



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 September 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:56 P.M., 12 September 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Administration of Justice

Emily Thornberry: [\[197424\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, on how many occasions defendants were informed that they (a) had been charged with an (i) indictable and (ii) either-way offence and (b) given a date and time to appear in court via a postal requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales in the (A) 2021-22 and (B) 2022-23 financial year.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ Crimes of Violence: Prosecutions

Emily Thornberry: [\[197752\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) assault occasioning actual bodily harm or (b) causing grievous bodily harm with intent and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

Emily Thornberry: [\[197753\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) wounding or (b) wounding with intent and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ Dangerous Driving: Prosecutions

Emily Thornberry: [\[197755\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) causing death by dangerous driving or (b) causing death by

careless driving whilst over the prescribed limit and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021/22 and (ii) 2022/23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ **Drugs: Prosecutions**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[197754\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) being concerned in the supply of Class A drugs or (b) conspiracy to supply a Class A drug and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ **Harassment: Prosecutions**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[197756\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship, (b) stalking and (c) harassment and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ **Homicide: Prosecutions**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[197748\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) murder or (b) manslaughter and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ Offences against Children: Prosecutions**Emily Thornberry:**[\[197750\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) rape of a child under 13 or (b) sexual assault of a child under 13 and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

Emily Thornberry:[\[197751\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) sexual activity with a child or (b) making an indecent image of a child and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ Sexual Offences: Prosecutions**Emily Thornberry:**[\[197749\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) rape or (b) sexual assault and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

■ Theft: Prosecutions**Emily Thornberry:**[\[197757\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times defendants were informed that they had been charged with (a) robbery, (b) conspiracy to commit robbery, (c) burglary and (d) conspiracy to commit burglary and given a date and time to appear in court by a Postal

Requisition letter from the Crown Prosecution Service in financial years (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Police issue all postal requisition letters following Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice to charge, and have sole responsibility for decisions on, and issue of, postal requisition letters. The CPS does not hold the relevant data.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Fireworks: Noise

Imran Hussain:

[\[198392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2023 to Question 196273 on Fireworks: Licensing, if she will publish a list of the (a) organisations and (b) stakeholders her Department has met with to (i) listen to and (ii) understand their views on inconsiderate use of fireworks between 2019 and 2023.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government engages with a wide range of stakeholders in relation to product safety, both in person but also through regular correspondence. We do not hold a full list of organisations and stakeholders that have been met where fireworks have been discussed. However, our engagement includes, but is not exclusive to, trade associations, animal welfare organisations, the industry, members of the public, parliamentarians and other government departments.

■ Indo-Pacific Region: Foreign Relations

Mark Logan:

[\[198232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what progress her Department has made on developing economic relations with the Indo-Pacific region.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are putting the UK at the centre of a network of modern relationships in the Indo-Pacific, including through the negotiation and implementation of Free Trade Agreements (such as the UK's recent accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership). In addition to joining CPTPP, we are breaking down market access barriers for UK businesses which will help to increase exports from UK companies into the Indo-Pacific, and encouraging investment from the Indo-Pacific into the UK that will boost science and technology, clean energy and levelling up objectives. We also introduced the Developing Countries Trading Scheme to provide lower tariffs and simpler rules of origin requirements for exporting to the UK.

■ Minimum Wage: Enfield North

Feryal Clark:

[\[197921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many breaches of minimum wage legislation by employers in Enfield North constituency there were in the last four years.

Kevin Hollinrake:

All businesses – irrespective of their size, business sector or location – are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff.

National Minimum Wage enforcement data is not held at constituency level but regional data for London can be seen in the table below.

FINANCIAL YEAR	REGION	ARREARS (£)	WORKERS
2018-19	London	6,456,315	59,147
2019-20	London	3,298,935	42,917
2020-21	London	1,285,697	10,005
2021-22	London	5,408,629	55,133

■ Post Offices

Navendu Mishra:

[\[197616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans she has for the future of the Crown Post Office estate.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Government sets the parameters for Post Office to operate in and asks its management to be responsible for running the company day-to-day. Post Office therefore has the freedom to make commercial decisions regarding the composition of its network, providing it fulfils the Government-set access criteria, which ensure that, for example, 99% of the UK population lives within three miles of a post office.

Post Office CEO, Nick Read, has been clear that it's the business' ambition to operate the network on a fully franchised basis in time. Directly Managed Branches (also known as Crown branches) represent around 1% of the Post Office network.

■ Scottish Limited Partnerships: Registration

Alison Thewliss:

[\[197787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what (a) value and (b) number of fines have been issued against Scottish Limited Partnerships for failing to register a Person of Significant Control in each month since the relevant regulations came into force.

Kevin Hollinrake:

There have been 2 convictions of Scottish Limited Partnerships (SLPs) for failure to register information for Persons with Significant Control ("PSCs") under The Scottish Partnerships (Register of People with Significant Control) Regulations 2017. The latest conviction was in August 2023.

The prosecuting authority is the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). The Registrar is not advised of the level of the fine in each case. Up to 31 March 2023, Companies House have passed 106 cases to COPFS for prosecution. Companies House publish figures for "Prosecutions under the Scottish Partnerships (Register of People with Significant Control) Regulations 2017" as part of their management information. This is a link to the publication (see Table 7):

[Companies House management information: April 2022 to March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/companies-house-management-information)

Alison Thewliss:**[197788]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many qualifying Scottish Limited partnerships have not registered a person of significant control in each year since the requirement to do so came into force.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Further to the answer to a previous query on this topic (UIN 75983) tabled on 1 November 2022, as of 31 August 2023, Companies House considers 7,836 Scottish Limited Partnerships ('SLPs') on the register to be active. Of these 85 have failed to register information for persons with significant control. This compares to 201 on 31 October 2022, 203 SLPs in January 2022, 213 SLPs in October 2021, 828 in January 2021, 948 in January 2020, 2,019 in January 2019 and 7,078 in January 2018.

Trade Agreements: India**Stephen Morgan:****[198227]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had discussions with her Indian counterpart on the prospect of India ratifying conventions (a) 87 and (b) 98 of the International Labour Organisation conventions; and whether this would be a prerequisite for any free trade agreement between the UK and India.

Nigel Huddleston:

While we do not comment on live negotiations, our approach to FTA negotiations is to secure provisions that ensure labour standards are not compromised in order to increase trade or investment. An FTA with India will not come at the expense of our worker protections.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Cabinet Office: Written Questions**

Julian Knight: [\[196712\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps their Department is taking to improve response times to written parliamentary questions.

Julian Knight: [\[196734\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data their Department holds on the average response time to written parliamentary questions in the last six months; and what assessment they have made of the adequacy of that response time.

Alex Burghart:

The Government attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of Written Parliamentary Questions and every effort is made to reply within the original deadline. However, if the matters raised in the question require substantial investigation, it might not be possible to provide a substantive reply to a case within the departmental deadline. To instil best practice in the Cabinet Office, we host regular departmental training sessions for parliamentary, private office and policy leads.

The Cabinet Office's Guide to Parliamentary Work sets out the timelines departments should seek to meet. This can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1116933/2022-10-11 - Guide to Parliamentary Work 1 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1116933/2022-10-11_-_Guide_to_Parliamentary_Work_1_.pdf)

Departmental performance on Written Parliamentary Questions is published at the end of each session by the Procedure Committee and is therefore publicly available.

You can find details of the last session's PQ performance here:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmproced/385/report.html>

■ Civil Servants: Remote Working

Sir John Hayes: [\[197341\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an estimate of the number of civil servants who were working remotely and logged in from overseas in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

Civil servants must honour their contractual obligations. A number will be posted overseas in permanent roles at any time but the total number of civil servants logging in from overseas is not held centrally.

■ Corporate Travel Management: Contracts

Emily Thornberry: [\[197717\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to section four, paragraph (i) of the variation made to his Department's enabling agreement with Corporate Travel

Management (North) Ltd. for the provision of public sector air capability on 8 June 2022, reference CCYZ20A01, what (a) the amendment is to be made to the definition of aircraft in that agreement and (b) the switch of aircraft that is to take place on or before 30 September 2023.

Emily Thornberry:

[197718]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to section four, paragraphs (i) to (ii) of the variation made to his Department's enabling agreement with Corporate Travel Management (North) Ltd. for the provision of public sector air capability on 8 June 2022, reference CCYZ20A01, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the proposed (a) switch of aircraft and (b) livery in which the new aircraft will be provided.

Alex Burghart:

The amendment to the definition of the aircraft covers the switch of airframe from Manufacturer's Serial Number (MSN)10238 to MSN 8830. This switch of airframe is contractually due to take place on or before 30 September 2023.

There is no further cost to the public purse to cover both (a) the switch of aircraft and (b) the livery in which the new aircraft will be provided.

■ Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee

Julian Knight:

[196664]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) transparency and (b) public accountability of the Parliamentary Business and Legislation Cabinet Committee.

Alex Burghart:

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.

The Guide to Making Legislation (Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-making-legislation>) includes an account of the workings of the Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee relating to legislation.

■ Prime Minister: California

Matt Western:

[196546]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many flights the Prime Minister has made to California since 25 October 2022.

Alex Burghart:

Details of Ministerial overseas travel are published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) on a quarterly basis.

■ Public Buildings: Concrete**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[197494\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many publicly-owned buildings in the UK contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

Alex Burghart:

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out.

Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Gambling Commission: Staff****Philip Davies:****[R]** [\[195826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many and what proportion of (a) board members and (b) employees of the Gambling Commission have previous experience in the industries that they regulate.

Stuart Andrew:

The Commission does not collect data on previous employers of its current staff but ensures that staff are able to access specialist knowledge to make informed and evidence-based decisions. The Commission also has a Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy that explains how it identifies and manages conflicts.

Job specifications for Commissioners reflect the range of skills and experience required by the Board including customer protection and insight, law enforcement and data science and digital innovation. Biographies of the current board members are available on Gov.uk.

As part of the fair and open process to recruit board members, candidates are assessed on their experience in different sectors, their understanding of the Gambling Commission's work and the importance of effective, independent, proportionate, and impartial regulation.

■ Leisure: Facilities**Sir John Hayes:**[\[197340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an estimate of the number of leisure centres that might have been built using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete.

Stuart Andrew:

On the 1st May 2019, the Standing Committee on Structural Safety issued a safety alert on the failure of RAAC planks.

Following this, the Cabinet Office wrote to all Government Departments and NHS England wrote to NHS Trusts highlighting the latest developments and advice.

Since then, individual organisations have been surveying properties and, depending on the assessment of the RAAC, decided to either monitor it, prop it up, or replace it. This is in line with Institution of Structural Engineers guidance.

Jamie Stone:[\[197551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has taken recent steps to determine the prevalence of reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC) in leisure centres.

Stuart Andrew:

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out.

Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates.

Sir John Hayes:[\[197664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many local authority leisure centres closed in each year since 1997.

Stuart Andrew:

Data held by Sport England is only fully available from 2010, when the Active Places database was fully established. Data is stored by facility type (e.g. pool, health and fitness gym, or sports hall) rather than "leisure centre."

From 2010, approximately 414 local authority owned sites which have one or more pools, main halls or health & fitness gyms, closed either fully or partially (where a facility within the site, e.g. a pool or gym may have closed). At the same time, new facilities were constructed at 434 comparable sites. This indicates a net increase in facilities in the period between 2010 and present.

It is important to consider these numbers in the context of facility provision within the local area. Facilities may close for a number of reasons, this can include the rationalisation of multiple older facilities into a modern, better located facility.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[196221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish the (a) annual total budget for and (b) amount of money allocated by the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme in each of the last five years.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The total annual budget for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme is £42,000,000 per year. Over the last five years, the funding allocation for places of worship under the grant scheme has been as follows:

- In the financial year 2022/2023, a total of £33,952,912 was allocated.
- In 2021/2022, the allocation was £25,519,715.
- In 2020/2021, the allocation was £28,708,075.
- In 2019/2020, the allocation was £35,639,573.
- In 2018/2019, the allocation was £35,994,884.

Public Buildings: Concrete**Jamie Stone:**[\[197550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking steps to compile a list of public buildings affected by construction with reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC).

Sir John Whittingdale:

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out.

Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates.

Sports: Drugs**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[197588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to her Department's policy paper *Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity*, published on 30 August 2023, what steps she plans to take to help ensure that the use of (a) anabolic steroids and (b) image and performance enhancing drugs is included by the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity in its work to self-regulate the workforce.

Dr Luke Evans:[\[197589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to her Department's policy paper *Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity*, published on 30 August 2023, what discussions she plans to have with the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity on the inclusion of the (a) legal and (b) health impacts of the use of (i) anabolic steroids and (ii) image and performance enhancing drugs in the development of a (A) national registration scheme and (B) structured career pathway for coaches.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[197964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the policy paper, Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity, published by her Department on 30 August 2023, whether she is taking steps to ensure that the call for evidence on sport integrity will include focus on the potential use of (a) anabolic steroids and (b) image and performance enhancing drugs.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[197965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the policy paper, Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity, published by her Department on 30 August 2023, whether she is taking steps to ensure that UK Anti-Doping considers the (a) legal and (b) health impacts of the use of (i) anabolic steroids and (ii) image and performance enhancing drugs as part of its work.

Stuart Andrew:

The safety and wellbeing of everyone taking part in sport is hugely important. This includes the issue of image and performance enhancing drugs and the significant impact of these substances on the physical and mental health of those who use them.

UK Anti-Doping (UKAD), an arm's length body of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, is collaborating with the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) to embed clean sport content in CIMSPA's professional standards for personal trainers and coaches.

The government's call for evidence on sport integrity opened on 30 August 2023 alongside the publication of "Get Active". It covers the handling of a range of sport integrity issues, including doping.

We will continue to support the work of UKAD and other partners to protect and promote clean sport and to look beyond the sporting community to shine a spotlight on the issue of image and performance enhancing drugs.

■ Sports: Rural Areas

Dr Luke Evans: [\[197587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to her Department's policy paper Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity, published on 30 August 2023, what steps she is taking to ensure that rurality is considered when meeting the target for at least 75% of Sport England place investment being committed to areas with the lowest levels of physical activity and social outcomes.

Stuart Andrew:

We know that active people are fitter, happier and healthier - which is why in our new Sport Strategy - 'Get Active' - we set out an ambitious strategy to boost our national health by getting 3.5 million extra active people by 2030. This includes bold targets to reach communities with the lowest levels of physical activity.

Building on their 12 local delivery pilot areas, Sport England is expanding their place-based work so that at least 75% of their investment is committed to areas with the lowest levels of physical activity and social outcomes.

Sport England are using a range of data sources to inform this approach including physical activity data from the Active Lives Surveys as well as wider social data including IMD, community need and health inequalities data. These datasets help to identify a range of diverse communities, including rural communities, across England that need support to become more active.

DEFENCE

■ Aircraft Carriers

John Healey: [\[197674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who the current senior responsible owner is for the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme.

James Cartlidge:

Governance of the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme was revised in 2021. The Royal Navy's Director of Force Generation is now responsible for the delivery of the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme.

John Healey: [\[197676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what capabilities the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme will deliver.

James Cartlidge:

Full Operating Capability of the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme will deliver the ability to routinely deploy and sustain globally an integrated Carrier Strike Group, which in turn would consist of two Lightning Front Line Squadrons and a blend of crewed and uncrewed airborne systems.

John Healey: [\[197677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who the current Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme director is; what experience they possess; and what proportion of their time is dedicated to the programme.

James Cartlidge:

This role is fulfilled by the Carrier Strike Programme Director. The post is held by a full-time Royal Navy Captain, who has a background of working in both Carrier Enabled Power Projection and Carrier Strike areas and is fully qualified for the position.

■ Aircraft Carriers: Expenditure

John Healey: [\[197678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the TDEL budget is for the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme (a) in total, (b) by platform, (c) by capability and (d) by milestone.

John Healey: [\[197679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) CDEL and (b) RDEL breakdown is for the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme.

John Healey: [\[197680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) CDEL and (b) RDEL spend to date is for the Carrier Enabled Power Projection programme.

James Cartlidge:

It will take time to collate and analyse the information requested. To ensure I can provide as much detail as possible, I will write to the hon. Member with the detail requested once it has been collated and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

John Healey: [\[197671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) RAF require applicants to join as commissioned officers to have a specific number of UCAS points.

John Healey: [\[197673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applicants to join the (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) RAF as commissioned officers have been rejected because they did not meet the required number of UCAS points in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

To apply to join the Army as a commissioned Officer, applicants require 72 UCAS points from a maximum of three subjects (four for Scottish Highers, excluding General Studies) with a minimum of two subjects at National Level 3 (excluding AS Levels) or National or International equivalent.

In the Royal Navy, the number of UCAS points required can be adjusted to meet service need and varies for some roles which require specific professional qualifications.

Royal Air Force Officer roles require a minimum of 64 UCAS points. However, there are some exceptions to this relating to specialised roles, entry route, or other qualifications held.

The number of Officer applicants in each Service who are rejected because they did not meet the required number of UCAS points is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Astute Class Submarines

Mr Mark Francois: [\[197695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of when the last of the two submarines of the Astute class will enter operational service.

James Cartlidge:

Planned in-service and out-of-service dates for Royal Navy submarines are withheld as disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness, or security of the Armed Forces.

We remain committed to delivering all seven Astute Class submarines.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[197698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost was of each of the five boats of the Astute class delivered to his Department; and what estimate he has made of the cost of each of the remaining Astute class boats .

James Cartlidge:

It is not possible to identify a single unit cost for the first three Astute Class submarines (HMS ASTUTE, HMS AMBUSH, and HMS ARTFUL) as they were contracted as a batch.

As previously announced, contract awards for Boats four to seven are as follows:

BOAT NAME	CONTRACT VALUE (£BILLION)
HMS AUDACIOUS	1.2
HMS ANSON	1.3
Agamemnon	1.4
Agincourt	1.5

The current value of the Astute programme is £11.4 billion.

■ Aviation: Prime Minister

Emily Thornberry: [\[197420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much was billed by his Department to the Cabinet Office to reimburse the costs of providing rotary wing air transport to the Prime Minister on the aircraft registered under the marks (a) GZ100 and (b) G-MAOL between the dates of (i) 1 February 2021 to 24 October 2022, and (ii) 25 October 2022 to 4 September 2023.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The A109 GZ100 is a rotary wing aircraft of the RAF's Command Support Air Transport fleet. The MOD has charged the Cabinet Office some £4,440 for flights by the Prime Minister on official duties between 1 February 2021 and 24 October 2022, and £6,830 for flights between 25 October 2022 and 4 September 2023.

The A109 is a Contractor Owned Military Registered aircraft and, through the support contract, aircraft registered G-MAOL is provided by the contractor when GZ100 is undergoing depth maintenance. Charges for individual aircraft, GZ100 and G-MAOL, are not recorded separately.

■ Babcock International: Contracts**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[197699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list all contracts by value between his Department and (a) Babcock and (b) its subsidiaries in the last ten years.

James Cartlidge:

The information needed to answer the right hon. Member's question is being reviewed for operational and commercial sensitivities, which will take time to complete. As such, I will write to him with an answer, and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

■ BOWMAN Combat Radio System**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[197694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of the cost of upgrading the Bowman tactical communications system from BCP 5.6 standard to BCP 5.7; when the upgraded system is expected to achieve initial operating capability; and which contractor has been appointed to undertake the work.

James Cartlidge:

I will write to the right hon. Member with the detail requested and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Defence Equipment: Procurement**John Healey:**[\[197358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has invested in ground based air defence since 2010.

James Cartlidge:

Ground based air defence (GBAD) is multi-layered posture that is flexible and scaled from man-portable point defence systems, through anti-aircraft munitions and Counter-Uncrewed Air System (C-UAS) technologies up to long range surface-to-air missile systems. There has been wide-ranging investment across the full range of ground-based air defence capabilities since 2010, including the Sky Sabre air defence system, and ORCUS C-UAS system, as well as many man-portable point

defence enhancements. For investment in the Sky Sabre, I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answer for UIN 197359. However, with this multi-layered approach, detailed investment costings for all GBAD capabilities over a thirteen year period are not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Over the next ten years, however, the Army plans to spend more than £3 billion on modernising its Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) capability.

Attachments:

1. Sky Sabre [197359 - Sky Sabre.docx]

■ **Defence: Procurement**

John Healey:

[\[197349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Command Paper Refresh, published on 18 July 2023, how his Department plans to implement the new maximum timescale for procurement projects of three and five years.

James Cartlidge:

When proposing selection of a preferred solution to the appropriate approving authority, all programmes will be required to consider what opportunities are available to accelerate delivery of capability to the front-line within these timescales. This includes consideration of off the shelf solutions and the use of spiral development. More complex programmes, such as those that are part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio, will take longer.

John Healey:

[\[197350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Command Paper Refresh, published on 18 July 2023, what enforcement mechanisms his Department plans to put in place to ensure industry contractors adhere to the new maximum timescales for procurement projects of three and five years.

James Cartlidge:

The Department will continue to incentivise timely delivery from its contractors through appropriate payment mechanisms, and the terms and conditions in individual contracts, which will reflect that particular commercial arrangement.

John Healey:

[\[197351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Command Paper Refresh, published on 18 July 2023, whether his Department are considering financial penalties on contractors that fail to deliver capabilities within the maximum timescales for procurement projects of three and five years.

James Cartlidge:

The Department will continue to incentivise timely delivery from its contractors through appropriate payment mechanisms and the inclusion of relevant contractual remedies.

■ Korean War**Jim Shannon:**[\[197390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is taking steps to acknowledge and commemorate the contribution of British service personnel during the Korean War.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

On 27 July 2023 the Ministry of Defence supported the Royal British Legion to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice. An event was held on Horse Guards Parade with invited veterans and families as well as ticketed guests, with tri-service involvement and representation throughout the Service. The service acknowledged the contribution of the 6,000 Service personnel from across Britain and the Commonwealth during the Korean War, including the 1,100 who lost their lives.

■ LE TacCIS Programme**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[197692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Morpheus terminals that will be required when it enters service.

James Cartlidge:

I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 27 April 2023 to Question 182237 to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Kevan Jones).

Attachments:

1. LE TacCIS programme [UIN 182237.docx]

Mr Mark Francois:[\[197693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to commence the competition for the Morpheus tactical communications system.

James Cartlidge:

I refer my right Hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 27 April 2023 to Question 182237 to the right Hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Kevan Jones).

Attachments:

1. LE TacCIS programme [UIN 182237.docx]

■ Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems**John Healey:**[\[197682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the initial operating capability is for Crowsnest: and how that capability is defined.

James Cartlidge:

Initial Operating Capability (IOC) was declared by the Senior Responsible Officer on 31 July 2023. While the precise details of the definition of IOC are classified, it means that the Royal Navy has the trained people, equipment deliveries, modified aircraft,

support packages and mission system performance in place for an initial airborne surveillance and control capability.

John Healey: [\[197705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the full operating capability is for Crowsnest; and how that capability is defined.

James Cartlidge:

The precise details of the CROWSNEST Full Operating Capability performance are classified.

■ **Military Aircraft: Helicopters**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[198339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it remains his Department's policy to procure up to 44 new aircraft under the New Medium Helicopter programme.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 20 July 2023 to Question 194668 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Deane (Mr Healey).

Attachments:

1. Military Aircraft: Helicopters [UIN 194668.docx]

■ **Ministry of Defence: Procurement**

John Healey: [\[198305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to incorporate the UK steel charter into its procurement strategy; and if he will make a statement.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to addressing those barriers which might prevent UK steel producers from competing effectively in the open market. Where our procurement rules allow, the MOD already meets the commitments in the existing Government steel procurement policy, including publishing our steel pipeline.

John Healey: [\[198308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has appointed a supply chain champion to management engagement with the domestic steel sector.

James Cartlidge:

As set out in DCPR, we are committed to a closer relationship with industry, with the Defence Supplier Forum acting as the primary MOD-industry engagement mechanism for discussion on strategic topics. Whilst the main Defence requirements for steel are sourced by our prime contractors, MOD encourages them to source UK steel for defence projects wherever is it technically and commercially feasible.

EDUCATION

■ Childcare: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:

[196239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish a list of the number and proportion of childcare staff who were aged (a) under 25, (b) 25-39, (c) 40-49 and (d) over 50 years in each year between 2012 and 2021.

David Johnston:

The department collects information on the childcare workforce through the survey of childcare and early years providers. This is a long-standing, nationally representative survey of 10,000 childcare and early years providers. The latest data was published on 15 December 2022 and is available on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2022>.

Surveys were run in 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2021. The surveys can be found on GOV.UK at the following links:

- 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2013>.
- 2016: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2016>.
- 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2018>.
- 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2019>.
- 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2021>.

Comparable workforce data is only available from 2019 and 2021. The survey of childcare and early years providers was re-purposed in 2018 so time series comparisons cannot be made before that date.

Age breakdown of the childcare and early years workforce (2019, 2021):

	2019	2021	2019	2021
Under 25	18%	17%	63,000	56,000
25-39	40%	42%	137,000	136,000
40-49	23%	22%	78,000	73,000
Over 50	19%	19%	66,000	63,000

■ Children: Social Services

Helen Hayes:

[\[196441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the capacity of the regulated accommodation sector for child social care placements.

David Johnston:

While the statutory responsibility for ensuring sufficient places for looked after children sits with local authorities, the department understands the current challenges in the looked after children placement market. Both the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the Competition and Markets Authority's Children's Social Care Market Study made recommendations around the commissioning and sufficiency of care placements. In the Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy, we set out our response to these reports and our plans to reform children's social care to ensure that there are enough of the right homes in the right places for children who need them.

To support local authorities to meet their statutory duty in ensuring there is sufficient provision for children in their care, the department has announced £259 million capital funding to maintain capacity and expand provision in secure and open children's homes that provide high quality and safe homes for some of our most vulnerable children and young people across England.

The department is investing £27 million this Spending Review to deliver a fostering recruitment and retention programme to make foster care even more readily available for more children. This will boost approvals of foster carers in areas of specific shortage, such as sibling groups, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, teenagers, mother and baby placements and children who have suffered complex trauma.

We have also improved the offer of support, raising the national minimum allowance for foster carers by 12.43% to reflect the increasing costs of caring for a child and increasing the amount of income tax relief available to foster carers up to £18,140, from £10,000.

We are also developing two Regional Care Co-operatives (RCCs) pathfinders, each pathfinder will also receive up to £5 million in capital funding to develop new provision. These pathfinders will trial an approach to make RCCs work within the current legal framework ahead of bringing forward legislation when parliamentary time allows. In the long term, RCCs will plan, commission and deliver children's social care placements. Through operating on a larger scale and developing specialist capabilities, the RCCs will be able to develop a wide range of places to better meet children's needs. This, in turn, should lead to improved placement stability and fewer out of area placements.

Helen Hayes:

[196442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has issued guidance to local authorities on managing the transition period before the prohibition on using unregulated child social care placements; and if she will make a statement.

David Johnston:

This government is clear that all supported accommodation must be safe, high-quality and provide excellent support to our young people as they transition into adulthood. That is why the department is investing over £142 million to introduce new mandatory national standards and a system of Ofsted-led registration and inspection for providers who accommodate 16 and 17-year-old looked after children and care leavers. These reforms will drive up the quality and consistency of this provision.

In March 2023, following extensive consultation with the sector, we announced that from 28 October 2023, all providers of supported accommodation must be registered with Ofsted, or have submitted a full application and paid their fee in advance of this date, to legally operate. Local authorities will be prohibited from placing children in unregistered supported accommodation.

The department has published guidance for the sector on the new requirements which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1145117/Guide_to_the_supported_accommodation_regulations_March_2023.pdf.

Ofsted has also published guidance on 4 April 2023 to support providers through the registration process, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/registering-a-supported-accommodation-service>.

To further support the implementation of the new requirements, the department has awarded the National Children's Bureau a contract up to April 2024, to provide practical support, information, and good practice resources targeted directly at providers and local authority commissioners.

■ Department for Education: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:

[195064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 December 2021 to Question 92909 on Department for Education: Staff, if she will list (a) the directorates within her Department and (b) the (i) staffing in FTE terms, (ii) total headcount and (iii) objectives and responsibilities of each of those directorates as of 31 March 2023.

Nick Gibb:

The data on staff numbers working for the Department and its executive agencies can be found at: <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/9a5ace56-cf8e-432a-b87b-50d4ba841641/workforce-management-information-department-for-education>.

More detailed information on the workforce and structures can be found at:

<https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/5a1f3831-86d6-4979-9164-99e982361ca4/organogram-of-staff-roles-salaries>.

The data is taken directly from the Department's HR system and snapshots are provided monthly for the first link and quarterly for the second.

The Department's responsibilities and priorities can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about#responsibilities>. The latest public Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) sets out objectives, priorities and a high level plan. The Department frequently updates its plans to respond to emerging risks and continue to deliver the priority outcomes set out in the ODP.

■ Energy: Costs

Bridget Phillipson:

[196077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what basis the School Teachers' Review Body estimated energy costs as £1,450 million; on what basis the updated estimate of £750 million was arrived at; what assessment she has made of the robustness of these estimates; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The School Teachers' Review Body did not provide its own assessment of energy costs for schools. It considered the estimate of schools' energy costs provided by the Department.

The Department's assessment considered trends in national energy prices and the prices paid by schools, considering how these are likely to vary depending on when schools signed up to their energy contracts.

The Department initially estimated that energy costs in 2023/24 would increase by £1,450 million above the baseline energy costs from 2021/22, when energy costs were close to £700 million for all schools. This would represent a 200% increase. This estimate was underpinned by market data about forecast energy prices at that time, as well as contract types.

The Department continued to monitor forecast prices and updated its assessment in March this year, in light of lower price forecasts published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. The Department continued to make assumptions about schools which would continue to pay above or below this market price, given contract variation. Lower forecasts of prices in 2023/24 led to a reduction in the forecast of the overall increase in energy costs, of an estimated £750 million increase in energy costs above 2021/22 levels, or a 125% increase. The updated forecast does not, therefore, suggest that schools' energy costs (or the prices that they are paying) will fall in 2023/24, compared to 2022/23. Rather, the increase in energy costs that schools will face in 2023/24, compared to their costs in 2021/22, is now forecast to have moderated.

The Department will continue to refine our assumptions on energy costs for schools for future years.

■ Erasmus+ Programme

John McNally:

[\[196503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's policy is on UK access to Erasmus+, in the context of the policies of the Irish Government on access to Erasmus+ in Northern Ireland.

Robert Halfon:

The department understands that the Irish Government has allocated funding to allow higher education students in Northern Ireland to access the Erasmus+ Programme.

The department looks forward to continuing its collaborative work with sector stakeholders and Northern Ireland Executive officials to ensure that students in Northern Ireland are able to benefit from the opportunities available to them through the UK Government's Turing Scheme.

For academic year 2023/24, the Turing Scheme is allocating over £2.9 million to education providers in Northern Ireland to fund international placements for over 1,000 participants, more than half of whom are students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The government does not intend to negotiate resuming participation in any aspect of Erasmus+ with the EU as a Programme Country.

■ Financial Services: Primary Education

Stephen Hammond:

[\[197439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all primary children receive a high-quality and effective financial education by 2030.

Nick Gibb:

Education on financial matters helps to ensure that young people are prepared to manage their money well, make sound financial decisions, and know where to seek further information when needed.

At primary school, financial education is included in the mathematics curriculum. In the curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the essential arithmetic that pupils should be taught. This knowledge is vital, as a strong grasp of mathematics will underpin pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, using percentages. The mathematics curriculum also includes specific content regarding financial education, such as calculations with money.

Primary schools can also teach financial education through citizenship. Although this is not part of the National Curriculum until Key Stage 3, the Department has published a non-statutory citizenship curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2, to support schools to ensure that pupils are taught how to look after their money and realise that

future wants and needs may be met through saving. There is also a wide range of resources available for schools, including the Money and Pension Service's (MaPS) financial education guidance for primary and secondary schools in England. This can be found here: <https://maps.org.uk/2021/11/11/financial-education-guidance-for-primary-and-secondary-schools-in-england/>.

The Department continues to work with MaPS and HM Treasury to consider the evidence and explore opportunities to promote the importance of financial education to schools. The Department is currently working with MaPS to deliver financial education webinars this academic year, promoting the importance of financial education and building teachers' confidence in this area.

■ Internet: Disinformation

Dan Carden:

[196413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase young people's (a) awareness of and (b) ability to identify (i) disinformation and (ii) other online harms.

David Johnston:

Pupils are taught about online safety and harms through the citizenship, computing and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum.

Citizenship is statutory within the National Curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 and primary schools can also choose to teach it. Citizenship teaching should equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to explore political and social issues critically, to weigh evidence, debate and make reasoned arguments. Citizenship includes coverage of media literacy topics such as safeguarding democracy and a free media, understanding the role of responsible journalism in democratic society, identifying mis-, dis- and mal- information and countering the effects of negative and harmful news, events and information. The citizenship curriculum can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study>.

The computing curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils can evaluate and apply information technology, including new or unfamiliar technologies, analytically to solve problems, and that they are responsible, competent, confident and creative users of information and communication technology. Using technology safely, securely, respectfully and responsibly is taught at all key stages of the computing curriculum to provide pupils with the e-safety knowledge they need to make informed decisions whilst online. The computing curriculum can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-computing-programmes-of-study>.

The RSHE curriculum was introduced in 2020 and is compulsory. Pupils are taught about online relationships, the implications of sharing private or personal data online, harmful content and contact, cyberbullying, an over-reliance on social media and where to get help and support for issues that occur online. The RSHE statutory

guidance also says that it is important for young people to know what the law says about sex, relationships and young people, as well as broader safeguarding issues. The RSHE statutory guidance can be found here:

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

In health education, under the topic of internet safety and harms, pupils should be taught about how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.

To support teachers to deliver these topics safely and with confidence, the department has produced the RSHE teacher training modules, 'online and media' and 'internet safety and harms'. The modules can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health#train-teachers-on-relationships-sex-and-health-education>.

To support schools further, the department has also published 'Teaching online safety in schools'. This non-statutory guidance aims to support schools in teaching pupils how to stay safe online within new and existing school subjects, such as relationships education, relationships and sex education, health education, citizenship and computing. The guidance outlines the importance of teaching pupils the underpinning knowledge and behaviours that can help them navigate the online world safely and confidently, regardless of the device, platform, or app. This includes how to evaluate what they see online. This will enable pupils to make judgements about what they see online and not automatically assume that what they see is true, valid, or acceptable. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>.

■ Multi-academy Trusts

Andrew Rosindell:

[195756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve the accountability of multi-academy trusts' management boards.

Nick Gibb:

The Department requires a high level of accountability and transparency from academy trusts. Academy trusts' status as companies, charities and public sector bodies means that they are all subject to rigorous accountability systems. The academy trust board has collective accountability and responsibility for the academy trust and assuring itself that there is compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements. The trustees must comply with the trust's charitable objects, with company and charity law, and with their contractual obligations under the trust's funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

The Department sets clear standards and expectations for governing boards through, for example, the Governance Handbook and Academy Trust Handbook, and through the Department's model articles of association and funding agreements. The

Department has also published detailed Trust Quality Descriptions which define what the Department want trusts to deliver in their governance and leadership.

Where non-financial or financial non-compliance or governance failure is identified, including by trust executive leaders, the Department or the Education and Skills Funding Agency respectively will intervene in a way that is proportionate to the risk and preserves education provision. This can include issuing a trust with a Notice to Improve or, in the most serious cases, termination of the Funding Agreement.

■ Overseas Students: Housing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that universities are able to accommodate all overseas students who have (a) applied for and (b) have received confirmation of residential accommodation.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a hosting scheme for overseas university students for when they first arrive in the UK.

Robert Halfon:

Student accommodation is a busy part of the housing market and, as universities and landlords are private, autonomous bodies, the government has no role in providing student residential accommodation, nor a remit to intervene. The department expects universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are fair, clear and have the interests of all students at heart. This includes making accommodation available at a range of affordable price points where possible.

As set out in the government's International Education Strategy, the department is committed to working with the higher education sector to enhance the international student experience to ensure they have an enjoyable and valuable experience whilst in the UK. The International Education Strategy can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth>. The department is also working closely with organisations such as the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) who offer a range of information and guidance for those in the UK. Further information is available at: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/>.

Universities provide a range of dedicated support to their international students before they arrive in the UK, on arrival and during their studies. Any arrangements for a hosting scheme for international students when they arrive in the UK would be for individual UK universities to consider, as part of their support provision.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[197496]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help reduce the number of children who regularly miss school.

Nick Gibb:

This Government understands how important school attendance is for children's education, wellbeing and life chances. The Department's approach to tackling this issue is a cross cutting support-first attendance strategy.

The Department published stronger expectations of schools, trusts, governing bodies and Local Authorities in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance. Schools are now expected to publish an attendance policy, appoint an attendance champion, and use data to identify, and then support, pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent. The Department deployed 10 expert attendance advisers to work with 155 Local Authorities and trusts to review practices, develop plans to improve and meet expectations set out in the guidance. To help identify children at risk of persistent absence and to enable early intervention, the Department established a timelier flow of pupil level attendance data through the daily attendance data collection. The 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf#:~:text=Some%20pupils%20find%20it%20harder%20than%20others%20to,together%20to%20put%20the%20right%20support%20in%20place.

The launch of the £2.32 million attendance mentor pilot aims to deliver intensive one-to-one support to a group of persistently and severely absent pupils. The findings from this pilot should enable schools, trusts, and Local Authorities to address persistent and severe absence more effectively. The Department also recently launched new attendance hubs with 10 lead schools sharing their effective practice on attendance with up to 600 partner schools, reaching hundreds of thousands of pupils. This is alongside intensive support to Children in Need through Virtual Schools Heads.

The Secretary of State and I co-chair the 'Attendance Action Alliance' of national system leaders to work to remove barriers to attendance and reduce absence through pledges. This is in addition to the £5 billion that has been made available for education recovery, helping pupils to recover from the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding includes up to £1.5 billion on tutoring and nearly £2 billion of direct funding to schools, so they can deliver evidence based interventions based on pupil needs.

■ Pupils: Bullying

Feryal Clark: [\[197055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much her Department has spent on anti-bullying initiatives for schools in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London in the last 12 months.

David Johnston:

The department does not collect information on how much money has been spent on anti-bullying initiatives for schools in specific areas of the country. The department is providing over £3 million of funding, between 10 August 2021 and 31 March 2024, to five anti-bullying organisations to support schools across the country to tackle bullying. This includes projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those who are victims of hate related bullying.

■ Schools: Migrant Workers

Bridget Phillipson: [\[196237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how funding raised from the Immigration Skills Charge and designated for her Department's Skills Budget was spent in the (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23 financial years.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[196238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish a list of (a) her Department's projects that have been allocated funding and (b) the amount of funding allocated to each project from the Immigration Skills Charge, broken down by each financial year since 2017.

Robert Halfon:

The department does not receive a hypothecated budget for the Immigration Skills Charge (ISC) and does not therefore maintain a list of individual projects in this way.

The amount of funding generated by the charge will depend on employer use of the skilled worker route. While the income raised is not additional funding for skills, the ISC is helping to maintain the department's existing skills budget and existing level of investment in skills in England.

Information on ISC revenue can be found in the Home Office's annual report and accounts, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>.

■ Schools: Sewage

Stephen Morgan: [\[197643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools recorded a sewage leak in each year since 2019.

Nick Gibb:

Schools and their Responsible Bodies are not obliged to report leaks causing operational issues or temporary closure to the Department. Therefore, the Department does not hold the information requested.

These issues are often dealt with locally and, where applicable, using insurance providers.

■ Social Workers: Crimes of Violence**Nadia Whittome:****[197291]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help protect social workers from facing violence at work.

David Johnston:

Social workers make a real, positive difference to the outcomes of children and families every day. It is with thanks to their work that many children go on to thrive. The government is dedicated to ensuring there is an excellent child and family social worker for everyone who needs one.

Local authorities are responsible for the delivery of children's social care and to determine the appropriate practice model and staffing levels to ensure high quality assessment and support for all children who need them. Ofsted inspect local authorities to ensure that children's services meet the needs of the local population. The health and safety of social workers is primarily a matter for their employer. For child and family social workers, this is the relevant local authority. It is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that working practices and processes are safe for their workers.

The standards for employers of social workers in England have been developed by the sector and set out the shared core expectations of employers which will enable social workers in all employment settings to work effectively and safely. The standards can be found at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support/social-workers/standards-employers-social-workers-england-3>.

Over the current spending review period, the department will continue to invest more than £50 million every year on recruiting, training, and developing child and family social workers to ensure the workforce has the capacity, skills, and knowledge to do their job and to support and protect vulnerable children.

In addition, the reforms set out in our children's social care strategy, *Stable Homes, Built on Love*, will boost social worker supply, provide more support earlier in their careers and help improve working conditions to encourage social workers to stay in practice for longer, and make sure they feel valued.

■ Special Educational Needs: Havering

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[195766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of places for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in the London Borough of Havering.

David Johnston:

The department is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive the support they need to realise their potential in all areas.

There are currently three special schools in Havering which provide SEND provision for the borough. Havering had its joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) SEND inspection between 26 February and 2 March 2018. The findings from the inspection, which were published in May 2018, found that the local area had been effective in implementing the SEND reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The local authority's timeliness with completing Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans in 2022 was 95.1%, above the national average and the London average at 63.1%.

To ensure that children with SEND receive the support they need to realise their potential, the government will deliver up to 60 new special and alternative provision free schools as part of the £2.6 billion capital investment in high needs provision across the Spending Review period.

In June 2022, the department launched the latest special free school wave, where it invited local authorities to set out their case for why a new school would benefit their area.

Havering applied in the 2022 wave but was unsuccessful. We would encourage Havering to take on board the feedback received in relation to its recent application and to reapply when the opportunity arises.

The department's Delivering Better Value in SEND programme aims to support local authorities and their partners to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability. Havering is a participating local authority in this programme.

■ Special Educational Needs: Rossendale and Darwen

Sir Jake Berry:

[\[196249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support SEND provision in Rossendale and Darwen constituency.

David Johnston:

High needs funding for supporting children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England is increasing by a further £440

million, or 4.3%, in the 2024/25 financial year, which will bring the total high needs budget to £10.5 billion, an increase of over 60% from the 2019/20 high needs allocations. This funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of provision for these children and young people.

The department has recently announced provisional 2024/25 high needs allocations for local authorities. Funding is provided to local authorities rather than constituencies. Lancashire County Council's allocation is £203 million, which is £10.5 million more than it will receive this year, an increase of 33% per head over the three years from 2021/22. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's allocation is £33 million, which is £1.3 million more than it will receive this year, an increase of 34% per head over the three years from 2021/22.

In March 2022, the department also announced High Needs Provision Capital Allocations amounting to over £1.4 billion of new investment. This funding is to support local authorities to deliver new places for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND. This funding forms part of the £2.6 billion we are investing between 2022 and 2025 and represents a significant, transformational investment in new high needs provision.

Of the £1.4 billion announced, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council received £3.1 million and Lancashire County Council received £26.1 million.

■ Teachers: Absenteeism

Stephen Morgan: [197645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many days teachers have been absent from school in each year since 2019.

Stephen Morgan: [197646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the most common reasons were for teachers' absence from school in each year since 2019.

Stephen Morgan: [197647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many days teachers of each subject have been absent from school in each year since 2019.

Nick Gibb:

Information on the school workforce in England, including teacher absences due to sickness, is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The Department collects information on teacher absences from state funded schools via the School Workforce Census. The number of working days lost due to absence are collected for sickness absence and pregnancy related absences only.

More information on teacher absences is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication, accessible here: <https://explore-education->

statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/f5ba72da-be42-4d81-d365-08db81e98ab0. Further granularity, such as the type of sickness absence, is not centrally collected. The requested figures for absences by subject taught are not available.

■ Universities: Student Numbers

Rachael Maskell:

[197561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of this year's A-level grading system on home student numbers at English universities.

Robert Halfon:

A levels, AS levels and GCSEs in England largely returned to pre-pandemic grading this summer, but with protection in place for students to recognise the disruption caused by the pandemic. This means that a student was just as likely to achieve a particular grade this year as they would have been before the pandemic.

This year, on A level and T level Results Day, 186,710 English-domiciled 18-year-olds were accepted to English higher education providers, compared to 162,680 in 2019.

Plans for grading in England in 2023 were set out by Ofqual in September 2021 and confirmed in 2022, so universities had time to take this into account when setting entry requirements and making offers. The overall number of university places available is not decided by the number of top grades, or the approach to grading.

It is important that qualifications maintain their value now and in the future, and stand the test of time. The return to normal grading helps to ensure young people make the right choices about their future, and sets them up for further study, training, or employment in the best possible way.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Emissions

Kerry McCarthy:

[198329]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to her Department's press release of 3 July 2023 entitled Tighter limit on industrial, power and aviation emissions, as UK leads the way to net zero, what advice her Department (a) sought and (b) received on (i) the UK Emissions Trading Scheme cap and (ii) allowances available to the market from relevant stakeholders prior to that announcement.

Graham Stuart:

The UK ETS Authority stated its intention to align the cap with net zero at scheme launch in 2021, and has consulted extensively since. The "Developing the UK ETS" consultation in 2022 included a range of trajectories for a cap consistent with the UK's climate targets. It received over 114 responses from market participants and

relevant stakeholders, and also sought the Climate Change Committee's advice, who published their views within their 2022 Progress Report.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[198330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to her Department's press release of 3 July 2023 entitled Tighter limit on industrial, power and aviation emissions, as the UK leads the way to net zero, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the number of Emissions Trading Scheme allowances available to the market on (a) the carbon price, (b) likelihood of meeting de-carbonisation targets and (c) future trade with the EU.

Graham Stuart:

In July the Government published reforms to the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to ensure it supports the delivery of net zero by 2050. These include a 30% reduction of the UK ETS cap, limiting the volume of greenhouse gases covered sectors can emit. As part of the UK ETS Authority, it is not appropriate for the Government to comment on UK ETS prices.

Maintaining international competitiveness for UK businesses is a key objective of the UK ETS and the impacts of UK ETS policy on trade with the EU are monitored closely.

■ Committee on Climate Change

Wera Hobhouse: [\[197525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what (a) rules, (b) agreements and (c) guidance her Department uses to decide what information to share with the Climate Change Committee.

Graham Stuart:

The Department's approach to sharing information with the CCC is underpinned by the Arm's Length Body Sponsorship Code of Good Practice on GOV.UK.

The Climate Change Committee's Framework Document sets out more information about the working practices between the CCC and the Department. This includes a Memorandum of Understanding on economic modelling and sharing of analysis and research; and a regular working group. The Department is drafting an updated version of this document.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[197526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will publish all the information her Department has shared with the Climate Change Committee to assist it in writing its annual progress report in each of the last five years.

Graham Stuart:

Under the Climate Change Act 2008, there is no requirement to publish any information the Department shares with the CCC. It has no plans to do so.

As required under the Act, the Department is due to publish its response to the CCC's 2023 Progress Report in October.

■ **Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Disclosure of Information**

Julian Knight:

[\[197457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the average response time to subject access requests was by their Department in the latest period for which data is available; and if they will make an assessment of the adequacy of that response time.

Graham Stuart:

The average response time to subject access requests received by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero for the latest reporting period, 01 June 2023 to 31 August 2023, is 5 working days. All subject access requests were processed within the statutory deadline of within one month of receipt of the request.

■ **Energy Bills Discount Scheme: Hendon**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[198088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Energy Bill Support Scheme on businesses in Hendon constituency.

Amanda Solloway:

Businesses, including those within the Hendon constituency, have already benefitted from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which ended on 31 March and provided over £7.4 billion of support. Businesses experiencing high energy costs will continue to get a discount on gas and electricity bills under the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) until 31 March 2024, including the higher level of support for eligible Energy and Trade Intensive Industries (ETII).

The Government has to date provided £55m of support under the EBDS to non-domestic customers.

■ **Energy Price Guarantee**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[198089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of maintaining the Energy Price Guarantee at £3,000 until April 2024.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Price Guarantee will remain in place as a safety net until the end of March 2024 should energy prices increase above £3,000 per year.

Due to recent falls in the wholesale price of energy, consumers currently pay the rates set by Ofgem's price cap, with a typical household paying the equivalent of £2,074 per year between July and September. This figure will drop further to £1,923

per year between October and December. Pre-payment meter customers also receive a discount through the Energy Price Guarantee to bring PPM costs into line with equivalent direct debit costs.

■ Energy: Billing

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[198311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will hold discussions with Ofgem on the process for reviewing customer credit balances every six months and avoiding large build-ups of credit.

Amanda Solloway:

DESNZ Ministers and officials regularly meet with Ofgem to discuss a range of issues relating to GB energy markets. The regulation of energy supply in Northern Ireland, including the avoidance of large credit balances on customer energy accounts is a devolved matter.

■ Energy: Prices

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[198087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the recent Energy Price Guarantee increase on (a) the competitiveness of the energy market and (b) the ability for consumers to switch supplier.

Amanda Solloway:

Due to recent falls in the wholesale price of energy as reflected in Ofgem's price cap, households without a pre-payment meter have not received an EPG discount on their bills since 30 June. PPM customers currently receive a small discount to bring their costs into line with direct debit. There has been a recent increase in switching rates, and these are expected to increase as fixed contracts return to the market.

On 1st July the EPG 'target bill' was increased from £2500 to £3000. It is unlikely this change itself has had any significant impact on the competitiveness of the energy market, or the ability for consumers to switch suppliers, because the Ofgem price cap sits well below both amounts.

■ Fuels: Prices

Louise Haigh: [\[198403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many petrol retailers have joined the Competition and Markets Authority's interim voluntary fuel price data scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

Ten fuel retailers have signed up to share their prices every day. The Government strongly encourages fuel retailers to participate in this initiative and third-party data service providers to incorporate the data into their products.

Soon, all fuel retailers will have to release their prices by law, and we will consult on the design of the permanent fuel price reporting scheme this autumn. This will further increase the data available to third party price comparison apps and websites.

■ Heat Pumps

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[198295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an estimate of the number of gas boilers that have been taken out of service since the launch of the heat pump subsidy scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) operates in England and Wales. Up until the end of July 2023, there had been 6,378 grants paid towards the installations of heat pumps that were replacing gas systems.

Source: [Boiler Upgrade Scheme statistics: July 2023](#)

■ Offshore Industry: North Sea

Derek Thomas: [\[198350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment she has made of whether the oil and gas sector will meeting its targets under the North Sea Transition Deal.

Graham Stuart:

The North Sea Transition Authority monitors the emissions reduction targets within the North Sea Transition Deal (NSTD) and published its annual [Emissions Monitoring Report](#) on 5 September. The report shows that emissions from upstream oil and gas activities on the UK Continental Shelf dropped 23% between 2018 and 2022 and indicates that industry is on track to meet the interim NSTD emission reduction targets of 10% by 2025 and 25% by 2027.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agricultural Products: Prices

Damien Moore: [\[197906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that farmers are paid fairly for produce.

Mark Spencer:

We want all farmers to get a fair price for their produce and the Government is committed to tackling the unfairness that exists in the agri-food supply chain. Powers contained in the Agriculture Act 2020 enable us to introduce statutory codes of contractual practice, which would apply to businesses when purchasing agricultural products directly from farmers. The development of regulations to cover the UK dairy sector is well advanced and it remains our intention to introduce the legislation later

this year. We are also developing regulations for the UK pig sector, following a consultation last year. At the recent Number 10 Farm to Fork Summit, we also confirmed that reviews of the egg and horticulture supply chains will begin from this autumn.

■ Agriculture: Environment Protection and Innovation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[197918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support (a) low carbon farming and (b) agricultural innovation.

Mark Spencer:

We are supporting farmers by providing one off and ongoing payments to help farmers decarbonise agricultural emissions. We will pay farmers and land managers to go beyond regulatory requirements to deliver carbon savings through our new farming offers.

We have a range of actions farmers can take through our Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes that will support farm decarbonisation. These measures include integrating cover crops and nitrogen-fixing break crops in rotations which can help increase carbon storage and reduce emissions in agriculture.

We are supporting the application of innovation, science and technology to help reduce emissions through our Farming Innovation Programme and the Farming Investment Fund. We will also pay farmers for improvements to animal health and welfare which will support lower emissions and improve productivity.

Our aim, as set out in the Net Zero Growth Plan, is that farmers and land managers can be supported with payments through our ELM schemes and also attract greater finance from the private sector for sequestering carbon, improving water quality and increasing biodiversity.

In this plan Defra has also committed to developing a harmonised approach to measuring carbon on farms and will set out how we will support farmers to understand their emission sources through carbon audits by 2024.

The £270 million Farming Innovation Programme supports industry-led research and development in agriculture and horticulture. All projects support productivity and environmental outcomes that will benefit farmers and growers in England. This investment is enabling more farmers and growers to become involved in agricultural R&D, helping to maximise the impact of R&D investment in innovation.

■ Deer: Animal Welfare

Miriam Cates:

[\[197914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to include deer farmers in the rollout of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.

Mark Spencer:

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway rollout will initially focus on the most commonly farmed species: dairy cows, beef cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Correspondence**Julian Knight:**[\[196674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps they are taking to reduce backlogs of Member correspondence in their office.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence, particularly from Parliamentarians. As per the Cabinet Office's Guide to Handling Correspondence on gov.uk, departments and agencies should aim to respond to correspondence within a 20-working day target deadline. Every effort must be made to reply to correspondence promptly and within the original deadline. However, if the matters raised in the correspondence require substantial investigation, it might not be possible to provide a substantive reply to a case within the departmental deadline.

Julian Knight:[\[196695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data their Department holds on the average response time to enquiries by Members; and what assessment they have made of the adequacy of that response time.

Rebecca Pow:

With regards to timeliness of responses to enquiries received by Members, the Cabinet Office published data on this for 2022 for all government departments on GOV.UK in March 2023, and will be publishing data for Q1 and Q2 2023 shortly. The 2022 data can be found [here](#).

Deposit Return Schemes**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[198331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government response to the consultation on Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, published on 20 January 2023, when she plans to publish the deposit return scheme regulations.

Rebecca Pow:

In January 2023, UK Government, Welsh Government, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland published the Government's response to the 2021 consultation, setting out policy decisions and next steps for introducing the scheme.

We are currently drafting the legislation to enable delivery of DRS, reflecting the positions set out in the consultation response published in January 2023. The legislation then needs to go through the necessary clearances before it can be laid in

UK Parliament and the Welsh Senedd. We are aiming to have the regulations in place by summer 2024.

■ Fruit

Jim Shannon:

[\[197393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions her Department has had with fruit producers on the potential use of automation in fruit-picking.

Mark Spencer:

Defra regularly engages with the horticulture industry to understand what support they need to continue to produce great food. These discussions help inform our understanding of automation development and adoption as well as future policy development in this space.

In 2021 a Defra-led review of automation in horticulture, chaired by Simon Pearson of Lincoln University, included a survey and a series of advisory roundtables with stakeholders across the horticulture supply chain, the automation sector and key enabling industries. The review helped Defra to better understand what is required to accelerate the development and uptake of automation technologies in both the edible and ornamental sectors, with the final report published on 27 July 2022.

Defra also commissioned John Shropshire to carry out an Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain throughout 2022 and 2023, considering how automation, domestic labour and migrant labour could contribute to tackling labour shortages in our sectors, including horticulture. This report was published on 30 June 2023 and the government response – which will also be informed by the Review of Automation in Horticulture – is expected to be published in Autumn 2023. At the same time as the response, the government will set out how it will support the sector to access the labour it needs alongside actions to reduce the sector's reliance on migrant labour including via our work on automation and promoting domestic labour procurement and training.

Furthermore, the UK Government continues to invest in agricultural R&D to support automation in horticulture and agriculture. This year it committed £12.5 million focussed on automation and robotics through the wider Farming Innovation Programme, and additional funding for horticulture via the Farming Investment Fund. When designing the next round of the Improving Farm Productivity grant, which is part of the Farming Investment Fund, we engaged with multiple horticulture sector groups (including fruit growers) in order to understand how we might be able to benefit the sector more. We are now implementing their advice by including more automated equipment in scope of the fund.

Members: Correspondence**Bill Esterson:** [\[197772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to respond to the email from the hon. Member for Sefton Central of 23 May 2023 on the regulator OFWAT.

Rebecca Pow:

A response was sent to the Rt. Hon Member on 11 September 2023.

Microplastics: Health Hazards**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[195852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of microplastics in the air within (a) houses, (b) large cities, (c) hospitals and (d) health care environments.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency undertakes a range of ambient air quality monitoring on behalf of Defra including particulate matter monitoring. Particulate matter is a complex pollutant that could include some proportion of microplastics but this is not routinely assessed. Near real time data on particulate matter levels, as well as other pollutants, are made available on [UK Air website](#).

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[195853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the prominence of microplastic contaminants in human tissue samples.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is aware of a several published research papers that report finding microplastic particles in human tissues such as a lung and diseased liver. These studies are small but do indicate the potential of small numbers of microplastic particles to enter some human tissues. UKHSA is not directly involved with this work and is not currently assessing the prevalence of microplastic particles in human tissues, but does have some research work ongoing with Imperial College London to look at the factors that contribute to the uptake of microplastic particles into tissues.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[195856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of microplastic contaminants on public health.

Rebecca Pow:

The potential impact of microplastic materials on human health has been assessed in 2021 by the UK Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) who published an overarching statement on potential risks from exposure to [microplastics](#).

The COT concluded that it is not yet possible to perform a complete assessment for the potential risks to human health from exposure to micro and nanoplastics via the oral and inhalation routes". The COT made a number of recommendations for further research including understanding the risk of exposure from the oral and inhalational routes. UKHSA has work ongoing in this area in small projects in collaboration with Imperial College. These projects, while limited, are assisting the understanding of the potential risks from exposure to micro and nano plastics from inhalational and oral exposure.

■ Milk

Damien Moore: [\[197907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure access to raw milk.

Mark Spencer:

The Government wants consumers to have access to a wide variety of different food and drink products to suit individual tastes. In England it is legal to sell raw drinking milk directly to the consumer by a limited number of Food Standards Agency approved premises, provided the milk complies with all relevant legislation, including hygiene and safety legislation. Approved premises include, among others, registered milk production farms and farmers selling their product at registered farmers' markets. More information is available on the Food Standards Agency website at the following link:

[Raw drinking milk | Food Standards Agency](#)

■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[198135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps has she taken to reduce environmental contamination from PFA chemicals.

Rebecca Pow:

Action has already been taken to ban or highly restrict specific Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) both domestically and internationally, including perfluoro-octane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). However, PFAS represent a very diverse group of chemicals with a wide range of uses for which safer and more sustainable alternatives are not yet available.

A 'Regulatory Management Options Analysis' (RMOA) on PFAS was published in Spring 2023 by the Health and Safety Executive. The RMOA assessed PFAS uses, exposure routes, and risk management actions specific to Great Britain. We have accepted the RMOA's recommendations. These include reducing PFAS emissions by developing UK REACH restrictions, beginning with a restriction on PFAS in fire-fighting foams, and exploring further restrictions covering a wide range of industrial and consumer uses.

We are also developing a cross-government Chemicals Strategy to frame the work we are doing across chemicals and put us on a path for improved chemicals management. It will set out our priorities and principles for taking regulatory action to protect human health and the environment, including our approach to managing PFAS. We will publish the Chemicals Strategy in 2023.

■ **Plastics: Small Businesses**

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[197885\]](#)

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

Rebecca Pow:

Building on the success of our existing restrictions on certain single use plastic items and the single use carrier bag charge, the government will restrict the supply of single use plastic plates, bowls, trays, cutlery, balloon sticks and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and drinks containers from October this year.

We will also, subject to public consultation this autumn, change the law to ban the sale of wet wipes containing plastic.

■ **Recreation Spaces: Greater London**

Feryal Clark:

[\[197928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the preservation of green spaces within (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the importance of providing access to the outdoors for people's health and wellbeing and is working to ensure this is safe and appropriate. We committed in our Environmental Improvement Plan to work across government to help ensure that everyone lives within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space.

The Government is delivering a number of policies to protect access to green spaces including in urban areas. Examples of these include:

- Delivering the £9m Levelling Up Parks Fund to improve green space in over 100 disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the UK.
- The launch of the Green Infrastructure Framework: Principles and Standards for England in January 2023 which shows what good green infrastructure looks like and will help local authorities, developers and communities to improve provision in their area.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies will identify locations where action for nature recovery would be particularly beneficial, encouraging the creation of more green spaces, including in urban areas.

In Enfield, Natural England is working with the Council in developing its local plan to create high quality places that tackle climate change, the nature emergency, inequalities, and promote health and well-being. This will also help Enfield to embed Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards into the plan and supporting documents.

In addition Enfield has been awarded £500,000 from the Landscape Recovery Scheme to support schemes to restore nature, reduce flood risks and boost biodiversity include creating hundreds of hectares of woodlands and grassland, wetlands and restore rivers and expanding the Enfield Chase Restoration Project. Natural England are also working with the London Borough of Enfield on a new Countryside Stewardship scheme.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Dan Jarvis:

[\[197785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many eligible Afghan nationals under (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan citizens resettlement scheme remained in (i) Afghanistan and (ii) Pakistan as of 4 September 2023.

Leo Docherty:

Given the sensitivity of the security checks element of the process, we are unable to give precise numbers of individuals at each stage of the process.

We recognise there is a desire to give specific numbers and details of each cohort and their positions throughout the process of resettlement. This is a dynamic picture, which changes daily. It would not be helpful for those in Afghanistan for us to give a running commentary on numbers, which could draw attention to those preparing to cross the border.

For Pakistan, as of 4 September, there are circa 2030 ARAP eligible individuals, and circa 700 eligible individuals under ACRS Pathway 3.

■ Developing Countries: Genito-urinary Medicine

Sarah Champion:

[\[197436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many projects under the Women's Integrated Sexual Health programme his Department has allocated funding to; and how many of those projects closed before their initial planned end date.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) programme initially operated in 27 countries. In response to budgetary re-prioritisation and contextual changes (such as the security situation in Afghanistan), adjustments were made to the scale and pace

of delivery. This included focusing support on 17 countries to ensure better value for money and coherence. Despite these changes, the WISH programme has continued to deliver strong results. In the last year alone, WISH has averted 6,800 maternal deaths and 2.2 million unintended pregnancies, and supported 873,540 additional users of modern methods of contraception.

■ Imran Khan

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[197523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent reports he has received on the arrest of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan; and whether he has made recent representations to his counterpart in Pakistan on the arrest.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has a longstanding and close relationship with Pakistan. The arrest, detention and sentencing of the former Prime Minister is an internal matter for Pakistan. We continue to monitor the situation closely and engage regularly across the political spectrum. In a letter to caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani on 21 August, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon impressed the need for Pakistan's citizens to be able to exercise their democratic rights and participate in peaceful, inclusive, credible elections.

■ Islamophobia

Sarah Owen:

[\[197628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of changes in the level of Islamophobia globally.

David Rutley:

The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all. We monitor the situation for religious and non-religious communities globally and work multilaterally and bilaterally to promote FoRB. The UK has condemned the recent incidents of Quran burning in Europe, recognising the deep hurt felt by Muslims across the world, and we unequivocally denounce hatred and incitement of violence on the basis of religion or belief. We are committed to both freedom of expression and FoRB and will continue to promote mutual respect between different communities.

Sarah Owen:

[\[197630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has held discussions with the UN on Islamophobia in the period since the UN Human Rights Council approved a resolution on religious hatred in July 2023.

David Rutley:

The UK engaged with the Organization for Islamic Co-operation at the UN Human Rights Council in July and, whilst condemning actions that seek to incite violence, discrimination or hatred, underlined the importance of striking a balance between freedom of expression and Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in the draft resolution on religious hatred. Ultimately, we could not support the final resolution presented as this balance was not achieved. The issue was also discussed at the UN General Assembly where we reiterated the need for a balanced approach. We will continue to work with our international partners to support FoRB for all.

■ **Matthew Hedges**

Philip Davies: [\[197440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make a formal apology to Matthew Hedges on the level of support offered by his Department while Mr Hedges was in prison in United Arab Emirates.

David Rutley:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) issued a formal apology to Mr Hedges on 31 August 2023 in accordance with the recommendations set out following an investigation by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, which upheld aspects of his complaint. Supporting British nationals when they need help abroad remains an enduring priority of the FCDO.

■ **Nagorno Karabakh: Humanitarian Aid**

Tim Loughton: [\[197979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has offered humanitarian aid to help civilians affected by Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has publicly highlighted the importance of re-opening the Lachin Corridor and addressing the humanitarian needs of the local population, including at the United Nations Security Council on 16 August 2023. The UK has a strong record of supporting humanitarian responses in this region and FCDO officials are in close contact with humanitarian agencies about the current situation. The START FUND, a humanitarian response fund to which the UK is a significant donor, has allocated £350,000 to the region to support those affected by the closure of the Lachin Corridor.

■ **Pakistan: Human Rights**

Kirsten Oswald: [\[197524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Pakistani counterpart on allegations of violent human rights violations committed by security forces in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government raises issues about human rights violations at a senior level with the Government of Pakistan, urging them to ensure they act in line with international human rights law, including ensuring everyone's right to a fair trial. In a letter to caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani on 21 August, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, impressed the need for Pakistan's citizens to be able to exercise their democratic rights and participate in peaceful, inclusive, credible elections. We continue to monitor the situation. On 6 September Lord Ahmad condemned attacks against religious minorities in his meeting with the Pakistani High Commissioner.

■ Palestinians: International Criminal Court**Rachael Maskell:**[\[196419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on the International Criminal Court investigation into the situation in Palestine of recent developments in Jenin and Gaza.

David Rutley:

The UK is a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and we respect the independence of the Court. We do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction in this instance as the UK does not currently recognise Palestinian statehood. The recent cycle of violence and loss of life and situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK remains committed to the Two-State Solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region and importantly between Israelis and Palestinians.

■ Refugees: Diplomatic Service**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[198190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consular protection his Department provides to refugees with UK asylum status who travel abroad; and whether he has plans to extend that protection.

David Rutley:

HMG provides consular assistance to British nationals travelling or living abroad. We may also help Commonwealth nationals in non-Commonwealth countries where they do not have any diplomatic or consular representation. We cannot help other nationalities, even if they live in the UK or have close connections to the UK. Home Office travel documents contain information making it clear that HMG cannot provide consular or diplomatic assistance to the bearer outside the UK. Our consular offer is set out on gov.uk.

■ Religious Freedom

Sarah Owen:

[\[197631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help improve the safety of persecuted religious communities.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), Fiona Bruce, as chair of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, is working to bolster international action on FoRB and seeking to improve the safety of persecuted religious minorities. At the UK-led Ministerial Conference on FoRB last year, we announced funding to support FoRB defenders, and provide expertise to assist countries with legislative changes to protect FoRB. In June we secured language in a Security Council resolution which directly addresses the persecution of religious minorities. We continue to use our position at the UN to highlight FoRB violations and abuses and help improve the lives of those affected.

■ Saudi Arabia: Migrants

Chi Onwurah:

[\[197866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his counterpart in Saudi Arabia on the reports by the Human Rights Watch of 21 August 2023 of lethal force used against Ethiopian migrants at the Saudi-Yemen border.

David Rutley:

We are aware of NGO and media reports about the deaths of migrants at the Saudi-Yemen border. The UK Government has raised the matter with the Saudi authorities, including at Ministerial level. The Minister for the Middle East and Human Rights, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised the issue with the Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in August, and most recently with the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission. The UK's relationship with Saudi Arabia covers a broad range of interests, however no aspect of our relationship prevents us from speaking frankly about human rights. We regularly discuss human rights with the Saudi authorities through a range of diplomatic channels including Ministers, our Ambassador, and the British Embassy in Riyadh.

■ Zimbabwe: Elections

Navendu Mishra:

[\[197617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the recent ballot in the Zimbabwe national elections on (a) democracy and (b) freedom of speech in Zimbabwe.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK commends Zimbabwean voters for their peaceful participation in Zimbabwe's recent elections. However, the UK shares the views expressed in International

Election Observation Mission preliminary statements that the pre-election period and election day fell short of regional and international standards. The UK is also concerned about the lack of transparency surrounding the compiling of results by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and the severe disruption of domestic observation. We note the EU Observation Mission findings that over the election period "fundamental freedoms were increasingly curtailed" through "regressive legal changes". We also share the SADC Observation Mission's views that the passing of the amendments to the Criminal Law Code Amendment Act "resulted in severe restriction of freedom of expression".

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Arthritis: Diagnosis

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[198312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has shared recommendations from the Getting It Right First Time Rheumatology with devolved institutions.

Will Quince:

The recommendations of the NHS England's Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) 2021 national report on rheumatology are publicly available, including to the devolved Governments.

■ Autism: Health Services

Julian Sturdy:

[\[197738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support people living with autism.

Maria Caulfield:

We expect integrated care boards (ICBs) to have due regard to relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines on autism when commissioning services. It is the responsibility of ICBs to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, in line with these NICE guidelines.

Additionally, each ICB must have an Executive Lead for learning disability and autism to support them to deliver care and support for autistic people in their area. NHS England has published statutory guidance on these Executive Lead roles.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance for autism assessment services. These documents include guidance on the provision of post-diagnostic support delivered shortly after diagnosis. In 2023/24, £4.2 million is available to improve services for autistic children and young people, as well as pre and post diagnostic support, including the continuation of the 'Autism in Schools' programme.

This year, the Department is also working on updating the Statutory Guidance on Autism to support the National Health Service and local authorities to deliver improved outcomes for autistic people.

From 1 July 2022, the Health and Care Act 2022 requires Care Quality Commission registered providers to ensure their staff receive specific training on learning disability and autism appropriate to their role. We are rolling out the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism to support this. This training will help to ensure that staff have the right skills and knowledge to provide safe and compassionate care, including how to provide reasonable adjustments, for autistic people.

■ **Borderline Personality Disorder: Health Services**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[197739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help support people living with borderline personality disorder.

Maria Caulfield:

It is for individual integrated care boards to commission mental health services, including those for people with borderline personality disorder, to meet the needs of their local population.

We are investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year in expanding and transforming mental health services in England by March 2024. Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing almost £1 billion of this extra funding in integrated community mental health support for people with serious mental illnesses. This will give an additional 370,000 adults and older adults greater choice and control over their care.

■ **Botulinum Toxin**

Jim Shannon:

[\[197779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to regulate the provision of botulinum injections.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2021 the Government introduced the Botulinum Toxin and Cosmetic Fillers (Children) Act to prevent children aged under 18 years old in England from accessing botulinum toxin and filler treatments for cosmetic purposes. Additionally, as part of the Health and Care Act 2022, the Government introduced legislation to give the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care the power to introduce a licensing regime for non-surgical cosmetic procedures, including botulinum toxin injections for cosmetic purposes.

The licensing scheme will ensure that practitioners offering specified procedures are suitably knowledgeable, trained, and qualified, hold appropriate indemnity cover and operate from premises which meet the necessary standards of hygiene, infection control and cleanliness. Following engagement with stakeholders, on 2 September

2023 we launched the first public consultation on the scope of the licensing scheme. The consultation will run until 28 October 2023.

■ **Cancer: Bath**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[197902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the potential impact of changes in NHS cancer waiting time targets on patients in Bath constituency.

Will Quince:

The information is not held in the format requested, as cancer waiting time data is not collected by constituency. Cancer waiting time data by provider, commissioner or at a national level is available at the following link:

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

■ **Cancer: Greater London**

Feryal Clark: [\[197931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for NHS patients to access cancer treatment in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Will Quince:

The information is not held in the format requested, as cancer waiting time data is not collected by constituency, borough, or city. Cancer waiting time data by provider, commissioner or at a national level is available at the following link:

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

■ **Cancer: North Antrim**

Ian Paisley: [\[198100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the length of time between (a) urgent GP referrals and (b) the commencement of treatment for cancer in North Antrim constituency.

Will Quince:

Health in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter; therefore, the Department does not hold this information centrally.

■ **Cancer: South Antrim**

Paul Girvan: [\[197856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the time taken from an urgent GP referral to the commencement of treatment for cancer for patients in South Antrim constituency.

Will Quince:

As health in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter, the Department does not hold this information centrally.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists**Wera Hobhouse:****[197901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of NHS Cancer waiting time targets; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

The Department has taken steps to work with NHS England to reduce the number of cancer waiting time targets within the National Health Service. Following a review of cancer waiting times standards by Professor Sir Steve Powis, and a consultation last year, clinical experts in the NHS recommended modernising and simplifying cancer waiting time standards to focus on three outcome-based standards. On 17 August 2023, NHS England announced changes to cancer waiting times standards; more specifically, there will be a Faster Diagnosis Standard of a maximum 28-day wait for communication of a definitive cancer/not cancer diagnosis for patients referred urgently or those identified by NHS cancer screening. There will be a maximum 62-day wait to first treatment from urgent general practitioner referral, NHS cancer screening or consultant upgrade. There will be a maximum 31-day wait from decision to treat to any cancer treatment starting for all cancer patients.

These standards will give clinicians greater flexibility to adopt new technologies such as remote image review and artificial intelligence, and avoid disincentivising modern working practices such as one-stop shops and straight-to-test. The Department supports these changes and will amend the relevant statutory regulations in due course, as shared in the Written Ministerial Statement of my Rt. hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, [HCWS1001](#), published on 4 September 2023.

■ Care Homes: Continuing Care**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[197684]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that NHS Continuing Healthcare assessments for those people in residential or nursing homes are only carried out by staff who have been briefed on the National Framework.

Helen Whately:

In England, the Department of Health and Social Care is responsible for National Health Service continuing healthcare (CHC) policy and legislation which includes the National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care. In Northern Ireland, CHC is the responsibility of Department of Health Northern Ireland. More information on the National Framework is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-framework-for-nhs-continuing-healthcare-and-nhs-funded-nursing-care>

In England, paragraph 122 of the National Framework sets out clearly that the Checklist can be completed by staff who have been trained in its use. Once an individual has been referred for a full assessment of eligibility for CHC, a multidisciplinary team must assess whether the individual has a primary health need using the Decision Support Tool.

■ Community Health Services: Children

Rachael Maskell: [\[196417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce backlogs in community child health services.

Helen Whately:

We are committed to reducing community health care waiting lists for children and young people. That is why the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan sets commitments to grow the community workforce, with increases in training places for district nurses and allied health professionals and a renewed focus on retaining existing staff.

NHS England has asked systems to develop and agree plans to reduce waiting lists for community health services, including considering transforming service pathways and improving effectiveness and productivity. Commissioning community services is the responsibility of local systems.

■ Community Hospitals: Discharges

Andrew Gwynne: [\[198332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients in community hospitals had their discharges delayed since January 2023.

Helen Whately:

On average, since January 2023, 1,956 patients per week, with a length of stay of 14 days or over in a community hospital, no longer met the criteria to reside but had not been discharged. Data is not available on the proportion of beds occupied by those that no longer meet the criteria to reside in a community hospital.

■ Contraceptives

Sir George Howarth: [\[197710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the next round of guidance for Integrated Care Systems on women's health hubs planned for autumn 2023, whether his Department plans to (a) provide guidance for the commissioning of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) and (b) publish additional guidance on women's health hubs in 2024.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department and NHS England are working together to develop further resources to support integrated care systems to establish women's health hubs. In the autumn of 2023, we plan to publish a commissioning specification for hubs which will include guidance around commissioning long-acting reversible contraception, and a toolkit for virtual group consultations and virtual engagement events in women's health hubs.

Currently there are no plans to publish additional guidance on women's health hubs, but we will keep under review if integrated care systems would benefit from further guidance.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Sarah Owen:**[\[197632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of making the covid-19 vaccination available privately as part of the seasonal booster programme.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government is guided by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on eligible cohorts for vaccination who have advised that the objective for the autumn/winter campaign is to continue to focus the offer of vaccination on those at greatest risk of serious disease and who are therefore most likely to benefit from vaccination.

Vaccines that have been licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency for use in the United Kingdom can be prescribed by a physician, either in the National Health Service or privately.

To date, the pharmaceutical companies producing COVID-19 vaccines have not made these treatments commercially available to the private health care sector in the United Kingdom either through pharmacies or other healthcare providers, but this is a matter for pharmaceutical companies rather than the Government or Parliament.

Sarah Owen:[\[197633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to expand the eligibility criteria for covid-19 vaccinations as part of the seasonal booster programme.

Maria Caulfield:

The primary aim of the COVID-19 vaccination programme continues to be the prevention of severe disease, involving hospitalisation and mortality, arising from COVID-19. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has recommended a targeted approach focussed on those vulnerable to serious outcomes from COVID-19 including older individuals and individuals with specified existing clinical conditions.

On 8 August 2023, the Government accepted advice from the JCVI on who should be offered a COVID-19 vaccine in the autumn 2023 booster programme. This includes

residents in a care home for older adults, all adults aged 65 years and over, persons aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group, frontline health and social care workers, persons aged 12 to 64 years who are household contacts, and persons aged 16 to 64 years who are carers.

Currently, there are no plans to expand the eligibility criteria for the autumn campaign. The JCVI will continue to review evidence and will provide further advice regarding future vaccination programmes in due course.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Disclosure of Information

Julian Knight:

[\[197463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average response time to subject access requests was by their Department in the latest period for which data is available; and if they will make an assessment of the adequacy of that response time.

Will Quince:

We endeavour to respond to all Subject Access Requests received within the statutory timescales listed within the Data Protection Act 2018 and United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation.

The Department received 101 requests from April 2022 to September 2023, the latest period for which data is available. We responded to 74 requests within the legal deadline of 30 days set by the Information Commissioner's Office, with an average response time of 13.13 days. 27 cases had an extension of up to three months applied due to complexity, and 25 of these cases were cleared within the extended period.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Freedom of Information

Julian Knight:

[\[196789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps their Department is taking to improve the response time to FOI requests.

Will Quince:

Freedom of Information (FOI) performance for all central Government Departments and other monitored bodies is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics>

A performance recovery plan was implemented during 2022. Subsequently, we have exceeded the 90% expectation of responding to FOI requests within 20 working days in each month during 2023.

■ Diabetes: Drugs**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the availability of medicines for type-2 diabetes on the level of diagnoses of (a) diabetic foot disease and (b) other associated illnesses.

Will Quince:

NHS England National Diabetes Audit core quarterly and annual dashboards will allow the assessment of changes in rates of complications over any periods of medicine shortages retrospectively, although attributing any such changes to any medicine shortages specifically to the level of diagnoses of diabetic foot disease and other associated illnesses is unlikely to be possible.

■ Diabetes: Health Services**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[198019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve NHS diabetes care (a) nationally and (b) in Romford constituency.

Will Quince:

Progress continues to be made for patients with type 1 diabetes, with over 65% of people currently using flash glucose monitoring to help manage their condition. 97% of pregnant women are being offered flash glucose monitoring and 78% accept the offer.

The NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme supports those identified at high risk of type 2 diabetes to reduce their risk. Data as of February 2023 shows a 20% reduction in risk for those who are referred to the programme compared to those who are not.

The local National Health Service in Romford, Havering and the neighbouring boroughs of Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge has set out a series of improvements to care for patients with diabetes. These include home-based urine tests, to help prevent renal failure in patients with diabetes, especially those in hard to reach populations such as the housebound.

In addition, plans are in place for a new transition service for children and young adults from ages 12 to 25 that will equip them for later life and will be supported by new capabilities for insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitoring.

A new diabetes foot pathway has been jointly adopted by local general practices and hospital and community care clinicians across the area, including in Romford.

■ Diagnosis**Paul Girvan:**[\[197855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Faster Diagnosis Standard.

Will Quince:

The Department has not made a formal assessment of the effectiveness of the Faster Diagnosis Standard (FDS) but works closely with NHS England who are responsible for managing performance of National Health Service providers. National performance of the FDS, which aims to ensure patients have cancer diagnosed or ruled out within 28 days of referral from a general practitioner or screening services, was at 73.5% performance in June 2023. FDS performance has averaged over 71% since collection started in April 2021, and we are confident the NHS will meet the ambition of 75% by March 2024.

NHS England plans to streamline cancer pathways to support diagnosis within 28 days by implementing non-symptom specific (NSS) pathways for patients who present with non-specific symptoms that can indicate several cancers, as well as implementing timed cancer pathways. By March 2024, the NSS programme will achieve full population coverage across England for non-specific symptom pathways as set out in the 2023/24 NHS Planning Guidance.

Diagnostic checks are a key part of many elective care pathways. NHS England's ambition is that 95% of patients needing a diagnostic check receive it within six weeks by March 2025. £2.3 billion was awarded at the 2021 Spending Review to transform diagnostic services over the next three years. Most of this will help increase the number of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) up to 160 by March 2025, expanding and protecting elective planned diagnostic services. There are 116 CDCs currently operational that have delivered over four million tests since July 2021.

■ Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma: Medical Treatments**Lee Anderson:**[\[197968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to increase funding for the research and development of treatments for diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma.

Will Quince:

The Department invests in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG).

DIPG is a difficult research area with a relatively small research community, and we are relying on researchers to submit high-quality research proposals. In May 2018 the Government announced £40 million for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission. The Government is committed to funding high-quality brain cancer research, and we expect to spend more as new research progresses. The £40 million funding remains available; if we can spend more on the best quality science we will do. It is also worth noting that all applications that were fundable in open competition have been funded.

The NIHR has supported delivery in the health and care system for eight DIPG research studies funded by research funding partners in the charity and public sectors since 2018.

■ Diseases: Clinical Trials

Alun Cairns: [\[198092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to amend regulations to ensure patients' access to early-phase clinical trials for (a) all diseases and (b) diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma.

Will Quince:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is introducing new legislation and guidance as part of a swathe of new measures that represent the biggest overhaul in United Kingdom clinical trials regulation in over 20 years.

The agency will introduce more streamlined and efficient application processes, making it easier to apply for trials in the UK, but without compromising on safety standards, including legislating for a combined MHRA/research ethics review. Internationally competitive approval timelines will also be introduced, with more flexibility for sponsors to respond to questions raised by regulators.

These changes will make the UK regulatory environment more attractive for sponsors to bring their trials to the UK, supporting more trials to be run on all kinds of medicines, including treatments for diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma.

The new legislation will help patients access more trials by bolstering the attractiveness of the UK as a destination for innovative and ground-breaking trials of life-saving medicines.

■ Diseases: Temperature

Rachael Maskell: [\[198145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue new guidance on reducing sickness levels among vulnerable groups during high temperatures.

Maria Caulfield:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published guidance on 10 May 2023 on supporting vulnerable people from adverse effects of hot weather. This is part of UKHSA's Adverse Weather and Health Plan which aims to protect individuals and communities from the health effects of adverse weather and to build community resilience. This will be regularly updated.

Information on supporting vulnerable people during periods of hot weather is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hot-weather-and-health-supporting-vulnerable-people>

■ Gene Therapies

Jim Shannon:

[\[197394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a list of (a) the number of times and (b) the circumstances in which the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has applied greater flexibility in its evaluation of (i) new health technologies and (ii) gene therapies routed through the single technology appraisal pathway since the health technology evaluation manual was updated in June 2022.

Will Quince:

Since publication of its updated process and methods for health technology evaluation in January 2022, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has applied a modifier in its evaluation of two new active substances evaluated through the single technology appraisal process. NICE has been able to recommend both technologies where a modifier has been applied, allowing the National Health Service to adopt innovative new treatments while ensuring value for the taxpayer.

The severity modifier was applied in NICE's appraisals of regorafenib for previously treated metastatic colorectal cancer [TA866] and bulevirtide for treating chronic hepatitis D [TA896].

■ Haemochromatosis

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[197844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve awareness of haemochromatosis and related clinical recommendations.

Will Quince:

Genomic testing for haemochromatosis is available through the NHS Genomic Medicine Service (GMS) for patients in England who show unexplained iron overload suggestive of hereditary haemochromatosis. Seven NHS GMS alliances play an important role in supporting the strategic systematic embedding of genomic medicine in end-to-end clinical pathways and clinical specialities, including raising awareness among clinicians and the public of the genomic testing available through the National Health Service. The alliances drive this embedding across all providers within their geography from primary and community care to secondary and tertiary care. The Genomics Education Programme also provides clinicians digital resources on diagnostics and genomic testing in both primary and secondary care.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[198328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 June 2023 to Question 190126 on Hospitals: Discharges, when his Department plans to allocate funding from the 2023-34 Discharge Fund.

Helen Whately:

As in 2022/23, the 2023/24 Adult Social Care Discharge Fund has been pooled via the Better Care Fund and divided between local authorities and integrated care boards. We began distributing the 2023/24 funding to local authorities in equal monthly instalments in April 2023, along with other adult social care grants. The integrated care board component was distributed by NHS England in a single instalment at the start of the financial year.

■ Innovation and Life Sciences: North East**Chi Onwurah:****[197405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) life sciences and (b) health innovation programmes his Department provides funding to in the North East.

Will Quince:

The Department supports the United Kingdom life sciences sector via the Office for Life Sciences and provides funding for research infrastructure across the whole of England through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

In the North East, the Newcastle Health Innovation Partners (NHIP) works with innovators to discover, develop and deliver new solutions in healthcare to improve the health of its population. The NHIP brings together the NIHR research infrastructure, the NIHR Clinical Research Network and the Academic Health Science Network for the North East and North Cumbria.

The Government's Life Sciences Innovative Manufacturing Fund supports businesses investing in life sciences manufacturing projects in the UK. Two companies in the North East have been awarded funding.

■ Integrated Care Systems: Finance**Sir George Howarth:****[197711]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his announcement in July 2023 of £595,000 funding per Integrated Care System to support the expansion of Women's Health Hubs, what steps his Department is taking to support Integrated Care Boards to determine how that funding is allocated to develop services that (a) best meet population needs and (b) reduce health inequalities.

Maria Caulfield:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning services that meet the health needs of their local population. We have published resources to support ICBs as they work with other system partners to implement the funding, including a core specification, and cost benefit analysis. These are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/womens-health-hubs>

The Women's Health Ambassador for England has hosted 4 webinars over the summer to support local systems as they develop their plans. These webinars had a

specific focus on how existing hubs are meeting population needs and reducing health inequalities.

We are developing further resources of a commissioning specification and a toolkit for virtual group consultations and virtual engagement events in women's health hubs. ICBs have been asked to submit an initial return by 30 September 2023, setting out where their hub will be, what services it plans to offer, staffing model, and other information. This will enable the Department and NHS England to understand how systems are using the funding to meet population needs and reduce health inequalities. The Department and NHS England are in regular contact with systems to answer any questions and are holding drop-in sessions in September to support with completing the reporting template.

■ **Medical Equipment: Reviews**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[198335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has received the report of the Equity in medical devices: independent review into equity in medical devices.

Will Quince:

The 'Equity in medical devices: independent review' has been completed by the independent panel and submitted to Government. The report has been reviewed in detail and work is ongoing with system partners to develop the Government's response to the review, which is expected to be published in autumn 2023.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Bill Esterson:

[\[197768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the email correspondence of 19 July 2023 from the hon. Member for Sefton Central relating to Impact Medical Ltd.

Will Quince:

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Lord Markham) has received your letter and will reply shortly.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a social model for mental health for supporting people with mental health challenges.

Maria Caulfield:

We have no current plans to do so.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to implement the policies on mental health in the Major Conditions Strategy published in August 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department is committed to implementing the commitments set out in the 'Major conditions strategy: case for change and our strategic framework' policy paper and is working with colleagues across Government and with key stakeholders in taking them forward.

As part of the process of designing the final strategy we will consider best practice for implementation once the policy proposals have been developed.

Wes Streeting:

[\[198220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many specialist mental health ambulances were in operation in each ambulance trust in each of the last five years.

Maria Caulfield:

This information is not held centrally.

■ **Mental Health Services: Telephone Services**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[198018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to implement a U.K.-wide mental health emergency hotline service.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no plans to do so as health services are a devolved matter.

We are working towards making emergency mental health support available through NHS 111 across England by April 2024. Linking the 24/7 urgent mental health helplines that are already available in all areas of the country through to NHS 111 will provide a consistent route for people to access support.

■ **Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**

Wes Streeting:

[\[198221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients waited over (a) 28, (b) 62 and (c) 90 days between their first and second appointment as part of treatment from the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme in the last year.

Maria Caulfield:

The following table shows the number of referrals for National Health Service talking therapies in England (formerly known as improving access to psychological therapies), as well as the waiting times for those referrals and the percentage of all

referrals with first and second treatment in 2021/22. Note that some patients may have had more than one referral during that period.

WAITING TIME	COUNT OF REFERRALS	PERCENTAGE OF ALL REFERRALS WITH FIRST AND SECOND TREATMENT IN 2021/22
Over 28 days	284,832	47.8
Over 56 days ¹	151,810	25.5
Over 90 days	76,649	12.9
All referrals with a first and second treatment in the year	595,607	100

Source: NHS England - Psychological Therapies, Annual report on the use of IAPT services, 2021/22

¹ First to Second treatment waiting times were not available for over 62 days. The 56-day threshold has been used instead.

■ Mental Health Services: Young People

Cat Smith:

[\[197475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to reduce the use of out-of-area placements for young people in mental health inpatient services.

Maria Caulfield:

We recognise that for some children and young people, mental health inpatient services, will not be the most appropriate or practical way to meet their needs. The National Health Service's overall strategy is therefore to reduce reliance on inpatient mental health beds and out-of-area placements for children and young people with serious mental illnesses.

The model of provision of NHS-funded inpatient treatment for children and young people is being reviewed and re-designed to support the move to a community-based provision, where children and young people can access appropriate support in a timely, effective, and patient-centred way, close to home and in the least restrictive environment.

This transition is being supported by the introduction of provider collaboratives to support place-based commissioning and to develop local services that meet the needs of their communities. Options may include increased day provision and the new model will see a change to how inpatient environments are best utilised.

■ MMR vaccine**Jim Shannon:**[\[198044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase measles vaccination rates.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department, alongside the UK Health Security Agency and NHS England, is committed to the UK Measles and Rubella elimination strategy, and together we work to improve immunisation coverage through a range of initiatives including data-improvement, increasing vaccine access, and information campaigns around eligibility and the benefits of vaccines.

The Department has also supported NHS England to develop programmes focused on improving coverage, including a measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) catch-up campaign throughout winter 2022/23, and more recently, a National Health Service London catch-up campaign for both polio and MMR for children aged between one and 11 years old.

It is vitally important that everyone takes up the vaccinations to which they are entitled; for themselves, their families, and wider society. Anyone unsure about their eligibility or vaccination status should contact their general practitioner for advice.

■ NHS: Disclosure of Information**Rachael Maskell:**[\[197795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of NHS processes for dealing with whistle-blowers.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Health Service's national freedom to speak up policy provides the minimum standard for local freedom to speak up policies across the NHS, so those who work in the NHS know how to speak up and what will happen when they do. It states that speaking up is to be welcomed and emphasises the need for a culture in which speaking up is considered normal, everyday practice. All organisations delivering NHS care should adopt this strengthened policy by January 2024.

Rachael Maskell:[\[197799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will undertake a review of the use of non disclosure agreements in the NHS.

Will Quince:

We do not have any current plans to undertake a review of the use of non-disclosure agreements in the National Health Service. Confidentiality clauses used within any such agreements can have a legal and legitimate purpose in helping to resolve workplace disputes or end a working relationship by mutual agreement. Our policy and NHS guidance has been consistently clear that employers must not use confidentiality clauses which attempt to prevent employees from whistleblowing or

discussing matters that might compromise the quality and safety of patient care or the safety and wellbeing of employees.

Rachael Maskell: [\[197800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many non disclosure agreements have been issued by the NHS in each of the last five years for which data is available (a) nationally and (b) in York.

Will Quince:

This information is not held centrally.

■ NHS: Drugs

Rachael Maskell: [\[197801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring two clinicians to be present in order to access medication in the NHS.

Will Quince:

National Health Service organisations will already have their own policies on access to medicines in a clinical setting. Additionally, the General Medical Council has good practice in prescribing and managing medicines and devices which sets out prescriber responsibilities relating to the prescriptions they sign.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the Royal College of Nursing have issued Professional Guidance on the Administration of Medicines in Healthcare Settings and Professional guidance on the safe and secure handling of medicines. Staff must be trained, and access to the locked medicines cupboard is by approved healthcare professionals only. In many organisations two healthcare professionals will be required to sign out any controlled drug and/or other medicines for administration to patients in line with organisational risk assessments.

It is the responsibility of individual health and care professionals to work within the requirements of their regulated profession, which is set by the relevant regulatory body. The nine professional health and care regulators are overseen by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care who carry out annual reviews of regulators' performance.

Further the Care Quality Commission, the independent regulator of health and social care, monitor, inspect and regulate service providers and have powers to act against providers that do not have adequate systems in place to ensure the proper and safe use of medicine.

■ NHS: Managers

Rachael Maskell: [\[197803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to strengthen the application of the duty of candour to leaders and managers within the NHS.

Will Quince:

The statutory duty of candour, introduced in 2014 for National Health Service trusts and 2015 for all other providers, requires all providers of NHS services to inform and apologise to patients where something unexpected or unintended happens that causes, or could be causing moderate or severe harm, death, or prolonged psychological harm. A failure to comply with the duty under regulation 20 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 can lead to enforcement action, including prosecution, by the Care Quality Commission.

Professional regulators, such as the General Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council, also made the Duty of Candour a professional requirement for their registered members in 2014.

■ Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome: Children and Young People**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[198351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that children and young people living with PANS and PANDAS receive effective, patient-centred care.

Maria Caulfield:

Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) and Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS)

are an emerging area of research and clinical interest for professionals working with children and young people. Should the evidence base develop further, we would look to organisations such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to update clinical policy. NHS England would then consider the development of care pathways for those living with relevant these conditions.

In the meantime, integrated care systems are responsible for planning care for their populations affected by these conditions and healthcare professionals will want to take account of any new research and developments in guidance to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality care to their patients.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Drugs**Alexander Stafford:**[\[198273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support NHS Trusts to ensure that people with Parkinson's receive their medication on time in hospital settings in England.

Alexander Stafford:[\[198274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that NHS Trusts in England have a self-administration policy that enables people with Parkinson's to (a) take their own time-critical Parkinson's medication in hospital should they wish to and (b) be assessed as safe to do so.

Will Quince:

Hospital providers are responsible for ensuring that patients within hospital settings, including those with Parkinson's disease, receive the appropriate medication on time.

NHS England has published a RightCare toolkit which aims to address challenges in providing services for those with progressive neurological conditions, including Parkinson's disease. The toolkit provides advice on medicine optimisation, highlighting the importance of timely administration of specific drugs, such as Levodopa, in acute and community health settings.

■ Patients: Safety**Julian Knight:**[\[196912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department provides hospitals on involving the police in investigations related to patient harm.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England's Serious Incident Framework sets out the key principles of serious incident management and defines the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the management of serious incidents, including the police and those providing National Health Service healthcare services.

The Department's 'Memorandum of understanding: investigating patient safety incidents involving unexpected death or serious untoward harm', published in 2006, also provides a source for reference where a serious incident occurs in a healthcare setting and an investigation is also required by the police, the Health and Safety Executive and/or the coroner. The NHS, the Association of Chief Police Officers (now the National Police Chiefs' Council) and the Health and Safety Executive are party to this agreement.

■ Pelvic Organ Prolapse**Stephen Morgan:**[\[198224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) improve awareness of pelvic organ prolapse and (b) increase support for those suffering with that condition.

Will Quince:

Improving awareness of women's health conditions is a priority in the strategy. In July, a women's health area was created on the National Health Service website, bringing together over 100 topics including pages on pelvic organ prolapse and incontinence. In addition, a pelvic organ prolapse patient information leaflet has been produced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to support patients with information and aims to help them better understand their health and their options for treatment and care.

We are working to improve services for pelvic floor dysfunction. We are investing £25 million to establish at least one women's health hub across every integrated care system. The core specification for these hubs, published on 21 July, sets out pessary

fitting and removal as a key service to provide in hubs. It recommends that local systems consider building further pelvic organ prolapse care into their hub model, including assessment, conservative management such as pelvic floor physiotherapy and, if needed, referral to specialist services.

The NHS Long Term Plan also set out a commitment to ensure that women have access to multidisciplinary pelvic health clinics and pathways across England. NHS England is currently rolling out Perinatal Pelvic Health Services, which aim to improve prevention, identification and access to physiotherapy for pelvic health issues antenatally and postnatally. Full rollout across England is expected by March 2024.

■ Podiatry

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[198108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of NHS podiatric care appointments in (a) Slough constituency, (b) the South East and (c) the rest of England.

Will Quince:

Frimley Integrated Care Board, which commissions National Health Service services for the population of Slough, is currently undertaking a review of podiatry services.

A regional podiatry workforce programme was set up in 2023, working with all six system partners in the South East (SE), working through their integrated care board allied health professionals (AHP) faculties and AHP Councils to address the challenged supply and demand forecast for the region. The SE podiatry programme's focus is on: building podiatry leadership and influence; supporting the sustainable growth of the podiatry workforce; and transformation and retention, for example by expanding podiatric surgery training opportunities.

■ Radiotherapy

Henry Smith: [\[197767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to devolve any aspect of radiotherapy commissioning to integrated care boards in (a) Crawley constituency and (b) England; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

NHS England's National Moderation Panel will determine how many integrated care boards (ICBs) will take on responsibility for specialised commissioning in October 2023. Following this moderation process, recommendations will be taken to the NHS England Board for final decisions in December 2023, before new arrangements go live from April 2024.

This process will consider the delegation of radiotherapy commissioning for ICBs across England including across the Crawley constituency.

Ian Paisley:

[198099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that reporting mechanisms are in place to inform the (a) public and (b) parliament how the nine statutory joint radiotherapy committees are improving access to modern radiotherapy.

Will Quince:

The nine statutory joint committees between NHS England and multi-integrated care board (ICB) collaborations established on 1 April 2023 are working to improve access to specialised services by bringing together regional specialised commissioning expertise and integrated care systems (ICSs). These committees have joint responsibility for commissioning decisions on 59 specialised services, including radiotherapy. A list of these services is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/board-2-feb-23-item-7-annex-a-final-spa-lists.pdf>

Reporting mechanisms are in place as part of ICS governance, with ICB leaders publishing an annual report to their population stating what their health and healthcare services are delivering for their population and communities.

To ensure appropriate oversight and assurance of specialised services under the nine statutory joint committees in 2023/24, NHS England produced guidance for its regional teams and ICBs. The guidance sets out four key areas that NHS England's regional specialised commissioning teams, working with and through the joint committees, should be regularly overseeing and monitoring in relation to their specialised provision (including providers of radiotherapy services): timeliness of provision; quality of provision; use of resources and value for money; and equity and health inequalities.

■ Radiotherapy: Crawley

Henry Smith:

[197766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many radiotherapy LINAC machines will be over the recommended 10-year lifespan by the end of (a) 2023, (b) 2024, and (c) 2025 in Crawley constituency.

Will Quince:

Data on radiotherapy linear accelerator (LINAC) machines is not held at constituency level. Since April 2022, the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines sits with local systems. This is supported by the 2021 Spending Review, which set aside £12 billion in operational capital for the National Health Service between 2022 and 2025.

Recent Capital Planning Guidance sets out the expectation that the majority of radiotherapy equipment, particularly LINAC machines, will need to be replaced at ten years of age, to make progress on Long Term Plan priorities. The guidance states that integrated care systems (ICSs) need to develop replacement plans as part of

their multi-year capital plans, in partnership with specialised commissioners, Cancer Alliances and Radiotherapy Operational Delivery Networks, based on an assessment of equipment age, capacity and demand, opportunities to improve access, and service risk.

■ Shingles: Vaccination

Rosie Duffield: [\[197821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the guidance issued by the NHS entitled Introduction of Shingrix® vaccine for the whole programme and expansion of eligible cohorts, published on 4 July 2023, on people who turned 65 before 1 September 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised the Government on the implementation of the Shingrix vaccine and the rollout of the cohort expansion. This advice was based on various considerations, including population impact. The Government accepted this advice, and it is the basis of NHS England guidance on the Shingles programme.

■ Surgery: Enfield North

Feryal Clark: [\[197939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many referrals for elective surgery to (a) the NHS and (b) independent health providers funded through the NHS were made by each GP surgery in Enfield North constituency in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Tony Chambers

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[198434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the former Chief Executive at the Countess of Chester Hospital, Tony Chambers, was last employed by (a) the NHS and (b) an organisation overseen by his Department.

Will Quince:

National Health Service staff records are not held centrally by the Department.

■ Tuberculosis

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[198389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a WHO Multisectoral Accountability Framework for TB following the UN High-level Meeting on the fight against tuberculosis on 22 September 2023.

Will Quince:

The Multisectoral Accountability Framework for Tuberculosis is a World Health Organization (WHO) initiative which includes regular global assessments. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Department are working with WHO's Global Lead for Multisectoral Engagement and the Director of the Global Tuberculosis Programme on the United Kingdom implementation of the framework. There is currently no plan to publish a separate UK assessment at this time.

HOME OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Luke Pollard:**[\[197961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which Minister is responsible for the resettlement and housing of Afghan citizens currently living in hotels in Pakistan under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy scheme.

Luke Pollard:[\[197962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timeline is for completing the resettlement and housing of Afghan citizens who are currently housed in hotels in Pakistan under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Programme scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

Responsibility for this area is shared across Departments. Within the Home Office I lead on resettlement as Minister for Immigration.

As of June 2023, we have relocated over c.12,200 people under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP) initiative, while over 11,500 people have been granted settled status, since the scheme launched in April 2021.

It is vital that those arriving have somewhere suitable to stay once they are in the UK. We are developing plans across government to support the remainder of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and ARAP cohorts into settled accommodation in the UK.

We will only facilitate ARAP third country arrivals where suitable accommodation can be secured ahead of arrival, including where individuals can be supported to arrange accommodation themselves.

We continue to work at pace with Local Authorities and other partners to source suitable accommodation, in order to be able to welcome more eligible Afghans.

We know there is still a way to go to bring those eligible to safety in the UK, but we remain committed to continuing to welcome eligible Afghans to the UK through our schemes.

■ Assisted Voluntary Return Schemes

Jessica Morden: [\[198333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications to the Voluntary Returns Service were processed in each month between January 2021 and July 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

We do not routinely publish the information you have requested.

The Home Office publishes statistics on all types of removals from the UK which includes voluntary departures. The latest statistics are available at:

[Immigration statistics quarterly release - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Published datasets for Voluntary Returns are available at:

[Returns and detention datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Returns data is published quarterly and the most recent publication provides information on return volumes to the end of Q1 2023.

[Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The voluntary return category includes returns which are categorised as assisted and controlled. This includes such returns processed by all Home Office units, including the Voluntary Returns Service.

■ Asylum: Applications

Jessica Morden: [\[198334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applicants that were eligible for the Streamlined Asylum Processing Questionnaire returned their application within 30 working days in each month since its introduction.

Robert Jenrick:

The information requested is not held in a reportable format and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost as it would require a manual trawl of case records to retrieve.

Tim Farron: [\[198337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have had their asylum claim withdrawn because they did not complete the Streamlined Asylum Process questionnaire.

Robert Jenrick:

The information requested is not held in a reportable format and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost as it would require a manual trawl of case records to retrieve.

■ Asylum: Greater London

Sir David Evennett: [\[197375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were awaiting the outcome of their asylum application in (a) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency, (b) Bexley Borough and (c) Greater London on 1 September 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

Whilst we hold information regarding the number of people awaiting the outcome of their asylum claim in each parliamentary constituency, this information is not held in a reportable format.

■ Asylum: Housing

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[198095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 on her Department's ability to access the Official Development Assistance budget for the purposes of paying for accommodation for asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

The government is preparing for the implementation of the Illegal Migration Act, including assessing its impact on Official Development Assistance spending.

■ Baroness Casey Review

Janet Daby: [\[196463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the transparency data entitled Home Office: ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings, January to March 2023, published on 20 July 2023, whether any meetings that Ministers held on the Baroness Casey Review included discussions on proposals for a new Children's Strategy for the Metropolitan Police.

Chris Philp:

Home Office Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of international partners, as well as organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

Details of these meetings are published on the Cabinet Office website on a quarterly basis.

■ Fires

Charlotte Nichols: [\[197131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the UK's preparedness for wildfires in future, in the context of climate change.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office works closely with other departments and key stakeholders including Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities to mitigate the risk of wildfire as set out in the Wildfire Framework for England. The framework can be found at [Wildfire Framework for England | Fire England](#).

Each Fire and Rescue Authority is required to plan for the foreseeable risks in their area, through their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), having regard to other key local responders, the top local and national risks, and the communities which they serve.

The government recognises the risk that wildfire presents for landscapes and communities and in preparation for summer 2023 wrote to Local Resilience Forums to share lessons and recommendations from the 2022 wildfire season. The Home Office has also committed to the scoping of a Wildfire Strategy and Action Plan by mid-2024. Further actions are set out in the third National Adaptation Plan, which was recently been published: [Third National Adaptation Programme \(NAP3\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Home Office maintains regular engagement with National Bodies including the National Fire Chiefs Council and England and Wales Wildfire Forum who monitor and review sector led improvements to wildfire response and mitigation.

■ Immigration: Hong Kong**Neil Coyle:****[197878]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the 533,000 people offered a safe and legal route into the UK since 2015 were from Hong Kong.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on the number of people offered entry to the UK on safe and legal routes in the "[How many people do we grant protection to](#)" section of the [Immigration system statistics release](#).

Further details on the British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa route can be found in the "[How many people come to the UK each year \(including visitors\)?](#)" section of the release.

■ Migrant Help: Standards**Stephen Kinnock:****[197433]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the National Audit Office report entitled Asylum Accommodation and support, published 3 July 2020, what recent steps her Department has taken to improve the performance of Migrant Help in operating the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office continues to work with Migrant Help in line with their contract to ensure that they take all rectification actions to bring about improvements. Migrant Help have increased their headcount to respond to the significant increase in demand for their services which is due to increased volumes of those destitute asylum seekers requiring accommodation.

Overseas Students: Afghanistan**Rachael Maskell:**[\[198396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will consider the potential merits of making non-student visas available to women and girls from Afghanistan who wish to study in the UK and are unable to travel here on a student visa.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK has made an ambitious and generous commitment to help relocate at-risk individuals in Afghanistan. To date, we have brought around 24,600 people to safety from Afghanistan and the neighbouring region, this includes thousands of women and girls.

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) provide two safe and legal routes for eligible people at risk affected by events in Afghanistan to come to the UK.

We recognise there are many vulnerable individuals who remain in Afghanistan and the region. The capacity of the UK to resettle people is not unlimited and difficult decisions have to be made on who will be prioritised for resettlement.

The UK government is appalled by the Taliban's attacks on the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. We continue to work with the international community to press the Taliban to reverse their prohibitive edicts.

Passports: Applications**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[197361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 June 2022 to Question 7920 on Passports: Applications, what the average waiting times were for a passport in (a) April 2021, (b) February 2022 and (c) February 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

Since April 2021, passport customers using the standard service in the UK have been advised to allow ten weeks to get their passport.

The percentage of customers who received their passport within this published processing timeframe in the months requested is shown below:

April 2021: 99.4%

February 2022: 99.3%

February 2023: 99.7%

■ Police Custody: Children

Janet Daby:

[\[196462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the meeting of the Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire with the Youth Endowment Fund on 16 March 2023, whether they discussed (a) the role of the appropriate adult for children detained in police custody, (b) legal advice for children detained in police custody and (c) opportunities to divert children from entering police custody.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office works closely with the Youth Endowment Fund on a wide range of issues, specifically aimed at reducing serious violence.

Home Office Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of international partners, as well as organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery. Details of these meetings are published on the Cabinet Office website on a quarterly basis.

Children should only be detained by police when absolutely necessary, and the number of children arrested by the police is declining. In the 10 years from 2011/12 to 2021/22, the number of children aged 10-17 arrested by the police fell by 67%. Children aged 10-17 accounted for 8% of all arrests in the latest year, compared with 14% in 2011/12.

Children detained in police custody must be provided with an appropriate adult. The Home Office part funds the National Association of Appropriate Adults (NAAN), which supports organisations providing appropriate adult services to young people and vulnerable adults in police custody.

The Home Office is a member of the steering group for the recent Nuffield Foundation-funded research project "Examining the impact of PACE on the detention and questioning of young suspects", and the follow-up project, "Children in police custody: piloting a 'Child First' approach".

■ Police: West Yorkshire

Imran Hussain:

[\[197398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of police officers had a length of service that was (a) less than one year, (b) one year to less than two years, (c) two years to less than five years, (d) five years to less than 10 years and (e) more than 10 years in West Yorkshire as of 31 March in each year since 2010.

Imran Hussain:

[\[197476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers who left West Yorkshire Police had a length of service that was (a) less than one year, (b) one year to less than two years, (c) two years to less than five years, (d) five years to less than 10 years and (e) more than 10 years in the year to 31 March in each year since 2010.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the length of service of police officers in England and Wales, broken down by Police Force Area (PFA), annually in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulleting which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>

Information on the length of service of police officers employed by West Yorkshire Police can be found in table JL5 of the data tables accompanying each publication for the year ending 31 March 2016 onwards.

The Home Office does not publish information on the length of service of police officers that have left the police service. The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police officers leaving the police service in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin however this does not include information on their length of service.

Data on the number of police officers leaving West Yorkshire Police, in the years ending March 2007 to 2023, can be found in the 'Leavers Open Data Table' here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1172932/open-data-table-police-workforce-leavers-260723.ods.

■ Short-term Holding Facilities: Drugs**Catherine West:****[197513]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish her Department's risk assessment for its policy of seizing medicines in short-term holding centres.

Robert Jenrick:

We take the welfare of people in our care extremely seriously and we continue to improve our short-term holding facilities. Individual risk assessments are conducted on all individuals entering a detention facility. Suitability for detention is assessed on a case-by-case basis with consideration of appropriate escalation points to safeguard individuals with vulnerabilities, including on prescribed medication.

■ Unexplained Wealth Orders**Alison Thewliss:****[197789]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unexplained wealth orders have been used since the scheme was revised.

Tom Tugendhat:

Since the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act came into effect on 15 March 2022 the two applications for UWOs have been applied for in the High Court.

JUSTICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Alison Thewliss:**[\[906347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 on access to justice for asylum seekers.

Mike Freer:

The Illegal Migration Act will ensure that the only way to come to the UK for asylum will be through safe and legal routes, and we are working across Government to ensure access to justice for asylum seekers.

All individuals who receive a removal notice under the Illegal Migration Act will have access to legal aid, without facing a means or merits test, to help ensure access to justice.

Iain Stewart:[\[906348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of levels of staff (a) retention and (b) morale at HMP Woodhill.

Damian Hinds:

Ensuring prison officers stay and progress their careers is a priority, and we are working hard to retain and develop clear career paths for operational staff.

HMP Woodhill has implemented an action plan focused on staff retention and improvements have been seen in attrition rates this year.

We have created a retention framework which is linked to wider activities around employee experience, employee lifecycle and staff engagement at work.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Justice, will publish an initial action plan by no later than 29 September 2023, addressing immediate concerns at HMP Woodhill. The prison is already taking steps to drive improvement including:

- receiving support from the Standards Coaching Team, which provides prisons with advice to improve standards in priority locations; and
- temporarily reducing capacity to free up resources and support stability.

We will be monitoring the situation at HMP Woodhill very closely to ensure there is a speedy and sustained improvement.

Ian Lavery:[\[906349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to help prevent the cancellation of court hearings at short notice.

Mike Freer:

The trend in Crown Court vacated (i.e. cancelled) trials is improving. Following the Crown Court Improvement Group update in January, we have seen 27% fewer vacated trials compared to the same period before the Bar Strike.

While short notice postponements are undesirable, they are not always avoidable.

Judges are responsible for listing. Most cases that are vacated are done so in excess of 10 days from hearing date, as we always aim to keep short notice postponements to a minimum.

Mark Eastwood: [\[906350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce reoffending rates.

Damian Hinds:

The overall proven reoffending rate has decreased significantly.

We are taking action to drive this down further by ensuring prisoners leavers have access to employment and accommodation.

For instance, we have rolled out Prison Employment Leads to match candidates to jobs and appointed business leader chairs to our Employment Advisory Boards.

We have also begun delivering our temporary accommodation service, so prison-leavers have a stable base on release.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[906352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of probation services in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

Damian Hinds:

In August the Probation Delivery Unit for Bristol and South Gloucestershire was rated as 'requires improvement' by HM Inspectorate of Probation.

We will publish an Action Plan in October 2023 to address the resulting recommendations, including through improved systems for information sharing and for pre-release planning.

■ Acquittals

Michael Fabricant: [\[197337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the magistrate's reasons for the acquittal of Lola Davies and Jasmine Murphy for obstructing the entrance to UAV Engines Ltd in Shenstone on 9 September 2022.

Mike Freer:

It would be inappropriate to comment on individual cases and decisions made by the independent judiciary, which are fact specific and made on a case-by-case basis.

This particular judgement does not relate to an area of Ministry of Justice policy but as is normal practice, the Crown Prosecution Service can appeal rulings in the magistrates' court.

■ Community Orders

Steve Reed:

[\[196293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the (a) average waiting time for community payback to commence once an individual has been sentenced and (b) the total number of people waiting to undergo community payback in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

a) The average waiting time for community payback to commence once an individual has been sentenced for years 2022/23 was 32.21 days.

b) The table below shows the number of UPW requirements waiting to undergo the first work session of their community payback requirement since 2017/18.

2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
1922	1621	412	70	1	1

Due to the way data is recorded, we cannot provide relevant or comparable data prior to the 2017/18 for part b).

While due care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the data, as with any large administrative data source the possibility of errors cannot be eliminated. This data was sourced from nDelius; while data has been assured as much as practical, as with any large administrative dataset data should not be assumed to be accurate to the last value presented.

This Government has committed to invest an additional £93 million in Community Payback over the next three years to increase the number of unpaid hours worked, focusing on outdoor projects that help to improve public spaces, ensuring that people can see justice being done.

■ Courts and Prisons: Buildings

Emily Thornberry:

[\[197416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his predecessor (a) received requests from and (b) made representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to discuss the (i) presence and (ii) potential cost implications of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within the court and prison estates between 13 February 2020 and 5 July 2022.

Mike Freer:

Ministers and officials have regular discussions with Treasury colleagues on a range of issues.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[197746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 3 May 2023 to Question 183039 on Courts and Prisons: Buildings, whether his Department has completed the work to identify buildings within the prison estate which may have been

constructed with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete; and whether that work included the examination of buildings opened between 1990 to 2000.

Damian Hinds:

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out. The Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates.

■ **Courts: Attendance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[197495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many defendants facing allegations of (a) rape and (b) other sexual crimes received a postal requisition to appear at court.

Mike Freer:

The data presented in the table below shows the number of Defendants dealt with for (a) rape and (b) other sexual crimes cases where they received a postal requisition to appear at the magistrates' courts, England and Wales, Q1 2014 - Q1 2023 held by HM Courts and Tribunals Service.

YEAR	QUARTER	ALL RAPE	OTHER SEXUAL CRIMES
2014	Q1	51	174
2014	Q2	55	209
2014	Q3	69	215
2014	Q4	81	279
2015	Q1	78	260
2015	Q2	85	265
2015	Q3	97	310
2015	Q4	134	372
2016	Q1	110	350
2016	Q2	145	464
2016	Q3	149	454
2016	Q4	138	472
2017	Q1	146	485
2017	Q2	137	504

YEAR	QUARTER	ALL RAPE	OTHER SEXUAL CRIMES
2017	Q3	176	623
2017	Q4	233	811
2018	Q1	184	748
2018	Q2	143	677
2018	Q3	163	754
2018	Q4	187	788
2019	Q1	223	868
2019	Q2	201	860
2019	Q3	202	836
2019	Q4	214	979
2020	Q1	231	916
2020	Q2	173	339
2020	Q3	353	1194
2020	Q4	317	1231
2021	Q1	319	1060
2021	Q2	343	929
2021	Q3	216	686
2021	Q4	187	571
2022	Q1	183	643
2022	Q2	209	595
2022	Q3	197	565
2022	Q4	154	398
2023	Q1	119	289

To Note:

- 1) Excludes a small number of cases with identified data quality issues and breaches.
- 2) Only one offence is counted for each defendant. If there is more than one offence per defendant that complete on the same day, a set of validation rules applies to

select one offence only and these relate to the longest duration, seriousness and the lowest sequence number of the offence.

3) Includes cases completed in the magistrates' courts during the specified time period, where no further action is required by the magistrates' courts, as well as those who go on to the Crown Court.

■ Courts: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[197585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the backlog of criminal court cases in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Mike Freer:

Stoke-on-Trent and Stafford fall into the Staffordshire Local Criminal Justice Board. Whilst the outstanding caseload in both the magistrates' court and the Crown Court is currently higher than in 2019, due to additional pressures faced by the courts during the pandemic and as a result of the Criminal Bar Association Strike, there have been improvements in the last quarter. In the magistrates' court, the outstanding case load stood at 8,964 in Q1 2023 compared to 9,401 in Q4 2022. In the Crown Court, the outstanding caseload stood at 1,033 in Q1 2023 compared to 1084 in Q4 2022. We continue to work with colleagues and the judiciary locally to improve our service to local communities.

We remain committed to reducing the caseload and are working closely with the judiciary and other partners to improve the experience of court users. We have introduced a raft of measures to achieve that aim, including allowing the courts to sit at maximum capacity for the third year in a row. We have also extended the use of 24 Nightingale courtrooms this financial year, and are recruiting up to 1,000 judges across all jurisdictions to allow courts to work at full capacity.

■ Homicide: Reoffenders

Ellie Reeves:

[\[197505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people who were convicted of murder were released at the end of their original tariff in each of the last five years; how many people who were convicted of murder were recalled to prison after they were released in each of the past 5 years; and how many people who were convicted of domestic homicide were recalled to prison after they were released in each of the last five years.

Damian Hinds:

Figures for question 1 are in Table 1. These are the number of first-time releases at the end of the original tariff following a mandatory life sentence.

Table 1. The number of people convicted of murder who were released at the end of their original tariff in each of the last five years:

	RELEASE YEAR				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Count	264	230	236	193	197

Figures for question 2 are in Table 2. These are the number of recalls in the last five years for offenders who at the time of recall had a conviction for murder. The power to recall is a vital public protection measure and all individuals supervised under licence in the community are liable to recall to prison if they fail to comply with their licence conditions.

Table 2. The number of people convicted of murder who were recalled to prison after they were released in each of the last five years:

	LICENCE REVOCATION YEAR				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Count	168	195	188	196	219

For question three, which relates specifically to those offenders convicted of domestic homicide, the data is not routinely available and the work to identify such cases would exceed the appropriate cost limit under the request for the provision of data.

Notes:

1. Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that this data has been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by HM Prison & Probation Service. Consequently, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.
2. Lifer Migration; These are prisoners who were sentenced prior to the introduction of the Public Protection Unit Database (PPUD), their records were migrated from paper files when the database was introduced in 2009.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Hornsey and Wood Green

Catherine West:

[\[197514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce the magistrates' court backlog in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.

Mike Freer:

The magistrates' court for Hornsey and Wood Green is Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court. Following Covid, the outstanding caseload in Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court returned to pre-pandemic levels by July 2021, and performance has been stable ever since. The outstanding caseload at Highbury Corner stood at 6760 in March 2023, compared to 7119 in March 2019.

This data is a further breakdown of published data that can be found in the criminal court statistics quarterly publication:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2023>.

We want to make sure every victim has the swift access to justice they deserve, and we are working hard to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the magistrates' courts to do so. This includes raising the statutory mandatory retirement age for all judicial office holders, including magistrates, investing over £1 million in a programme to recruit new and diverse magistrates, and increasing the use of remote hearings.

■ Ministry of Justice: Disclosure of Information

Julian Knight:

[197467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average response time to subject access requests was by their Department in the latest period for which data is available; and if they will make an assessment of the adequacy of that response time.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice handles subject access requests in accordance with data protection legislation and the Information Commissioner's Office's (ICO) guidance.

The timescales for responding to a subject access request is within one calendar month, although timescales for certain, complex cases can be extended under the legislation for a further two months.

The latest period for which performance data is available is April-June 2023. During this period, the Ministry received 2,046 subject access requests. We responded to 1851 within the legal deadline of 30 days set by the ICO and the average response time was 24 days.

This is in line with legislation and is a metric which the department consistently seeks to achieve and improve.

■ Ministry of Justice: Publications

Emily Thornberry:

[197414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service leaflet, published 30 August 2023, (a) how many physical copies of the leaflet have been distributed in England and Wales, (b) in which locations and (c) at what cost; and whether his Department has taken any other steps to disseminate copies of the leaflet through other channels.

Mike Freer:

The Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS) leaflet has been distributed digitally to government departments, local authorities, charities, and advice agencies. Physical copies have not been distributed at this time but the Ministry of Justice continues to monitor uptake of the HLPAS service and may consider interventions such as physical distribution if appropriate.

Notices and letters concerning possession proceedings which are distributed physically do reference HLPAS and signpost towards support.

■ Police and Prison Officers: Crimes of Violence

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[195757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many assaults on prison officers there were in 2021-22; and how many and what proportion of prisoners sentenced to imprisonment for assaulting a prison officer in that period served their sentence concurrently with a sentence already being served.

Damian Hinds:

The data on prison officer assaults is recorded in our published Safety in Custody Statistics.

The number and rates of assaults on staff across the estates are published in the Safety in Custody Summary Table which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1173764/Safety-in-custody-summary-q1-2023-final-tables.xlsx.

Sentencing data does not produce a breakdown of types of emergency worker for all violent offences. Consequently, we are unable to confirm within cost what proportion of prisoners sentenced for assaulting prison officers served their sentence concurrently.

However, the relevant sentencing guideline, issued by the independent Sentencing Council, makes clear that sentences for offences committed in prison will generally be served consecutively and, for any act of violence in prison custody, any reduction to take account of the principle of totality is likely to be minimal.

■ Prison Officers: Pay

Holly Lynch:

[\[196505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendation by the Prison Service Pay Review Body to offer different paid contracts for Prison Officers on Fair and Sustainable rates and closed rates; and what steps he is taking to address disparities between the two pay structures.

Damian Hinds:

In 2012, HMPPS introduced of a new common pay and grading structure called Fair & Sustainable (F&S) that applied to all new staff who joined the service after 1 April 2012 and existing staff who would benefit from opting into the modernised pay structures. This was a Workforce Policy decision and therefore not determined by the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB). There are, however, still a group of staff employed pre-2012 who remain on legacy "closed" grade pay structures. The reason for this is that they would not benefit financially from "opting in" to F&S so they have been allowed to remain on legacy terms. This year, because of the Prison Service Pay Review Body recommendations, the majority of closed grade staff will financially

benefit from opting into the Fair & Sustainable pay structures and we will encourage them to do so.

■ Prisoners' Release

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[195842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of criminal offences committed by prisoners on temporary release in the last 12 months.

Damian Hinds:

The table below shows the number of temporary release failures due to an alleged offence for the year 2022-2023 was 31.

Temporary Releases 2022-23

TOTAL NUMBER OF TEMPORARY RELEASES	386,435
Number of temporary release failures(1)	746
Temporary release failures percentage of total releases	0.19%
of which, number where the failure was due to an alleged offence(2)	31
Failure due to an alleged offence percentage of total releases	less than 0.01%

Data Sources and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the HMPPS Incident Reporting System. Care is taken when processing and analysing returns but the detail is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system. Although shown to the last case, the figures may not be accurate to that level.

(1) A temporary release failure after a release on temporary licence (ROTL) occurs when a prisoner fails to adhere to any condition written into the licence that permits their temporary release. Such conditions include the date and time by which the prisoner is required to return to the prison and may also place restrictions on where the prisoner may go and whom they may visit during the period of release, etc.

(2) The number of failures due to an offence is a count of the number of prisoners who have been arrested for an offence that allegedly took place during a period of ROTL, not the number of offences, one prisoner may have committed multiple offences while on temporary release.

Public protection is our priority. All offenders must meet strict criteria and pass a full risk assessment, involving all relevant agencies, before being considered for ROTL.

By providing opportunities to work, learn and build family ties, temporary release from prison helps ensure offenders don't return to crime when they leave prison. Evidence

shows the vast majority abide by their temporary release conditions, with the compliance rate standing at well over 99%. Non-compliance is, and will continue to be, dealt with robustly.

■ Prisoners: Parents

Luke Pollard: [\[197596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the number of school children that have a parent in prison.

Damian Hinds:

The Ministry of Justice's most comprehensive estimate suggests over the course of a year, approximately 200,000 children may be affected by a parent being in or going to prison. This estimate is based on 2009 survey data.

The Prisons Strategy White Paper includes a commitment to improve the quality of the data collected on children impacted by parental imprisonment. We will deliver this commitment through our Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD) Programme. BOLD is a cross government project which will link data to enable better evidenced and more joined up cross government services.

Through BOLD, we will explore data sharing to improve our understanding of the number of children with parents in prison. Changes have also been made to the Basic Custody Screening Tool to enable us to collect data on entry to prison about how many primary carers are in custody and how many children under the age of 18 are affected by their imprisonment. The learning from the data collected will be incorporated into findings from the BOLD programme, which will be delivered by March 2024.

■ Prisoners: Pregnancy

Tulip Siddiq: [\[197024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the safety of pregnant women in prison.

Damian Hinds:

In September 2021, the Ministry of Justice published a new Policy Framework on Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) and Maternal Separation from Children up to the Age of Two in Women's Prisons. The policy set out in the Framework was developed jointly with NHS England and NHS Improvement, and as a result of extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including women with lived experience, the children's social care sector, academics and charities.

Over £500,000 of additional funding was provided to better equip Mother and Baby Units and to support the introduction of a new liaison officer role. Pregnancy and Mother and Baby Liaison Officers have been recruited to all women's prisons and multi-disciplinary care planning for pregnant women, based on their individual needs, is now compulsory. We have also introduced additional training for prison officers on the care of pregnant women in prison. All women are now provided with free

telephone access to local NHS Pregnancy Advice Services and appropriate Social Services support: this includes any pregnant women who refuse to engage with ante-natal services.

Under the policy, care planning based on individual needs is in place for all women identified as pregnant, regardless of the level of engagement. The policy explains how prison staff should support women not engaging with services. Operational guidance that accompanies the policy highlights specific barriers to engagement and how these might present, to enable staff to identify and address complex needs and ensure access to relevant support services.

The policy can be found at the following link: [Pregnancy, MBUs and maternal separation in women's prisons Policy Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/pregnancy-maternal-and-child-health-services).

■ Prisoners: Young Offender Institutions

Steve Reed:

[196011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people aged 18 and over are being held in young offender institutions for people under the age of 18.

Damian Hinds:

Young people who begin their sentences in the youth custodial estate, because they are under 18 at the time of sentencing, do not automatically transfer to the adult estate on reaching their eighteenth birthday. As of June 2023, 148 young people aged 18 and over were being accommodated in young offender institutions.

Custody should always be a last resort for children. We have made great strides to reduce the numbers of children in the youth justice system. The most recent publication of Youth Justice Statistics showed the 20/21 population fell by 19% compared to the previous year and was 77% lower than the population for the year ending March 2012.

■ Prisons: Buildings

Ellie Reeves:

[197515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he expects to hear the results of his Department's survey on the number of buildings in the prison estate that include reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

Damian Hinds:

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out.

■ Prisons: Closures

Steve Reed:

[\[196012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison wings closed (a) permanently and (b) temporarily due to staff shortages in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

Since 2010, there have been no permanent reductions in prison capacity due solely to staff shortages.

Alongside issues such as safety, decency, and stability, staffing levels have been one factor in decisions to temporarily close wings between 2010-2022, although decisions during this period cannot be attributed solely or principally to staffing levels. All wings temporarily closed during this period have been returned to use.

In May 2022, HMPPS introduced a Strategic Enhanced Resourcing Support process to authorise capacity reductions due to staffing levels where other mitigations are insufficient. Since the introduction of the process there have been a total of 6 temporary prison wing closures across 4 prisons (HMPs Wayland, Bullingdon, Woodhill and Swaleside) due to stability concerns linked to acute resourcing issues. At present, 2 wing closures remain in place at HMPs Woodhill and Swaleside.

■ Prisons: Drugs

Dan Carden:

[R] [\[196381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many drug recovery wings have been opened in prisons since 22 July 2022.

Damian Hinds:

As part of the ambitious cross-Government Drug Strategy, we are rolling out a wide range of interventions to support prisoners off drugs and into recovery. This includes testing a new approach to help prisoners with an opiate dependency achieve abstinence, through abstinence-focused Drug Recovery Wings. Seven of these are now open across the estate. Alongside this, we are increasing the number of Incentivised Substance-Free Living units, where prisoners commit to remaining free of illicit drugs with regular drug testing and incentives. We have more than doubled the number of these from 25 last summer to 60 now, aiming to reach up to 100 by March 2025.

■ Prisons: Repairs and Maintenance

Ellie Reeves:

[\[197507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish a list of all (a) maintenance contracts, (b) contractors and (c) contract (i) costs and (ii) lengths across the prison estate.

Damian Hinds:

Maintenance contracts for the prison estate with the details requested are set out in the table below:

MAINTENANCE CONTRACT	CONTRACTOR	CURRENT ANNUAL CONTRACT COST	CONTRACT LENGTH
Prison FM Contract-1305	Amey Community Ltd	£55.5m	June 2015 to March 26
Prison FM Contract -1306	Amey Community Ltd	£49.7m	June 2015 to March 26
Prison FM Contract -12631	Mitie Care & Custody Ltd	£3.5m	February 2012 to March 26

In addition to the contracts shown in the above table, maintenance activities are also undertaken by the Ministry of Justice's wholly owned company, GFSL, who operate under a Memorandum of Understanding. GFSL provide maintenance for around 50 prison establishments across the South of England with an annual value of £88.3m.

All suppliers play a critical role in maintaining capacity and ensuring our prisons are safe and decent.

We ensure value of money by regularly benchmarking different elements of the service.

■ Rape: Trials

Steve Reed:

[\[196292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average waiting time was for a rape trial to begin in each year since 2010.

Edward Argar:

The average waiting times of defendants dealt with in rape trial cases where a not guilty plea was entered in the Crown Court can be found in the below table with annual data from 2014 to 2022. Data prior to 2014 is not available.

AVERAGE WAITING TIMES (WEEKS) OF DEFENDANTS DEALT WITH IN RAPE TRIAL CASES WHERE A NOT GUILTY PLEA WAS ENTERED IN THE CROWN COURT

YEAR	MEDIAN	MEAN
2014	27.6	29.5
2015	28.9	31.8
2016	28.0	30.9
2017	28.8	31.5
2018	29.6	32.9
2019	26.7	30.1
2020	30.6	32.4
2021	41.0	44.8
2022	39.7	44.4

Notes:

- Waiting time refers to the time between the date of sending a case to the Crown Court and the start of the substantive Crown Court hearing.
- The number of defendants relate to defendants in the cases that were disposed of in the reporting period.
- Only one offence is counted for each defendant in the case. If there is more than one offence per defendant that complete on the same day, a set of validation rules applies to select one offence only and these relate to the longest duration, seriousness and the lowest sequence number of the offence.

Despite recent setbacks caused by the pandemic and the criminal barrister strike, we continue to make significant investments that will support the reduction of the caseload in its totality.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[196362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many rape cases were awaiting trial in the Crown courts in (a) March 2020, (b) March 2021, (c) March 2022 and (d) March 2023.

Edward Argar:

The volume of outstanding 'for trial' rape cases at the Crown Court in England and Wales, as at end of March 2020 – 2023 has been provided (as attached).

'For trial' cases relates to the case type at the point of receipt into the Crown Court - these are the cases that could go to trial, but they may not necessarily result in a trial (i.e. if a guilty plea is entered).

The latest published data is available to March 2023 only.

Attachments:

1. Volume of outstanding 'for trial' rape cases [2023-09-11 PQ 196362 table.xlsx]

■ Reoffenders**Matt Vickers:**[\[197084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to allocate sufficient resources to the prevention of repeat offences.

Damian Hinds:

This Government is tackling the causes of reoffending to keep our communities safe. Between 2010/11 and 2020/21, the overall proven reoffending rate has decreased from 31.6% to 24.4%.

We know that by helping offenders into skills training, work, and stable accommodation we can significantly reduce their likelihood of reoffending. Over the 3-year Spending Review, we are therefore investing in a range of interventions, including delivering our temporary accommodation service so that prison-leavers

have a stable base on release, building stronger links with employers and offering more offenders the chance to work in prison and on release.

We are also delivering probation Commissioned Rehabilitative Services which provide offenders with tailored, community-based support to address areas of need associated with reoffending.

■ Wandsworth Prison: Security

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[198414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of security arrangements at Wandsworth Prison.

Damian Hinds:

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) carries out a programme of unannounced audits across the prison estate, to ensure adequate operational standards are being maintained within individual establishments.

The Annual Prison Performance Ratings published on gov.uk include the latest security audit score for each prison. The most recent security audit data is available here: [Security audit - Justice Data](#).

We have invested £100 million since 2019 on measures such as enhanced gate security with x-ray body scanners which has driven up the finds of drugs, weapons and other contraband, including tools that could be used to aid an escape from prison. As of October 2022, we had recorded 28,626 positive indications through our X-ray scanners, helping to tackle the supply of illicit contraband.

■ Young Offenders: Women

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[196555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to publish the Young Women's Strategy.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[196556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department plans to consult with (a) young women with lived experience, (b) specialists and (c) women and girls' organisations on the development of the Young Women's Strategy.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[196557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Young Women's Strategy will include policies to help tackle (a) trauma, (b) gender, (c) age and (d) cultural challenges faced by young women.

Damian Hinds:

The Young Women's Strategy forms part of the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan, which sets out what we will deliver over the period 2022-25. We do not yet have a specific publication date.

We are running young women's residential pilots in two women's prisons: learning from these will inform the Young Women's Strategy. We will also be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including specialist organisations and young women with lived experience.

The Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan exemplifies the Government's commitment to take a gender-specific and trauma-responsive approach that acknowledges the impact of neglect and abuse (as well as other forms of trauma) on health, mental health and behaviour. In developing the Young Women's Strategy we will have due regard to issues of age and race.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Better Care Fund

Rachael Maskell: [\[197572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet Colleagues on the potential merits of increasing the level of funding for the Better Care Fund.

Lee Rowley:

On 4 April 2023 the Government published the Better Care Fund Policy Framework for 2023-25, which sets the national conditions, metrics and funding arrangements for the Better Care Fund in the financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25. Funding levels for the Better Care Fund beyond 2024-25 will be considered by the Government at the next Spending Review.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Sarah Green: [\[197919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to publish online guidance for leaseholders who do not qualify for protection under the Building Safety Act 2022 on the circumstances in which they are required to pay for cladding remediation costs.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon Member to published guidance [Remediation costs: what leaseholders do and do not have to pay](#).

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Buildings

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[197948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within their Department's estate.

Lee Rowley:

Survey work is underway. For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property.

■ Empty Property: Greater London**Catherine West:**[\[197506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Empty Dwelling Management Orders for tackling the number of empty houses in London.

Catherine West:[\[197508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of homes in London that have been empty for six months or more.

Rachel Maclean:

As previously outlined to this House on 7 June 2023, the number of long-term empty homes remains substantially lower than when records began in 2004. As of May 2010, over 300,000 homes in England had been standing empty for longer than 6 months. As of October 2022, the number of long-term empty properties had fallen to 248,633.

The Government wants to encourage empty homes back into use and to empower local leaders to reinvest in their communities. Local authorities already have many powers and strong incentives to tackle empty homes. Through the New Homes Bonus, they receive the same level of reward for bringing an empty home back into use as building a new one.

Council Tax billing authorities in England currently have the power to charge up to 100% extra council tax - on top of the standard bill - on properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for at least two years, up to 200% extra on properties that have been empty for at least five years, and up to 300% extra on properties that have been empty for at least 10 years.

The Levelling up and Regeneration bill will give councils the power to apply the 100% premium on properties left empty after a year, rather than the current two years. The premium will provide local leaders with additional flexibility to help address the impacts of empty homes and improve the sustainability of local services where they consider that appropriate.

Additionally, in certain circumstances, local authorities can exercise powers to take over the management of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use in the private rented sector. Local authorities can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) when a property has been empty for more than two years, subject to the production of evidence that the property has been causing a nuisance to the community and evidence of community support for their proposal.

The Mayor of London, through the London Plan and Housing Strategy, sets out where homes should be built and what level of affordable housing is required.

■ Help to Buy Scheme: Rotherham

Sarah Champion:

[\[197429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many homeowners in Rotherham constituency bought their homes using the Help to Buy Equity Loan Scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2023 1,675 homes were purchased in Rotherham using the Help to Buy Equity Loan Scheme. Further data on the number of households in England which have benefitted from the Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme in each local authority area can be found in the latest HtB Equity Loan scheme statistics at the following [link](#).

■ Housing: Health

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the new residential developments provide for a healthy space for the mental, physical and social health of the population.

Rachel Maclean:

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that strategic policies in local plans should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale, and design quality of places. The design and use of our built and natural environments are major determinants of health and wellbeing. The Framework is clear that planning policies and decisions should enable and support healthy lifestyles, for example this includes through the provision of open space and green infrastructure.

In support of this, our guidance on creating well-designed places - the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, emphasise the importance of providing access to both high quality public and external private spaces in new residential development to support the physical, mental and social health and wellbeing of residents.

■ Land: Registration

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[198184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the average clearance time is for HM Land Registry to complete registrations for new leases and lease extensions as of 1 September 2023; and what steps his Department is taking to to reduce the time taken to complete those registrations.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[198186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what proportion of registrations for new leases or lease extensions take (a) less than 18 months and (b) over 24 months to be processed by HM Land Registry.

Rachel Maclean:

HM Land Registry (HMLR) publishes information about its average processing times on GOV.UK [here](#).

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [187953](#) on 14 June 2023 for information about the steps HMLR is taking to improve its speed of service.

■ Planning Inspectorate**Richard Fuller:** [\[197435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the (a) performance of and (b) time taken to commence appeals by the Planning Inspectorate.

Rachel Maclean:

The Inspectorate has been performing well across a number of key areas such as local plan examinations, nationally significant infrastructure project applications, s62a applications and planning appeals proceeding by hearings and inquiries. The Inspectorate is implementing actions to maintain performance in these areas and to improve end-to-end times for other casework. In the short term those actions are focused around increasing capacity by:

- increasing the available capacity for inspectors/other decision makers by recruiting more. The Inspectorate has significantly increased the number of inspectors it employs over the past 18 months and is on track to recruit additional inspectors later this year;
- using contract (non-salaried) inspectors to the full extent of their availability and expanding the range of casework they determine; and
- training inspectors to handle different casework to increase flexibility.

■ Public Houses: Planning**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[197612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to amend planning regulations to strengthen protections for pubs.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government recognises the importance of local pubs to their communities and there are strong protections in place through the planning system. The demolition or change of use of a pub always requires planning permission. Local planning authorities have strong enforcement powers to tackle breaches of planning control, including the ability to issue enforcement notices which can require the construction

of a building which, subject to certain conditions, is as similar as possible to the demolished building.

■ Service Charges

Catherine West: [\[197504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure service charges for tenants and leaseholders are (a) transparent and (b) communicated effectively; and whether he is taking steps to remove barriers for challenging the (a) setting and (b) recovery of service charges.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government strongly believes that service charges should be reasonable, transparent and communicated effectively for both tenants and leaseholders. We are due to bring forward further leasehold reforms later in this parliament.

■ Social Rented Housing: Concrete

Julian Knight: [\[197871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many residential buildings have been confirmed to contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete as of 5 September 2023.

Julian Knight: [\[197872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support the Government is providing to housing associations conducting structural surveys for reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

Julian Knight: [\[197873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether there is a nationwide plan to survey social housing for the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

Andrew Western: [\[197969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance his Department issues to social housing providers on reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

Andrew Western: [\[197970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the proportion of social housing stock that contains reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

Ruth Cadbury: [\[198159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what information his Department holds on the number of residential buildings that contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) concrete.

Caroline Nokes: [\[198347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to support local communities who have a (a) village hall and (b) other community building impacted by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN [197493](#) on 11 September 2023.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Bombings: Omagh

Stephen Farry: [\[197176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent estimate he has made of when the terms of reference for the independent statutory inquiry into the Omagh bombing will be published.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Inquiry Chair, Lord Turnbull, stated at the time of his appointment in June that he wished to speak to people affected by the bombing before considering draft Terms of Reference. Lord Turnbull continues to meet a large number of bereaved and injured individuals and is reflecting on their views as to what will be important for the Inquiry to consider. The Terms of Reference will be agreed and published after that.

Stephen Farry: [\[197178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether there are planned timescales for the independent statutory inquiry into the Omagh bombing.

Mr Steve Baker:

The draft Terms of Reference are with the Inquiry Chair, who has been clear that he will consider them after he has taken the views of those affected by the bombing.

Once this process is complete, we will move quickly to agree and publish the Terms of Reference so that the Inquiry can be formally launched.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Buildings

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[197957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within their Department's estate.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is a tenant within two UK Government Hubs; one is located at Erskine House, 20-32 Chichester Street, Belfast, BT1 4GF which is managed by HMRC. The other is located at 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ, which is managed by the Government Property Agency (GPA). In that light, NIO as tenants would not centrally hold such information.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ 5G: Grants****Julian Knight:****[196097]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the 5G Testbeds and Trials 2021.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The 5G Testbeds and Trials ran between 2017 and 2023, and involved supporting 37 projects to maximise the prospective benefits of 5G to the UK economy through timely deployment and effective utilisation of 5G technology.

Several assessments have been made on the effectiveness of spending in this program, most recently the [interim evaluation](#) into the programme, published on 11th of August.

The independent evaluation assesses the processes, delivery and impact of the program and found that funding competition processes and project support were effective and allowed a diverse portfolio of projects to be supported. Projects realised benefits to the wider community and carried out new 5G activities. Improvements could have been made on payment systems and underspends.

These impacts are for the program, not year by year. Projects ran for multiple years, so a single year would be uninformative of the scale of impact.

The department has multiple safeguards in place to ensure value for money and avoid fraud. This begins at the competition stage, where we assess bids for value for money and feasibility of being able to deliver against the proposed budget. At the project set-up phase we conduct financial due diligence on partners within the consortium to ensure the contracted entities are financially stable. We continue to check grant claims through the lifetime of projects, verifying expenditure and carrying out fraud checks.

■ Artificial Intelligence**Julian Knight:****[196937]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress the Government has made on hosting an AI summit in 2023; and will he make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The government has set out its ambitions for the AI Safety Summit which will take place on the 1st and 2nd November at Bletchley Park. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State is this week launching the start of formal engagement prior to the summit as Jonathan Black and Matt Clifford, the Prime Minister's Representatives for the AI Safety Summit, begin discussions with countries and some frontier AI

organisations. This follows a roundtable hosted by the Secretary of State with a cross-section of civil society groups last week.

The summit will focus on risks created or significantly exacerbated by the most powerful AI systems, particularly those associated with the potentially dangerous capabilities of these systems. The summit will also focus on how safe AI can be used for public good and to improve people's lives – from lifesaving medical technology to safer transport.

Julian Knight: [\[196939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment the Government has made of the implications for its policies of the decision of the President of the United States not to attend the 2023 AI summit.

Paul Scully:

The United States has strongly welcomed the government's plan for the first global summit on AI Safety and has committed in the Atlantic Declaration to attend at a high level. This week, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched the start of formal engagement prior to the summit as Jonathan Black and Matt Clifford, the Prime Minister's Representatives for the AI Safety Summit, have begun discussions with countries and some frontier AI organisations.

■ **Broadband: Grants**

Julian Knight: [\[196095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Local Full Fibre Networks 1920 and initial 2021 grants.

Julian Knight: [\[196096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Local Full Fibre Networks 2021 Main Scheme Part 2.

Julian Knight: [\[196121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme 2021.

Julian Knight: [\[196136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Local Full Fibre Networks 2021 Main Scheme Part 1.

Sir John Whittingdale:

An evaluation of the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) Wave 1 is due to be published shortly. Building Digital UK (BDUK) will commission further evaluation for Wave 2 and 3 of the LFFN programme later this year.

We will publish the first evaluation of the Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme later this year, with a further impact evaluation planned in 2025/2026.

■ Broadband: Repairs and Maintenance

Julian Knight: [\[196145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Innovation, with reference to the communications providers' voluntary code of practice for an automatic compensation scheme for service issues relating to residential fixed-line telephony and broadband services, published by Ofcom on 1 April 2021, what information her Department holds on the amount of compensation that has been issued by broadband providers for missed repair appointments since the publication of that guidance.

Julian Knight: [\[196146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Innovation, with reference to the communications providers' voluntary code of practice for an automatic compensation scheme for service issues relating to residential fixed-line telephony and broadband services, published by Ofcom on 1 April 2021, what information her Department holds on the amount of compensation that has been issued by broadband providers for not repairing faulty internet connections within two working days since the publication of that guidance.

Julian Knight: [\[196147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Innovation, with reference to the communications providers' voluntary code of practice for an automatic compensation scheme for service issues relating to residential fixed-line telephony and broadband services, published by Ofcom on 1 April 2021, what information her Department holds on the amount of compensation that has been issued by broadband providers for failing to provide a new service on a particular date since the publication of that guidance.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Ofcom's voluntary industry automatic compensation scheme was launched in April 2019 - with the original signatories including BT, Sky, TalkTalk, Virgin Media, and Zen Internet - there are currently [11 providers](#) signed up to the scheme.

The government does not hold data on the automatic compensation scheme, as this scheme is administered by Ofcom.

In 2020, Ofcom's [review of the voluntary compensation scheme](#) showed that the compensation paid by the original five signatories, between July and December 2019 was:

- £9.7m for delayed repair following the loss of service (309,000 cases);

- £1.6m for missed appointment (59,000 cases); and
- £9.5m for delayed provision of a new service (228,000 cases).

Following Ofcom's review - and from April 2021 - signatories agreed to increase the rate of compensation (on an annual basis) based on the rate of CPI.

■ Building Digital UK: Grants

Julian Knight:

[\[196094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the BDUK 700 MHz View Support 2021.

Sir John Whittingdale:

BDUK undertook a review of the 700MHz Spectrum Clearance Programme in June 2021.

The programme successfully cleared the 700MHz spectrum, which has in turn been auctioned by Ofcom to the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) for 5G and mobile coverage in rural areas. In April 2021, Ofcom announced that £1.38 billion was raised from the auction of the 700MHz spectrum and the 3.6 - 3.8 GHz bands.

The total forecast spend for the programme is £313 million.

■ Copyright: Internet

John Cryer:

[\[195627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department is taking steps to ensure that online platforms [operating in the UK] provide (a) cost- and (b) time-efficient takedown processes for [(a) designers and (b) other content creators] whose copyrighted (a) designs and (b) other products have been infringed on their platforms.

Paul Scully:

The UK approaches the challenge of tackling online IP infringement in an integrated manner through enforcement and public education. There is in place a number of criminal, civil, administrative and voluntary initiatives which provide rights holders and law enforcement with a package of measures to use to tackle online infringement. These vary from relatively non-intrusive such as notice and takedown, to domain removal, website blocking via court orders, police intervention, and more intrusive initiatives such as notifications being sent to repeat infringers.

The IPO [has published guidance](#) on how rights holders can protect their intellectual property on e-commerce stores, such as Amazon and eBay.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Domestic Visits**Julian Knight:** [\[196045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if they will take steps to visit Solihull constituency in 2023.

Michelle Donelan:

There are no current plans for the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology to visit Solihull in 2023.

■ Digital Technology: Grants**Julian Knight:** [\[196108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Local Digital Skills Partnership Catalyst Fund 1920-2021.

Julian Knight: [\[196120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Local Digital Skills Partnership Catalyst Fund 2021 and 2122 Additional Funding.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport commissioned an evaluation of the Local Digital Skills Partnerships (LDSPs) in September 2021. The evaluation found that more digital skills activity had been delivered over a shorter time period in areas with a DSP when compared to three areas without a DCMS-funded LDSP. The evaluation also concluded that there was clear evidence that the LDSP model is working effectively and is having an impact in improving digital skills capacity.

The regions operating an LDSP are Lancashire, Heart of South West, West Midlands, South East, Cheshire & Warrington, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly, West Yorkshire and Hull and East Yorkshire. The Government continues to work with LDSPs across England to help increase digital skills capabilities across the country.

The full evaluation of the LDSPs can be found using the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021163/Evaluation_of_LDSP_final_report_270921.pdf

Julian Knight: [\[196122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Digital Boost 2021 Grant.

Paul Scully:

The £250,000 Digital Boost Grant 2021 provided needed support for the development of the Digital Boost platform, helping SMEs and charities improve their digital capabilities and build an online presence to stay competitive during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This government has built on the success of this grant and remains committed to supporting SMEs and individuals to access the digital skills they need. For example, the Department of Science Tech and Innovation is supporting tech startups and scaleups through the £12 million Digital Growth Grant (delivered by Barclays Eagle Labs) and we continue to encourage Local Digital Skills Partnerships (LDSPs) in eight regions across England to help increase digital skills capabilities across the country.

Julian Knight:[\[196126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Digital and Tech Policy 2021 Fund.

Paul Scully:

The Digital and Tech Policy Fund 2021 was used to deliver two programmes.

Firstly, the fund supported the delivery of HutZero, an accelerator programme for cyber security entrepreneurs. As a condition of funding, the HutZero delivery partner was required to provide an annual report demonstrating impact and progress against KPIs. The programme supported 6 cohorts from 2016 - 2020, totalling 146 participants and resulting in the formation of 17 new cyber security companies. Upon evaluation of the programme, 100% of participants agreed that the HutZero programme improved their knowledge and skills relevant to product commercialisation.

Secondly, the fund was used to support the Tech Talent Charter, a not-for-profit organisation leading a movement to address a lack of diversity in the tech sector. DSIT (formerly DCMS) has both funded and supported the TTC since 2017, helping it grow from 18 signatories to an organisation with over 800 signatories across 42 industry sectors and representing 160,000 people in technology roles across the UK.

With funding from the Digital and Tech Policy Fund 2021, Tech Talent Charter were able to increase their signatory base and deliver sector-wide insights and resources on diversity and inclusion. They grew from 475 to 700 signatories and had a significant positive impact on their members, which employed 33% more women in tech roles than comparable tech companies. They launched an 'open playbook' including best practice and resources to support tech companies' work on diversity and inclusion. They also launched their 2021 Annual Diversity in Tech report, the only comprehensive source of diversity and inclusion data on the tech sector, which was used by 1500 professionals.

■ Ofcom: Staff

Philip Davies: [R] [195827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many and what proportion of (a) board members and (b) employees of Ofcom have previous experience in the industry that they regulate.

Sir John Whittingdale:

[Ofcom's board](#) has ten members, bringing together executive and non-executive members who have the expertise relevant for providing strategic direction to Ofcom. Of its ten members, five (50%) have experience working in the industries for which Ofcom is the regulator. Ofcom hires people from a range of professional backgrounds, including its regulated sectors, but does not hold data relating to employees' previous work experience.

■ Public Telephones

Julian Knight: [196183]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of changes in the numbers of public telephone boxes.

Julian Knight: [196184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has had recent discussions with BT Group PLC on the (a) protection and (b) restoration of red telephone boxes.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Ofcom, the UK's telecommunications regulator, is responsible for the regulation of public call boxes (PCBs). Under the telephony universal service obligation (USO), BT and KCOM are required to provide telephony services throughout the UK, including PCBs. BT and KCOM are required to ensure the adequate provision, repair and maintenance of PCBs.

In November 2021, Ofcom published a consultation and acknowledged that the process to remove PCBs was not working as effectively as it could. Previously, local authorities were able to veto the removal of the last public call box in an area.

In June 2022, Ofcom officially amended the rules regarding the removal of PCBs. Ofcom removed the local veto process and replaced it with a set of strengthened criteria which would ensure PCBs that are still needed are protected from removal. The criteria protect PCBs where:

- they do not have coverage from all four mobile network providers; or
- are located in an area with a high frequency of accidents or suicides; or
- they have made 52 or more calls over the past 12 months (i.e. the equivalent of one call per week); or

- there is other evidence of a reasonable need for the PCB.

■ Public Telephones: Repairs and Maintenance

Janet Daby:

[\[196385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with (a) BT and (b) Ofcom on the maintenance of public phone boxes.

Sir John Whittingdale:

I thank the Hon. Member for her question, and would like to refer her to the answer that I gave on 12th September to Questions 196183 and 196184

■ Shared Rural Network: 4G

Helen Morgan:

[\[197322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Shared Rural Network on 4G mobile signals across (a) the UK and (b) North Shropshire constituency.

Sir John Whittingdale:

With industry, we are investing £1 billion in the Shared Rural Network (SRN) to extend 4G coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of 2025. The UK will see coverage improvements to partial not-spots, areas where there is coverage from at least one but not all Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), and to total not-spots, where there is no coverage from any operator.

The SRN programme is also regulated by Ofcom, with regular reporting throughout the life of the programme to ensure agreed obligations and targets are met.

Any improvements from the SRN programme in North Shropshire will come from the industry-led element of the programme and as such DSIT are unable to provide any details on the precise location or number of new or upgraded masts that may be delivered specifically in North Shropshire as a result of the SRN.

Helen Morgan:

[\[197323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many new 4G mobile signal masts have been constructed following the launch of the Shared Rural Network.

Helen Morgan:

[\[197324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many new 4G mobile signal masts have been constructed by each mobile network operator under the Shared Rural Network in the UK so far.

Helen Morgan:

[\[197326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many new 4G mobile signal masts have been constructed in North Shropshire constituency under the

Shared Rural Network; and if she will list which mobile network operators were responsible for their construction.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Any improvements from the SRN programme in North Shropshire will come from the industry-led element of the programme and as such DSIT are unable to provide any details on the precise location or number of new or upgraded masts that may be delivered specifically in North Shropshire as a result of the SRN.

We can confirm that the MNOs have said publicly that they have deployed more than 150 new masts and over 1500 upgraded masts across the UK as part of the industry-led element of the SRN.

Helen Morgan:

[\[197325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of new 4G mobile signal constructed via the Shared Rural Network on communities in (a) total not spots and (b) partial not spots.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Shared Rural Network will deliver good 4G coverage - defined by Ofcom as 4G signals supporting nearly all 90-second calls being completed without interruption and data connections that deliver a connection speed of at least 2 Mbps.

Delivery of the partial not-spot programme is already underway with many new and upgraded sites already delivered. The mobile network operators (MNOs) and suppliers are currently assessing where new total not-spot masts should go and planning applications are being submitted. The most recent Connected Nations report published on 7 September showed increased 4G coverage mobile coverage from at least one MNO being available across 93% of the UK, up from 91% when the SRN was agreed in March 2020.

Helen Morgan:

[\[197327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether customers will need to switch their mobile network operator in order to connect to new 4G mobile signal masts built by a different operator under the Shared Rural Network.

Sir John Whittingdale:

One of the outcomes of the SRN will be greater consumer choice, providing new coverage from networks not previously available in the area. New coverage in partial not spot areas will augment existing coverage, so no switch of network is required unless the consumer wants to move networks by choice.

Consumers can use both the mobile network operators' coverage checkers on their public websites, alongside Ofcom's coverage checker, to determine which operator might provide the best coverage in their area.

Helen Morgan: [\[197328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many (a) partial not-spots and (b) total not-spots for 4G mobile signal are in North Shropshire constituency.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Communications Act 2003 requires Ofcom to publish mobile coverage data. This data is made up of mobile signal coverage predictions provided by the mobile network operators.

Using Ofcom's Connected Nations 4G geographic coverage data, 13% of the constituency area is made up of partial not-spots, with 0.4% being total not-spots .

■ **Social Media: People Smuggling**

Julian Knight: [\[196936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has held discussions with social media companies on videos on platforms encouraging migrants to cross the English Channel illegally.

Paul Scully:

The UK Government remains absolutely committed to tackling Organised Immigration Crime

The Government & law enforcement engage regularly with tech companies on a number of issues including the need to clamp down on criminal gangs who use the internet to lure people into paying for crossings. To this end, the Prime Minister announced a new voluntary partnership between social media companies and the Government to accelerate action to tackle people smuggling content online, on 6 August 2023.

■ **Telephone Services**

Dawn Butler: [\[195914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with relevant industry stakeholders on the progress towards switching off the public switched telephone network by 2025.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Department engages regularly with relevant stakeholders to ensure there are adequate plans in place to inform consumers and protect the most vulnerable consumers. This includes, but is not limited to, quarterly progress meetings with individual providers, quarterly meetings with Communications Providers and all government departments, and quarterly meetings with Ofcom. The Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure also convened a roundtable with the largest providers in January 2023.

Ofcom, the UK's telecommunications regulator, is also monitoring the progress of Communications Providers. Ofcom is responsible for ensuring telecoms providers adhere to their regulatory obligations throughout the migration process.

Dawn Butler: [\[195915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what estimate she has made of the number and proportion of the public switched telephone network that has been retired as of August 2023.

Dawn Butler: [\[195916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many and what proportion of households have been switched to the Digital Voice service as of August 2023.

Sir John Whittingdale:

According to Ofcom's latest figures, as of August 2023, more than 50% of the UK's 30 million premises have been moved from the PSTN. The premises that are no longer on the PSTN have moved to various technological options, including 8 million (27%) that have moved to a broadband based Digital Voice solution.

■ Voice Over Internet Protocol: Cybercrime

Dawn Butler: [\[195912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Innovation, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of a cyber attack on the rollout of the Digital Voice services.

Dawn Butler: [\[195917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of migrating households from the public switched telephone network to the Digital Voice service.

Sir John Whittingdale:

Ofcom is responsible for ensuring telecoms providers adhere to their regulatory obligations throughout the migration process. Ofcom has published [guidance](#) which states that providers must take steps to identify and protect at-risk consumers who are dependent on their landline. Providers have a range of solutions to ensure vulnerable consumers receive additional support. These options include, among others, free battery back-up units to engineer supported installations or hybrid landline phones. The Government is working together with Ofcom to ensure customers receive appropriate levels of communication and vulnerable consumers are protected.

Furthermore, the Department meets regularly with Communications Providers to discuss the progress made in migrating their customers, and to ensure they have adequate plans in place to inform and protect vulnerable consumers.

While the PSTN migration is an industry-led process, industry is accountable to Ofcom in ensuring the security of any new technologies used in their network.

The Government is committed to ensuring the security and resilience of the UK's telecommunications networks and services. Since October 2022, public telecommunications providers have been required under the Communications Act 2003 (as amended by the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021) to identify and reduce the risk of a wide range of security compromises. The specific requirements providers must follow are set out in the Electronic Communications (Security Measures) Regulations 2022, with accompany technical guidance in a code of practice. Ofcom has also been given powers and duties to investigate, rectify, and penalise any infringement of the statutory security and resilience obligations of network providers.

DSIT also works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre, the UK's technical authority for cyber security, on issues related to the cyber security of the UK's telecoms network. The NCSC is responsible for helping to protect the UK's critical services from cyber attacks, manage major incidents, and improve the underlying security of the UK's telecoms networks through technological improvement and advice to citizens and organisations. The NCSC issues a range of guidance on its website to support organisations in ensuring secure design and management of their networks.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Buildings

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[197960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within their Department's estate.

Mr Alister Jack:

For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property. Survey work is underway.

■ Scotland Office: Public Inquiries

Julian Knight: [\[196858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what has been the average time taken to respond to public inquiries by his Department in each of the last five years; and whether he plans to introduce measures to improve this.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scotland Office has not held policy responsibility for any public inquiries for the past 5 years.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions

Julian Sturdy:

[\[197426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward the date by which net zero for aviation is implemented.

Jesse Norman:

In July 2022, the Government published the Jet Zero Strategy, setting out its approach to achieving net zero (or “Jet Zero”) for the UK aviation sector, focusing on the rapid development of technologies in a way that maintains the benefits of air travel. Aviation is one of the most challenging sectors to decarbonise and through the Strategy the Department has set ambitious interim targets to ensure the sector plays its part in delivering the UK’s net zero commitments through to 2050.

These include introducing a CO₂ emissions reduction trajectory that sees aviation emissions peak in 2019 and residual emissions in 2050 that are comparable to the Climate Change Committee’s Balanced Net Zero pathway for aviation. In addition, the Department has set targets for UK domestic flights to reach net zero by 2040, and all airport operations in England to be zero emission by 2040.

In July 2023, the Department published “Jet Zero Strategy: One Year On”, highlighting the progress and achievements that have been made since the launch of the Strategy, and the next steps to deliver net zero aviation by 2050. The Department has committed to a major review of the Strategy and delivery plan every five years, supported by annual monitoring of progress against its emissions reduction trajectory from 2025.

■ British Transport Police: Detection Rates

Emily Thornberry:

[\[198314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September to Question 197409, how many and what proportion of the violence against the person offences recorded in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 were committed against women.

Huw Merriman:

	2021-22	2022-23
Violence against the person where victim is recorded as female	3,276 (28%)	3,847 (30%)

■ Cycleways: Finance

Daniel Zeichner: [\[196254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of funding given by his Department to maintain the National Cycle Network.

Jesse Norman:

The Department has provided over £75 million to Sustrans to upgrade the National Cycle Network (NCN) since 2018. Further funding for NCN upgrades in 2023/24 onwards will be announced later in the year.

■ Cycleways: Rural Areas

Daniel Zeichner: [\[196253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the National Cycle Network in providing opportunities for active travel in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Department for Transport provided funding to Sustrans in 2018 to assess the quality, safety, and accessibility of the National Cycle Network (NCN), including in rural areas. The findings were published in Sustrans' Paths for Everyone report and were used by Sustrans to prioritise the schemes it put forward for Departmental funding. Over £75 million has been provided by the Department to upgrade the NCN since 2018. A progress update was published by Sustrans in 2021.

■ Department for Transport: Buildings

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[197485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many buildings on land owned by (a) Network Rail and (b) his Department use reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

Huw Merriman:

Network Rail is currently undergoing a review of the use of RAAC across the rail estate as a priority. Once this is concluded, they will supply their findings to the Department.

■ Department for Transport: Consultants

Wera Hobhouse: [\[197833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department has spent on consultancy fees since 2010.

Jesse Norman:

Spend on consultancy by the Department is published in the DfT Annual Report and Accounts, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dft-annual-reports-and-accounts>

■ Driving Licences: USA

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[198296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators on reciprocal licence exchange arrangements.

Mr Richard Holden:

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency officials wrote to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) about reciprocal licence exchange arrangements with the USA in December 2020. No response has been received to date.

■ Driving: Insurance

Charlotte Nichols: [\[197917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has held recent discussions with insurers on minimising increases in the cost of premiums for motorists.

Mr Richard Holden:

The setting of premiums is a commercial decision for individual insurers based on their underwriting experience and the Government does not intervene or seek to control the market. The UK motor insurance market is very competitive, and we recommend that consumers shop around in order to get the best deal.

■ Freight

Wera Hobhouse: [\[198189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what percentage of the movement of freight within the United Kingdom was by (a) road, (b) rail and (c) water in each year since 2016.

Huw Merriman:

From 2016 to 2020 (latest available statistics), the average annual percentage of domestic freight moved, measured by goods moved, is a) 78%, b) 9% and c) 14%.

The table below summarises the percentage of domestic freight moved by mode annually since 2016, measured by goods moved.

	ROAD	RAIL	WATER
2016	76%	9%	15%
2017	78%	9%	13%
2018	78%	9%	13%
2019	79%	8%	13%
2020	77%	9%	14%

■ Great British Railways: Consultants

Wera Hobhouse: [\[198182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much Great British Railways has spent on consultancy fees since its establishment.

Huw Merriman:

Since its establishment in September 2022, the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) has spent a total of 20.3 million on specialist technical support, including consultancy, for the creation of Great British Railways.

■ Railway Stations

Wera Hobhouse: [\[197828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on which towns in England with populations of 30,000 or more do not have a railway station.

Huw Merriman:

Latest analysis of Office for National Statistics 2019 Population Estimates Data by Network Rail suggests that there are currently eight towns in England, with a population of 30,000 or more, without an operational railway station and not situated within 5km of one. These are Washington, Swadlincote, Blyth, Aldridge, Coalville, Wisbech, Rushden and Witney.

As part of the levelling-up agenda, and a manifesto commitment, in January 2020 the government launched the Restoring Your Railway (RYR) Fund to reopen lines and stations, including ones closed following the 1963 Reshaping of British Railways (Beeching) Report. The aim is to reconnect smaller communities, regenerate local economies and improve access to jobs, homes and education. The Dartmoor line (between Okehampton and Exeter) marked the first reopening in November 2021, opening two years ahead of schedule, and Marsh Barton station opened in July 2023.

Of the eight towns listed above, seven (Washington, Swadlincote, Blyth, Aldridge, Coalville, Wisbech and Witney) have been considered by the RYR programme and four (Swadlincote, Blyth, Aldridge and Coalville) have been considered within the scope of RYR-funded projects, including the Northumberland Line, Ivanhoe Line and Aldridge Line Upgrade.

■ Railway Stations: Enfield North

Feryal Clark: [\[197937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of closing train station ticket offices on passengers in Enfield North constituency.

Huw Merriman:

We are now in a period where the independent passenger bodies (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) are engaging with train operators on the basis of the consultation responses they have received and the criteria they have set out. We

expect train operators, including Greater Anglia, who manage several stations in the Enfield North area, to work collaboratively with the passenger bodies in the coming weeks, to listen to the concerns raised and to refine their proposals accordingly.

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours, as set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, train 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. All operators prepared Equality Impact Assessments and published these on their websites.

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 should be unstaffed as a result of industry changes.

■ Railways: Carbon Emissions

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has he made on decarbonising rail freight.

Huw Merriman:

We are committed to working with industry and the private sector to decarbonise the rail network. We are working with the Great British Railways Transition Team to provide costed options for Government to consider in terms of deliverability and affordability, including options for rail freight.

Electrification is important in our decarbonisation programme. Since 2010, over 1,200 miles of electrification has been delivered in Great Britain, including almost 800 miles in England and Wales since 2016.

The Government is undertaking a number of initiatives to grow rail freight, recognising the environmental benefits it delivers, including setting a long-term rail freight growth target, which will be announced later this year.

We encourage and incentivise modal shift from road to rail by allocating £20m per year to the Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme. In 2022/23, the scheme removed the need for around 900,000 HGV journeys, saving almost 40,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

■ Railways: Concrete

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[198160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been used in (a) train stations and (b) the wider rail estate.

Huw Merriman:

Network Rail is currently undergoing a review of the use of RAAC across the rail estate as a priority. Once this is concluded, they will supply their findings to the Department.

■ **Railways: Crew**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[198427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the monitoring of occupational psychological fitness of train drivers.

Huw Merriman:

My department recently published a statutory post implementation review of the Train Driver Licensing and Certificates Regulations 2010 (TDLCR) on 19th May 2023, which contains the requirements for becoming a train driver in Great Britain. The purpose of the review was to assess whether the regime was meeting its original objectives and whether it remains fit for purpose.

Since publication, my officials have started the process of exploring options for potential reform to address the findings of the review, and will engage industry to develop and consult on these proposals in due course. This will include reviewing the adequacy of the monitoring requirements concerning the occupational psychological fitness of train drivers.

■ **Railways: Freight**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to take steps to increase the amount of freight transported by rail.

Huw Merriman:

The Government is committed to growing rail freight. We are undertaking a number of initiatives including setting a long-term rail freight growth target, which will be announced later this year, and a review of the Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme. The Rail Minister hosts bi-monthly roundtable meetings with key rail freight stakeholders. Network Rail also continues to work closely with freight operators to improve performance, with increases seen recently in Network Rail's Freight Delivery Metric.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[198187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which rail lines are only operated for freight purposes; and what the length in miles of each such line is.

Huw Merriman:

As of 31 March 2022, according to ORR, 777 miles of mainline network in Great Britain are for freight only, with 9,129 miles for passenger and freight traffic. This refers to the mainline railway and does not include privately operated lines, such as terminals, for which we do not hold information.

■ Railways: Ticket Offices**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answers to Questions 193235 and 194771 on Railways: Tickets, on which date the meeting where Ministers met stakeholders to discuss closing the majority of ticket offices in England took place; who attended that meeting; and whether the proposal to close the majority of ticket offices was first raised by (a) Ministers or (b) stakeholders.

Huw Merriman:

I held roundtables with industry and accessibility stakeholders and passenger representative groups on 6 June 2023 and 18 July 2023 to discuss potential reforms. Over 20 different organisations were represented at the different roundtables including accessibility groups.

Through the industry-led Ticketing and Settlement Agreement process Train Operating Companies have put forward proposals to change the opening hours or closure of station ticket offices and consulted on these. This consultation closed on 1 September and the independent passenger bodies, Transport Focus and London TravelWatch, are currently assessing the proposals and consultation responses.

We expect train operators to work collaboratively with the passenger bodies in the coming weeks, to listen to the concerns raised and to refine their proposals accordingly.

■ Railways: Weather**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to adapt the rail network to take account of (a) long-term changes in weather patterns and (b) increased incidences of extreme weather.

Huw Merriman:

Extreme weather events are likely to become more frequent as a result of climate change. In 2022 the Department for Transport published the [High-Level Output Specification \(HLOS\)](#) which outlines the Secretary of State's objectives for Network Rail's operation, maintenance and renewal of railway infrastructure between 2024 and 2029—tied to a record £44.1 billion funding settlement. The HLOS is clear that the rail network must be as resilient as reasonably possible to the effects of climate change and extreme weather.

Network Rail's resilience taskforce was established in 2022 and is being led by independent experts. Their recommendations to improve weather resilience on the network are already being put into effect, including renewed investment in Network Rail's capability and use of weather data and technology, upskilling of its workforce and competencies, and improving inspections and examinations of earthworks and drainage assets.

The Department for Transport is developing a transport adaptation strategy taking a holistic approach to addressing the transport-related risks in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment.

■ Transport: Forecasts

Wera Hobhouse: [\[197826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what scenarios have been run under the National Transport Model in the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

The National Transport Model (NTM) is used by the Department for Transport to analyse possible future travel behaviour, and so to inform investment and policy decisions. Scenarios are a method used by analysts to understand uncertainty, taking different inputs and assumptions into the modelling.

One use of the NTM is to provide the projections for the Department's regular publications, most recently the [National Road Traffic Projections 2022](#). The NTM was used to run a Core Scenario and seven Common Analytical Scenarios. These scenarios have been created to explore key drivers of uncertainty on transport demand, including the economy, decarbonisation, behaviour and technology. Full descriptors of these scenarios can be found in DfT's [Uncertainty Toolkit](#) as well as in the National Road Traffic Projections report. The outputs of these runs are also in the report, as well as published data files on the same webpage.

Prior to the National Road Traffic Projections, the Department published the [Road Traffic Forecasts](#) in 2018. These included scenarios that have since been superseded by the Common Analytical Scenarios, but were an improvement on previous publications. These scenarios explored GDP, fuel price, migration, behaviour and decarbonisation of vehicles. The full descriptions of these scenarios, as well as the outputs from the modelling, are published in the report and associated data tables.

In addition to the Department's regular publications, the NTM serves as an invaluable departmental analytical tool. As with many other models, it is used to inform policy decisions, as well as undertaking exploratory analysis to understand possible impacts of in areas the Department know to be significant in travel behaviour (for example, changes in GDP projections).

TREASURY

■ Air Passenger Duty

Wera Hobhouse: [\[198194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of air passenger duty on passenger numbers; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of adjusting the level of such duty.

Gareth Davies:

The Government publishes tax information and impact notes (TIINs) for tax policy changes which detail the impact of the policy. The TIIN for the 2023/24 APD rates can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-passenger-duty-banding-reforms-with-effect-from-april-2023/air-passenger-duty-apd-banding-reforms-and-rates-from-1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024>

As with all taxes, the Government keeps APD under review and any changes are announced by the Chancellor at fiscal events.

Bank Services: Vulnerable Adults

Tulip Siddiq: [\[198104\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that vulnerable individuals have access to (a) financial advice and (b) support with essential banking services.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government seeks to ensure that everyone can access useful support with their finances, including those in vulnerable circumstances. As part of this, the Government established the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) to provide people with comprehensive, consistent, guidance for each stage of their financial lives. MaPS offers resources to support consumers with a range of issues, including everyday money, benefits, financial difficulty, pensions and retirement, savings, and work.

Building on its consumer vulnerability work, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has also introduced the Consumer Duty which raises the standard expected from firms for all customers.

HM Treasury and the FCA are also working on a joint review of the regulatory boundary between financial advice and guidance with the aim of improving the support available to consumers with their financial decision-making.

Banking Hubs

Tulip Siddiq: [\[198105\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the locations of shared banking hubs that will be set up in the future; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing shared banking hubs in post office branches.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[198106\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on steps to help ensure local communities have access to essential in-person banking services.

Andrew Griffith:

Treasury Ministers and officials regularly meet with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to discuss a variety of policy matters

The government believes that all customers, wherever they live, should have appropriate access to banking and cash services.

Decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue. However, the FCA's guidance sets out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on the everyday banking and cash access needs of their customers and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This ensures that the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

Alternative options for access to banking can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking, and the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows 99% of personal banking and 95% of business banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

New shared Banking Hubs are also being introduced, providing cash and basic banking services and dedicated space where community bankers from major banks can meet customers of that bank. Decisions regarding the operation and location of Banking Hubs are taken by the parties involved. Following successful pilots Cash Access UK Ltd is rolling out shared Banking Hubs and other new shared facilities in communities across the UK. To date, industry has committed to deliver Banking Hubs in 80 locations. Further information on Banking Hubs is available at:

<https://www.cashaccess.co.uk/>

■ Cash Machines: Rural Areas**Sir John Hayes:****[197665]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of closures of cashpoints in rural areas on the rural economy.

Andrew Griffith:

The government recognises that while the transition towards digital payments brings many opportunities, cash continues to be used by many people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups.

The government legislated through the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 to establish a new legislative framework to protect access to cash. This establishes the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) as the lead regulator for access to cash and provides it with responsibility and powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities.

Following this, the government recently published a Cash Access Policy Statement, which sets out the government's policies on access to cash. The FCA is required by

law to have regard to these policies when determining its regulatory approach. The FCA will publicly consult on its regulatory approach in due course. The government's policy statement is available on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cash-access-policy-statement/cash-access-policy-statement>

Regarding the ATM network specifically, LINK (the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network) has commitments to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs and is held to account against these commitments by the Payment Systems Regulator. LINK has committed to protect free-to-use ATMs more than one kilometre away from the next nearest free ATM or Post Office, and free access to cash on high streets (where there is a cluster of five or more retailers) that do not have a free-to-use ATM or a Post Office counter within one kilometre.

LINK reports that as of June 2023 there are over 38,000 free-to-use ATMs in the UK. LINK's Monthly ATM Footprint Report also publishes information on the break down by constituency, which is available online: <https://www.link.co.uk/initiatives/financial-inclusion-monthly-report/>

■ **Child Trust Fund: Solihull**

Julian Knight:

[197881]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Child Trust Funds have been created for children in Solihull constituency in each of the last 10 years.

Andrew Griffith:

A geographical breakdown of accounts created, could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

UK wide, the government paid more than £2 billion into CTFs for 6.3 million children born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011, when the scheme closed to new accounts. By April 2012, around 6.1 million CTF accounts had been set up through the scheme. A further 0.2 million accounts were set up after April 2012 for eligible children where there had been a delay opening an account.

Information on Child Trust Funds as of 5th April 2022, are available in HMRC's Annual Savings Statistics. This includes figures on existing accounts, but not by geographic location.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-savings-statistics-2023>

■ **Economic Data Innovation Fund**

Emily Thornberry:

[197425]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which projects received funding from the Economic Data Innovation Fund in the period since the Budget in 2020; and, for each project, (a) which organisation received the funding, (b) how much funding was allocated, (c) what the timescale was over which the project was to be carried out and (d) what the purpose was of the project.

Andrew Griffith:

Since the 2020 Budget £11 million has been awarded, across 50 successful bids. The Office for National Statistics received the most funding with just under £5 million all told. The Bank of England received £1.3 million, HM Treasury £1 million, DHLUC £1 million, and £2.5 million across other departments. Each project aims to create, acquire or use data to further the government's economic objectives.

High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge**Claire Hanna:**[\[197963\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will commit to reviewing the Higher Income Child Benefit Charge.

Victoria Atkins:

Restricting Child Benefit for those on higher incomes via the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) ensures that the Government can support the majority of families whilst keeping welfare expenditure sustainable. In 2020-21, the latest year that data is available, 88% of Child Benefit claimants were unaffected by the HICBC.

Moreover, the threshold for HICBC affects taxpayers who are on comparatively high incomes. In 2020-21, 99.7% of those who declared a liability for HICBC paid income tax at the higher rate or above. The Government therefore considers that the current approach to HICBC remains appropriate.

Nonetheless, the Government has introduced improvements recently. In April this year, we announced we would take steps to ensure parents can retrospectively receive a National Insurance credit. This means parents who were eligible to claim Child Benefit but who chose not to are able to protect their future State Pension entitlement. In July, we announced that employed individuals will be able to pay HICBC through their tax code, without the need to register for Self-Assessment, simplifying the process for taxpayers.

Members: Correspondence**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[198366\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department plans to respond to correspondence of (a) 7 July 2023 and (b) 8 August 2023 from the hon. Member for Bolton South East, case reference YQ28262.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) received this correspondence on 20 July and 11 August 2023. They apologise for the delay in replying which has been due to a system error with their digital mail service.

HMRC telephoned the Honourable Member's office on 08 September 2023 to discuss the correspondence and to provide an update on their investigations.

They aim to reply as quickly as possible and by 18 September 2023.

■ Mortgages

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[198107\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with (a) lenders and (b) other relevant stakeholders on the levels of early repayment charges for tracker mortgages.

Andrew Griffith:

HM Treasury is regularly in contact with mortgage lenders on all aspects of their mortgage business to understand their position and current lending conditions. However, the pricing of mortgages, including early repayment charges, is a commercial decision for lenders in which the Government does not intervene.

Nevertheless, Financial Conduct Authority rules set out that lenders should not impose early repayment charges at a level that is more than a reasonable pre-estimate of the costs that would be incurred as a result of a loan being terminated early.

Consumers should also be given adequate information about the existence of these charges in the pre-sale disclosure documents lenders are required to give them.

■ Productivity

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[197498\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to improve productivity.

Gareth Davies:

The Chancellor has outlined his plans to boost private sector productivity and long-term economic growth with a package of measures under the 'four Es' of economic growth: Employment, Enterprise, Education, and Everywhere.

The Government has introduced several fiscal measures to increase productivity. For example, we have introduced full expensing – giving the UK the most generous capital allowances regime in the OECD on a Net Present Value basis to increase business investment and boost labour productivity. We increased the R&D Expenditure Credit relief rate to 20% – the joint highest uncapped headline rate of R&D tax relief in the G7 for large companies.

We are supporting our world leading green industries. For example, up to £20bn of funding has been provided for Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage, and we are working with investors through our Automotive Transformation Fund to build a globally competitive electric vehicle supply chain in the UK. Furthermore, the Investment Zones programme will catalyse 12 high potential knowledge-intensive growth clusters across the UK.

We are also ensuring our labour market is more productive through our investment in skills and the Chief Secretary is currently leading a programme across government to identify the most ambitious ways to improve productivity in the public sector.

■ Public Houses: Rural Areas

Sir John Hayes: [\[197986\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is taking steps to increase financial support for pubs in rural areas.

Gareth Davies:

The Government believes that pubs make an important contribution to our culture, fostering a sense of place and community, and the UK economy.

Our 'Brexite Pubs Guarantee,' confirms that the duty on a draught pint will always be lower than its equivalent in a supermarket. And the new alcohol duty system implemented in August of this year included a new Draught Relief that provides a significant duty discount on alcohol sold in containers of 20 litres or more in the on-trade.

In addition, pubs will benefit from business rates support worth £13.6bn over the next five years, including a more generous Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief scheme that has increased from 50% to 75% relief in 2023-24.

The Government is also funding a wide range of community assets, including pubs, through the Community Ownership Fund. To date, the Fund has allocated £36.9m to 150 projects, including 23 rural pubs.

■ Sanctions: Myanmar

Catherine West: [\[198402\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the total sum of assets frozen under the Myanmar sanctions regime.

Gareth Davies:

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) undertakes an annual review of assets frozen as a result of UK financial sanctions, requiring all persons or institutions that hold or control frozen assets in the UK to report to OFSI.

Details of assets reported to OFSI as part of the 2021 frozen asset review were published in OFSI's 2021-2022 Annual Review. As of September 2021, £12.4 billion of frozen funds across all regimes were reported to be held by UK institutions. The value of assets held in relation to the Myanmar regime is aggregated under 'Others' so as not to disclose the value of funds held by particular individuals.

Details of assets reported to OFSI in 2022 will be published in OFSI's 2022-2023 Annual Review, in Autumn 2023.

■ Small Businesses: VAT

Mark Logan: [\[198235\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the annual VAT registration threshold to help support small businesses.

Victoria Atkins:

Views on the VAT registration threshold are divided and the case for change has been regularly reviewed over the years. While some businesses have argued that a higher threshold would reduce administrative and financial burdens, others contend that a lower threshold would provide a fairer competitive environment.

In 2018, the Government consulted on how the design of the VAT registration threshold could better incentivise growth. However, there was no clear option for reform.

It was announced at Autumn Statement 2022 that the VAT threshold will be maintained at its current level of £85,000 until 31 March 2026.

■ Taxation

Christian Wakeford: [\[197966\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that the operation of the tax system is fair.

Victoria Atkins:

I refer the hon Member to the answer that I gave on 5 September to PQ UIN: 906214.

That answer can be found here: [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament.](#)

■ Travel: Insurance

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[197819\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of diagnosis of terminal and likely terminal health conditions on travel insurance rates offered to consumers.

Andrew Griffith:

Insurers make commercial decisions about the terms on which they will offer cover following an assessment of the relevant risks. The Government does not intend to intervene in these commercial decisions by insurers as this could damage competition in the market. The respective capabilities of insurers to assess risk is a key element on which they compete.

The Government recognises that it is important that everyone has access to suitable insurance. Since April 2021, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has required firms to signpost consumers to a directory of specialist providers if they are declined cover,

offered cover with an exclusion, or charged a significantly higher premium based on their pre-existing medical conditions.

■ Treasury: Buildings

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[197954\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within their Department's estate.

Gareth Davies:

For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property. Survey work is underway.

■ Treasury: Disclosure of Information

Julian Knight: [\[197464\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average response time to subject access requests was by their Department in the latest period for which data is available; and if they will make an assessment of the adequacy of that response time.

Gareth Davies:

HM Treasury does not calculate average response times for Data Subject Access Requests (DSARs) it receives. Treasury's compliance rate for responding to DSARs in the last reporting year can be found in the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-treasury-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>.

DSAR compliance for 2023 will be included in the upcoming Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24.

■ Treasury: Public Opinion

Emily Thornberry: [\[198340\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 July to Question 193069 on Treasury: Deltapoll, on how many occasions between (a) 19-31 July 2022, (b) 1-31 August 2022, (c) 1-30 September 2022, (d) 1-31 October 2022, (e) 1-30 November 2022, (f) 1-31 December 2022, (g) 1-31 January 2023, (h) 1-28 February 2023, (i) 1-31 March 2023, (j) 1-30 April 2023, (k) 1-31 May 2023, (l) 1-30 June 2023, (m) 1-31 July 2023, and (n) 1-31 August 2023, was online polling activity carried out upon instruction from his Department; and which company was responsible for carrying out each online poll.

Emily Thornberry: [\[198341\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 July 2023 to Question 193068 on Treasury: Deltapoll, how times between (a) 19 and 31 July 2022, (b) 1 and 31 August 2022, (c) 1 and 30 September 2022, (d) 1 and 31 October 2022, (e) 1 and 30 November 2022, (f) 1 and 31 December 2022, (g) 1 and 31 January 2023, (h) 1

and 28 February 2023, (i) 1 and 31 March 2023, (j) 1 and 30 April 2023, (k) 1 and 31 May 2023, (l) 1 and 30 June 2023, (m) 1 and 31 July 2023 and (n) 1 and 31 August 2023 was focus group activity was carried out upon instruction by his Department; and if he will list which company was responsible for carrying out each focus group.

Gareth Davies:

From 18 July 2022 to present day, focus groups and online polling have been carried out by our insight providers, details of which are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

■ **Video Games: Tax Allowances**

Feryal Clark:

[\[197922\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of how many gaming companies in (a) the UK and (b) Enfield North constituency have benefited from Video Games Tax Relief in the most recent year for which data is available.

Victoria Atkins:

While HMRC does not hold information at a constituency level, the number of companies benefiting from the Video Games Tax Relief can be found in Table 4.1 of:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/creative-industries-statistics-august-2023>

■ **War Widows: Lump Sum Payments**

Drew Hendry:

[\[198173\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to make War Widows Recognition Payments tax exempt.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government will confirm the tax treatment of War Widow(er)s' recognition payments ahead of them being made later this year.

WALES

■ **Wales Office: Buildings**

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[197958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within their Department's estate.

David T C Davies:

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out.

The Wales Office does not own or manage any buildings. The Office leases space in Gwydyr House in London and Ty William Morgan in Cardiff. These buildings are managed by the Government Property Agency and HMRC respectively.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[197814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are employed by his Department to determine the outcome of Personal Independence Payment claims as of 5 September 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

The latest information of the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff who are in paid employment and undertake decisions on Personal Independence Payment claims is in the table below:

BENEFIT	FTE
Personal Independence Payment	2,970

Source: derived from the department's Activity Based Model (ABM).

NOTES:

Data is drawn at the end of each month. Data is correct as of end of August 2023. Figures were derived from the department's Activity Based Model (ABM), which provides Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures based on point in time estimate by line managers. They cover only FTE of staff with paid employment. They have been rounded to the nearest 10. Figures include all staff undertaking decision making on new claims, reassessments, case manager training, award reviews, change of circumstances (unplanned award reviews), administrative exercises, unplanned award reviews triage, mandatory reconsiderations and appeals decision making. Team leaders, case workers, visiting officers and administrative staff are not included. Figures do not include staff working on overtime. FTE in training and training support for case managers, mandatory reconsiderations and appeals decision making have been included. The figures exclude any HM Courts and Tribunals Service staff involved in the appeals process. The data is frequently revised and changes to definitions / benefits / DWP structure effect comparisons over time. It should therefore be treated with caution and must be seen as an indication of how staff have been deployed. The number of staff is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal department use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics standard. As the department holds the information, we have released it.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[197815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are employed by his Department to determine the outcome of work capability assessments as of 5 September 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

The latest information of the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff who are in paid employment and undertake decisions on Work Capability Assessments is in the table below:

WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT (WCA)	FTE
Universal Credit (UC)	480
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	100
Total	580

Source: Derived from the department's Activity Based Model (ABM). Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 and may not sum to the total due to the rounding.

NOTES:

Data is drawn at the end of each month. Data is correct as of end of August 2023. Figures were derived from the department's Activity Based Model (ABM), which provides Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures based on point in time estimate by line managers. They cover only FTE of staff with paid employment. They have been rounded to the nearest 10. Figures include staff undertaking Work Capability Assessment decision making activities, including training, ESA WCA mandatory reconsiderations, ESA WCA appeals and telephony. UC mandatory reconsiderations and appeals have not been included as figures include all FTE working on UC mandatory reconsiderations and appeals, not just those related to Work Capability Assessment outcomes. Management, administrative and support staff are not included. Figures do not include staff working on overtime. The data is frequently revised and changes to definitions / benefits / DWP structure effect comparisons over time. It should therefore be treated with caution and must be seen as an indication of how staff have been deployed. The number of staff is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal department use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics standard. As the department holds the information, we have released it.

■ Sickness Benefits**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[197407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were on long-term sickness benefits in (a) England, (b) London and (c) Hendon constituency in each of the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

The available information is in the attached spreadsheet.

Attachments:

1. Attachment [197407 attachment .xlsx]

■ Universal Credit: Applications**Deidre Brock:**[\[197531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has issued guidance on the circumstances in which the deadline for an application for Universal Credit could be extended.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has issued guidance on the circumstances in which the deadline for an application for Universal Credit could be extended. This guidance is regularly reviewed and updated.

■ Universal Credit: Overpayments**Deidre Brock:**[\[197532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how existing overpayments will be handled in the managed migration from Working Tax Credits to Universal Credit.

Guy Opperman:

When a claimant's tax credit claim is closed, for whatever reason, including a move to Universal Credit, the debt is transferred to the Department's Debt Management team.

Once Universal Credit is in payment, the overpayment will be recovered in line with the Universal Credit regulations.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DEFENCE

■ Challenger Tanks

Mr Mark Francois:

[197700]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of the Challenger 3 upgrade programme; what the definition is of initial operating capability for Challenger 3; and what the planned date is for that initial operating capability.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 11 September 2023. The correct answer should have been:

James Cartlidge:

To ensure I can provide as much detail as possible, I will write to the right hon. Member with the detail requested once it has been collated and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

We do not routinely release forecast figures regarding the resource and capital expenditure of our major projects. Portfolio data is published annually in support of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) Annual Report which includes a budget baseline and the latest HM Treasury approved estimates in respect of whole life costs. The current report is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-annual-report-2022-23>

Initial Operating Capability is defined as a single squadron of Main Battle Tanks with trained crews and is planned to be achieved in 2027.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Dental Services: Cornwall

Derek Thomas:

[195463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding was recovered by NHS England from dental providers in Cornwall in 2021-22; and how much recovered funding was reallocated for the delivery of NHS dentistry in (i) Cornwall and (ii) St Ives, West Cornwall and Isles of Scilly.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 4 September 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Neil O'Brien:

Sums recovered from dentists in Cornwall for underperformance on contracts during 2021/2022 amounted to £4,562,496. The amount recovered is not available for reinvestment in the same financial year due to the calculations being finalised in the following financial year. Dental contracts are paid at the start of each financial year at

100% and so all contractors receive their full contract value to deliver activity in 2022/23.

£334,049.67 was recovered from under-performance of commissioned activity from the 2020/21 contract year and was reinvested for additional urgent dental care appointments **that same year** in 2021/22.

HOME OFFICE

■ Home Office: Freedom of Information

Julian Knight:

[\[196812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the average time taken by his Department to respond to freedom of information requests in the 2022-23 financial year.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 11 September 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Chris Philp:

~~The Home Office takes its obligations under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act seriously and has dedicated teams responsible for the handling of requests.~~

~~The department receives one of the highest volumes of FOI requests across central government. In 2022 we responded to 92% of FOI requests within the permitted time and to 93% in the first quarter of 2023.~~

~~Home Office FOI performance statistics are published and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics#2023>~~

The Home Office takes its obligations under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act seriously and has dedicated teams responsible for the handling of requests. The department receives one of the highest volumes of FOI requests across central government. In 2022 we responded to 92% of FOI requests within the permitted time and to 93% in the first quarter of 2023.

Home Office FOI performance statistics are published and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics#2023>

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Insolvency Practitioner regulation reform

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Kevin Hollinrake): [\[HCWS1013\]](#)

The Government has today published its response to its consultation ‘*The Future of Insolvency Regulation*’, which was published in December 2021. This consultation was open for 13 weeks and outlined proposals for significant reform to the regulatory framework for Insolvency Practitioners.

The insolvency profession plays a key role in driving economic growth and supporting those in financial distress. The unique responsibilities that Insolvency Practitioners bear and the decisions they take help save jobs and businesses, and deliver a fair, effective and orderly winding up to deal with financial failure where that is not possible. The vast majority of Insolvency Practitioners do a good job in challenging circumstances, but there continue to be instances of poor conduct that directly impact those closely involved. This tarnishes the reputation of the whole profession and undermines confidence. Insolvency Practitioners should be regulated within a modern framework that reflects the way the insolvency sector has developed since formal insolvency regulation was first introduced in 1986.

The Government received 102 detailed responses to the consultation. Officials also obtained further relevant evidence through targeted stakeholder engagement. Most proposals received significant support amongst a broad range of stakeholders. We are grateful for the views and evidence provided as part of the consultation process, which has informed the package of reforms we will take forward when Parliamentary time allows. This most notably includes:

- challenging the current four professional body regulators to deliver significant and measurable improvements to the quality of regulation through non-legislative means, whilst keeping options to replace the current regulatory model with a single regulator of Insolvency Practitioners under review
- expanding regulation to include firms providing insolvency services, alongside the existing regulation of individual Insolvency Practitioners
- reforming the way ethical and professional standards for the profession are set
- introducing a public register of authorised Insolvency Practitioners and firms providing insolvency services, that will include relevant and proportionate regulatory information
- developing and consulting on proposals to introduce a compensation/redress scheme for those affected by an Insolvency Practitioner’s acts or omissions
- strengthening the bonding framework, which requires Insolvency Practitioners to hold security in the event of their fraud or dishonesty

The Government's response to the consultation reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the insolvency profession is effectively and robustly regulated, with a regulatory framework fit for the future. These reforms, which represent the biggest change to the regulatory framework in nearly 40 years, will address weaknesses with the current regulatory framework, modernise the regime and increase public confidence in regulation.

A copy of the consultation response may be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-of-insolvency-regulation>

DEFENCE

■ The Defence Industry and Environmental, Social and Governance Considerations

Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps):

[HCWS1014]

I wish to make a joint statement with HM Treasury, on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

The Government is clear the UK's defence sector has an integral role in supporting the first duty of government: to promote and protect the United Kingdom's core national interests: the sovereignty, security and prosperity of the British people. That includes supporting allies and partners and contributing to broader international security.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Ukraine - where we continue to have a leading role in providing our Ukrainian friends with our support and with vital military aid to resist President Putin's illegal and brutal war.

Our defence industrial base underpins our Armed Forces, maintains our continuous-at-sea nuclear deterrent, and safeguards our critical infrastructure. The private sector is essential to our national security whether in peacetime or times of emergency. The ongoing maintenance of critical industrial facilities, skills, and intellectual property onshore, and the approach we take to sustain these, gives us confidence that we can continue to operate independently, in defence of the country's interests, without external political influence and protecting the sensitive technologies that underpin our military capability.

Despite this, defence companies are being excluded from access to debt and equity capital, citing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) grounds. This not only threatens an important part of the economy that, through MOD expenditure alone, directly and indirectly supports over 200,000 jobs, but it fails to recognise that the UK's defence industry is essential to protecting our way of life. Such divestment also threatens to increase the cost of procurement, diverting taxpayers' money away from other defence spending and from public services. The industry's value to us as a key strategic asset is only increasing at a time of global uncertainty.

As outlined in the Defence Command Paper Refresh, this Government asserts that there is nothing contradictory between the principles within ESG and the defence industry. On the contrary, a strong national defence, including our nuclear deterrent, is a pre-requisite for the freedoms (including social liberties) which we often take for granted, and the

aspirations that investors and financial services companies seek to address using ESG considerations.

As stated in the Green Finance Strategy published this Spring, the Government believes that continued private investment in the UK defence industry and its NATO allies is essential to protect the UK national interest, the UK economy and broader environmental and social goals.

Moreover, the UK defence sector has reflected ESG considerations in a range of ways. Industry is driving innovation in new technologies to improve sustainability and companies are embedding ESG metrics into their remuneration structures. Additionally, defence companies are exploring how to raise standards across the board, improve access to information and communicate the positive vision of what they are achieving on these subjects.

Whilst investors must always be free to make their own choices, they should do so on the basis of the facts, and those seeking to inform those choices through providing ESG ratings should be clearer on their methodology and more prompt to correct errors when these are pointed out. Defence spending helps prevent war and helps support the British way of life, and those of our NATO allies and partners.

MOD is showing leadership itself on the environmental and social agenda, including the application of the Social Value Model within MOD's procurement process; we are focused on tackling economic disparities, tackling climate change and promoting equal opportunity. Through the Defence Suppliers Forum, we are working with industry at a strategic level to build sustainability into defence supply chains and tackle greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Crucially, HM Treasury has also published a consultation on a potential regulatory framework for ESG ratings providers with the aim of improving transparency and promoting good conduct in the ESG ratings business.

The Government will, with our industrial partners, continue to explore and champion the wider environmental and social benefit of the defence sector and ensure it continues to represent the highest standards of corporate governance. The Economic Secretary (my Hon Friend, the Member for Arundel and South Downs) and I will continue to engage with defence companies and the financial sector on access to investment and financial services for industries critical to our national security.

This Government believes that the important values within ESG should not undermine capabilities developed to help us preserve peace and security, without which sustaining those values would not be possible.

■ **Combat Air Strategy Update**

Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS1015\]](#)

The last update to the House on delivery of the Combat Air Strategy was given during Farnborough International Airshow in July of last year. DSEI London has brought the eyes of the world once again to the UK's world-leading defence capabilities, making this a fitting time to provide a further update on the progress made over the last year.

The Government published the Integrated Review Refresh in March, which lays out a strategic approach based on four pillars: shaping the international environment; deterring, defending and competing across all domains; bolstering our national resilience; and securing strategic advantage. The Defence Command Paper 2023 sets out how Defence will help the UK meet these aims through the interlinked objectives of protecting the nation and helping it prosper. With the world becoming increasingly contested and volatile it is clear, now more than at any time in a generation, that strong and capable Combat Air is crucial in enabling the UK to meet its core strategic objectives.

It is in this context that RAF fast jets have been conducting an intense schedule of operations and exercises, from eastern Europe to the Middle East, and from the High North to Australia. It was with a keen eye to the UK's future security and prosperity that in December 2022 we launched the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) with Japan and Italy.

Operations and exercises

Russia's illegal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine has seen the UK step up its efforts to reassure our NATO allies in eastern Europe. In late 2022, RAF F-35B aircraft deployed on HMS Queen Elizabeth took part in operations with our NATO allies and Joint Expeditionary Force partners above the waters of northern Europe, underscoring our shared commitment to European security. From March to July this year, the RAF led NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission, intercepting 50 Russian aircraft and flying for a combined total of more than 500 hours. Operating from Ämari Air Base in Estonia, RAF Typhoons conducted Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) intercepts, demonstrating our willingness and ability to defend our allies. Typhoons have continued to operate from RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and from the Falkland Islands, simultaneously safeguarding our security and projecting UK influence. And of course, RAF Typhoons are on constant standby in the UK itself, to protect our own skies and intercept adversary aircraft when they approach our airspace.

Exercises also continue to play a fundamental role in demonstrating our military capability, interoperability with allies and partners, and our shared resolve. Major global deployments have been conducted, with F-35B Lightning aircraft taking part in Exercise Northern Edge in Alaska, and Typhoon playing a key role in Exercise Pitch Black in Australia. Exercises such as these make clear the RAF's truly global reach and our commitment to Indo-Pacific security. Closer to home, the RAF has taken part in exercises that underline our commitment to Euro-Atlantic security, such as Air Defender in Germany and Tempest Strike/Tower Guardian with Norway and Estonia. In January, Typhoons from RAF Akrotiri exercised with Saudi Arabia, and in March we agreed a Statement of Intent to further strengthen our Combat Air relationship.

Across both operations and exercises, the way in which RAF fast jets operate has become fundamentally more agile, with air-to-air refuelling from both home bases and deployed locations, supported by a global network of allies and partners. This has helped the RAF to take part in operations and exercises with over 30 nations over the last twelve months, across Europe, the High North, the Middle East and Indo-Pacific.

In addition to evolving how we operate, we continue to invest in our Typhoon and F-35B fleets to keep them ahead of the threat. In July, an £870 million five-year contract was awarded to BAE Systems and Leonardo UK to fit RAF Typhoons with the European Common Radar System (ECRS) Mk2, one of the world's most advanced, sustaining 600 UK engineering jobs in Edinburgh, Luton and Lancashire. Typhoon has already proven its export potential and we are working closely with industry to pursue further exports to close international partners. Meanwhile, the RAF continues to grow its F-35 fleet, with the next key programme milestone being the stand-up of 809 Naval Air Squadron in December.

The Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP)

In December 2022, the Prime Minister and his Japanese and Italian counterparts launched a partnership to design a next-generation combat aircraft to keep us ahead of the threat well into the second half of the century. We are currently in the early but crucial phases of the programme, developing and assessing concepts for a system with the most advanced capabilities, including machine learning to support human operators, open systems architecture to allow rapid and continual upgrade, and extensive digital networks linking forces across air, land and sea to bolster our overall operational advantage.

This is a strategic endeavour in which Japan and Italy are strong partners. Japan, renowned for its industrial base and with a commitment to increasing investment in its self-defence, has invested heavily in advanced combat air R&D, while Italy brings decades of shared experience on the Eurofighter programme. All three partners operate F-35. Progress is well underway, with the UK, Japan and Italy already working together across a range of areas, including concept design, a trilateral engine demonstrator, and advanced on-board electronics to ensure information advantage. The founding partners are open to exploring how others could become involved going forwards, to mutual benefit and aligned to programme schedule.

Here in the UK, the Ministry of Defence continues to work closely with BAE Systems, Leonardo UK, Rolls-Royce and MBDA UK, under the Team Tempest partnership. We are delivering at pace and in April awarded BAE Systems, on behalf of Team Tempest industry partners, a £656m contract extension to progress vital concepting and technology work. In July, a £115m contract was awarded to Leonardo UK to develop a Flight Test Aircraft, to be delivered in partnership with 2Excel. Rapid progress is also being made on an advanced flying demonstrator that was announced at Farnborough Airshow last year, with over 150 hours of simulated flight trials and key aerodynamic engine and ejector seat testing undertaken.

This progress is being enabled by the long-term approach to capability delivery outlined in the 2018 Combat Air Strategy, which recognised the vital importance of a strong and sustainable UK combat air sector. MOD has invested over £1.1bn in R&D through the Future Combat Air System Technology Initiative (FCAS TI), with a further £600m from our Team Tempest industry partners to date, delivering advanced industrial technologies such as digital design and additive manufacturing. These technologies are revolutionising how we deliver advanced combat air, driving efficiency and cutting timelines. Looking ahead, the UK has a proposed budget of over £12bn over the next 10 years, alongside

robust funding from Japan and Italy. Funding requirements will continue to be refined as the programme matures.

In addition to investing in advanced industrial technologies, we are continually working to develop the skills base needed to succeed, now and in the future. The number of skilled people working on the programme is growing quickly, with approximately 3,000 across the UK's Team Tempest partners, in major combat air hubs including the south-west and north-west of England and Edinburgh. We recognise that today's students are tomorrow's lead engineers, which is why we are reaching out to schools and universities, recruiting graduates and apprentices, and propelling them into long-term STEM careers while continuing to attract mature talent.

Next steps

UK Combat Air will remain crucial for our security and prosperity and that of our allies and partners, both on NATO's borders with Russia and in the wider world. The RAF will continue to exercise its global reach, conducting operations and exercises from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific. We will continue to invest in our Typhoon and F-35 fleets. On GCAP, we are working intensively with Japan and Italy to establish the core platform concept and the joint structures needed to launch the development phase in 2025, targeting entry into service in 2035.