factors including sufficient level of coverage, assurance of the safety, security and reliability of the service, and testing of the user experience.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[193236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many PIP reassessments from 2022 are outstanding.

Tom Pursglove:

On 30th April 2023, there were 220,000 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Award Reviews registered in 2022 that were awaiting a decision.

Claimants awaiting an assessment to review their PIP will continue to be paid until the review is complete. Should a claimant have a change in their circumstances, they are advised to notify the department and their award will be prioritised for review.

We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, considering the need to review all available evidence, including that from the claimant. Where possible, we are making decisions without referral to the assessment providers and maintaining awards for those undergoing a review.

Source: PIP Atomic Data Store (ADS)

Notes:

- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and may be subject to future revision;
- Figures refer to planned PIP Award Reviews, where a claimant has reached their scheduled review date and the department has sent an AR1 form;
- Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand; and
- Figures are for England and Wales only.

■ Unemployment: Chronic Illnesses

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[193640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 10 July 2023 to Question 192319 on Unemployment: Chronic Illnesses, if he will publish further details of the work his Department is undertaking with (a) other Departments and (b) organisations to increase the Department's understanding of the potential relationship between NHS waiting lists and long-term sickness in the labour market through analysis of available data.

Tom Pursglove:

Work to better understand any potential relationship between NHS waiting lists and long-term sickness in the labour market through the analysis of available data is ongoing. The department has no plans to publish any further details at this stage.

■ Unemployment: Older People

Lilian Greenwood: [\[193593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the targeted measures announced in the Budget 2023 on reducing economic inactivity among people aged 50-64.

Guy Opperman:

Employment is up, vacancies down and economic inactivity has reduced since the Budget in March 2023.

■ Universal Credit

Sir Stephen Timms: [\[193282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the reasons for approximately a third of registrations for Universal Credit not leading to a claim being submitted in the year to February 2023; and if he will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The requested information is not held as claimants are not required to inform the Department why they have chosen not to continue their claim, and there may be multiple reasons why they have chosen not to.

■ Universal Credit: Employment

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[193639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of claimants in the searching for work Universal Credit conditionality regime showed evidence of employment in at least one week of the first (a) 13, (b) 26 and (c) 39 weeks following the claim in the most recent period for which this data is available.

Guy Opperman:

Claimants are considered to be in work if they have earnings from employment or are required to report self-employed earnings. Information on the employment status of

Universal Credit is only available at the level of monthly assessment periods, we are providing figures using approximations in months of the specified periods in weeks.

The most recent data on this issue is for claimants starting a new Universal Credit claim in the Searching for Work conditionality regime during the period September 2021 to August 2022:

(a) 51% were in work or had worked within 3 months

(b) 58% were in work or had worked within 6 months (including those in work within 3 months)

(c) 61% were in work or had worked within 9 months (including those in work within 3 / 6 months)

Notes:

1. Source: UC Management Information and HMRC Real Time Information data.
2. Claimants are counted in work if they have earnings from employment or are required to report self-employed earnings.
3. All figures include claimants who are already in work and in the Searching for Work conditionality regime at the start of their claim.

■ Universal Credit: Greater London

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[193329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are recipients of Universal Credit in (a) Romford constituency and (b) the London Borough of Havering.

Guy Opperman:

The latest available statistics on the number of people who are on Universal Credit, by Westminster parliamentary constituency and by local authority, are published monthly on [Stat-Xplore](#).

You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

■ Universal Credit: Parents

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[193357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support parents on Universal Credit into work.

Guy Opperman:

The Spring Budget included transformative childcare plans for parents, children and the economy. By 2027-28, the government expects to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever.

The reforms announced build on our current entitlements and childcare offers, which includes the universal 15-hour offer for all 3- and 4-year-olds, a 15-hour offer for the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds, the existing 30 hours offer for 3- and 4-year-olds, as well as Tax-Free Childcare and Universal Credit Childcare.

■ Universal Credit: Private Rented Housing

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[191728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data his Department holds on the number of households in the private rented sector in receipt of universal credit with the housing element in payment; how many and what proportion of those households have rents that exceed the local housing allowance (LHA); and what the median average gap is between the rent and the LHA for those households where rent exceeds the LHA for each local authority area in (a) England, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales for the most recent period for which data are available.

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[191729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of those households in receipt of universal credit with the housing element in payment had rents that exceeded the local housing allowance (LHA) in (a) March 2020, (b) March 2021, (c) March 2022 and (d) March 2023; and what the median average gap is between the rent and the LHA for those households where rent exceeds the LHA in (a) England, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales.

Mims Davies:

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) determines the maximum housing support for tenants in the private rented sector. LHA rates are not intended to cover all rents in all areas. Data on local LHA rates and averages can be found in the attachments provided.

In 2020 we spent almost £1 billion increasing LHA rates. These rates were aligned to the 30th percentile of market rents in Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA) across the country, therefore in those areas with higher rent costs this is reflected in higher LHA rates for that BRMA. In 2022/23, the Government is projected to spend around £30 billion to support renters. This is approximately 1.4% of GDP, more than any other OECD country, with the next highest being 0.9% of GDP.

Information on the legislation increasing LHA rates to 30th percentile in April 2020 can be found [here](#). Information on the legislation maintaining LHA rates at their current rates for 2023/24 can be found [here](#).

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.

We recognise that rents are increasing. However, the challenging fiscal environment means that difficult decisions have been necessary to ensure support is targeted

effectively. Overall, the Government is providing total support of over £94 billion over 2022/23 and 2023/24 to help households and individuals with the rising cost of living.

Attachments:

1. Attachment [Attachment.xlsx]

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry: Interim Report**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Kevin Hollinrake):

[\[HCWS950\]](#)

The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry is led by retired high court judge Sir Wyn Williams who has over 28 years' judicial experience. Sir Wyn is tasked with ensuring there is a public summary of the failings which occurred with the Horizon IT system at the Post Office leading to the prosecution and conviction of postmasters, with 86 having those convictions quashed to date, and the incorrect repayment of shortfalls by thousands more. The Inquiry will look to establish a clear account of the implementation and historic failings of the system starting from its rollout in the late 1990s."

Today the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry has published an interim report, which has been laid before the House. The report can be found at www.postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk.

Government will review this report and consider how to respond to its content in due course.

I would like to thank Sir Wyn Williams and to everyone in his team for their ongoing work and commitment to delivering the Inquiry's work on these issues. It is vital that we establish the facts behind this scandal and learn the lessons so that something like this can never happen again.

■ **UK signs Accession Protocol to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership**

Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Kemi Badenoch):

[\[HCWS953\]](#)

Introduction

The UK officially signed its Accession Protocol to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) on 16 July 2023. This trade agreement contains some of the world's largest and most dynamic economies. Our membership will take the agreement from 11 to 12 members and represents the first expansion of this high standards trade agreement.

The agreement will act as a gateway to the wider Indo-Pacific and Americas region, bringing new opportunities for British businesses, supporting jobs across the whole UK and shaping the future of international trading rules.

The Indo-Pacific region will account for the majority of global growth in coming decades and be home to around half of the world's middle-class consumers. On the UK joining, the CPTPP membership will account for around £12 trillion in GDP, a number which will grow as new members join. Economies including Costa Rica, Uruguay and Ecuador have formally applied, and Republic of Korea, Thailand and the Philippines have also

expressed an interest in doing so. As the first acceding country we have placed ourselves in an ideal position to benefit from future expansion of the agreement.

Geopolitical Benefits

Accession to the agreement will send a powerful signal that the UK is using our post-Brexit freedoms to boost the economy. It will secure our place as the second largest economy in a trade grouping dedicated to free and rules-based trade while taking a larger role in setting standards for the global economy.

Becoming a member will see us deepening our multilateral relations and strengthening our trading links in the Indo-Pacific region. We will work closely with our partners to develop the agreement, creating further benefits for all its members.

As CPTPP grows, the UK will help shape its development to fight unfair and coercive trading practices that threaten the future of international trade. British businesses will benefit from enhanced access to more markets while trading under fair rules that allow them to compete and thrive on the global stage.

Our status as an independent trading nation is putting the UK in an enviable position. Membership of this agreement will be a welcome addition to our bilateral free trade agreements with over 70 countries.

Gains for Businesses and Consumers

In an historic first joining CPTPP will mean that the UK and Malaysia are in a Free Trade Agreement together for the first time, giving British business better access to a market worth £330 billion. Manufacturers of key UK exports will be able to make the most of tariff reductions to this thriving market. Tariffs of around 80% on whisky will be eliminated within 10 years and tariffs of 30% on cars will be eliminated within 7 years. In addition to this, over 99% of current UK goods exports to economies in the agreement will be eligible for zero tariff trade. The agreement's provisions will also help facilitate trade by ensuring that customs procedures of CPTPP Parties are efficient, consistent, transparent, and predictable.

Beyond goods exports, the UK's world leading services firms will benefit from modern rules which ensure non-discriminatory treatment and greater levels of transparency. In key sectors, UK companies will not be required to establish or maintain a representative office in a CPTPP territory. This will make it easier for them to provide services to consumers in other CPTPP countries.

The deal we've struck will also open up new opportunities in the Government Procurement markets of CPTPP members, including in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan.

Business travel will be easier under the agreement. Britons travelling to CPTPP members for work purposes will enjoy greater certainty on trips for short term work meetings. Professionals going to Peru and Vietnam for short term business will be able to stay for 6 months. That's double the amount of time for previous agreements.

UK consumers are also set to benefit from tariff reductions on imports. These tariff reductions could lead to cheaper prices, better choice and higher quality. Products such

as fruit juices from Chile and Peru, and Mexican honey and chocolate, to name but a few, could all cost less.

Defending UK Interests in Negotiations

We have ensured that joining will not compromise our high animal and plant health, food safety or animal welfare standards. We have also maintained our right to regulate in the public interest, including in areas such as the environment and labour standards.

Furthermore, we ensured that the NHS was kept off the table throughout the course of discussions, as in all of our Free Trade Agreement negotiations. We have also ensured that UK producers will be protected. We have reduced import tariffs in proportion to the market access we have received and kept safeguards where necessary. Market access increases will be staged over time for certain products, ensuring that farmers have time to adjust to new trade flows. Permanent limits on tariff-free volumes have been agreed on some of the most sensitive products that can be exported to the UK. This includes on beef and pork

Conclusion and Next Steps

Following signature, the government will now take the necessary steps to ratify the agreement. The Secretary of State will write to the Trade and Agriculture Commission to commission their advice on the agreement.

The government has now published the Accession Protocol and related market access schedules, as well as relevant side letters, an Impact Assessment and a draft Explanatory Memorandum. With the publication of the Accession Protocol, the agreement text has now been presented to parliament, but the Government will not commence the pre-ratification scrutiny process under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 for a period of at least three months. This will ensure there is appropriate time for the relevant select committees to consider the agreement in advance. Legislation necessary to implement the agreement will be brought forward, and duly scrutinised by Parliament, when Parliamentary time allows.

Joining CPTPP marks a key step in the development of the UK's independent trade policy. It will deepen our relations with a strategically vital region and offer exciting new opportunities for British businesses and consumers.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Transforming Public Procurement Part 2 Consultation on draft regulations to implement the Procurement Bill

Parliamentary Secretary (Alex Burghart):

[\[HCWS949\]](#)

Further to my statement on 19 June 2023, I am today launching the second part of a public consultation on the draft implementing Regulations that will form part of a new procurement regime. This consultation, which is highly technical and not seeking views on policy development, has been split into two parts. My previous statement launched the first part of the consultation which will remain open until 28 July 2023.

The second part of the consultation, announced today, focuses on the transparency provisions and notices that will be used by contracting authorities to fulfil their legal requirements under the Bill. It also includes information on the proposed approach to transitional arrangements for procurements already underway at the time that the new regime enters into force and the position on other legislation that will need to be amended in order for the full provisions of the Bill to take effect. We are also using this opportunity to consult on a proposal to use the power in the Bill at clause 120 to amend Bill provisions for private utilities with respect to the Preliminary Market Engagement notice, in line with our aim of minimising burdens on these private businesses.

The consultation we are publishing today, and laying in Parliament, gives everyone an opportunity to help shape public procurement for the future and I wish to encourage all involved in public procurement to have their say.

DEFENCE

■ Camp BAGNOLD Gifting to the UN

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[\[HCWS959\]](#)

I have today laid before the House a Departmental Minute describing the provision of infrastructure worth £4,226,970 to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Gao, Mali.

MINUSMA is a UN-led, non-combat mission to support the political processes in Mali and to carry out a number of security related tasks, for which the UK contribution, since December 2020, was the Long Range Reconnaissance Group (Mali) (LRRG(M)).

The security and political situation in Mali has deteriorated significantly since the UK review of MINUSMA at the start of 2022. There have been two coups in the past two years and the Transitional Government of Mali (TGoM), which seized power in 2021, has continued to delay democratic transition and has routinely failed to address the numerous security and humanitarian issues it is facing. The TGoM has also behaved in a way that is constraining MINUSMA's delivery against its mandate. On 14 November 2022 the Government announced it was withdrawing its forces from Mali.

The UK Ministry of Defence intend to gift the Camp Bagnold infrastructure, with a value of £4,226,970 for \$1(US) to UN MINUSMA. The gifting transfers all ownership rights of the Camp to the UN, including any future responsibility for the remediation and disposal of the site.

On the 16 June 2023 the TGoM asked MINUSMA to leave Mali 'without delay'. Despite this, we still intend to gift the Camp to the UN MINUSMA. Given the fast-moving situation on the ground we request special urgency to lay a Departmental Minute in parliament for four sitting days before recess. This is necessary to allow us to meet the UN MINUSMA request that any contract to transfer the ownership of the Camp must be signed before 31 July 2023.

Attachments:

1. Camp BAGNOLD Gifting to the UN [20230712-Camp_BAGNOLD_DM (003)-1.pdf]

■ The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Quinquennial Review and Independent Review of UK Government Welfare Services for Veterans

Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families (Dr Andrew Murrison):

[\[HCWS956\]](#)

The following joint statement is released on behalf of myself and the Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

We are pleased to announce the completion and publication of both the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Quinquennial Review 2022/3 and the independent review of UK Government Welfare Services for veterans.

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) provides compensation for injury or illness caused or made worse by service; or where death is caused by service in the UK Armed Forces on or after 6 April 2005. Quinquennial Reviews ensure that the Scheme is scrutinised and remains fit for purpose; this is the second of these Quinquennial Reviews.

We informed the House on 2 March 2023 that we had commissioned an additional review into the role, scope and breadth of UK Government welfare provision for veterans, including by the Ministry of Defence under the Veterans UK banner. This is the first time these have been considered in the round since the launch of the Strategy for our Veterans and corresponding Veterans Strategy Action Plan, and the creation of the Office for Veterans' Affairs.

These reviews will help us to build on positive work already being undertaken across Government under the Strategy for our Veterans, including the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) £40 million digitisation project, which will significantly improve customer service and the process for managing claims within MOD.

We welcome both reviews and are grateful to the review teams for the considerable amount of work that has gone into both reports. The MOD and Office for Veterans' Affairs, along with other stakeholders, will now consider the recommendations of both reports in full, and the Government's response to each will be published later in the year.

We are placing copies of these Reviews in the Library of the House.

Attachments:

1. AFCS Quinquennial Review 2023 [Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Quinquennial Review 2023.pdf]
2. Annex D Public Bodies Review Programme [Annex D Public Bodies Review Programme- Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees_.pdf]
3. UK Government Services for Veterans Review [Independent Review of UK Government Welfare Services for Veterans.pdf]

EDUCATION**■ Minimum School Week****The Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb):****[[HCWS948](#)]**

In March 2022, the Government announced in the Schools White Paper ‘Opportunity for All’ that to give every pupil the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential, all mainstream, state-funded schools would be expected to deliver a minimum school week of 32.5 hours by September 2023.

Most schools already have a school week of at least this length, and others will have plans in hand to meet the minimum expectation by September 2023. However, in recognition of the pressures currently facing schools, the Government has decided to defer the deadline to September 2024. The Government is encouraging schools that are planning to increase their hours from this September to continue to do so.

The Government has today published guidance and case studies <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/length-of-the-school-week-minimum-expectation> to support those schools that are not yet meeting the minimum expectation.

■ School Funding Update**The Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb):****[[HCWS958](#)]**

Today I am confirming provisional funding allocations for 2024-25 through the schools, high needs and central school services national funding formulae (NFFs). Core schools funding includes funding for both mainstream schools and high needs. This is increasing by over £1.8bn in 2024-25 – from over £57.7 bn in 2023-24 to over £59.6bn in 2024-25. This is on top of the over £3.9 billion increase in the core schools budget in 2023-24.

The core schools funding increase for both this year and next year includes the additional funding for schools’ teacher pay costs, through the Teachers’ Pay Additional Grant (TPAG). On 13 July, we announced this funding to support schools with the September 2023 teachers’ pay award. The funding is being split between mainstream schools, special schools and alternative provision (AP), early years, and 16 to 19 provision. The part of the additional funding that goes to mainstream schools, special schools and alternative provision is worth £482.5m in 2023-24 and £827.5m in 2024-25. This funding will be paid on top of NFF funding in both 2023-24 and 2024-25. Further information on the TPAG is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2023-to-2024>.

Funding for mainstream schools through the schools NFF is increasing by 2.7% per pupil compared to 2023-24. Taken together with the funding increases seen in 2023-24, this means that funding through the schools NFF will be 8.5% higher per pupil in 2024-25, compared to 2022-23.

The minimum per pupil funding levels (MPPLs) will increase by 2.4% compared to 2023-24. This will mean that, next year, every primary school will receive at least £4,655 per pupil, and every secondary school at least £6,050. Academy trusts continue to have

flexibilities over how they allocate funding across academies in their trust. This means, in some cases, an individual academy could receive a lower or higher per-pupil funding amount than the MPPL value. This may reflect, for example, activities that are paid for by the trust centrally, rather than by individual academies.

The NFF will distribute this funding based on schools' and pupils' needs and characteristics. The main features in 2024-25 are:

- We are introducing a formulaic approach to allocating split sites funding. This ensures that funding for schools which operate across more than one site will be provided on a consistent basis across the country.
- The core factors in the schools NFF (such as basic per-pupil funding, and the lump sum that all schools attract) will increase by 2.4%.
- The funding floor will ensure that every school attracts at least 0.5% more pupil-led funding per pupil compared to its 2023-24 allocation.
- The 2023-24 mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG) has been rolled into the schools NFF for 2024-25. This is to ensure that the additional funding schools attract through the NFF is as close as possible to the funding they would have received if the funding was continuing as a separate grant in 2024-25, without adding significant complexity to the formula. Adding the grant funding to the NFF provides reassurance to schools that this funding forms part of schools' core budgets and will continue to be provided.
- For the first time, in 2024-25 we will allocate funding to local authorities on the basis of falling rolls, as well as growth. Local authorities can use this funding to support schools which see a short-term fall in the number of pupils on roll.

2023-24 was the first year of transition to the direct schools NFF, with our end point being a system in which, to ensure full fairness and consistency in funding, every mainstream school in England is funded through a single national formula without adjustment through local funding formulae. Following a successful first year of transition, we will continue with the same approach to transition in 2024-25. As in 2023-24, local authorities will only be allowed to use NFF factors in their local formulae, and must use all NFF factors, except any locally determined premises factors. Local authorities will also be required to move their local formulae factors a further 10% closer to the NFF values, compared to where they were in 2023-24, unless they are classed as already "mirroring" the NFF.

Today we are also publishing local authority funding formula data for 2023-24. Following the first year of transition, the number of local authorities that mirror the schools NFF increased significantly from just over half in 2022-23, to just over two-thirds in 2023-24. Of the 72 local authorities that were not mirroring the NFF in 2022-23, 61 chose to move their local formula closer to the NFF than required.

In 2024-25, high needs funding through the NFF is increasing by a further £440m, or 4.3% – following the £970 million increase in 2023-24 and £1 billion increase in 2022-23. This brings the total high needs budget to over £10.5 billion. All local authorities will

receive at least a 3% increase per head of their aged 2-18 population, compared to their 2023-24 allocations, with some authorities seeing gains of up to 5%.

The £10.5 billion funding includes the continuation of the £400m high needs funding allocated to local authorities following the 2022 autumn statement, and the £440m increase is provided on top of that. All special and alternative provision schools will continue to receive their share of that funding in 2024-25.

Central school services funding is provided to local authorities for the ongoing responsibilities they have for all schools. The total provisional funding for ongoing responsibilities is £304 million in 2024-25. In line with the process introduced for 2020-21, to withdraw funding over time for the historic commitments local authorities entered into before 2013-14, funding for historic commitments will decrease by a further 20% in 2024-25.

Updated allocations of schools, high needs and central schools services funding for 2024-25 will be published in December, taking account of the latest pupil data at that point.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Update on Fisheries

Minister of State (Mark Spencer):

[\[HCWS951\]](#)

Today the UK Government is publishing a number of consultations, consultation responses, and announcing funding to use post-Brexit freedoms to support a thriving fishing sector.

Seizing the opportunities of being an independent coastal state, the UK is introducing a world class system of fisheries management which draws on the best available science and the expertise of our fishermen and anglers to ensure our fish stocks are healthy and sustainable long into the future.

The UK has some of the finest fish stocks in the world. Healthy fish stocks are a vital resource, providing livelihoods, enjoyment, and prosperity to our coastal communities. Since we left the EU, the UK government has taken important steps for our fishing industry, anglers and marine environment.

As an independent coastal state, we negotiated significant uplifts in fishing opportunities for UK vessels, valued at around £101 million this year. We are investing in the long-term future of the UK fisheries sector through our £100 million UK Seafood Fund, to drive innovation, support job creation, and boost seafood exports to new markets. We introduced the first Fisheries Act for nearly thirty years and published the Joint Fisheries Statement.

In replacing the Common Fisheries Policy with our own domestic policy, we aim to maximise our newfound freedoms to introduce a world class fisheries management system.

Today we take another step in that journey, unveiling proposals for a reform package that will transform how we manage our fisheries – ensuring a thriving, sustainable industry and healthy marine environment for future generations. These reforms play a crucial role in achieving the goals in our Environmental Improvement Plan and the UK Government's Food Strategy as well as levelling up some of our much-loved coastal towns and communities.

This new system will be underpinned by Fisheries Management Plans – blueprints for how best to manage fish stocks – with the first six published today, including bass, king scallops, crab and lobster.

Based on the best available science and experience from fishermen and anglers, FMPs assess the fish stocks, and set out actions to manage them sustainably. The first six draft FMPs and associated environmental reports are being published today for consultation.

We are also consulting on a range of other important changes. These include:

- Expanding the use of remote electronic monitoring (REM) in English waters.
- Introducing a new approach to managing discards in England.
- Establishing a licensed recreational bluefin tuna fishery.
- Permanently lifting the quota cap on licences for small vessels in English waters.

We are also awarding £45.6 million to modernise and improve infrastructure across the seafood sector, helping to support c. 1,500 jobs and ensure we are using the best science, research, and technology in fisheries management as part of our £100 million UK Seafood Fund.

Finally, we are publishing a response to our consultation on flyseining measures in English waters, noting we will change legislation to make squid fishing more sustainable and will take forward other measures through the FMPs. We will also publish the summary of responses to our consultation on spatial management measures for sandeels. A clear majority of respondents supported a proposal of a full closure of sandeel fishing in English waters of the North Sea.

This package marks a clear departure from the Common Fisheries Policy and will deliver our ambition to build a modern, resilient and profitable fishing industry underpinned by sustainable fish stocks and a healthy marine environment.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ 0.7 per cent of GNI on ODA target 2022

Minister of State (Development and Africa) (Mr Andrew Mitchell): [\[HCWS961\]](#)

The Government took the difficult decision to reduce temporarily the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget from 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) to 0.5% from 2021, because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and public finances. The Government will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows.

The International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 (“the 2015 Act”) envisages situations in which a departure from meeting the target of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA may be necessary: for example, in response to “fiscal circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of meeting the target on taxation, public spending and public borrowing”.

The FCDO’s Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, published today, reports that the 0.7% target was not met in 2022, on a provisional basis. As required by section 2 of the 2015 Act, an Unnumbered Act Paper has been laid before Parliament and is in the same terms as this statement.

In a Written Ministerial Statement on 12 July 2021, my Rt Hon Friend the former Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed that the decision to reduce the ODA budget is temporary and set out the conditions for returning to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA. The principles for a return will be met when, on a sustainable basis, the Government is not borrowing for day-to-day spending and underlying debt is falling. The House of Commons voted to approve this approach to returning to 0.7% on 13 July 2021. My Rt Hon Friend the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed this in his 22 November 2022 Written Ministerial Statement.

Each year the Government will review, in accordance with the 2015 Act, whether a return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA is possible against the latest fiscal forecast provided by the Office for Budget Responsibility. The most recent assessment, set out in HM Treasury’s Autumn Statement 2022, showed that the principles for a return to 0.7% had not been met.

■ Support to the people of Afghanistan

Minister of State (Development and Africa) (Mr Andrew Mitchell): [\[HCWS960\]](#)

My Noble Friend, the Minister of State (Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and United Nations) (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon), has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am updating the House on UK efforts to support those most in need in Afghanistan. Afghanistan remains one of HM Government’s (HMG’s) largest bilateral aid allocations and we continue to be a major contributor to humanitarian, health and education support. Since April 2021, HMG has disbursed over £532 million in aid for Afghanistan while the country continues to experience one of the world’s most acute humanitarian crises. This financial year we have made a further commitment of £100 million and plan an additional £151 million for next financial year. HMG continues to influence international thinking on how to support basic services in Afghanistan, challenge the Taliban on human rights abuses, and build consensus on engaging with the Taliban to make progress on issues of mutual benefit. We remain committed that at least 50% of people reached with UK aid in Afghanistan will be women and girls – a commitment we met in 2021-2022 and are on track to meet for 2022-2023.

The scale of the need in Afghanistan is profound. Two thirds of the population are estimated to be in humanitarian need. We remain appalled at the continued erosion of the

rights of women and girls, which has led to their almost total exclusion from political, educational and social spaces. On 23 March 2022, the Taliban banned girls' access to secondary schools and closed universities to women in December 2022. On 5 April 2023, the Taliban banned Afghan women from working for the UN in Afghanistan, extending their 24 December 2022 directive banning Afghan women from working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs). HMG has strongly condemned the Taliban's decisions through a range of international statements, including the UN Security Council Resolution 2681. Together with likeminded countries – including those in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation – we continue to press the Taliban to reverse their prohibitive decrees.

Afghan women play a vital role in the delivery of aid operations, and the FCDO is supporting our international partners to adapt programmes and find solutions to include women and girls in the implementation of aid. Afghan women and girls must have safe and equitable access to aid. HMG continues to support girls' education in Afghanistan through bilateral and multilateral contributions to NGOs, UN partners and multilateral funds. Educated, empowered women will contribute to Afghanistan's economic development, as well as to its peace and stability.

The UN's Humanitarian Appeal for Afghanistan this year is for \$3.2 billion and is currently only 15% funded. We continue to press donors to meet their commitments to support the Afghan people. In 2022-2023, the UK disbursed £95 million to the UN's World Food Programme, supporting 4.2 million people. Through UNICEF, HMG expects to reach an estimated 1.6 million people with nutrition, water and sanitation, and child and social protection services in 2022-2023. £50 million was allocated to the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund last year to provide support for health, water, protection, shelter, food, livelihoods, and education interventions.

As co-Chair of the Afghanistan Coordination Group until recently, HMG has worked with international partners to deliver sustained essential services for the Afghan people. In 2022, HMG supported the Asian Development Bank to approve a \$405m package of support. This followed an approval in December 2021 to transfer \$280m of funds from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund to UN agencies. This funding supports UN agencies to finance core public health services, education, and the provision of emergency food services.

We continue to engage pragmatically with the Taliban, primarily through the UK Mission to Afghanistan, based in Doha. FCDO ministers are in regular contact with their international counterparts on Afghanistan. In 2023 The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP and I as Minister of State have met UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, Afghan women and civil society organisations to discuss the Taliban's restrictions on women and girls. The Foreign Secretary and his ministerial team regularly discuss Afghanistan during their international engagements. The Prime Minister's Special Representative to Afghanistan regularly engages with international counterparts, including at a substantive meeting for Special Envoys hosted by the UN Secretary General in Doha in May 2023.

Attachments:

1. ODA spend breakdown for Afghanistan for FY 2022-20 [ODA spend breakdown for Afghanistan for FY 2022-2023.docx.pdf]

HOME OFFICE**■ Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules****The Minister of State for Immigration (Robert Jenrick):**[\[HCWS954\]](#)

My right hon Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

Changes to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and EUSS family permit

We are making certain changes to the EUSS, which enables EU, other European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens living in the UK by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, and their family members, to obtain immigration status. In particular, meeting the deadline for the application (or, in line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, having reasonable grounds for the delay in making an application) will become a requirement for making a valid application. Consistent with the Agreements, this will enable us to consider whether there are reasonable grounds for a late application as a preliminary issue, before going on to consider whether a valid application meets the relevant eligibility and suitability requirements. We will also prevent a valid application as a joining family member being made by an illegal entrant to the UK, thereby reinforcing our approach to tackling illegal migration.

We are closing the EUSS on 8 August 2023 to new applications under two routes not covered by the Agreements: family member of a qualifying British citizen (on their return to the UK having exercised free movement rights in the EEA or Switzerland, known as 'Surinder Singh' cases) and primary carer of a British citizen (known as 'Zambrano' cases). The UK made generous transitional provisions enabling such persons to access the EUSS for more than four years. It is now appropriate, as a matter of fairness to other British citizens wishing to sponsor foreign national family members to settle in the UK, that any new applications should have to meet the family Immigration Rules applicable to others. The routes will remain open to those who are already on them (or with a pending application, administrative review or appeal) or who have pending access to them via a relevant EUSS family permit.

The EUSS family permit will also close on 8 August 2023 to new applications by a family member of a qualifying British citizen. Those granted an EUSS family permit as such a family member via an application made by this date will still be able to come to the UK and apply to the EUSS.

Extension of the Ukraine Extension Scheme

We are extending the application deadline for the Ukraine Extension Scheme for a further six months to 16 May 2024.

This change extends the scheme to allow Ukrainian nationals and their family members who obtain permission to enter or stay in the UK for any period between 18 March 2022 and 16 November 2023 to apply to the Ukraine Extension Scheme and obtain 36 months' permission to stay in the UK. All applications must now to be made by 16 May 2024.

The extension to the application deadline is intended to encourage people to apply for leave under the Ukraine Extension Scheme to ensure they maintain a lawful immigration status. This will provide greater certainty and clarity for the individual, the Home Office and other Government Departments and organisations which require evidence of immigration status to confirm entitlement to services.

Student route (dependants and switching)

As announced by the Home Secretary on the 23 May 2023, and following the Government's commitment to reduce net migration, we are removing the right for international students to bring dependants unless they are on postgraduate courses currently designated as research programmes. We are also removing the ability for international students to switch out of the student route into work routes before their studies have been completed.

These changes preserve the ability for dependants already in the UK to extend their stay, and for international students on taught postgraduate courses beginning before 1 January 2024 to bring dependants. They also preserve existing exemptions for dependants of government-sponsored students and for dependent children who are born in the UK.

The switching restrictions will ensure that students are generally not switching in-country to another route until they have completed their course. Students on courses at degree level or above will be able to apply before course completion to switch to sponsored work routes, as long as their employment start date is not before course completion. Those studying towards PhDs will be able to switch after 24 months' study.

Asylum - pausing the differentiation policy

Provisions within the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (NABA), which came into force on 28 June 2022, set out the framework to differentiate between two groups of refugees who ultimately remain in the UK: "Group 1" and "Group 2".

The primary way in which the Groups are differentiated is the grant of permission to stay: Group 1 refugees are normally granted refugee permission to stay for five years, after which they can apply for settlement, whereas Group 2 refugees are normally granted temporary refugee permission to stay for 30 months on a 10-year route to settlement.

The differentiation policy was intended to disincentivise migrants from using criminal smugglers to facilitate illegal journeys to the UK. This was the right approach. Since then, the scale of the challenge facing the UK, like other countries, has grown – and that is why the Government introduced the Illegal Migration Bill. The Bill goes further than ever before in seeking to deter illegal entry to the UK, so that the only humanitarian route into the UK is through a safe and legal one. The Bill will radically overhaul how we deal with people who arrive in the UK illegally via safe countries, rendering their asylum and human rights claims (in respect of their home country) inadmissible and imposing a duty on the

Home Secretary to remove them. This approach represents a considerably stronger means of tackling the same issue that the differentiation policy sought to address: people making dangerous and unnecessary journeys through safe countries to claim asylum in the UK.

We will therefore pause the differentiation policy in the next package of Immigration Rules changes in July 2023. This means we will stop taking grouping decisions under the differentiated asylum system after these Rules changes and those individuals who are successful in their asylum application, including those who are granted humanitarian protection, will receive the same conditions. Our ability to remove failed asylum applicant remains unchanged.

Individuals who have already received a “Group 2” or humanitarian protection decision under post-28 June 2022 policies will be contacted and will have their conditions aligned to those afforded to “Group 1” refugees. This includes length of permission to stay, route to settlement, and eligibility for Family Reunion.

On 23 February 2023 the Home Office announced the streamlined asylum processing model for a small number of cases of nationalities with high asylum grant rates: Afghanistan, Eritrea, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Because this model focuses on manifestly well-founded cases, positive decisions can be taken without the need for an additional interview. No one will have their asylum application refused without the opportunity of an additional interview.

Those claims made between 28 June 2022 and the date of introduction of the Illegal Migration Bill (7 March 2023) will be processed according to this model. This will also include claimants from Sudan. Sudanese legacy claimants are already being processed in-line with established policies and processes and will be decided in-line with the Prime Minister’s commitment to clear the backlog of legacy asylum claims by the end of 2023.

Improving clarity regarding withdrawing asylum claims

The updated paragraph 333C provides clarity on the circumstances in which an asylum application will be withdrawn, whilst strengthening our ability to promptly withdraw asylum applications from individuals who do not comply with established processes.

It clarifies that there will be no substantive consideration of asylum claims that have been withdrawn and provides greater flexibility to accept explicit withdrawals where a claimant requests to withdraw their claim in writing but fails to do so on a specified form, in doing so preventing duplicative correspondence with the claimant.

In addition, the updates will support the efficient progression of applications by helping to prevent absconder scenarios by making it clear that the burden is on the claimant to keep the Home Office up-to-date with their contact details, and that failure to do so may result in a withdrawal of their asylum claim.

Furthermore, it is now made clear that failure to attend a reporting event may result in an asylum application being treated as implicitly withdrawn, ensuring efficiency with application progression through preventing potential absconder scenarios.

These changes will enable decision-making resources to be concentrated on those who genuinely wish to continue with their asylum claims in the United Kingdom.

The changes to the Immigration Rules are being laid on 17 July 2023.

The changes relating to Asylum - pausing the differentiation policy and the changes relating to Students will come into force at 3pm today.

The changes relating to the EUSS will come into effect on 9 August 2023.

All other changes will come into effect on 7 August 2023.

■ **Updating the Code of Practice on non-compliance with the biometric registration regulations**

The Minister of State for Immigration (Robert Jenrick):

[\[HCWS955\]](#)

In 2018 the Home Office began issuing eVisas, which are an electronic record of immigration status and can be accessed via GOV.UK. eVisas were initially issued to individuals granted status under the EU settlement scheme and have since been extended to other schemes such as the Hong Kong (British National Overseas) route to citizenship. By the end of 2024, we will have completed the transition from physical biometric immigration documents (BIDs) in the form of the biometric residence permits, to digitised BIDs, known as eVisas. From this point the vast majority of individuals will receive digital status.

Holders of eVisas are able to evidence their status by creating a share-code which they can share with a third-party checkers, such as employers. We also enable system-to-system checks to directly confirm immigration status, for example the Department for Health and Social Care being able to check a person's immigration status when accessing NHS treatment.

There will be times where key information shown on a customer's record may change and they need to update their details (for example when they get married and change their name). Ensuring that this information is kept up to date is a requirement which is set out in the Immigration (Biometric Registration) Regulations 2008. Failure to comply with one of the requirements in the regulations may result in the Secretary of State imposing one or more sanctions on the individual. These are outlined in the "Code of Practice about the sanctions for non-compliance with the biometric registration regulations", which was last updated in 2015.

However, since the introduction of biometric immigration documents in the form of eVisas, the Code of Practice needs to be updated to fully reflect the specific elements and approach to eVisas. This includes updating the requirements and sanctions associated with holders of these accounts.

To ensure they are effective and proportionate, I am launching a consultation on these changes. The consultation will explore how these sanctions would potentially be understood and affect individuals, including those who are vulnerable. It would also explore how the sanctions may impact groups linked to the holders of eVisas (employers, landlords and financial institutions)

The consultation will be available on GOV.UK.

JUSTICE

■ Review of the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Ministry of Justice (Mike Freer):
[\[HCWS952\]](#)

The Under-Secretary of State for Justice, my noble Friend Lord Bellamy KC, has made the following written statement:

"The government has today published the outcome of its review of the fees that can be recovered from judgment debtors by enforcement agents and High Court Enforcement Officers – commonly known as bailiffs – when using the procedures in the Taking Control of Goods Regulations 2013 and the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014 in England and Wales.

The ability of creditors to enforce the payment of debts and fines is a fundamental part of the justice system which supports economic growth and underpins the rule of law. The enforcement industry collects debts owed to private individuals, businesses and local authorities, the last of which are in turn used to fund public services. If effective enforcement methods were not available, creditors would be more cautious in their lending and the authority of the courts, and public trust in their effectiveness, would be questioned. To ensure the enforcement system remains effective it is essential that the enforcement industry is sustainable.

The fees that enforcement agents and High Court Enforcement Officers can recover are set out in the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014. They were designed to ensure a fair and transparent costs structure that provides appropriate remuneration for enforcement work undertaken, without allowing the sector to make excessive profits to be paid for by debtors. The Regulations were also designed to incentivise early recovery without an enforcement visit being necessary, thereby reducing costs to all parties.

The review looked at whether the fees should be uplifted from the level set in 2014; whether more could be done to encourage payment without an enforcement visit becoming necessary; whether reform was needed of the High Court fee scale; and whether the costs of enforcement should continue to be borne by judgment debtors.

We intend to make the following changes:

Uplifting the fixed fees that enforcement agents and High Court Enforcement Officers can recover from judgment debtors by 5%. This will be the first uplift to the fees since 2014. We consider it is necessary to do so to ensure that enforcement firms are appropriately remunerated for the work they do in order to ensure the sustainability of the sector.

Uplifting by 24% the thresholds above which enforcement agents and High Court Enforcement Officers can recover a percentage fee and rounding the result to the nearest £100. This will ensure that inflationary increases are accounted for so that only

consumers and businesses with higher value debts requiring greater amounts of work to enforce have to pay this additional fee.

We also intend to consult on a package of measures aimed at incentivising earlier and cheaper settlement of debt. Proposals include extending the minimum period of notice that must be given before making an enforcement visit from 7 to 28 days; defining in Regulations the tasks that are to be undertaken before a visit is made; and amending the statutory Notice of Enforcement to signpost debtors to advice and encourage early engagement with enforcement agents. We will also consult on amending the Regulations that apply to High Court enforcement to prevent a higher fee being applied to low value debts, and to clarify when cases can progress to the next enforcement stage. We also intend to consult on proposals to amend the *Taking Control of Goods: National Standards* to prohibit creditors from seeking to recover a percentage of the enforcement agent or High Court Enforcement Officer fees when tendering for enforcement contracts. This will ensure enforcement agents do not recover less than they should for each stage of enforcement and prevent debtors being unnecessarily moved to more expensive stages of enforcement and higher costs.

This package of reforms aims to ensure the sustainability of the enforcement sector, whilst tightening up the rules that enforcement agents and High Court Enforcement Officers must follow to ensure that people in debt are given more opportunities to settle the debt at the earliest and cheapest stage possible. These reforms will complement the work that the government is already doing to make sure that people facing enforcement action are treated fairly, such as supporting the establishment of the Enforcement Conduct Board to provide independent oversight of the sector.

Following consultation, we propose introducing legislation to implement all of these measures at the same time.

Our review benefitted from a wealth of data and feedback from the enforcement sector and other interested parties including debt advice providers local authorities, court users and other interested parties and the Government would like to thank them for their important contributions.

A copy of the Government Response to the Review will be online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enforcement-agent-fee-review-2023> .

TRANSPORT

■ Transport Update

Minister of State for Transport (Huw Merriman):

[[HCWS962](#)]

The Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), published in November 2021 set out a £96 billion investment to benefit the Midlands and the North, the largest ever government investment in the railways. The Government stands by the conclusions of the Plan and continues to consider it the most effective way of providing rail benefits to the North and Midlands.

As part of the Plan, we also committed to take forward a study to consider the most effective way to run HS2 trains to Leeds.

I am today publishing the terms of reference for this work, which will include consideration of station capacity at Leeds, and the implications of different options on the wider network.

The proposals set out in the Integrated Rail Plan bring communities and labour markets together and will support growing our economy in towns and cities across the nation.

The work in the study will consider a range of options and take account of value for money, affordability, deliverability and timescales, economic development, disruption to passengers and local views and evidence. The study will be extensive and will take two years to complete.

As this work progresses, we intend to review the case for dropping certain options, taking account of evidence gathered, particularly on costs, affordability, benefits and value for money.

In addition, the Transport Select Committee on 13 July published the Government's response to their report on the Integrated Rail Plan. In response to the following recommendation on Bradford:

The Government should reconsider the case for the development of a new station in Bradford. The development of the St James's Market station would not only enhance rail connectivity in the North, allowing further investment in the city, but also provide further opportunities for rail development in Bradford after the 'core pipeline' of IRP upgrades take place. (Paragraph 63)

I have confirmed that the Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government stands by the conclusions of the Integrated Rail Plan on Bradford, and the benefits that plan brings to the city. However, in light of this recommendation, a re-assessment of the evidence for better connecting Bradford and the case for a new station will now form part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail development programme and the HS2 to Leeds Study.

The Government's approaches for Leeds and Bradford remain those which were set out in the Integrated Rail Plan, and the undertaking of this work does not guarantee further interventions will be agreed or progressed.

The Government remains committed to the Integrated Rail Plan's £96 billion envelope and expects that additions or changes to the core IRP pipeline will be affordable within that. Any options that are progressed, including those that would exceed the £96 billion envelope, will be subject to the established adaptive approach, as set out in the IRP.

TREASURY**■ South Yorkshire Advanced Manufacturing Investment Zone****The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Gareth Davies):**[\[HCWS957\]](#)

On Friday the Government and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority announced the creation of a new South Yorkshire Investment Zone focused on Advanced Manufacturing, building on the region's long-standing research strengths and existing commercial operations in the area. Local communities and businesses across South Yorkshire, including in the Sheffield-Rotherham corridor, Barnsley and Doncaster, will benefit.

The Government also announced that Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems, Loop Technologies and the University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) have partnered to support the first investment within the zone, leading a portfolio of major new R&D projects into the future of aerospace. This investment will be worth over £80 million partially funded from the joint public-private sector Aerospace Technology Institute programme.

The South Yorkshire Investment Zone will be co-designed with the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University. By harnessing the region's local sector strengths, significant innovation assets and existing talent, the Investment Zone will catalyse further investment to boost productivity and deliver sustainable growth that benefits local communities. The Investment Zone will increase commercial opportunities in areas that have historically under-performed economically through a total funding envelope of £80 million over 5 years. It is expected that the Investment Zone will support more than £1.2 billion of private investment and the creation of more than 8,000 jobs by 2030.

The Government will continue to work with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and other local partners to co-develop the plans for their Advanced Manufacturing Investment Zone, including agreeing priority sites and specific interventions to drive cluster growth, over the summer ahead of final confirmation of plans.