



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 September 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 14 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

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Visits Abroad

Matt Warman:

[\[197817\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what information the Crown Prosecution Service holds on the (a) programme and (b) accompanying delegation for the visit by the Director of Public Prosecutions to Washington in November 2011.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not hold the information on Director of Public Prosecution visits from 2011. Routine information, such as visit programmes and delegation lists, will have been disposed of in line with the published CPS Retention and Disposal policy and in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act, and other relevant laws.

The CPS regularly publishes information regarding expenses incurred by the DPP, including through foreign travel. Historic data of this nature (including from 2011) is available on an archived version of the CPS website held by the National Archives

Requests under the Freedom of Information Act (United States) have also been made to US authorities previously, and they hold some further information which has been disclosed.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Department for Business and Trade: Buildings

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[197943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within their Department's estate.

Nigel Huddleston:

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.

■ Paternity Pay

Carol Monaghan:

[\[198359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of increasing the length of time for which paternity pay is awarded from two to four weeks.

Carol Monaghan: [198360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the level of paternity pay.

Carol Monaghan: [198363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing (a) the length of time for which paternity pay is awarded and (b) the level of paternity pay when the mother is not working.

Kevin Hollinrake:

We recently published our response to the consultation on parental leave and pay. This detailed our planned reforms to make Paternity Leave and Pay more flexible and easier to take, including increasing the period of time within which leave can be taken and allowing it to be taken in non-consecutive blocks. In line with other parental pay entitlements, Paternity Pay is paid at the statutory rate.

The standard rate of Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Maternity Pay is reviewed annually and from April 2023, it increased by September's CPI figure of 10.1 per cent to £172.48.

■ Sick Leave: Bullying

Rachael Maskell: [198140]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking to help ensure that sickness absences caused by bullying at work are tackled in good time.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Any form of bullying and harassment is unacceptable and has no place in today's workplace.

The Government has published guidance on the steps that employees can take if they are experiencing bullying or harassment at work, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment>.

Acas provides free and impartial advice for employers and employees on a variety of employment matters, including managing sickness absence and the return to work.

Acas has recently updated its guidance on how to deal with bullying in the workplace.

This includes how to best support an employee's mental health and wellbeing, and is available at: <https://www.acas.org.uk/bullying-at-work>

■ Trade Agreements: India

Nadia Whittome: [197248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make it her policy to require that any free trade agreement with India be conditional on India ratifying conventions (a) 87 and (b) 98 of the International Labour Organisation conventions.

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.

Nadia Whittome: [\[197249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what representations her Department has received from (a) trade unions and (b) labour rights organisations in (i) the UK and (ii) India, on the free trade agreement negotiations with India.

Nigel Huddleston:

While we do not comment on live negotiations, our approach to the UK-India FTA has been shaped through substantial engagement with interested stakeholders. Our objectives in the India FTA were informed by a 14-week long public call for input, which incorporated recommendations from businesses, civil society groups, trade unions, public bodies and individuals.

Navendu Mishra: [\[198904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent progress her Department has made in negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of India.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are continuing to negotiate with India to secure a comprehensive and ambitious trade deal.

Round 12 of negotiations concluded on 31 August. While visiting India for the G20 Trade Ministers meeting on 24-26 August, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade met with India's Ministers for Commerce and Finance. They discussed how to make meaningful progress in this complex next phase of talks, which is focused on goods, services, and investment.

The Prime Minister also met with Prime Minister Modi on 9 September while at the G20 Summit. They reaffirmed their joint commitment to work at pace towards an ambitious deal.

The next round will be later this month.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Government Departments: Birmingham****Julie Elliott:** [\[198522\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Government Property Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, published on 14 July 2023, HC 1724, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the progress of the hub project entitled Birmingham 3; which Department the project relates to; and how many jobs will be relocated to Birmingham as part of that project.

Alex Burghart:

The Government is committed to launching new Hubs across the UK including in Birmingham, and commercially sensitive discussions regarding prospective solutions for Birmingham 3 are ongoing. The Government has committed to relocate over 1,150 roles to Birmingham from London by March 2025 with over 850 roles already relocated.

Two Hubs are already in operation in Birmingham at 23 Stephenson Street, supporting 1,607 full time equivalent roles and 21 client departments, as well as 3 Arena Central, supporting 4,000 full time equivalent roles from HMRC, VOA and DWP.

■ Government Departments: Buildings**Julie Elliott:**[\[198523\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Government Property Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, published on 14 July 2023, HC 1724, whether he had discussions with relevant stakeholders prior to the termination of the Government Hub projects set out in that report.

Alex Burghart:

No Government Hub projects have been cancelled. The GPA works with many stakeholders as part of its Government Hubs Programme, with a range of factors taken into account when making decisions on potential locations and solutions. These include demand, future need, economic benefits and funding. The Hubs Programme supports the Governments' priorities of Levelling Up and Places for Growth.

Good progress is being made on the Hubs Programme with HMRC delivering fourteen Hubs under Phase 1. The GPA is leading Phase 2 and has opened three Hubs in Birmingham, Peterborough and London with four further Hubs in Bristol, Croydon, Darlington and Manchester in delivery. Market searches and commercial negotiations continue to source appropriate solutions for further locations. As these locations are agreed, further announcements will be made.

■ National Security**Catherine West:**[\[198938\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to recommendation U on page 61 of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament's report entitled China, published on 13 July 2023, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of moving policy ownership of all elements of national security activity to the Cabinet Office.

Alex Burghart:

HM Government has today laid before Parliament a full response that considers and addresses each of the recommendations and conclusions drawn by the Intelligence and Security Committee in its report on China, including the committee's recommendation 'U'.

The Cabinet Office is best placed to coordinate cross-government strategy across a range of issues including China, with departments responsible for delivery of that strategy. This allows for a coherent view across the extent of China's activity, and allows the Government to prioritise work, assess trade-offs, and mitigate risks, with delivery across all departments.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Hilary Benn:

[198612]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what arrangements his Department is planning for the handling of groupage for the operation of the proposed red and green lanes covering goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework.

Alex Burghart:

The Windsor Framework delivers significant benefits for operators who move groupage consignments and mixed loads, including the removal of burdensome paperwork and a reduction in checks.

The green and red lanes under customs arrangements are entirely virtual lanes with separate underlying electronic processes. Green and red lane goods can therefore be moved in the same vehicle without requiring physical segregation, meaning hauliers will not have to alter their logistical arrangements

Mixed loads containing agri-food goods moving through the red and green lane will also be permitted. Whilst the lorry as a whole would not benefit from the full facilitations of the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme, the subsection of goods moving under the scheme will still benefit from the advantages it offers, including removing the need for veterinary signed certificates for individual products. Guidance for traders on how these movements will operate is available [on Gov.uk](#).

It will be a commercial decision for traders and hauliers as to how they move goods. This will be no different in principle to how hauliers make decisions on whether to operate groupage loads at present.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Buildings

Barbara Keeley:

[198638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in the construction of buildings operated under its remit.

Sir John Whittingdale:

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.

■ Draft Media Bill

Stephanie Peacock: [\[198959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department plans to (a) publish and (b) set a timescale for the legislative scrutiny of the Media Bill.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The government remains committed to introducing the Media Bill when Parliamentary time allows.

The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee is expected to publish their pre-legislative scrutiny report this Autumn. The government looks forward to receiving their recommendations and responding in the usual manner.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[198960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to incorporate the outcome of the Listed Events: Digital Rights Review into the Media Bill.

Sir John Whittingdale:

We are undertaking a review to look at whether, in the face of technological change, the objectives of the existing regime are still being met and whether digital rights should now be included in the regime.

Our review is ongoing and we will set out more detail in due course.

■ Local Broadcasting: Radio

Stephanie Peacock: [\[198955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the BBC board on proposed changes to local radio.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[198958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the BBC board on the potential use of (a) an Equalities Impact Assessment and (b) a Public Value Test on proposed changes to local radio.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The government remains disappointed that the BBC is planning to reduce parts of its local output. Ministers have met with the BBC on several occasions since the announcement where they have expressed the concerns shared across the House about the BBC's plans. The Secretary of State most recently raised her concerns with the BBC earlier this month.

While it is up to the BBC to decide how it delivers its services, the government has been clear with the Chair of the BBC Board and the Director General that the BBC must make sure it continues to provide distinctive and genuinely local radio services, with content that reflects and represents people and communities from all corners of the UK. These services are a key part of the BBC's public service remit and an

example of how the BBC can use its licence fee funding to provide content that is directly relevant to audiences, particularly in areas that may be underserved by the market.

The BBC is editorially and operationally independent, and therefore decisions on how to consider the potential impacts for audiences of these changes under their public sector equality duty is for the BBC. It is also for the BBC to consider the public value associated with any changes to its services.

The government also expects Ofcom, as the independent regulator of the BBC, to ensure the BBC is robustly held to account in delivering its public service duties. As part of this, the BBC will be required to monitor the impact of changes on audiences and publish more information about how it delivers high quality, distinctive content and services for audiences across the UK.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Armed Forces

Adam Holloway: [\[198066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many former members of Commando Force 333 are in the UK.

James Heappey:

As of 8 September, we have relocated over 12,200 individuals under the ARAP scheme to the UK. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of these figures by job role or specific unit.

Not all members of the Afghan Armed Forces, including specific units such as Commando Force 333 will automatically be eligible for ARAP. However, we are prioritising finding remaining eligible applications who are awaiting a decision as quickly as we can.

Adam Holloway: [\[198068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the extent of the UK's responsibility for the security of former members of Commando Force 333.

Adam Holloway: [\[198069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to support former members of Commando Force 333.

James Heappey:

The ARAP scheme provides relocation or other assistance specifically to Afghan nationals who worked for or alongside UK forces in support of the UK's mission in Afghanistan, as set out in the specific eligibility criteria in the ARAP policy.

Members of the Afghan national security forces such as Commando Force 333 - whilst their efforts heroic - are not automatically in scope for relocation under ARAP unless they meet these criteria.

Those who are eligible can also apply for support in the UK under Op NEWHOPE. The Ministry of Defence works closely with third sector partners to deliver Operation NEWHOPE, which is our pastoral commitment to support the individuals who have and want to maintain their Defence connection by providing camaraderie, community support, and pathways to employment.

■ Arctic: Defence

Mark Logan:

[\[198233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made with NATO allies on assessing security risks emanating from the High North.

James Heappey:

The High North is changing rapidly. This poses both opportunities and challenges for the UK. His Majesty's Government is committed to working with regional Allies and partners, including NATO, the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Northern Group to align policy, activity, and capability where possible and across all domains, including sharing assessments of the risks emanating from the High North. We have also actively forged Arctic-specific partnerships where we discuss regional risks, and remain a proactive member of the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, a forum in which Allies share information on the changing environment, improve collective awareness of and de-conflict activity in the Arctic, and identify opportunities for further co-operation.

■ Aviation: Prime Minister

Emily Thornberry:

[\[197421\]](#)

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 fixed-wing air transport to the Prime Minister for domestic flights on the aircraft registered under the marks (a) G-ZABH and (b) G-ZAHS between the dates of 25 October 2022 to 4 September 2023.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

G-ZABH and G-ZAHS are Envoy aircraft of the RAF's Command Support Air Transport fleet. The MOD has charged the Cabinet Office some £36,900 for domestic flights by the Prime Minister on official duties between 25 October 2022 and 4 September 2023.

■ Cybersecurity

Catherine West:

[\[198936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to improve the UK's cyber defences.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence takes its cybersecurity obligations very seriously and works constantly to improve cyber security through its people, processes and technology.

The Cyber Resilience Strategy for Defence published in May 2022 sets out the steps that the MOD is taking to enhance cyber security and deliver secure foundations for Defence, working in collaboration with Government, industry, academia, and international allies and partners.

The Cyber Resilience Strategy for Defence is aligned with the National Cyber Strategy, the Government Cyber Security Strategy, and is a core part of the Digital Strategy for Defence. The aim is to ensure that Defence can continue to deliver its purpose and support the national effort to strengthen the UK in the cyber domain and cement its authority as a democratic and responsible cyber power.

■ Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation

John Healey: [\[198598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when does his Department plan to respond to the Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question 194927 on 21 July 2023 to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Mr Pollard).

Attachments:

1. Question 194927 [UIN 194927.docx]

■ Ministry of Defence: Reorganisation

John Healey: [\[197355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Command Paper Refresh, published on 18 July 2023, when he expects the process of redesigning the Defence Operating Model to be completed.

James Heappey:

As we design the future operating model, we will pilot improvements in priority areas across the system to drive change iteratively and quickly, aiming for significant changes to be in place from April 2024. Most of the work is anticipated to be completed within 18 and 24 months, however, we expect to regularly review and iterate our Operating Model to ensure it meets our needs thereafter.

■ Navy: Greenwich Hospital

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[195928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2023 to Question 194354 on Navy: Greenwich Hospital, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the relationship between his Department, Greenwich Hospital and the Royal Hospital School.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Director of Greenwich Hospital (DGH), appointed by the Secretary of State, is proprietor of the Royal Hospital School (RHS) and sits on the school's Board of

Governors. Until formal governance can be modernised via legislation, the Greenwich Hospital Advisory Board including DGH, chaired by the Second Sea Lord, has established closer engagement with Governors and the RHS senior leadership team to ensure the effective delivery of education and Greenwich Hospital's objectives at the RHS.

■ Niger: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[198906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the training courses provided to Niger's armed forces by the UK since 2018.

James Heappey:

The list below outlines our record of the training courses provided by the UK to Niger between April 2018 and July 2023. Following the 26 July 2023 coup in Niger, the UK Ministry of Defence halted all bilateral security cooperation with Niger's armed forces.

COURSE START DATE	COURSE
2018, 2019	Managing Defence in Wider Security Context (Export), Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
2018	Strategic Leadership Programme, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
2018	Advanced Staff Course, Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College
2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	Basic Officer Training, Senegalese Military Training School
2018	Intermediate Staff Course, Horton Command and Staff College
2019, 2020	Advanced Command and Staff Course, UK Defence Academy
2020	Commissioning Course, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
2021, 2022	Information Operations and Strategic Communications training to the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Taskforce
2021	Professional Officer Development, Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College
2021, 2022	Combat Medic training provided to the Lake

COURSE START DATE	COURSE
	Chad Basin Multinational Joint Task Force
2021	Civil military cooperation (CIMIC) training, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
2022	Operational Planning course, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
2022	Counter-IED training provided to the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Task Force
2022	Managing Defence in Wider Security Context, Cranfield University
2022	Operational Intelligence and Imagery Analysis training provided to the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Task Force
2022	CIMIC workshop provided to the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Taskforce

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[198907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times RAF Chinook helicopters have conducted missions inside Niger since 2018.

James Heapey:

Joint Helicopter Command, including the Chinook Force, operated from Gao, Mali in support of Op NEWCOMBE from July 2018 until June 2022.

The Force regularly conducted tasking and support operations into Niger however I am withholding exact details as their disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness, or security of the Armed Forces.

■ Type 23 Frigates

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[198616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2023 to Question 195934 on Type 23 Frigates, how much of the £676.7 million for Type 23 frigate upkeep has been spent.

James Cartlidge:

Of the £676.7 million allocated to Type 23 Upkeep until the class out of service date, about £37 million has been spent to date.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

John Healey:

[\[198617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 July 2023 to Question 192474 on Ukraine: Military Aid, whether the two contracts planned to begin delivering capabilities to the Ukrainian Armed Forces at the end of July 2023 have now been completed.

James Cartlidge:

Of the six contracts placed by 7 July 2023 under International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) Urgent Bidding Round one, two were planned to begin deliveries by the end of July 2023. One contract met this timeframe. The second was delayed due to the installation of a critical operational upgrade, with deliveries beginning in August.

Additional deliveries from both contracts will be made over the coming months with all deliveries expected to have been made by January 2024.

John Healey:

[\[198618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 July 2023 to Question 192474 on Ukraine: Military Aid, whether the four remaining contracts have (a) begun and (b) completed delivering capabilities to the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

James Heappey:

Delivery of capabilities to the Ukrainian Armed Forces have begun from four of the six International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) Urgent Bidding Round one contracts placed by 7 July 2023. Deliveries from the remaining two contracts are scheduled to begin over the coming months. All deliveries from these contracts are expected to have taken place by February 2024.

■ Zaun: Cybercrime

John Healey:

[\[198632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any documents (a) concerning and (b) from his Department were accessed by hackers during cyber attack on the supplier Zaun.

James Heappey:

The investigation into the impact of this incident is in progress. Zaun Limited is not a contractor to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and does not hold any classified MOD information. The company does not therefore hold any information that concerns MOD projects, capabilities, sites or personnel, other than that which may be in the public domain already.

If, at the conclusion of the investigation, the position alters, an update will be provided.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices: Finance**

Seema Malhotra: [\[198766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeship starts were funded by levy transfers from levy-paying to non-levy paying organisations in the 2022/2023 academic year.

Robert Halfon:

In the 2022/23 academic year (August to April, reported to date) there have been 4,530 transferred apprenticeship service commitments that have materialised into starts at non-levy paying organisations. In the 2021/22 academic year (August to July, reported to date) there were 4,510.

To note:

- (1) Apprenticeship service data as of 9 June 2023.
- (2) Starts as recorded on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).
- (3) Levy-paying status of the transfer recipient is the latest recorded status of the apprenticeship service account.
- (4) Providers may not record learners immediately on the ILR, so a lag may occur between a commitment being recorded in the apprenticeship service and the corresponding commitment being recorded as a start on the ILR.
- (5) Commitments can be recorded/amended on the apprenticeship service system after the transfer approval date, so all data are provisional.

■ Apprentices: Registration

Seema Malhotra: [\[198762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many training providers on the Apprenticeships Register have been removed from the register (a) after receiving an 'inadequate' Ofsted grade and (b) for not having any active apprenticeships in the last 6 months, in each of the last 3 years.

Seema Malhotra: [\[198763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many training providers were added to the Apprenticeships Register in each of the last three years.

Robert Halfon:

On 1 August 2023, the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) and the Register of End-point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) were combined to become the Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register (APAR).

The table below shows the number of apprenticeship training providers that were added to the APAR in each of the last three calendar years:

2021	2022	2023 (AS OF 1 SEPTEMBER)
79	115	61

The table below shows the number of apprenticeship training providers that have been removed from the APAR after receiving an Inadequate Ofsted grade in each of the last three calendar years:

2021	2022	2023 (AS OF 1 SEPTEMBER)
15	24	17

The table below shows the number of apprenticeship training providers that have been removed from the APAR for not having any active apprenticeships in the last six months in each of the last three calendar years:

2021	2022	2023 (AS OF 1 SEPTEMBER)
269	68	26

■ Childcare

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[198639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether 15 hours of free childcare will be extended to (a) all children from the age of nine months and (b) the children of working parents from the age of nine months; with reference to the blog post on her Department's Education Hub website entitled Budget 2023: Everything you need to know about childcare support, published on 16 March 2023, and to the blog post entitled Free childcare: How we are tackling the cost of childcare, published on 7 July 2023, for what reason this information is not consistent on that website; what sign-off processes are in place for the accuracy of information on that website; and if she will make a statement.

David Johnston:

In the Government's Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced transformative reforms to childcare for parents, children, the economy and women. By 2027/28, the Government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever.

From April 2024, all eligible working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access their 15 hours of free childcare (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child's 2nd birthday. From September 2024, eligible parents will be able to access 15 hours free childcare (over 38 weeks a year) from the term following their child turning 9 months, and the offer will be rolled out in full from September 2025, with eligible working

parents of children aged 9 months and above able to access 30 hours (over 38 weeks a year) from the term following their child turning 9 months.

To be eligible for the 30-hour entitlement for children from age 9 months up, as with the current 30 hours offer, parents will need to earn the equivalent of 16 hours a week at National Minimum or Living Wage (£167 per week/£8,670 per year in 2023/2024), and less than £100,000 adjusted net income per year.

The department has communicated clearly that the offer is for working parents. The Education Hub is the Department's parent-facing blog which aims to explain policy in a digestible format available at: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/>. The Hub post in question references throughout that this policy applies to working parents. To avoid any unintended confusion, the sentence cited, has been updated in the post. All communications are cleared by the relevant policy and communications leads before publication

■ Confucius Institutes

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[195762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the number of Chinese nationals that are working in Confucius Institutes in the UK; and how many and what proportion of these people have diplomatic immunity.

Robert Halfon:

The employment of staff within Confucius Institutes is a matter for the UK university at which the Confucius Institute is based and their partner Chinese organisations. We do not hold data on the number of visa holders who work in Confucius Institutes.

Like other international bodies that operate in the UK, Confucius Institutes are required to operate transparently and within the law, and with a full commitment to our values of openness and freedom of expression. The government is taking action to remove any direct or indirect government funding from these institutions in the UK.

Working at a Confucius Institute does not in itself confer any privileges and immunities under the Vienna Conventions. However, it is possible that a spouse of a serving diplomat at the Chinese mission to the UK, who therefore enjoys privileges and immunities on that basis, is employed at a Confucius Institute. The government would not hold such information.

■ Department for Education: Domestic Visits

Julie Elliott:

[198521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many visits were made by (a) the Secretary of State and (b) each Minister in his Department to a (i) Government Hub and (ii) ministerial office outside of London in (A) 2022 and (B) 2023.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not centrally collated and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Department for Education: Written Questions

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[198610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to respond to Question 195762 on Confucius Institutes tabled by the hon. Member for East Londonderry on 1 September 2023.

Robert Halfon:

I can confirm that a response to Question [195762](#) has been provided to the hon. Member for East Londonderry.

■ Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

Seema Malhotra:

[\[198764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many times she has met with representatives from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in the last 12 months.

Robert Halfon:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, met with Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) representatives seven times in the past 12 months.

Ministers and senior officials regularly meet with IfATE, as a key delivery partner of the department, to discuss priorities and progress against them.

■ Literature: Secondary Education

Nadia Whittome:

[\[198566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the provision of literature and poetry programmes in secondary schools.

Nick Gibb:

The National Curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage. It encourages pupils to read a range of books, poems and plays to encourage the development of a life long love of literature. Pupils should be taught to maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books.

The Department has strengthened the Key Stage 4 English programmes of study to ensure all pupils read a wide range of high quality, challenging, classic English literature. There is a renewed focus on the reading of whole texts.

The 2022 Autumn Statement announced that funding for mainstream schools and high needs is £3.5 billion higher in 2023/24, compared to 2022/23. That is on top of the £4 billion, year-on-year increase provided in 2022/23 –;an increase of £7.5 billion, or over 15%, in just two years. This funding is not ringfenced and can include literature and poetry programmes.

The Department also funds Poetry by Heart which helps to develop and support inspiring poetry teaching in schools, and to motivate pupils and teachers to explore our rich literary heritage.

Since 2012, the Department has funded a National Poetry Recitation Competition (NPRC), which helps to develop and support inspiring poetry teaching in primary and secondary schools.

NPRC encourages schools to participate to improve pupils' knowledge and enjoyment of poetry and to improve spoken language through poetry recitation and recall.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Rachael Maskell: [\[198796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason schools in Yorkshire and Humber receive lower average funding per pupil than schools in London.

Rachael Maskell: [\[198797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to reduce the difference in average funding between pupils in schools in Yorkshire and the Humber and London.

Nick Gibb:

This Government is committed to providing a world class education system for all pupils and has provided significant funding for education to achieve that.

The National Funding Formula (NFF) continues to distribute funding fairly, based on the needs of schools and their pupil cohorts. In 2023/24, over 90% of the schools NFF is distributed on a per pupil basis, based on pupil numbers and pupil characteristics. 75.5% of the schools NFF has been allocated through basic entitlement funding, which every pupil attracts, regardless of their location or circumstances, and a further 17.4% (£7.2 billion) has been allocated through additional needs factors based on pupils' level of deprivation, low prior attainment, English as an additional language, and mobility.

The purpose of the NFF is not to give every school the same level of per pupil funding. It is right that schools with more pupils with additional needs receive extra funding to help them meet the needs of all their pupils.

Differing levels of additional needs is one part of the reason why funding is not distributed identically across the country. In addition, schools in more expensive areas, like London, attract higher per pupil funding than other parts of the country to reflect the higher costs they face.

The Department will continue to fund schools through the NFF in a fair and transparent manner, on a consistent assessment of need based on pupil numbers and characteristics.

■ Schools: Curriculum

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the involvement of parents in the education curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

The Department welcomes and supports the work that many schools are doing to strengthen parental engagement, for example through Parent Teacher Associations, to actively involve parents in supporting their child's education.

Where schools decide to set homework, they should develop their own homework policies in consultation with staff, parents, pupils and governors. The Department does not determine how involved parents should be in the development of the school curriculum. Whilst parental support in pupils' education is important, teachers are best placed to determine what support is needed and have the autonomy to decide how to involve parents.

The National Curriculum, which the Department reformed to set world class standards across all subjects, focusses on the key knowledge that schools should teach. Within a broad statutory framework, schools have considerable flexibility to organise the content and delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of the majority of their pupils and to take account of new developments, societal changes or topical issues.

Academies and free schools have greater freedom and autonomy in how they operate for areas such as the curriculum, but they are expected to teach a curriculum that is comparable in breadth and ambition to the National Curriculum, and many choose to teach the full National Curriculum to achieve this.

In addition to meeting their statutory duties, schools are also free to include other subjects or topics they deem relevant for their pupils, as part of the school's wider curriculum.

It is important that every school has a well designed and well sequenced curriculum which ensures pupils acquire knowledge in a broad range of subjects and prepares them to specialise and succeed in further and higher education or training.

For maintained schools, the National Curriculum provides parents with an understanding of what their child can be expected to know at every stage in their school career. All schools have a duty to share information about their curriculum with parents. The Department has been very clear that schools should respond positively where parents request to see specific materials. On 31 March 2023, the Secretary of State wrote to all schools to set out that, under current arrangements, schools can and should share curriculum materials with parents.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Energy: Meters**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[198963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2023 to Question 198279 on Energy: Meters, what progress reports her Department has received from companies responsible for ensuring that all households with a SMETS 1 meter will have it operating in smart mode or replaced with SMETS2 meter by 31 December 2023.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[198964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2023 to Question 198279 on Energy: Meters, what information her Department holds on how many households with SMETS 1 meters are awaiting either adaption to operating in smart mode or upgrade to SMETS2.

Amanda Solloway:

Information about the number of SMETS1 meters enrolled onto the smart metering network is available as part of official quarterly statistics reporting:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/smart-meters-in-great-britain-quarterly-update-june-2023>

■ Environment Protection: Manufacturing Industries

Mrs Sheryll Murray: [\[906370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to support the green industry.

Graham Stuart:

The UK has attracted around £120 billion investment in renewables since 2010 and is expected to attract a further £100 billion investment in net zero by 2030, supporting up to 480,000 jobs.

The Government is providing investors with long-term certainty over policy and regulatory frameworks to unlock investment and create jobs in green industries such as hydrogen, CCUS, offshore wind and nuclear.

■ Fuel Poverty: Selby and Ainsty

Keir Mather: [\[198456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of care recipients who are in fuel poverty in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Amanda Solloway:

Information on the number or proportion of care recipients who are in fuel poverty is not held.

The latest statistics for the number of households in fuel poverty in parliamentary constituencies in England can be found in the published [sub-regional fuel poverty Official Statistics](#).

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

Keir Mather:

[\[198552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many miners were recipients of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme (a) in Selby and Ainsty constituency and (b) nationally in August 2023.

Graham Stuart:

As of 30 June 2023, there were 1,110 Mineworkers' Pension Scheme members in Selby and Ainsty constituency and as of 31 July 2023, 119,162 members nationally. These are the most recent available figures.

■ Uranium: Niger

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[198908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether uranium from Niger is used in UK nuclear power plants.

Andrew Bowie:

The sourcing of fuel for the UK's operational civil nuclear power plants is a commercial decision for the plant operator, which in all instances is EDF.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Carbon Capture and Utilisation

Sir Bill Wiggin:

[\[198313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the accuracy of the on-farm calculations undertaken by (a) farmers and (b) her Department of on-farm (i) carbon cycling and (ii) sequestration.

Mark Spencer:

(a) At present there are many tools to support on-farm carbon calculations and audits available for use by farmers and farm advisers. Defra is in the process of completing an assessment of the variability and comparability of the most popular on-farm carbon audit tools, which differ widely in their complexity and underlying methodology. There are trade-offs between the accuracy and specificity of tools, and the complexity of data required to underpin the calculations. Defra is considering options to improve standardisation.

(b) There is a mature evidence base on the cycling and sequestration of carbon within and through the farmed and semi-natural landscape. On-farm emissions are monitored and assessed through the UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory, and Defra is seeking to understand broader supply chain emissions through additional research.

Other research has assessed methods to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in farming and carbon stores; all of which undergoes independent scrutiny through peer review.

■ **Beef: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Sir Bill Wiggin: [\[198468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 49 of the report entitled National Food Strategy: The Evidence, published 2021, whether she has made an assessment of trends in the level of the UK's greenhouse gas footprint per kilogram of bovine meat and how this compares to other countries.

Mark Spencer:

Emissions from beef production are highly variable both between countries and within countries, reflecting a wide range of production systems. Defra has assessed the best available data, which suggest that emissions from UK beef production range between 16-34 kg CO₂-eq per kg meat. These data also suggest that UK beef emissions are roughly equivalent to the rest of the EU, USA, and Australia, but notably less than Brazil or Indonesia. The UK is currently the fourth most efficient of 11 EU producers. Defra is keeping the evidence base on product carbon footprints under review and updating where required.

■ **Birds: Wind Power**

Sir John Hayes: [\[198284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made a recent estimate of the number of birds that are killed by onshore wind turbines in each year.

Sir John Hayes: [\[198285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made a recent estimate of the number of bats that are killed by onshore wind turbines in each year.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government does not have a recent estimate of the number of bats or birds killed by onshore wind turbines. The Government works closely with partners, including the renewable energy sector, to manage and mitigate any potential impacts of wind farms on birds, bats and their habitats. Wind farm developers must carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment to determine any impacts on protected species.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Disclosure of Information**

Julian Knight: [\[197458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Mark Spencer:

The average time taken by my Department to respond to subject access requests from 1 January 2022 to date, which is the latest period in which data is available, is 29.5 days.

The figures show my Department's excellent record in responding to subject access requests, with more than 94% of requests being answered within the deadlines laid down in the data protection legislation.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Labour Turnover**

Julian Knight:

[\[196866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information their Department holds on the level of staff retention; and what steps they are taking to improve staff retention.

Mark Spencer:

Civil service turnover in Defra was 8.7% in the 12 months up to March 2023, including all four executive agencies: the Animal and Plant Health Agency; the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science; the Rural Payments Agency; and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Defra is addressing turnover by using the following approaches:

- The additional flexibility to the 2022 Civil Service pay remit guidance of a one-off, non-consolidated payment of £1500 per full time employee that was announced in the spring. These payments were paid in August salaries to eligible staff across Defra group.
- Seeking to take advantage of the flexibility set out in the 2023 Civil Service pay remit guidance of pursuing pay flexibility cases. The pay remit guidance also set out an average award of up to 4.5% plus 0.5% which can be targeted towards the lowest paid. These proposals set out to make best use of the money available and target retention where appropriate. There are also existing mechanisms such as allowances that can be used to address any identified retention pressures.
- Building talent attraction and outreach capability to build awareness of our roles and departmental mission whilst targeting hard to recruit roles.
- Continuing to develop our employee offer and evolve how we position that internally and externally to engage a multigenerational workforce to support staff retention.
- Improving engagement through development of the Future Defra Story so people understand their contribution to the wider Defra group aims. Future Defra's 'Thriving people' pillar aims that Defra is 'a destination organisation by investing in people so they can enjoy their job and feel valued'.

- Developing career pathways will enable staff to proactively manage their careers supported by great learning and development opportunities including the use of apprenticeships.
- Growing our understanding of staff's reasons for leaving through an improved exit questionnaire leading to insights for future interventions.
- Using specialist pay allowances while we explore longer term pay solutions for business-critical specialist roles that are critical to policy or delivery priorities.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Public Inquiries

Julian Knight:

[196844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what has been the average time taken to respond to public inquiries by her Department in each of the last five years; and whether she plans to introduce measures to improve those times.

Mark Spencer:

Defra has not issued a response to any public inquiry that has concluded within the last five years.

Public inquiries are an important mechanism to allow the Government to learn lessons for the future. Defra takes recommendations from public inquiries seriously and recognises the importance of taking time to thoroughly consider its response.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Written Questions

Julian Knight:

[196739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Mark Spencer:

The Government attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of Written Parliamentary Questions. There are three types of Written Parliamentary Question. The Cabinet Office's Guide to Parliamentary Work sets out the timelines departments should seek to meet. This can be found [here](#).

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](#).

This year's data will be published by the Procedure Committee when the session concludes. Every effort must be made to reply to Written Parliamentary Questions 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.

■ Fisheries and Seafood Scheme

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[198831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the outcomes of the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme.

Mark Spencer:

The FaSS is currently undergoing an independent evaluation lasting initially for two years. The evaluation will assess the scheme's administration and management, impact of the funding and the value for money of the scheme.

The evaluation is ongoing, but preliminary reporting shows the FaSS has had a broad contribution to increasing economic sustainability and resilience across the fisheries and seafood sectors. Feedback from the evaluation has already been acted upon by fund managers to ensure delivery is effective as possible and to maximise benefits. A full report with a detailed assessment will be published in 2024.

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[198832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many applications were received to the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme; what proportion of applications were successful; and how much funding was (a) allocated and (b) remains for allocation.

Mark Spencer:

The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) has had two distinct phases. Initially, we launched FaSS in April 2021 for one year, during which 529 applications were received, 98% (522) of which were successful and £8.5 million was allocated and spent. The scheme was relaunched in April 2022 and since then 815 applications have been received, 99% (808) of which were successful and £18 million has been allocated. This is in excess of the c. £12 million we originally allocated as a result of our efforts to keep the scheme open as long as possible. Unfortunately, we were still unable to fund new FaSS applications throughout 2023-24 and the scheme has now closed to new applications. FaSS will reopen in 2024 with a budget of £5 million to be allocated.

■ Flood Control

Emma Hardy:

[\[198909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to publish a progress update to her Department's Surface water management action plan, published on 17 July 2018, further to the update in July 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government will provide an update on the actions from the 2021 surface water government update as part of its response to the NIC's surface water study later this year.

Emma Hardy:

[\[198910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has completed Action plan 3 in the policy paper entitled Surface water management, a government update, published 29 July 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

On 29 July 2021, [Government published an update](#) that set out the work that had been done to contribute to Action 3 of the Surface Water Management Action Plan and the further actions required to complete this. The Environment Agency is on track to complete actions in 2024 as set out in that document and continues to work with risk management authorities to improve the national picture of surface water flood risk.

In August 2022, the Environment Agency published an update to the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water maps, incorporating additional local mapping. The Environment Agency has also continued to work closely with lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) through the development of the new National Flood Risk Assessment, encouraging LLFAs to share data, local knowledge, and further local detailed mapping. This work will enable local information to be included in improved national surface water flood maps for publication in 2024.

The Environment Agency strongly encourages LLFAs to work with Water and Sewerage companies in the development of any local detailed modelling and mapping. It continues to work with both the water industry and the insurance sector to help promote collaborative working and data sharing.

■ Food: UK Trade with EU

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[906363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the adequacy of business preparedness for future controls on the import of (a) food and (b) fresh products from the EU.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[906369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the adequacy of business preparedness for future controls on the import of (a) food and (b) fresh products from the EU.

Mark Spencer:

Following publication of the draft Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) in April 2023, the Government ran a six-week engagement period with industry. The feedback received is reflected in the final BTOM, notably the decision to delay implementation by three months, to January 2024, giving businesses more time to prepare. Before implementation of controls, awareness of and readiness for new

controls will be boosted through a series of engagement events. Further guidance will be available on GOV.UK.

■ Footwear: Recycling

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[198770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the amount of non-recyclable shoes in landfill waste in England.

Rebecca Pow:

Textile waste was identified as a priority in the Resources and Waste Strategy and we outlined our proposals for dealing with it in Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste which was published in July. Our current focus is on clothing and other flat textiles such as towels and bedding. However, the Government is supportive of initiatives which promote keeping products in use for longer. We want to prolong the lives of the materials and goods that we use and move society away from the inefficient 'linear' economic model of 'take, make, use, throw'.

Furthermore, we set an ambition in our Resources and Waste Strategy to send less than 10% of municipal waste to landfill by 2035. As a result of active diversion of municipal waste from landfill over the last two decades, only 8.1% of local authority collected waste was sent to landfill in 2021/22. This equates to a 90% reduction by weight since 2000/01 when 79% of municipal waste was sent to landfill.

■ Horse Passports

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[198021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to (a) change and (b) eliminate the Horse Passport System.

Mark Spencer:

Defra carried out a 12-week public consultation last year on Improvements to Equine Identification and Traceability in England. Subsequently Defra published the summary of results and Government response in November 2022. This report sets out Government plans to improve rather than to eliminate the current horse passport system. Notably this will include increased digitisation to make the system more efficient, accurate and easier to use for horse owners. This will better support equine traceability for disease control, equine welfare, trade and public health.

■ Inland Waterways: Climate Change

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to help improve the resilience of inland waterways in the context of climate change.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 21 July 2023 to his previous question PQ UIN 194528 of 17 July 2023.

Organic Food: Labelling**Sir Bill Wiggin:**[\[198033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the level of transparency that food producers have with consumers when using derogations for the use of non-organic agricultural ingredients.

Mark Spencer:

A company who prepares, produces, stores, imports, exports or sells organic food in the UK must be certified by an approved UK organic control body.

A product for consumption may only be labelled and marketed as “organic” if it meets the organic production rules, at least 95% of the agricultural ingredients are organically certified, all other ingredients, additives and processing aids are listed as permitted in the organic regulations and the product, labels and suppliers are certified.

The 5% non-organic limit is only for permitted non-organic ingredients listed in the organic regulations or where an ingredient is not available in sufficient quality or quantity.

Derogations for non-organic ingredients which are not listed in the organic regulations are considered based on documentary evidence of non-availability of an ingredient in organic form in sufficient quality or quantity.

Our organic food legislation requires organic and non-organic ingredients to be identified in the ingredients panel on the label of an organic product. The Government is not overly prescriptive about how the organic and non-organic agricultural ingredients of a given product are shown so long as it is obvious to the consumer. An asterisk against all organic or non-organic ingredients is a common method used by UK producers.

Recycling**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to develop a more circular economy for resources.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is supportive of initiatives which promote a more circular economy.

‘Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste’, the new Waste Prevention Programme for England, was published in July 2023. It outlined our ambitions for waste prevention across in relation to three cross cutting areas – designing out waste, systems and services and data and information; and seven key sectors: construction,

textiles, furniture, electronic and electrical products, road vehicles, plastics and packaging and food. It sets out our priorities for action to manage resources and waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy and embeds our circular economy approach by retaining materials and goods in circulation for as long as possible and at their highest value.

■ Responsible Dog Ownership Working Group

Judith Cummins: [\[198117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what timeframe her Department set the Responsible Dog Ownership working group for reporting its recommendations.

Trudy Harrison:

We expect the Responsible Dog Ownership working group to publish its findings later this year.

Judith Cummins: [\[198118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will publish (a) the membership of, (b) a list of the regular participants of, (c) the key stakeholders who have engaged with and (d) the number of meetings held to-date of the Responsible Dog Ownership working group.

Trudy Harrison:

Publication of the membership, regular participants and key stakeholders who have engaged with the Responsible Dog Ownership working group is expected later this year alongside their conclusions. We are currently working in partnership with the police, local authorities and animal welfare organisations to address all aspects of tackling irresponsible dog ownership effectively, from prevention to robust, consistent enforcement, focussing on owners as well as on their dogs.

■ UK Trade with EU: Food

Richard Thomson: [\[198262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of import checks on products arriving from the EU on (a) food prices and (b) consumers.

Mark Spencer:

The Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) will introduce import controls on consignments arriving in GB from the EU. Our analysis indicates that these controls would at most have an impact on inflation of less than 0.2% in total over a 3-year period. We are taking steps to support businesses importing to GB to prepare for BTOM and do not anticipate BTOM will adversely affect supplies, including food supplies, to GB.

Richard Thomson: [\[198263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with industry in the (a) UK and (b) EU on the potential impact of import checks on food products arriving from the EU.

Mark Spencer:

Following the launch of the draft Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) in April 2023, the Government ran a 6-week engagement period with affected stakeholders, including businesses in the UK and EU. As part of this, the Government engaged approximately 10,000 participants that registered for Government-led events and received over 200 written responses to an online portal and over 650 detailed responses at focused sessions. The feedback received is reflected in the publication of BTOM, notably the decision to move the introduction of controls by three months to give businesses more time to prepare.

Richard Thomson: [\[198264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of import checks on food products arriving from the EU on (a) independent and (b) small and medium-sized (i) sandwich shops, (ii) delicatessens and (iii) grocery wholesale businesses.

Mark Spencer:

The Border Target Operating Model provides a proportionate and streamlined import control regime that supports businesses of all sizes while maintaining high levels of biosecurity and public health protection. During the 6-week stakeholder engagement period, the majority of responding businesses identified as small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). We have listened to the feedback and we have pushed back the implementation dates for SPS controls giving industry longer to prepare. We have also revised the SPS trusted trader scheme and set out further facilitations for importers using groupage models, all of which will benefit SMEs.

Richard Thomson: [\[198265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of import checks on food products arriving from the EU on Christmas supply chains.

Mark Spencer:

Under the Border Target Operating Model, no new controls will be implemented before 31 January 2024, so new controls will not impact Christmas supply chains in 2023.

Richard Thomson: [\[198268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that (a) border inspection teams and (b) port authorities are fully-staffed ahead of the implementation of import checks on food products arriving from the EU.

Mark Spencer:

Following the decision to delay implementing new SPS controls on EU-GB imports of animal products, Defra agreed to fund up to 150 staff for Port Health Authorities through the Port Health Transition Fund. This funding was extended, confirming funding for existing staff at PHAs for the financial year 2023/2024, allowing retention of capacity and skills for delivery of the BTOM as well as continuing the ongoing work on managing biosecurity risks, (e.g., African Swine Fever). Following the publication of the final BTOM, we will continue to work with both APHA and PHAs to agree resourcing plans to deliver the proposed controls and develop a clear and consistent understanding across PHAs and APHA as to how the new controls should be implemented.

Richard Thomson:[\[198270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the implementation of import checks on food products arriving from the European Union to Great Britain causes minimal loss of perishable products.

Mark Spencer:

Fruit and vegetable imports have been classified as low-risk meaning they will not require any additional paperwork or checks. Where perishable products will require additional physical checks, the three-month period from 31 January 2024 will allow businesses time to familiarise themselves with the new requirements before full implementation on 30 April 2024. From 30 April, our approach to compliance and enforcement will be carefully calibrated to balance an expectation that businesses will do their best to comply, with an understanding that there will be a period of adjustment. We will continue to pursue an approach of supporting businesses towards full compliance via guidance and warnings and only escalating to enforcement where necessary.

Richard Thomson:[\[198271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the availability of fresh food will not be affected by the implementation of import checks on food products arriving from the EU.

Mark Spencer:

Fruit and vegetable imports have been classified as low-risk meaning they will not require any additional paperwork or checks. We do not expect a significant impact on availability. In implementing this new control regime for the first time on EU imports, we will carefully monitor the range of potential risks, including those that may impact food supply-chains. Where possible we will work with importers to try to manage those risks in a structured way, considering whether there are appropriate contingencies which we can deploy if and when required.

The UK Government will also work closely with our key trading partners, to ensure that the capacity and availability of certifiers for Export Health Certificates does not become a barrier to trade.

■ Urban Areas: Environment Protection

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[198636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential role of greening urban areas in achieving the UK's environmental targets.

Trudy Harrison:

The Secretary of State is committed to greening urban areas in achieving the UK's environmental targets. In January this year Natural England launched a Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework, which it developed in partnership with Defra and other key stakeholders.

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 sets out how the GI Framework will be used to track progress in our commitment for everyone to have access to green or blue space within 15 minutes from their front door. Well-designed green infrastructure has an important role to play in urban areas in improving health and wellbeing, air quality, nature recovery and resilience to and mitigation of climate change, as well as growing the natural capital of city-regions. The use of green infrastructure can help to reduce the risk and impact of extreme heat and surface water flooding through street trees and Sustainable Drainage Systems, contributing to our goal of reducing the risk of harm from environmental hazards.

■ Water Companies: Standards

Emma Hardy:

[\[198915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information her Department holds on the water companies which have (a) published final drainage and wastewater management plans and (b) submitted those plans to Ofwat as part of their PR24 Business Plan.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency, Ofwat, the Consumer Council for Water, and Defra, have reviewed and provided feedback on the draft DWMPs from each of the nine water companies in England. The final DWMPs have been published by the water companies and are publicly available on their websites.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Abduction

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions on enforced disappearances with the UN working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Government strongly condemns any instances of enforced disappearances. We urge states to fully investigate any allegations and prosecute those responsible, in order to provide justice to victims and their families.

The UK works through the multilateral system, including the UN, to address these crimes, highlighting concerns and working with others to end these abhorrent practices. Through our diplomatic network, we engage bilaterally to promote awareness, raising individual cases where appropriate, in order to enhance cooperation on this pressing issue.

■ Afghanistan: Hazara**Rachael Maskell:**[\[198397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the situation of the Hazara community in Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

FCDO officials regularly press the Taliban to protect religious and ethnic minorities, including the Hazara community. We are working with international partners to ensure credible monitoring. In October, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution to extend the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate. His February report included an assessment of the violence and threats against religious minorities and the situation for Hazara communities. Ministers and officials engage regularly with a range of Afghans, including Hazaras, to ensure our policy and programming reflect the diversity of needs in Afghanistan. In May, officials met a representative from the Hazara National Congress.

■ Afghanistan: Politics and Government**Rachael Maskell:**[\[198398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help de-escalate the risk of violence in Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

The Government is firmly committed to supporting an inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan. Such a settlement will enable the Afghan people to live in lasting peace and security. We have made clear to the Taliban that they need to enter into a genuine intra-Afghan political dialogue, in order to make progress towards reaching a political settlement. We have encouraged them to engage with a diverse range of Afghans, particularly women and civil society representatives. FCDO Ministers and officials engage regularly with these important constituencies. The Government also provides support to peacebuilding organisations through the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund.

■ China: Development Aid**Catherine West:**[\[198939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of providing a multi-year funding settlement for its work on China.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The FCDO receives multi-year funding settlements at each Spending Review, which are then allocated internally. The FCDO have published their planned budget allocations for the remaining years of the current Spending Review period (2023-24 and 2024-25) within the 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts.

As set out in the Integrated Review Refresh in March, we will double our funding (financial year 2024-25) to build China capabilities across the Government in recognition of the evolving and epoch-defining challenge that China poses. We are unable to comment on funding allocations outside of the current Spending Review period.

■ China: Espionage**Catherine West:**[\[198942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps with his international counterparts to (a) share and (b) adopt best practice on tackling Chinese espionage.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As the Foreign Secretary laid out in his Mansion House speech, our China policy involves deepening cooperation and strengthening our alignment with friends and partners across the world. This includes sharing our awareness and understanding of threats we, and our allies, face so that we can strengthen our national security protections wherever actions pose a threat to our people or our prosperity.

■ China: Human Rights**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[197851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he had with his Chinese counterpart on human rights violations against the Uyghur population during his visit to China in August 2023.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

During his recent visit to China, the Foreign Secretary made clear to the Chinese Government the UK's strength of feeling about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We will continue to press the Chinese authorities to uphold their human rights obligations and raise the violations in Xinjiang at the UN and other international fora.

■ India: Cultural Relations

Navendu Mishra:

[\[198244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage cultural exchange between the UK and India.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Culture features prominently in the *India-UK 2030 Roadmap*. A key *Roadmap* deliverable was the recently concluded and hugely successful India-UK Together Season of Culture. This programme saw 51 partners employing nearly two thousand artists, reached an audience of over fourteen million people and welcomed visitors to 21 cities across both countries. This has set the stage for further collaboration and exchange. Furthermore, the Arts and Heritage Minister, Lord Parkinson, recently visited India to attend the G20 culture track and meet his Indian counterparts and key culture sector stakeholders. DCMS (Department of Culture, Media & Sport), the lead UK Department, is committed to facilitating ongoing bilateral collaboration.

■ India: Violence

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[198530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Indian counterpart on the recent violence in Manipur.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Our diplomatic network in India closely follows reports of violence in the state of Manipur. The UK Government has a broad and deep partnership with the Government of India, and we discuss all elements of our relationship. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia, raised the current situation in Manipur with the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs during his visit to India in May. The British High Commissioner to India and our Deputy High Commissioner for East and Northeast India, over the last year, visited relevant communities including at Christian and Hindu places of worship.

■ Pakistan: Christianity

Alexander Stafford:

[\[198261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Pakistan on the treatment of Christians in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

The UK strongly condemns violence against Christians in Pakistan. Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), including for minority communities, remains central to the UK Government's human rights engagement in Pakistan. On 21 August, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia wrote to Pakistan's caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, urging the government to

ensure the safety of the Christian community following the attacks in Jaranwala. In a post on X (formerly Twitter) he publicly called for those responsible to be brought to justice and reiterated the UK's commitment to freedom of religion or belief for all. On 6 September, Lord Ahmad, condemned attacks against religious minorities in his meeting with the Pakistani High Commissioner.

Alexander Stafford: [\[198419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of recent attacks on churches in Jaranwala in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

The UK strongly condemns violence against Christians in Pakistan. Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), including for minority communities, remains central to the UK Government's human rights engagement in Pakistan. On 21 August, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia wrote to Pakistan's caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, urging the Government to ensure the safety of the Christian community following the attacks in Jaranwala. In a post on X (formerly Twitter) he publicly called for those responsible to be brought to justice and reiterated the UK's commitment to freedom of religion or belief for all. On 6 September, Lord Ahmad, condemned attacks against religious minorities in his meeting with the Pakistani High Commissioner.

Alexander Stafford: [\[198420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect Christians accused of (a) blasphemy and (b) other acts from (i) mob violence and (ii) extrajudicial killing in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

The UK strongly condemns violence against Christians in Pakistan. Protecting minority communities remains central to the UK Government's human rights engagement. On 21 August, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia, wrote to Pakistan's caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, urging the Government to ensure the safety of the Christian community following recent attacks in Jaranwala. On 6 September, Lord Ahmad condemned attacks against religious minorities in his meeting with the Pakistani High Commissioner. We continue to raise the issue of blasphemy laws privately at the highest levels. On 27 June, Lord Ahmad raised the use of blasphemy laws to target marginalised religious communities with Pakistan's then-Minister for Human Rights, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada.

■ Pakistan: Development Aid

Alexander Stafford: [\[198260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on aid spending in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

We have renewed our strong commitment to our development partnership with Pakistan to provide £41.5 million in bilateral Overseas Development Aid (ODA) for FY 23/24. This supports family planning, climate resilience and regional stability. Our ODA budget is set to more than triple for FY24/25, to £133 million.

■ South East Asia: Chevening Scholarships Programme**Catherine West:**[\[198176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Chevening scholarships awarded to people from (a) the ASEAN nations and (b) Timor-Leste.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Chevening is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year and since the programme began in 1983 it has granted Chevening scholarships to over 6200 people from ASEAN nations and over 50 to people from Timor Leste.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Alcoholism: Rehabilitation****Rachael Maskell:**[\[198814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to use positive interventions on alcohol use.

Neil O'Brien:

As part of the Government's Drugs Strategy, we are investing £532 million over three years into local authority-commissioned substance misuse treatment services in England, which includes supporting an additional 54,500 new high-quality treatment places, including for those with alcohol dependency, by the end of 2024/25.

In addition, as part of the NHS Long Term Plan, we have provided national funding to support the implementation of specialist alcohol care teams in the 25% of acute hospitals that have the highest rates of alcohol-related admissions.

The Department, in partnership with the devolved administrations, are also developing the first United Kingdom-wide clinical guidelines on alcohol treatment, which will include guidance for commissioners and services on addressing barriers to treatment.

■ Alison Kelly**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the dates Alison Kelly, the former nursing and quality director at the Countess of Chester Hospital, was last employed by (a) the NHS and (b) an organisation overseen his Department.

Will Quince:

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

■ Baby Care Units: Mortality Rates

Julian Knight: [\[196895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what protocols are in place to (a) monitor and (b) evaluate (i) neonatal mortality rates and (ii) suspicious occurrences in neonatal units in NHS hospitals.

Julian Knight: [\[196899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to help ensure that NHS whistleblowers are protected when raising concerns.

Julian Knight: [\[196901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to launch a nationwide review of neonatal (a) mortality rates and (b) unexplained deaths.

Julian Knight: [\[196903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support families affected by the Lucy Letby case.

Julian Knight: [\[196904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the level of public trust in the safety of neonatal care.

Julian Knight: [\[196913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review guidance on the (a) use and (b) access to medicines and equipment in neonatal wards.

Maria Caulfield:

On 4 September 2023, my Rt. hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, announced an independent inquiry, to be led by Lady Justice Thirlwall, into the events at the Countess of Chester Hospital and the actions of Lucy Letby. In line with the wishes of the families, this will be a full statutory inquiry established under the Inquiries Act 2005, giving it legal powers to compel witnesses to give evidence under oath.

The Secretary of State ordered the Inquiry on the day of Lucy Letby's conviction and has made clear that the wishes of the families will remain central to how the inquiry is taken forward to provide the answers they need. The Secretary of State will make a statement on the Inquiry's terms of reference at the earliest opportunity.

We have asked NHS Resolution to look at compensation and it will work with the families and their representatives to agree an approach which is sympathetic and fair and minimises any further distress. At this time, the police have arrangements in

place to appropriately support families impacted, including psychological support and family liaison officers.

We have taken action to improve patient safety and identify warning signs more quickly and will continue to make improvements. In 2019, we introduced medical examiners across England and Wales to independently scrutinise deaths not investigated by a coroner and will now make this a statutory role.

Additionally, the Secretary of State has asked for the Department and NHS England to revisit recommendation 5 of the Kark review, on disbarring senior managers for serious misconduct.

In 2020, NHS England's Getting It Right First Time programme was expanded to cover neonatal services. It reviewed England's neonatal services using detailed data and gave trusts individual improvement plans, which they are working towards.

On 27 March 2023, the Government announced a review of the whistleblowing legal framework. The Government supports the right of staff working in the National Health Service to speak up and raise concerns. There is a range of support and protection in place, including legal protections to prohibit detriment and discrimination against workers and job applicants who have spoken up. The review will examine the effectiveness of the framework in meeting its intended objectives of enabling workers to come forward to speak up about wrongdoing and to protect those who do so against detriment and dismissal.

The Secretary of State has asked the Department and NHS England to explore if introducing 'Martha's rule' would enhance patient safety in England. This could follow Ryan's rule, established in Queensland, Australia, which allows patients or their families to request a clinical review of their case from a doctor or nurse if their condition is deteriorating or not improving as expected

A formal assessment has not been made of the level of public trust in the safety of neonatal care. NHS England's Three-Year Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Services, published in March 2023, sets out how NHS England will make maternity and neonatal care safer, more personalised, and more equitable for women, babies, and families. The Delivery Plan has provided a clear and co-ordinated direction which will guide maternity services to provide women and families with the care and support they need. There are no plans to do a formal review of the use and access to medicines and equipment in neonatal wards.

On neonatal mortality rates and unexplained deaths, although there are no current plans to launch a nationwide review, the 'Child Death Review: Statutory and Operational Guidance' outlines the duties of Child Death Review partners in relation to the processes to be followed when responding to, investigating, and reviewing the death of any child, from any cause. The Child Death Review is a statutory process, which involves a multi-disciplinary child death overview panel to ensure that lessons are learnt from child deaths, that learning is widely shared and actions are taken to reduce preventable child deaths in the future.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Grahame Morris:

[\[198674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what changes his Department plans to make to the (a) reporting of and (b) data collected by NHS England on cancer waiting times after 1 October 2023.

Will Quince:

The Department has taken steps to work with NHS England to modernise and simplify National Health Service cancer waiting time targets. The new standards are more in line with the requirements of modern cancer care, with a greater focus on outcomes and incentivising the completion of the pathway, in the best interests of patients.

From 1 October 2023, the NHS will move from the 10 different standards currently in place to three:

- Faster Diagnosis Standard: a diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days of referral (set at 75%, rising to 80% by 2026);
- 31-day treatment standard: commence treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat for all cancer patients (set at 96%); and
- 62-day treatment standard: commence treatment within 62 days of being referred or consultant upgrade (set at 85%).

There will be minimal changes to reporting of data by trusts. In addition, Cancer Waiting Time statistics will continue to be published monthly by NHS England, who will take this opportunity to improve the granularity of the statistics by cancer type.

NHS England will continue to collect and publish some data on the other process-based standards, such as first and subsequent radiotherapy or chemotherapy treatments. This data will remain important in terms of being able to analyse and understand reasons for any changes in overall performance.

■ Cancer: Warrington North

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[198464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Department has taken to monitor the potential impact of changes in NHS cancer waiting time targets in Warrington North constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

On 17 August 2023, NHS England announced that cancer waiting times standards would be rationalised from 1 October 2023. This followed the clinically led review of standards across the National Health Service which recommended consolidating cancer waiting times from nine standards into three. 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 changes will allow a clearer focus on priorities and 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.

As previously, NHS cancer waiting time targets will be published at provider and commissioner level, but not by constituency.

■ Care Homes: Buildings

Helen Morgan:

[\[198258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of residential care homes constructed with reinforced autoclave aerated concrete.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 September 2023]: The Department does not hold information about the building or maintenance of care homes in England.

Adult social care (ASC) is provided through a largely outsourced market of commercial organisations and charities and is regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2008, providers must make sure that they meet the requirements of relevant legislation so that premises and equipment are properly used and maintained. They are responsible for their own building maintenance and there should be regular health and safety risk assessments of the premises (including grounds) and equipment.

Reinforced autoclave aerated concrete is a longstanding issue, and there is guidance available to support ASC sector building owners to identify and assess any issues and, if necessary, to take remedial measures to make their buildings safe.

■ Care Homes: Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring care homes to provide (a) residents and (b) family members of residents of care homes with access to a second opinion on clinical care decisions if they raise concerns about a proposed decision.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 September 2023]: There are currently no plans to undertake such an assessment. If a resident of a care home, or one of their family members, is concerned about a proposed clinical decision, there are safeguards already in place to help them access a second opinion. Guidelines from the National Institute for

Health and Care Excellence (NICE) set out that health and care services should 'ensure that the patient knows that they can ask for a second opinion from a different healthcare professional and, if necessary, how they would go about this'.

Healthcare professionals, including those working in care homes, are expected to take guidance from NICE fully into account when providing care and treatment for individual patients.

■ Dementia: Solihull

Julian Knight:

[198746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce dementia-specific training for general practitioners in Solihull constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

An action plan launched in response to the 2023 – 2028 Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care Board Dementia Strategy includes general practitioner (GP) training as part of a robust training schedule for all health and social care professionals.

One of the key goals of this strategy is to increase the dementia diagnosis rate in Birmingham and Solihull to at least meet the national target of 67.7%. This will be achieved in part by running dementia diagnosis reporting from primary care systems to identify GP practices and primary care networks not meeting the national target for the dementia diagnosis rate. Members of the primary care workforce will be provided with a toolkit to correctly code patients on the dementia register.

Information on the strategy is available at the following link:

https://www.birminghamsolihull.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/6816/7951/4782/BSICS_Dementia_Strategy_Action_Plan_2023-2028_FINAL_MAR23.pdf

■ Dental Services: Integrated Care Boards

Rachael Maskell:

[199134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help Integrated Care Boards to develop Centres for Dental Development.

Rachael Maskell:

[199135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that the Hull York Medical School is used as a model for a Centre for Dental Development.

Neil O'Brien:

As proposed Centres for Dental Development are developed by integrated care boards (ICBs) in England, we will work closely and collaboratively with areas to support their creation. NHS England is working with ICBs to develop a resource for publication, to support ICBs with considering how to establish a Centre in their area.

Centres for Dental Development have the potential to support recruitment and retention in an area, however, they will not replicate the role of dental schools in training and supplying the dentistry workforce of the future. Individual centres will be

driven locally, in alignment with the ICB strategy to address health inequalities and drive improvements in the quality of oral health care.

■ **Dental Services: Selby and Ainsty**

Keir Mather:

[\[198448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase access to NHS dentistry in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 13 September 2023]: In July 2022 we announced a package of reforms to improve access to National Health Service dentistry. This included changes to the banding of courses of treatments and the introduction of a minimum Units of Dental Activity value.

From 1 April 2023, responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. ICBs are responsible for having local processes in place to involve patient groups, and for undertaking oral health needs assessments, to identify areas of need and determine the priorities for investment.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, published on 30 June 2023, sets out the steps the NHS and its partners need to take to deliver an NHS workforce that meets the changing needs of the population over the next 15 years. These include a 40% increase to dentistry undergraduate training places by 2031/32.

However, we know that we need to do more, and that there are some areas where access is particularly problematic. We are working on our Dental Plan, which will address how we continue to improve access, particularly for new patients, and how we make NHS work more attractive to ensure NHS dentists are incentivised to deliver more NHS care.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Data Protection**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[198677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Schedule 12 of the Data Protection and Digital Information (No. 2) Bill, whether he already has the statutory authority to (a) issue written notices to relevant IT providers requesting their compliance with information standards of the type described in Section 251ZB and (b) publish a statement of censure to relevant IT providers regarding their non-compliance with those standards of the type described in Section 251ZC.

Will Quince:

At present public providers of health or adult social care in England must have regard to information standards. Changes made by the Health and Care Act 2022, once commenced, will make information standards binding and extend them so that they apply to private health and adult social care providers that are required to be registered with the Care Quality Commission.

The Data Protection and Digital Information Bill is intended to make those involved in supplying IT systems used for processing health and adult social care information accountable for meeting mandatory information standards used in connection with the provision of health and adult social care in England. The Bill is intended to give the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care powers to enable them to issue relevant IT providers who are suspected of not complying with an information standard with a notice asking for compliance. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care will also be able to publish a statement about non-compliance by way of public censure.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Public Inquiries

Julian Knight:

[196850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Will Quince:

We monitor public enquiries performance by how many cases are responded to within 20 working days of receipt. We have implemented a performance recovery plan to improve our achievement in this area.

Our performance against this measure is set out in the Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts, which are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2018-to-2019>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2019-to-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-to-2021>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>

■ Diabetes: Drugs

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[198840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to (a) inform and (b) help support patients with type-2 diabetes who may be affected by shortages of medications.

Will Quince:

We are aware of a supply issue with glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor agonist medicines, which has been largely driven by off-label use for weight loss. We have issued guidance in the form of Medicine Supply Notifications and, on 18 July, issued a National Patient Safety Alert which made it clear that Ozempic, which is solely

licensed to treat type 2 diabetes, should only be used for that purpose, and should not be routinely prescribed for weight loss.

We have provided advice for healthcare professionals on how to manage patients requiring this medicine whilst there are shortages and are keeping this under review as the situation evolves. We are working closely with national diabetes specialists, wholesalers, all manufacturers of these medicines and the relevant regulatory bodies and agencies to address this problem and to understand how we can help to ensure type 2 diabetic patients continue to get access to their treatment. If any patient is concerned about their treatment, they should discuss this with their clinician at the earliest opportunity.

■ **General Practitioners: Selby and Ainsty**

Keir Mather:

[\[198555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of GP surgeries are rated as Good by the CQC in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

As of 13 September 2023, there are seven general practice surgeries rated 'good' (87.5%) by the Care Quality Commission in the Selby and Ainsty constituency.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine: Surveys**

Catherine West:

[\[198890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason women over the age of 55 are not being invited to participate in his Department's Reproductive Health Survey for England 2023.

Catherine West:

[\[198891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to include women over the age of 55 in his Department's Reproductive Health Survey for England 2023.

Neil O'Brien:

The 2023 Women's Reproductive Health Survey focuses on recent experiences of periods, prevention and planning of pregnancy, pregnancy experiences and menopause (which usually affects women between the ages of 45 and 55), therefore many of the questions in the survey would not be relevant to the majority of women over 55 years of age.

Whilst exploring current and previous reproductive health experiences of women aged over 55 is outside of the scope of the 2023 Women's Reproductive Health Survey, we recognise that some women experience menopausal symptoms and other reproductive health issues beyond this age. We remain committed to listening to the voices of women of all ages and there will be further research in due course that explores the health needs of different groups of women.

■ Health Visitors

Wes Streeting: [\[198962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the total number of visits by health visitors that took place in each of the last 10 years.

Will Quince:

Since 2015, when commissioning was moved to local authorities, the Department has annually published statistics on the number of mandatory visits delivering the Healthy Child Programme by Health Visitors. Data on additional visits is only available for 2019/20. Visit statistics are not available prior to 2015. The information is shown in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. Attachment [TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE - PQ198962 Attachment - HV data (1).docx]

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[198857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the uptake of the Healthy Start scheme in (a) the South East and (b) England was in the past year.

Neil O'Brien:

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. Monthly uptake figures for the Healthy Start scheme, including uptake figures for England, are published on the NHS Healthy Start website, and are available at the following link:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/>

Monthly uptake figures for the Healthy Start scheme are not available from March 2022 to December 2022, as the data needed to calculate uptake was not made available to the NHSBSA.

Monthly uptake figures for the South East since January 2023 are set out in the table below:

JANUARY 2023	61.6%
February 2023	62.4%
March 2023	63.0%
April 2023	63.7%
May 2023	64.1%
June 2023	63.9%
July 2023	63.4%

JANUARY 2023	61.6%
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August 2023	64.7%
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■ Hearing Aids

Olivia Blake: [\[198861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in which areas of England bilateral hearing aids (a) are and (b) are not provided to all patients with hearing loss in both ears who wish to receive them.

Helen Whately:

Audiology services are locally commissioned services and responsibility for provision of hearing aids, including bilateral hearing aids, lies with local National Health Service commissioners. Data on provision of bilateral hearing aids is not held centrally, although this information may be collected locally.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Chris Green: [\[195971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department makes an estimate of the timescale for manufacturing influenza vaccines to (a) inform its decision on eligibility for the annual NHS influenza immunisation programme and (b) ensure the adequacy of supply of those vaccines across the country.

Maria Caulfield:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation regularly discuss with the vaccine manufacturing industry issues such as the availability of new and existing vaccines, and manufacturing lead in times. Their advice about which flu vaccines are to be used for the coming season is informed by these discussions. An effective programme depends on a reliable supply of vaccine. It takes approximately five to six months for the first supplies of approved vaccine to become available once a new strain of influenza virus is identified and isolated.

National Health Service providers determine how many seasonal flu vaccines to buy for eligible cohorts each year based on their local populations, as outlined in the annual flu system letter. The letter, published on 25 May 2023, is based on the advice of the JCVI, which reviews the latest evidence on flu vaccines and advises on the type of vaccine to be offered to different age groups and on which vaccines should be prioritised for various at-risk groups.

General practitioners and community pharmacists are responsible for ordering their own flu vaccines for the adult population from suppliers. These are then used to deliver the national flu vaccination programme, with deliveries phased through the season to help mitigate against risks of wastage, cold chain failure and to adequately cover the peaks and flows of local demand.

NHS England encourages their contractors to purchase vaccines from more than one manufacturer to mitigate against the risk of supply issues. Regional NHS England commissioners, in partnership with their local systems, also make assessments of the amount of vaccine available in their area to ensure there is enough supply to meet public demand.

The UK Health Security Agency secures and supplies a sufficient volume of flu vaccines used in the children's flu programme to ensure that eligible children aged less than 18 years old who present for vaccination can be offered an appropriate vaccine.

■ **Mental Health Services: Selby and Ainsty**

Keir Mather:

[\[198550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of mental health specialists in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Health Service has published a Long Term Workforce Plan which outlines the steps the Government has taken to support the recruitment and retention of mental health specialists, including in Selby and Ainsty.

■ **NHS: Civil Proceedings**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[197804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of litigation on culture in the NHS.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department is committed to ensuring there is an open, just and learning culture in the National Health Service. Equally, where people have been harmed negligently, they are entitled to seek redress, including through litigation.

Several organisations, such as NHS England, the Care Quality Commission and NHS Resolution (NHSR) are responsible for ensuring the NHS is continuously improving towards a just culture that balances fairness, learning and accountability. In July 2023, NHS England published 'Improving patient safety culture – a practical guide' which supports the existing NHS 'Just Culture Guide' and seeks to embed just culture principles across the NHS.

On litigation, NHSR, which handles claims on behalf of the NHS, has launched a range of resources to support NHS trusts in relation to openness, duty of candour, the importance of apologies and learning from claims. NHSR has worked with a wide range of partners in developing their 'Being Fair' guidance and the Just and Learning Culture Charter, which were published earlier this year and promote a just and learning culture for all.

■ NHS: Disclosure of Information

Rachael Maskell: [\[197796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to create an independent complaints system for NHS staff to raise concerns about patient care and potential malpractice.

Maria Caulfield:

There are already several routes, both within National Health Service organisations and externally, for NHS staff to raise concerns about anything that gets in the way of delivering safe and high-quality care. NHS England's national freedom to speak up policy, which all organisations delivering NHS care should adopt by January 2024, sets out the range of internal routes open to staff, including their Local Freedom To Speak Up Guardian, who can support staff to speak up if they feel unable to do so via other routes.

For staff who do not wish to raise a concern within their organisation, there are also several external routes available, including the Care Quality Commission and, if appropriate, the relevant professional body. In addition, we have put in place a Speak Up Direct helpline and website for NHS and social care staff. The service provides advice for staff who want to speak up about something that concerns them in their organisation.

Rachael Maskell: [\[197798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission in examining cases reported by whistle-blowers concerning claims of misconduct, bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Maria Caulfield:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) takes very seriously issues that are raised with them in relation to patient and worker safety. They also use such information to help shape their regulatory action. The CQC normally receives reports on whistle-blowers concerns through its National Customer Service Centre, as well as via their online digital service, healthcare staff or members of the public. When the CQC receives a whistleblowing concern, it is triaged and prioritised for further action.

■ NHS: Staff

Julian Knight: [\[196902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to ask the NHS to improve its internal investigation processes regarding allegations made against staff.

Julian Knight: [\[196906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there are protocols in place for mandatory external reviews after internal concerns on patient safety are raised within the NHS.

Maria Caulfield:

From 2015, the National Health Service has followed the Serious Incident Framework to guide its response to serious incidents in the NHS. Details of this framework are available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/serious-incident-framework/>

In response to evidence that this framework was not leading to sufficient patient safety improvement, the new Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) was developed, tested, and is now being implemented across the NHS. All NHS organisations contracted under the NHS standard contract are expected to transition to PSIRF in autumn 2023. More information is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/incident-response-framework/>

PSIRF has guidance for oversight bodies, including integrated care boards and NHS England regional teams, describing when it may be appropriate for those bodies to consider commissioning an independent patient safety incident investigation. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/B1465-4.-Oversight-roles-and-responsibilities-specification-v1-FINAL.pdf>

Providers can also commission invited reviews from Royal Colleges, including in response to patient safety concerns. These provide independent and objective advice to provider boards. The reviews support but do not replace the processes of healthcare regulatory bodies, including the Care Quality Commission and the General Medical Council, or the provider's own procedures for addressing and managing patient safety.

NHS England will refresh 'Maintaining High Professional Standards in the Modern NHS', in line with current best practice and learning from incidents and reviews.

■ Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome**Jonathan Ashworth:****[198793]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of recognising PANS and PANDAS as a condition eligible for personalised NHS treatment.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made.

■ Physician Associates: Employment and Regulation**Nadia Whittome:****[198568]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many physician associates are employed in the NHS; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the regulation of physician associates.

Will Quince:

Latest data published by NHS England shows that, as of March 2023, there are 1,490 full time equivalent (FTE) physician associates (PAs) working across National Health Service trusts and integrated care boards. In addition, in June 2023 there were a total of 1,805 FTE physician associates working in primary care settings.

The Faculty of Physician Associates at the Royal College of Physicians currently provides professional support to PAs across the United Kingdom. This includes setting standards for education and training. The Faculty also oversees a voluntary register of qualified PAs who have been declared fit to practise in the UK.

Work is ongoing to bring PAs into statutory regulation under the General Medical Council (GMC). We plan to lay legislation before Parliament at the end of 2023, which will allow the GMC to commence regulation by the end of 2024. Regulation by the GMC will provide a standardised framework of governance and assurance for the clinical practice and professional conduct of PAs.

Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment**Grahame Morris:**[\[198673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that radiotherapy LINAC machines used in NHS Trusts are replaced once they go beyond their recommended 10-year lifespan; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of rolling replacement funding.

Will Quince:

Since April 2022, the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines has sat with local systems. This is supported by the 2021 Spending Review, which set aside £12 billion in operational capital for the National Health Service from 2022 to 2025.

Recent capital planning guidance sets out the expectation that the majority of radiotherapy equipment, particularly linear accelerator machines, will need to be replaced at 10 years of age, to make progress on NHS Long Term Plan priorities. The guidance states that integrated care systems 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.

Semaglutide**Grahame Morris:**[\[198650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward proposals to ban the off-label prescribing of Ozempic.

Will Quince:

We have issued guidance to prescribers and pharmacists that medicines which are solely licensed to treat type 2 diabetes, such as Ozempic, should not be routinely

prescribed for weight loss. The guidance is clear that these medicines should only be prescribed for the treatment of type 2 diabetes, in order to protect supply for diabetes patients.

Decisions about what medicines to prescribe are made by the doctor or healthcare professional responsible for that part of the patient's care and prescribers are accountable for their prescribing decisions, both professionally and to their service commissioners. All prescribers, whether employed privately or by the National Health Service, are also expected by their professional regulators and the Government to take account of appropriate national guidance. This includes Medicines Supply Notifications and National Patient Safety Alerts.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[198924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that off-label prescriptions of Ozempic Semaglutide for weight-loss from private healthcare providers do not create supply shortages for those prescribed Ozempic for diabetes.

Will Quince:

We have issued guidance in the form of Medicine Supply Notifications and, on 18 July, issued a National Patient Safety Alert which made it clear that Ozempic, which is solely licensed to treat type 2 diabetes, should only be used for that purpose, and should not be routinely prescribed for weight loss.

All prescribers, whether employed privately or by the National Health Service, are expected to take account of appropriate national guidance. It is for the responsible clinician to work with their patient and decide on the course of treatment, with the provision of the most clinically appropriate care for the individual always being the primary consideration.

We have engaged with relevant regulators, and the General Pharmaceutical Council, General Medical Council, Health and Care Professions Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland have issued a joint statement stressing the importance of health and care professionals meeting regulatory standards.

We are continuing to work closely with manufacturers and others working in the supply chain to help ensure the continued supply of these medicines for United Kingdom patients, for example by asking suppliers to expedite deliveries. We have provided advice for healthcare professionals on how to manage patients requiring this medicine while there are shortages and are keeping this under review as the situation evolves. If any patient is concerned about their treatment, they should discuss this with their clinician at the earliest opportunity.

■ Staff: Disciplinary Proceedings

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff have been disciplined for sexual harassment of (a) NHS staff and (b) patients in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not collected centrally but collected at a local level.

National Health Service organisations are required to have a policy that deals with sexual misconduct.

In July 2022, NHS England established a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Programme to build on safeguarding processes for protecting patients, improve victim support and focus on early intervention and prevention.

On 4 September 2023, NHS England launched the health service's first sexual safety charter. As part of this charter, every NHS trust and local health system in England will have a domestic abuse and sexual violence lead to support patients and staff to report incidents and access support.

The next NHS Staff Survey is due to be launched in October 2023 and will include a new question on unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature in the workplace. This will enable organisations to understand the potential prevalence of sexual misconduct within their organisations and inform further actions.

■ Strokes: Mechanical Thrombectomy

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[198508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to increase access to thrombectomy treatment for stroke patients.

Will Quince:

Thrombectomy is available in 24 centres in England. The National Health Service is committed to bringing about a tenfold increase in the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy from 1% to 10%. Progress has been made, with latest data showing that 3.3% of patients are receiving a thrombectomy following a stroke.

NHS England are taking steps to increase access to thrombectomy treatment for stroke patients by expanding access, with six centres currently offering 24/7 services, eight services currently providing extended hours and the remainder offering in-hours or a limited service. All thrombectomy providers and integrated stroke delivery networks are actively working to provide access to 24/7 services across England.

In addition, NHS England have worked with the General Medical Council in approving the thrombectomy curriculum and credentials to support non-interventional neuroradiologists to conduct thrombectomy and increase the number of thrombectomies that can be delivered.

■ Surgery

Wes Streeting: [\[198957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of elective procedures that have been cancelled on the day by patients in each of the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

We do not hold data on the number of elective procedures that have been cancelled on the day by patients in each of the last 12 months, and are unable to make an estimate.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Rachael Maskell: [\[198400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to ensure that people from Hazara communities are able to access the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

As of June 2023, the UK has granted settled status to around 9,800 individuals under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

The ACRS is designed to support those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values, as well as vulnerable people, including members of minority groups at risk. The ACRS is a bespoke scheme and is not open to applications. Instead, eligible individuals are prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK through one of three referral pathways, which is a fair and equitable way to identify those in need.

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.

We continue to work with likeminded partners and countries neighbouring Afghanistan on resettlement issues, and to support safe passage for eligible Afghans.

■ Asylum

Tim Farron: [\[198336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people whose asylum claims were withdrawn in the year ending June 2023 have (a) left the UK, (b) regularised their immigration status and (c) remained in the UK without any status.

Robert Jenrick:

We do not publish the information you have requested. As these figures are not available in a reportable format, providing information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

The Home Office publishes statistics on asylum claims. The latest statistics are available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1180065/outcome-analysis-asylum-applications-datasets-jun-2022.xlsx

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1178017/asylum-applications-datasets-jun-2023.xlsx

■ Children: Newham

Ms Lyn Brown:

[198101]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to help ensure ensure that public parks in Newham are safe for children during the hours when children travel home from school.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Policing of parks in Newham is an operational matter for the Metropolitan Police Service. Multi-agency partners, including the Metropolitan Police Service receives over £22.5m in funds to tackle serious violence in London. This includes funds for the Violence Reduction Unit which delivers a multi-agency partnerships to lead the local response to reducing violence, with a focus on long-term prevention.

To date, £3.2 million has been awarded through all rounds of the Safer Streets Fund to local projects across London. This includes just over £1.5 million in funding through the current fourth round for projects targeting anti-social behaviour, as well as neighbourhood crime and violence against women and girls. Interventions funded have included the installation of additional CCTV, streetlighting and alleygating. The Mayor for Policing and Crime in London and the City of London Police Authority board have both been allocated £2m in total through the latest fifth round of the fund to support delivery of a range of interventions focused on VAWG, ASB and Neighbourhood Crime.

■ Crime: Rural Areas

Keir Mather:

[198554]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) financial and (b) other steps her Department is taking to help prevent rural crime in (i) Selby and Ainsty constituency, (ii) North Yorkshire, and (iii) England.

Chris Philp:

The Government are committed to driving down rural crime. Whether someone lives in the countryside, a town, or a city, they should have the same peace of mind when going about their daily lives, and they should get the same high-quality service from the police if they fall victim to a crime.

While it is for Chief Constables to decide how to allocate their resources, up to £193.4 million funding is available for policing in North Yorkshire, an increase of up to £8.1m when compared to 2022/23. Overall police funding available to PCCs will

increase by up to £550.2 million this year. As at the end of March 2023, there were a record 149,500 police officers in England and Wales, 1,669 of whom were in North Yorkshire.

In addition to the funding for forces, the Government has provided £287,037 for the National Wildlife Crime Unit and £200,000 for the new National Rural Crime Unit. This will support all forces in their response to rural crimes such as theft of farming construction machinery, livestock theft and rural fly tipping. Funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit is in addition to funding provided on a long-term basis for the National Rural Crime Unit.

The Government has also acted to address specific points of concern raised by stakeholders in relation to rural crime and it supported the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023. The Act aims to prevent the theft of all-terrain vehicles such as quad bikes, by requiring immobilisers and forensic markings to be fitted as standard to all new all-terrain vehicles.

■ Fraud

Joanna Cherry:

[\[906386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of fraud on businesses.

Tom Tugendhat:

Discussions with Cabinet peers are held in confidence. However, the Government takes the issue of fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public and businesses from this devastating crime.

The 2020 Economic Crime Survey showed that around 1 in 5 businesses in surveyed sectors had been a victim of fraud over a three-year period. The mean annual cost per business of all fraud incidents was around £16,000, and the median cost was £1,000. 37% of businesses that experienced fraud also reported other impacts, including on the wellbeing of their staff.

The Fraud Strategy, published earlier this year, sets out the Government's three pillar approach to tackling this crime. We will work with industry, intelligence agencies, law enforcement, and with all partners to ensure that people and businesses have the advice and support they need.

■ Home Office: Social Media

Emily Thornberry:

[\[199031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the dates on which each post on the Minister for Security's X social media account was deleted between 6 September 2022 and 15 December 2022; and who took the decision for each of those posts to be deleted.

Tom Tugendhat:

Ministers are not required to take advice when choosing to make changes to their social media accounts. As such, the Home Office holds no relevant information.

■ Marriage: Fraud**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[198297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to provide support to victims of marriage fraud in the UK by foreign nationals to help them obtain (a) a residence permit and (b) money.

Tom Tugendhat:

The impact of fraud extends beyond financial losses. Victims can suffer both serious financial and emotional harm and that is why we have taken various steps, as detailed in the Fraud Strategy, to improve the victim support system.

The strategy outlines how we will raise public awareness and safeguard victims through improved reporting pathways, more accessible victim support, and the provision of clear and consistent protect advice. This will ensure that everyone receives the support they need to feel safe again and prevent revictimisation.

■ Migrants: Domestic Abuse**Caroline Nokes:**[\[198757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Evaluation of the Support for Migrant Victims pilot, published on 4 August 2023, when her Department plans to take a decision on the reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention.

Miss Sarah Dines:

We are carefully considering the findings of the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot evaluation to inform any future policy decisions. Once we have considered all the evidence in the round, we will communicate our decision on the Article 59 reservation.

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

■ Missing Persons**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[197853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in the UK are reported as missing as of September 2023.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Home Office does not hold this data centrally. Information about current missing persons incidents is held by individual police forces. The National Crime Agency's UK Missing Persons Unit holds the national database for all missing incidents that are

unresolved after 72 hours, allowing the police to have access to missing persons information across force boundaries. In addition, annual missing persons statistics, broken down to police force level, are published by the National Crime Agency's Missing Person's Unit in its annual data report which can be found here: [Downloads | UK Missing Persons Unit](#)

We are working with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to deliver a National Register of Missing Persons (NRMP) which will enable us to have a snapshot of live missing incidents across police forces in England and Wales. This will assist officers when they encounter a missing person particularly if that missing person is outside their home force area.

■ Motorcycles: Greater Manchester

Navendu Mishra:

[198243]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help local authorities in Greater Manchester to tackle illegal off road bikes.

Chris Philp:

On 27 March, the Government launched the Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan>) ensuring the police, local authorities and other relevant agencies have the powers they need to tackle the blight of anti-social behaviour, including off road bike nuisance, facing communities across England and Wales.

The plan is backed by £160m of funding. This includes up to £60m to fund an increased police and other uniformed presence to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, targeting hotspots. Initially we are working with 10 police force areas, but from 2024 we will support a hotspot approach across every police force area in England and Wales. We are also providing up to £50m to support the provision of Immediate Justice, by issuing out of court disposals with conditions to swiftly repair any damage – the aim being for them to start within 48 hours of referral. This will start in 10 initial trailblazer police force areas and be rolled out across England and Wales from 2024.

The police, local authorities and other local agencies can deal with anti-social behaviour involving vehicles (e.g. off-road bikes, racing round estates, driving across public open spaces) in the same way as they deal with any other anti-social behaviour. It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances. They are best placed to understand what is driving the behaviour in question, the impact that it is having, and to determine the most appropriate response.

We are giving the police the resources they need to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Greater Manchester Police recruited 1,280 additional uplift officers against a total three-year allocation of 1,155 officers. On 31 March 2023, there were 8,067 police officers in Greater Manchester, a total growth of 1,280 additional officers against the baseline (6,787) at the start of the Police Uplift Programme. Greater

Manchester's funding will be up to £740.1m in 2023/24, an increase of up to £25.0m when compared to 2022/23.

■ Offences against Children: Newham

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[198102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to work with local (a) businesses and (b) authorities to provide safe spaces for child victims of sexual street harassment in Newham.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Public sexual harassment is an appalling crime which the Government is committed to tackling. Our children have the right to both be and feel safe on our streets.

We are providing just over £1.2 million in funding, for the next two years, to the Children's Society for a programme to drive targeted action to respond to child sexual abuse and exploitation. The programme works with national and local partners, including businesses, to identify exploitation trends and work collaboratively to prevent harm.

In addition, we have:

- awarded £125 million through the Safer Streets and Safety of Women at Night Funds, covering a range of interventions including enhanced street lighting and CCTV, bystander training programmes and taxi marshals;
- are supporting Rt Hon. Greg Clark MP's Protection from Sex-Based Harassment in Public Bill, which provides that if someone commits an offence under section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986 (intentional harassment, alarm or distress) and does so because of the victim's sex, they can receive a longer sentence. In cases involving children, there are potentially additional offences that may be relevant;
- have ensured new guidance is in place for the police and prosecutors on public sexual harassment; and are running the "Enough" public communications campaign, which aims to target and challenge public sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls by, for example, empowering bystanders to intervene safely.

■ Passports: Children

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[198606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to undertake a comparative review of the cost of (a) getting and (b) renewing a child's passport in (i) the UK and (b) similar sized European countries.

Robert Jenrick:

British passport fees are set to recover the costs of providing related services, in line with HM Treasury Managing Public Money Guidance.

Passport fees levied by overseas issuing authorities have no bearing upon the fees agreed by Parliament for applying for a British passport. As such, there are no plans to conduct a comparative review.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

John Healey:

[\[198599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September to Question 195657 on Afghanistan: Refugees, on what exact date the first cohort of Afghan people arrive in the UK under (a) Pathway 2 and (b) Pathway 3 under the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

Exact arrival dates are not contained within the quarterly Immigration system statistics, year ending June 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[198608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will consult representatives of the retail trade sector on the potential merits of introducing a Protection of Employees Bill in the context of tackling assaults on employees.

Chris Philp:

The Government is clear that violence and abuse towards any worker is not acceptable. The offence of common assault carries a maximum penalty of six months.

Additionally, the Government has already legislated to introduce a statutory aggravating factor for assault against any public facing worker via section 156 of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. This legislation extends to England and Wales. The statutory aggravating factor applies in cases of assault where an offence is committed against those performing a public duty or providing a service to the public and ensures the courts treat the public-facing nature of a victim's role as an aggravating factor when considering the sentence for an offence.

The introduction of the statutory aggravating factor sends a strong message that violence and abuse against retail staff will not be tolerated.

The Home Office continues to work closely with retailers, trade associations and policing through the National Retail Crime Steering Group to ensure the response to retail crime is as robust as it can be.

JUSTICE**■ Child Trust Fund: Disability****Jim Shannon:**[\[198046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he is taking steps to simplify the process for parents of disabled children to access child trust fund accounts when their children turn eighteen.

Mike Freer:

Anyone who wishes to manage the finances of a person who lacks the mental capacity to do so for themselves, which includes children turning 18, must have the legal authority to do so. In England and Wales legal authority is obtained by applying to the Court of Protection.

In February the Court of Protection introduced an online process to streamline and speed up processing times for property and affairs applications. This has resulted in decisions for a Court of Protection application being obtained within 8 weeks instead of 24 weeks. We continue to review and revise the process and the court will continue to identify areas to simplify and remove duplication on court forms, including uploading to the online process many of the forms required for a property and affairs applications.

My friend represents Northern Ireland. I cannot comment on the situation there as this responsibility is devolved.

■ Court of Protection**Olivia Blake:**[\[198860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications for (a) personal welfare and (b) property and financial affairs deputyships have been made under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 in 2023; and how many of those applications have been approved.

Mike Freer:

All deputyship applications are considered by the Court of Protection, which derives its jurisdiction and powers from the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The Court covers England and Wales and deals with a range of applications in addition to deputyship applications.

In the period 1 January to 31 March 2023, 241 personal welfare applications were made of which 2 had received decisions from the Court of Protection as of 31 March. In the same time period, 2,432 property and financial affairs applications were made, of which had 549 received decisions as of 31 March.

When looking at Court of Protection disposal figures, regard should be given to other factors such as whether the application has been made correctly and whether the court has requested further information. The latter point is particularly prevalent in regard to in health and welfare applications, which are by their nature complex. The court will often consider it needs further information before it will make a decision.

Ipsos MORI: Prisons**Emily Thornberry:**[\[198320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 July 2023 to Question 193876 on Ipsos Mori, between which dates the Value of Prison survey was conducted online; and whether the results of that survey have been reported to his office.

Damian Hinds:

The department is working with Ipsos to finalise the research design and ensure analytical robustness. As such, the survey has not yet been conducted and therefore, results have not been reported to the Secretary of State's office.

This survey is part of a research project looking to quantify the key societal benefits associated with prison provision. The survey aims to quantify the retributive benefit of prison. As the approach to quantifying the retribution effect is novel, the Ministry of Justice will need to go through standard quality assurance processes to determine whether results are useable as part of our wider 'value of a prison place' work.

Once the fieldwork has been completed and results have been quality assured, they will be shared with the Secretary of State.

Marriage**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[198188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department plans to implement the recommendations in the Law Commission report entitled Celebrating Marriage: A New Weddings Law, published in July 2022.

Mike Freer:

Marriage will always be one of our most important institutions, and the Government has a duty to consider the implications of any changes to the law in this area very carefully.

The Government is considering the Law Commissions' 57 recommendations for legislative reform and a response will be published in due course.

Ministry of Justice: Buildings**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[197959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within their Department's estate.

Damian Hinds:

We are currently undertaking surveys to determine the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) across the entire Ministry of Justice estate.

At present, 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.

■ Ministry of Justice: Policy

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[198124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps they are taking to help ensure that their Department (a) gives sufficient attention to long term strategic challenges, (b) does not allow current events to slow down work on long term strategic issues and (c) consistently undertakes horizon scanning.

Mike Freer:

The Government has a clear vision for the justice system, including focusing on protecting the public and reducing reoffending. The Ministry of Justice is investing record sums in long term infrastructure programmes – notably the 20,000 prison places portfolio. The Ministry of Justice hosts dedicated resource involved in long-term strategy planning and horizon scanning, including a Futures, Insights, and Emerging Technology team that actively engages in cross-government horizon scanning networks.

■ Prison Accommodation

Shabana Mahmood: [\[198640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were in (a) category A and (b) category B prisons as of 11 September 2023.

Damian Hinds:

The number of prisoners held in Category A and B prisons as of 11 September is provided below. The main function of Category B training prisons is to hold sentenced Category B prisoners. By contrast all reception prisons are certified as suitable to hold sentenced category B prisoners, but their main function is to hold remand and recently sentenced prisoners.

FUNCTION	POPULATION
Category A prisons	5,039
Category B training prisons	6,200
Category B reception prisons	25,944
Total	37,183

Janet Daby: [\[198885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been assessed as needing to be moved into a higher security prison in the last six months; and what estimate he has made of how long it will take to move them.

Damian Hinds:

A categorisation review can take place at any point during a prisoner's sentence following specific incidents or changes in risk. It is vital to ensure we hold prisoners in

the appropriate category of prison. A total of 2020* prisoners in England and Wales have been assessed in the last six months as needing to be moved to a higher security prison. Upon receiving a new security categorisation level, they are relocated to their new category prison at the earliest opportunity.

*The data is captured from the Digital Categorisation Scheme and is used as information for internal management processes.

■ Prisoner Escapes

Shabana Mahmood: [\[198644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners who have (a) escaped and (b) absconded from category B prisons were (i) being held on remand for terrorism related charges, (ii) convicted of terrorism related charges, (iii) being held on remand under the Official Secrets Act and (iv) convicted under the Official Secrets Act since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

There has only been one incident of a prisoner who has (a) escaped or (b) absconded from category B prisons and was (i) being held on remand for terrorism related charges, (ii) convicted of terrorism related charges, (iii) being held on remand under the Official Secrets Act and (iv) convicted under the Official Secrets Act since 2010. This was the escape of Daniel Khalife from HMP Wandsworth on 06 September 2023.

An abscond is an escape that does not involve overcoming a physical security restraint such as that provided by a wall or fence, locks, bolts or bars, a secure vehicle, handcuffs, or the direct supervision of staff.

■ Procurement: Fraud

Emily Thornberry: [\[198321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many individuals were (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted of offences relating to procurement fraud against (i) private sector companies and (ii) public sector organisations in each of the last four financial years.

Emily Thornberry: [\[198322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted of offences relating to payroll fraud against (i) private sector companies and (ii) public sector organisations in each of the last four financial years.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants prosecuted and convicted for various offences under the Fraud Act 2006 in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2022](#).

However, whether the offences relate to procurement or payroll fraud specifically, and whether they were against private or public sector companies, is not held centrally in

the Court Proceedings database. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

■ Special Category Prisoners

Shabana Mahmood: [\[198645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were assessed to be in the wrong security categorisation since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

Prisoners are not assessed as being in the wrong security category. A re-categorisation review can take place at any point during a prisoner's sentence following specific incidents or changes in risk. It is vital to ensure we hold prisoners in the appropriate category of prison.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[198724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance his Department issues on the categorisation and management of prisoners who have been (a) charged with and (b) convicted of (i) terror-related and (ii) national security-related offences.

Damian Hinds:

Terrorism and national security-related offences vary considerably.

Risk assessments are carried out to determine the appropriate categorisation of each prisoner. Where an individual is serving a determinate custodial sentence for a terrorist or terrorist connected offence, their categorisation risk assessment must be informed by the Regional Counter Terrorism Team. Any individuals serving a sentence for an offence of this nature are deemed as unsuitable for the open estate unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There is a range of guidance on managing prisoners charged with or convicted of terror related offences in custody. There is a multi-agency, end-to-end case management process, which includes regular risk assessments. Much of the specific guidance is operationally sensitive and disclosing it would undermine national security efforts and the maintenance of good order in prisons.

■ Wandsworth Prison: Prison Officers

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[198412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison officers at Wandsworth Prison attended their shift on 6 September 2023.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[198413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were held at Wandsworth Prison on 6 September 2023.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[198416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of shift slots at Wandsworth Prison were unfilled on 6 September 2023.

Damian Hinds:

On 6 September 2023, 1,594 prisoners were held at HMP Wandsworth. 125 Band 3 Prison Officers at the prison attended their shift on that day. This equates to 61 per cent of all staff due to attend. 80 officers did not attend their expected shift at the prison on that day. Overall staffing levels were above the minimum staffing level required by the prison's Regime Management Plan to deliver a safe and decent regime. All staff in both the kitchen and the gatehouse were on duty on 06 September. An initial investigation into Daniel Khalife's escape did not find the staffing level to be a contributing factor.

We have taken a series of measures to increase the prison workforce. Despite a challenging labour market, the 12 months ending 30 June 2023 saw an increase of over 700 Full Time Equivalent Band prison officers. This means we now have 4,000 more prison officers than in March 2017. We are also recruiting 5,000 prison officers across public and private prisons by the mid-2020s.

We recently increased the pay of the vast majority of frontline officers by 7 per cent. Combined with other pay rises, this means starting pay for prison officers has increased since 2019 from £22,293 to £30,902 (on the basis of a national rate, 37 hour week with unsocial hours) or £23,529 to £32,851 (on the basis of a national rate, 39 hour week with unsocial hours).

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:[\[198415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison officers at Wandsworth Prison attended their shift on the last day of each month since September 2022.

Damian Hinds:

The figures requested are given in the table below. They represent the number of operational staff at Bands 3, 4 and 5 who attended the establishment for their shift on the last day of each month. They do not include staff on external duties.

MONTH	NO OF PRISON OFFICERS	PERCENTAGE OF STAFF DUE TO ATTEND
Sep 2022	126	64
Oct 2022	126	63
Nov 2022	116	59
Dec 2022	79	81[1]
Jan 2023	106	52
Feb 2023	116	55
Mar 2023	112	58
Apr 2023	61	62[2]

MONTH	NO OF PRISON OFFICERS	PERCENTAGE OF STAFF DUE TO ATTEND
May 2023	114	55
Jun 2023	124	62
Jul 2023	108	56
Aug 2023	124	62

[1] Last day of month fell at weekend, so fewer staff required.

[2] As above.

These figures exceed the minimum staffing level required by the prison's Regime Management Plan to deliver a safe and decent regime.

We have taken, and continue to take, a series of measures to increase the prison workforce. Despite a challenging labour market, the 12 months ending 30 June 2023 saw an increase of over 700 Full-Time Equivalent Band prison officers. This means we now have 4,000 more prison officers than in March 2017. We are also recruiting 5,000 prison officers across public and private prisons by the mid-2020s.

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LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Digital Technology

Julian Knight:

[\[196826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps their Department is taking to improve its digital services to provide better (a) accessibility and (b) user experience for the public.

Dehenna Davison:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities adheres to the Government Service Standard, which includes requirements to understand users and their needs, and to make sure everyone can use the service. We regularly audit our digital products and services for compliance with the latest accessibility standards, and prioritise areas for improvement.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Domestic Visits**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[198480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many visits were made by (a) the Secretary of State and (b) each Minister in his Department to a (i) Government Hub and (ii) ministerial office outside of London in (A) 2022 and (B) 2023.

Dehenna Davison:

The information requested is not centrally collated and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Public Inquiries**Julian Knight:** [\[196846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 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.

Dehenna Davison:

The Department does not collate this information but aims to respond to relevant reports and recommendations arising from public inquiries promptly and constructively.

■ Housing: Land**Mr Laurence Robertson:** [\[198601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress he has made in removing the requirement for local authorities to maintain a five-year housing land supply; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

We consulted on changes to NPPF and are currently carefully considering the responses. We will set out further details later this year.

■ Housing: Planning Permission**Mr Laurence Robertson:** [\[198600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance the Planning Inspectorate has issued to planning inspectors on taking the mental health of the wider community into consideration for housing application appeals; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Planning Inspectorate does not issue guidance on this matter.

■ Planning

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[198358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework.

Rachel Maclean:

We received a high number of detailed responses to the consultation and expect to publish a response later this autumn.

■ Social Rented Housing: North Yorkshire

Keir Mather:

[\[198454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the prevalence of damp and mould in social housing in (a) Selby and Ainsty constituency and (b) North Yorkshire.

Dehenna Davison:

We assess levels of damp by tenure through the English Housing Survey, which can be found at [English Housing Survey - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey). The Regulator of Social Housing also published information on damp and mould in social housing, in February 2023.

I also refer the Hon Member to the answers to Question UIN [181418](#) on 24 April 2023, and Questions UIN [185446](#) and UIN [185074](#) on 22 May 2023.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Lagan Valley Regional Park

Claire Hanna:

[\[198940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the effectiveness of the Lagan Valley Regional Park for managing the area surrounding the River Lagan.

Mr Steve Baker:

Planning and environmental issues are devolved matters in Northern Ireland. In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Ministers, it is for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Department for Infrastructure to work with Belfast City Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, to assess the effectiveness of the Lagan Valley Regional Park in managing the area surrounding the River Lagan and making any necessary improvements.

■ Lagan Valley Regional Park: Finance**Claire Hanna:**[\[198941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will hold discussions with the Department of Infrastructure on the continuation of funding to Lagan Valley Regional Park.

Mr Steve Baker:

Planning and environmental issues are devolved matters in Northern Ireland. In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Ministers, it is for the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure to decide on the continuation of funding to Lagan Valley Regional Park and other spending decisions flowing from the 2023-24 budget allocation for the Department for Infrastructure.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Labour Turnover**Julian Knight:**[\[196877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what information their Department holds on the level of staff retention; and what steps they are taking to improve staff retention.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Northern Ireland Office currently does not compile staff retention statistics. The Single Operating Platform (SOP) is used to manage staff records which includes leaving dates and reason for leaving. These are reviewed to monitor reasons for leaving and identify any unexpected trends. Within the Northern Ireland Office, most turnover is expected and appropriate.

The Northern Ireland Office is committed to investing in staff retention by ensuring the 2023 pay award was implemented promptly. The Civil Service People Survey results from 2022 have been studied thoroughly and based on these results this Department has been focusing on Learning & Development, Wellbeing and Leadership.

Reward and Recognition is a standing agenda item for Senior Leaders and is regularly promoted to all staff.

■ Pollution: Lough Neagh**Hilary Benn:**[\[198611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency on algae pollution in Lough Neagh.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Environmental matters including algae pollution in Lough Neagh are devolved. In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Ministers, it is for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to work with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency on this matter.

Claire Hanna:

[\[198917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will hold discussions with Departments in Northern Ireland on the potential (a) ecological, (b) environmental and (c) health impacts of conditions at Lough Neagh.

Mr Steve Baker:

Environmental matters including conditions at Lough Neagh are devolved. In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Ministers, it is for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to work with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency on this matter.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence: Social Media

Siobhan Baillie:

[\[198916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of generative artificial intelligence on the (a) nature and (b) scale of harms associated with (i) inauthentic and (ii) non-verified social media accounts.

Paul Scully:

Following the AI Regulation Whitepaper, the government is establishing a central AI risk function which will identify, measure and monitor existing and emerging AI risks using expertise from across government, industry, and academia. This will allow us to monitor risks — including online harms.

The Online Safety Bill will require services to tackle AI-generated content on services in scope. Content produced by AI bots on those services will be in scope of the regulation if they are controlled by a user and interact with other users.

In addition, adult users will have the choice to filter-out non-verified users, including generative AI bots that impersonate others or spread harmful content.

Siobhan Baillie:

[\[198953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of (a) generative artificial intelligence and (b) in-authentic and non-verified social media accounts on the (i) nature and (ii) prevalence of online fraud; and whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her Department's policies of comments on generative artificial intelligence by the Chief Executive of Ofcom to the Lords Communications and Digital Committee on 11 July 2023.

Paul Scully:

Following the AI Regulation Whitepaper, the government is establishing a central AI risk function which will identify, measure and monitor existing and emerging AI risks

using expertise from across government, industry, and academia. This will allow us to monitor risks — including fraud.

All companies in scope of the Online Safety Bill will need to take action to prevent fraudulent content - including AI-generated content or content posted by AI bots - appearing on their platforms and swiftly remove it if it does.

As Ofcom recognised, the Bill provides Ofcom with a powerful set of tools to understand how bots are used, and how services are assessing their risks and appropriate safety measures. In line with requirements in the Bill, the Government will review the operation of the Online Safety framework two to five years after the safety duties come into force, and we expect AI to be an important part of this.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Policy

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps they are taking to help ensure that their Department (a) gives sufficient attention to long term strategic challenges, (b) does not allow current events to slow down work on long term strategic issues and (c) consistently undertakes horizon scanning.

George Freeman:

The Science and Technology Framework, published in March, sets out a strategic vision for the UK across priority areas to 2030 to meet the UK's science superpower ambition. Much of DSIT's work is underpinned by long-term strategies including the UK Life Sciences vision and our recently published National Quantum Strategy. DSIT constantly examines future trends across the breadth of its policy areas, drawing in expertise from across government and externally, for example through our work preparing for the AI Safety Summit and the Frontier AI Taskforce. This is underpinned by the Government Office for Science, which supports strategic long term thinking in government through its [Futures and Foresight](#) team.

■ Electronic equipment: Government Departments

Carol Monaghan:

[\[198371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to encourage Departments to donate electronic devices that are no longer in use the National Device Bank.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is committed to closing the digital divide and meeting the government's commitment that nobody should be left behind in the digital age. Reflecting the four key pillars set out in the government's Digital Inclusion Strategy, we recognise that access to safe and suitable devices remains a key barrier facing digitally excluded people. Device donation initiatives are a significant and valuable contribution to supporting people to overcome this obstacle and I would encourage all private and public sector organisations to consider the feasibility of doing this.

The Department has noted this particular recommendation in the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee's report on digital exclusion and cost of living and will formally respond later this month.

■ Internet: Disability

Stephen Farry:

[\[197185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of online accessibility for people with disabilities.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that as many people as possible, no matter their background, can overcome the barriers of digital inclusion and make the most of digital opportunities.

This includes working to remove barriers and ensure that online services are as inclusive as possible. The Government also understands the impact of poorly designed apps and websites, which do not take people with disabilities into account.

Cabinet Office manages the Government's policy for the accessibility regulations which ensure that websites and mobile apps are designed to be perceivable, operable, understandable and robust.

That is why the Government Digital Service in Cabinet Office monitors the accessibility of public sector websites and mobile applications under The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Public sector websites and mobile applications need to meet the technical standard WCAG 2.1 AA and publish an accessibility statement.

Cabinet Office published a report in December 2021 detailing what had been found through accessibility monitoring of public sector websites and apps. Although accessibility issues were found on nearly all tested websites, after sending a report to the website owner, and giving them some time to fix, 59% had fixed the issues found or had short-term timelines for when the website would be fixed. The report can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessibility-monitoring-of-public-sector-websites-and-mobile-apps-2020-2021>.

Furthermore, assisted digital support services aim to increase digital inclusion for those online users who lack digital confidence, digital skills or access to the internet and make sure that everyone, including people with disabilities and impairments, can access public services.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Alternative Fuels

Navendu Mishra:

[\[198899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to increase the (a) production and (b) distribution of sustainable aviation fuel.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is making good progress on UK SAF. Five projects have already been awarded a share of the £165m Advanced Fuels Fund, which will support them to reach commercial scale. The Department for Transport is now considering applications for the second round of funding. The Government has also published the second SAF mandate consultation, setting out details on how the scheme will operate towards a target of at least 10% SAF in the UK jet fuel mix by 2030. In addition, it has announced the University of Sheffield as the delivery partner for the UK SAF Clearing House to support testing and certification of new SAF and has announced a commitment to implement a revenue certainty mechanism for SAF, and has published a delivery plan for such a mechanism. This delivery plan sets out the timelines associated with the design and implementation of such a mechanism and how it could be delivered by the end of 2026.

Blue Badge Scheme**Neale Hanvey:**[\[198426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase the efficiency of the process of applying for and receiving a Blue Badge.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport sets the legislation that governs the Blue Badge scheme and provides guidance for local authorities who are solely responsible for administering the scheme.

80% of citizens apply for a badge using the digital service operated by the Department for Transport. The Department works closely with the supplier of the service to identify ways to improve the application and re-application process for all users as part of its National Disability Strategy commitments. This includes acting on feedback from local authority administrators and citizen users of the scheme.

Blue Badges are now electronically printed by a single manufacturer and as soon as a local authority requests a badge through the system, it is dispatched within 5 working days.

Blue Badge Scheme: Costs**Navendu Mishra:**[\[198935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2023 to Question 197626 on Blue Badge Scheme, if he will make an estimate of the average cost to process a blue badge application in each local authority in England.

Mr Richard Holden:

Local authorities are responsible for administration of the Blue Badge scheme in their area. The Department for Transport does not hold this information.

■ Bus Services: Selby and Ainsty**Keir Mather:**[\[198551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to take steps to improve bus services in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Mr Richard Holden:

The National Bus Strategy, published in March 2021, set out the Government's vision for delivering better bus services for passengers across England. The Strategy asked that all English Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) outside London publish Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). Over £1 billion has been allocated to LTAs in BSIP/BSIP+ funding to improve local bus services. In addition North Yorkshire LTA have been allocated an extra £1.463 million BSIP+ funding for 2023/24. Any funding for improving bus services in Selby and Ainsty will be from North Yorkshire's BSIP+ allocation.

The Government also introduced the £2 bus fare cap on 1 January to help passengers save on their regular travel costs. The scheme is set to run until 31 October, and covers over 5,000 routes in England outside London, including in Selby and Ainsty. The scheme will then be replaced by a longer-term £2.50 fare cap until 30 November 2024, with the Government investing over £300 million across both schemes.

■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions**Louise Haigh:**[\[198771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on the number of buses that have been retrofitted to reduce emissions under the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme in (a) total and (b) by local authority since 2017.

Louise Haigh:[\[198772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has provided for retrofitting buses to reduce emissions under (a) the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme and (b) other relevant schemes since 2017.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department has provided £64 million in funding for retrofitted buses via the 2017-2019 Clean Bus Technology Fund and further funding has been provided for specific retrofit initiatives under the NO2 Programme (2017- present).

The Department does not hold the information on the number of buses that have been retrofitted to reduce emissions in the form requested.

All bus retrofits funded by the Department for Transport since 2017 use technology that has been accredited under the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme.

■ Buses: Greater Manchester**James Daly:**[\[198447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has provided for new buses in Greater Manchester in the latest period for which data is available; and how many and what proportion of the buses that have been purchased with that funding were manufactured in the UK.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport has allocated over £1.1 billion of taxpayer funding to Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) through the five-year City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme.

While the Department for Transport (DfT) allocate funding for schemes, it is up local authorities and operators how they manage the tender process and who they chose to manufacture the buses on their networks.

As part of the ZEBRA scheme, GMCA was awarded £35.7m to deliver 170 zero emission buses (ZEBs). These buses will be manufactured by Volvo. The body of these buses are manufactured in Egypt by Volvo's partner MCV.

GMCA has been allocated £1.07bn through its City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. The city region has chosen to allocate some of this funding towards the purchase of 100 ZEBs, which will be produced by UK manufacturer Alexander Dennis Limited, based in Scarborough and Falkirk. GMCA have informed DfT that they intend to use further CRSTS funding to deliver additional ZEBs.

■ Department for Transport: Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education**Caroline Nokes:**[\[198758\]](#)

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

Jesse Norman:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees is not normally shared publicly.

■ Network Rail: Apprentices**Grahame Morris:**[\[198689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Network Rail apprentices that have (a) completed and (b) dropped out of their apprenticeships in each of the last five years.

Grahame Morris:

[\[198690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Network Rail (a) apprenticeships were offered and (b) how many cohorts of Network Rail apprenticeships have there been in for each of the last five years.

Huw Merriman:

COHORT	START DATE	END DATE	ORIGINAL SIZE	CURRENTLY		
				COMPLETIONS	UNDERTAKING	LEAVERS
3	Sept-17	Sept-20	157	124	4	29
4	Mar-18	Mar-21	150	124	10	16
5	Sept-18	Sept-21	156	97	34	25
6	Mar-19	Mar-22	131	84	31	16
7	Sept-19	Sept-22	197	77	78	42
8	Mar-20	Mar-23	138	36	72	30

The above table reflects the number of apprenticeships by cohort years rather than calendar years.

■ Railway Signals

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many times train signalling equipment has failed in each of the last 12 months.

Huw Merriman:

According to data recorded by Network Rail, there were 12,687 train signalling equipment failures between 8 September 2022 and 7 September 2023, which is equivalent to 1,057 failures per month on average. The figure for 2022-23 is comparable to recent years and lower than the average number of signal failures over the past decade.

Network Rail are undertaking a number of actions to reduce instances of signalling equipment failures on the network. This includes replacing old and obsolete equipment as part of their renewals work, undertaking reliability analysis to identify assets that are failing prematurely to enable targeted remedial action, applying predictive technology to identify the risk of failures, monitoring trends to identify underperforming assets so these can be replaced, and reviewing staff training to ensure staff are in the best position to manage and mitigate signalling failures. Moving to digital signalling, such as on the East Coast Digital Programme, will also lead to increased infrastructure reliability.

■ Railway Signals: Repairs and Maintenance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[198424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce instances of signalling equipment failures.

Huw Merriman:

Network Rail, in their capacity as the infrastructure manager for Britain's railways, are undertaking a number of actions to reduce instances of signalling equipment failures on the network. This includes replacing old and obsolete equipment as part of their renewals work, undertaking reliability analysis to identify assets that are failing prematurely to enable targeted remedial action, applying predictive technology to identify the risk of failures, monitoring trends to identify underperforming assets so these can be replaced, and reviewing staff training to ensure staff are in the best position to manage and mitigate signalling failures. Moving to digital signalling, such as on the East Coast Digital Programme, will also lead to increased infrastructure reliability.

■ Railways: Carbon Emissions

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[198072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate his Department has made of the total carbon emissions produced by the railway system in the last 12 months.

Huw Merriman:

The most recent data from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) shows that the total CO2 equivalent emissions from the railway (passenger and freight traction) from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 was 2,332 kilotonnes.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[198191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an estimate of the level of carbon emission from rail haulage in each year since 2010.

Huw Merriman:

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) publish emissions data for the rail network each year. The available data for freight emissions between April 2011 to March 2022 is provided below.

YEAR	TOTAL FREIGHT TRACTION CO2 EQUIVALENT EMISSIONS (KILOTONNES)
April 2011 to March 2012	545
April 2012 to March 2013	636
April 2013 to March 2014	621
April 2014 to March 2015	628

YEAR	TOTAL FREIGHT TRACTION CO2 EQUIVALENT EMISSIONS (KILOTONNES)
April 2015 to March 2016	559
April 2016 to March 2017	525
April 2017 to March 2018	508
April 2018 to March 2019	476
April 2019 to March 2020	493
April 2020 to March 2021	437
April 2021 to March 2022	457

■ Railways: Crew

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of compliance by train operating companies to the occupational psychological fitness and medical requirements in the Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations 2010.

Huw Merriman:

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), as the independent safety regulator and enforcement body for the Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations 2010, ensures train operating companies comply with the regime and can enforce against any non-compliance. Under the regulations, train operators are required to ensure train drivers employed by them comply with the occupational psychological fitness and medical requirements, which are conditions for obtaining a licence, and through a system of monitoring maintain the validity of train driving licences and certificates.

■ Railways: Freight

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the quantity of freight that was transported on the rail network in each of the last five years.

Huw Merriman:

The attached table summarises freight lifted, and freight moved by rail in Great Britain in each of the last 5 years.

Freight lifted is the mass of goods carried on the rail network measured in tonnes, excluding the weight of the locomotives and wagons. Unlike freight moved it takes no account of the distance travelled.

Freight moved measures the amount of freight moved on the railway network, taking into account the weight of the load and the distance carried. It is measured in net tonne kilometres.

Attachments:

1. Table - Quantity of freight on rail - five years [Table - Quantity of freight on rail network in the last five years.docx]

■ **Railways: Infrastructure**

Louise Haigh:

[\[198753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total rate of Network Rail's non-compliance with structural examinations was in (a) May 2021 and (b) March 2023.

Huw Merriman:

- a) 27,848 non-compliant examinations in May 2021
- b) 20,940 non-compliant examinations in March 2023

Network Rail undertakes examinations of its structures (bridges, retaining walls, culverts) to record their condition. Each examination type involves two key stages:

1. Site examination – an examiner visits the structure to collect condition information.
2. Report submission and Network Rail acceptance – an independent engineer reviews the information from site and makes recommendations, then a Network Rail engineer reviews the examination report and determines the need for interventions to the structure.

Non-compliance occurs when either of the above examination stages take longer than the permitted tolerances within Network Rail's standard.

To contextualise the levels of non-compliance provided, Network Rail's structures portfolio has approximately 150,000 examination regimes ongoing. Each non-compliant examination is risk assessed so that mitigating measures can be put in place if considered necessary. Network Rail has been engaging with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) around the issue of non-compliance and, at the end of August 2023, submitted its recovery plans setting out how it will recover and sustain examination compliance. Network Rail is now focusing on its delivery of these plans.

Louise Haigh:

[\[198754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many structural examinations are currently non-compliant on the Network Rail network as of 11 September 2023.

Huw Merriman:

As of 11 September 2023, there were 14,952 non-compliant examinations.

Network Rail undertakes examinations of its structures (bridges, retaining walls, culverts) to record their condition. Each examination type involves two key stages:

1. Site examination – an examiner visits the structure to collect condition information.

2. Report submission and Network Rail acceptance – an independent engineer reviews the information from site and makes recommendations, then a Network Rail engineer reviews the examination report and determines the need for interventions to the structure.

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■ Railways: Overcrowding

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[198423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce overcrowding on rail services.

Huw Merriman:

As the pandemic has changed travel habits, train operators are using this opportunity to reassess their services to provide rail timetables that respond to new passenger travel patterns, are fit for the future, and carefully balance cost, capacity and performance.

We are working with train operators to ensure their service offer provides capacity where it is most needed, whilst maintaining performance and protecting the public purse.

■ Railways: Ticket Offices

Keir Mather:

[\[198449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to support (a) vulnerable and (b) disabled passengers affected by the potential closure of railway ticket offices in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Huw Merriman:

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours – including closures – 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. When consulting, operators should have also clearly considered other equality-related needs. Operators prepared Equality Impact Assessments, and these were available on their websites during the consultation.

The consultations 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.

TREASURY

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Seema Malhotra: [\[198767\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much was raised by the apprenticeships levy in the 2022/2023 academic year.

Victoria Atkins:

Monthly receipts data for the Apprenticeship Levy is published by HM Revenue and Customs in their Tax and NIC Receipts publication which can be found online at:

[HMRC tax receipts and National Insurance contributions for the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-tax-receipts-and-national-insurance-contributions-for-the-uk).

■ Attendance Allowance: Motor Vehicles

Neale Hanvey: [\[198417\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to exempt people in receipt of Attendance Allowance from vehicle excise duty.

Gareth Davies:

The Government is absolutely committed to supporting disabled people and is determined that support should be focused on people who need it most. The aim of existing Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) exemptions for recipients of some disability benefits is to provide additional help for people who become disabled early, or relatively early, in life and as a result experience economic disadvantage. These allowances are therefore only available to people who become disabled before State Pension age.

For individuals who develop a disability after State Pension age, Attendance Allowance (AA) is a non-means-tested benefit which provides targeted help with the extra costs of disability and helps them maintain their independence. Unlike Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, AA does not have a mobility component and is intended to cover the need for care or supervision an individual requires as a result of their disability rather than specific mobility needs. Individuals can however choose to use their AA to fund mobility aids.

As with all taxes, VED remains under review and any changes are considered by the Chancellor as part of the tax policy making cycle and Budget process.

■ Bank Services: Selby and Ainsty

Keir Mather: [\[198458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department is taking steps to help secure free access to cash withdrawals and deposit facilities in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Keir Mather: [\[198459\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of bank closures on the financial vulnerability of people in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Andrew Griffith:

The government believes that all customers, wherever they live, should have appropriate access to banking and cash services.

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 across the UK, including free withdrawal and deposit facilities in relation to personal current accounts.

Decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue, and the government does not intervene in these. However, under FCA guidance, 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 seeks to ensure 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.

■ Financial Institutions: Complaints

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[198607\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will hold discussions with financial institutions on customer complaints and the way they operate the Your Business Profile system.

Andrew Griffith:

Banks and building societies occupy a privileged position in society and I recognise the importance of access to banking services to enable businesses to manage their money on a day-to-day basis.

That is why Treasury ministers and officials regularly hold discussions with financial institutions, both individually and through the trade association UK Finance, on a range of issues including how those institutions can best serve their business customers.

■ Money: Disadvantaged

Mark Logan: [\[198234\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is taking steps to address the potential impact of a cashless society on financial inclusivity.

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. The government considers that this legislation will also support organisations, including local businesses, to continue accepting cash by ensuring that they have reasonable access to cash 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>

■ Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[198609\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether additional Barnett formula funding was applied to Northern Ireland in the context of the extension of the Household Support Fund in England for financial year 2023-24.

John Glen:

The Barnett formula was applied in the normal way to additional funding provided for the Household Support Fund.

The Block Grant Transparency document details the Barnett consequential that have been provided to the Northern Ireland Executive. As this shows, Barnett consequential of £27.5m were provided to the Northern Ireland Executive in 2023-24 as a result of the extension of the Household Support Fund.[1]

[1] [Block Grant Transparency: July 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Royal Mint: Fraud**Emily Thornberry:** [\[197760\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 40 of the document entitled Royal Mint Trading Fund annual report and accounts 2022-23, HC 1644, published on 19 July 2023, which body or agency investigated the external fraud incident; what the nature of that incident was; and whether that investigation has concluded.

Emily Thornberry: [\[197761\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 40 of the document entitled Royal Mint Trading Fund annual report and accounts 2022-23, HC 1644, published on 19 July 2023, what the nature of the external fraud incident was; which areas of the Royal Mint's operations were targeted by that incident; and what proportion of the resulting losses have been recovered as of 1 September 2023.

Emily Thornberry: [\[197762\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 40 of the document entitled Royal Mint Trading Fund annual report and accounts 2022-23, HC 1644, published on 19 July 2023, on what date he was informed of the external fraud incident; and what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Royal Mint's cyber security.

Andrew Griffith:

As outlined in the Royal Mint Trading Fund's Annual Reports and Accounts, an external fraud incident occurred impacting the Royal Mint. A small number of fraudulent transactions were made on the Royal Mint's website. The incident did not impact Royal Mint customers details and there was no risk to customer data. The Royal Mint has provided assurances to the Department on the incident and commissioned external fraud risk and assurance advice. There is an ongoing investigation by law enforcement agencies.

WALES**■ Wales Office: Domestic Visits****Jessica Morden:** [\[198700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, on how many occasions (a) he and (b) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales visited a (i) Government Hub and (ii) ministerial office outside London in (A) 2022 and (B) 2023.

David T C Davies:

I have worked from the Hub on 21 occasions between 2022 and 2023 and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has done so twice. We both also attend a large number of events, meetings and visits across Wales on a regular basis.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Attendance Allowance: Scotland**

Neale Hanvey: [\[198431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has issued guidance to people affected by the transition from Attendance Allowance to Pension Age Disability Payment delivered by the Scottish Government.

Neale Hanvey: [\[198433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he next plans to hold discussions with his counterpart in the Scottish government on the process for transferring responsibility for Attendance Allowance to the Scottish government.

Tom Pursglove:

Attendance Allowance was devolved to the Scottish Government in 2020. It is being delivered by DWP on behalf of the Scottish Ministers under an Agency Agreement until its replacement by Pension Age Disability Payment. Public communications on the transition from Attendance Allowance to Pension Age Disability Payment are a matter for the Scottish Government.

DWP ministers and officials regularly meet with their Scottish Government counterparts to discuss the progress of the devolution programme, including the replacement of Attendance Allowance with Pension Age Disability Payment and the transfer of existing cases to Social Security Scotland. The Joint Ministerial Working Group on Welfare is the principal forum for discussion and decision-making in this respect. It will next meet on 19 September.

■ Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act 2023

Sir Stephen Timms: [\[198582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date will the Child Support Collection Act 2023 enter into force.

Mims Davies:

Preventing domestic abuse within CMS remains a key priority for the department and we want to work at pace to tackle it. The Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act 2023 requires secondary legislation before it can come into force. We will engage widely with stakeholders and other government departments to ensure the changes made are right.

The department has already commenced a single caseworker pilot where there are cases of Domestic Abuse within CMS. The evaluation of this pilot will take place early next year. We have also implemented mandatory training for all CMS staff in how to respond to cases of domestic abuse and rolled out a complex needs toolkit which provides caseworkers with clear steps to follow where there are cases involving domestic abuse.

■ Children: Maintenance

Amy Callaghan:

[\[198250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many women applied for the two-child limit exemption in East Dunbartonshire constituency.

Guy Opperman:

The requested information is only available at household level and are not broken down by gender.

■ Household Support Fund

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[198558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to guarantee that the Household Support Fund will continue to be provided to county councils and unitary authorities in England after March 2024.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer given to PQ [196466](#).

■ Pensioners: North Yorkshire

Keir Mather:

[\[198553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of inflation on pensioners in (a) Selby and Ainsty constituency and (b) North Yorkshire.

Laura Trott:

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and is taking action to help. Overall, we are providing total support of over £94bn over 2022/23 and 2023/24 to help households and individuals with the rising cost of bills. This includes 8.7m pensioner households who received a £300 Cost of Living Payment last winter as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment. Pensioners will also receive a further £300 additional payment later this year in their Winter Fuel Payment.

■ Social Security Benefits

Neale Hanvey:

[\[198422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people claim (a) Attendance Allowance, (b) Personal Independence Payment and (c) Universal Credit in (i) each parliamentary constituency, (ii) the UK, (iii) Great Britain, (iv) England, (v) Scotland and (vi) North Ireland.

Guy Opperman:

The latest available statistics on the number of people in Great Britain in receipt of Attendance Allowance (to February 2023), entitled to Personal Independence Payment (to April 2023), and on Universal Credit (to July 2023), by various geographical breakdowns including country, region and Westminster parliamentary constituency, are published monthly on [Stat-Xplore](#). Users can log in or access Stat-

Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

Benefit statistics for Northern Ireland are published by the [Department for Communities](#).

Population estimates for Westminster parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain are published by the [Office for National Statistics](#) on [NOMIS](#).

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Patricia Gibson: [\[198820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that people transferred onto the Adult Disability Payment while awaiting his Department's decision to increase their mobility rate who are subsequently deemed by Social Security Scotland to be eligible for an enhanced mobility rate receive a backdated payment for the period following their notifying his Department of their change in circumstances and their transition to Adult Disability Payment.

Tom Pursglove:

These are matters for the Scottish Government.

■ Universal Credit: Deductions

Alex Cunningham: [\[198821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2023 to Question 196260 on Universal Credit: Deductions, what the (a) total and (b) average sum of Universal Credit deductions was for households with children; and what proportion of those sums was deducted to repay advance payments in each Parliamentary constituency in the most recent month for which data is available.

Guy Opperman:

The requested information is provided in the separate spreadsheet and are subject to the following caveats:

1. For low level geography: volumes have been rounded to the nearest 100, total amounts have been rounded to the nearest £1,000 and average amounts have been rounded to the nearest £1. For totals at GB level: volumes have been rounded to the nearest 100,000, total amounts have been rounded to the nearest £1,000,000 and average amount has been rounded to the nearest £1. Proportions have been rounded to the nearest percent.
2. The sum of individual low level geographies may not sum to the total figure due to rounding.
3. Deductions include advance repayments, third party deductions and all other deductions, but exclude sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.

4. Children are defined here as being people who are declared as living in the same household as the UC claimant(s) and who are under the age of 20. The number of children may not be equal to the number of dependent children in the household who are eligible for child element for various reasons. This includes children over the age of 16 in non-advanced full-time education, looked-after children and, other young people living in multigenerational households whose parents are not the claimant. Those affected by the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children may also have a larger number of children compared to the number of children entitled to the child element in their household.

5. Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.

6. The 'unknown' parliamentary constituency equates to 0.2% of all households and relates to households for which a constituency could not be determined due to incomplete postcode information.

7. Data for May 2023 has been provided in line with the latest available UC Household Statistics.

8. Claim numbers and number of children on UC will not match official statistics caseloads due to methodological differences.

Attachments:

1. Spreadsheet [Spreadsheet.xlsx]

■ **Universal Credit: Disqualification**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[198769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children were living in households subject to Universal Credit sanctions in each Parliamentary constituency for the most recent month for which data are available.

Guy Opperman:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Universal Credit: Employment**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[198142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he is taking steps to adjust the tapering of Universal Credit to enable workers to work more hours.

Guy Opperman:

Universal Credit is designed to make work pay and there are no limits on the number of hours someone can work. The amount of Universal Credit awarded depends on the level of income and other household circumstances reported within an assessment period, rather than the number of hours worked.

We want people to see their income increase when they start working or earn more, so we reduce their Universal Credit by less than they are earning. From November 2021 the Universal Credit single taper rate of 63 per cent was reduced to 55 per cent and some claimants will also benefit from a work allowance which is the amount someone can earn before their Universal Credit award starts to reduce.

■ Universal Credit: Greater London

Feryal Clark:

[\[198256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data his Department holds on the average monthly deduction taken from households with children in receipt of Universal Credit in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Guy Opperman:

The requested information is provided in the table below.

TABLE 1 : NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN, MAY 2023

Administrative Area	Number of Households on Universal Credit	Number of Households with Children on Universal Credit	Number of Households with Children on Universal Credit with a Deduction	Total amount deducted for Households with Children	Average Amount Deducted for Households with Children
Enfield North Parliamentary Constituency	12,700	6,700	3,200	£230,000	£73
London Borough of Enfield	38,200	18,600	8,500	£630,000	£74
London	813,000	352,000	153,000	£11,400,000	£75

Table 1 shows the requested analysis of Universal Credit households with children with a payment due in May 2023 for each of the requested administrative areas.

Notes:

1. Volumes have been rounded to the nearest 100, total amounts have been rounded to the nearest £10,000 and average amounts have been rounded to the nearest £1. For region level: volumes have been rounded to the nearest 1,000, total amount has been rounded to the nearest £100,000 and average amount has been rounded to the nearest £1.

2. Deductions include advance repayments, third party deductions and all other deductions, but exclude sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.

3. Children are defined here as being people who are declared as living in the same household as the UC claimant(s) and who are under the age of 20. The number of children may not be equal to the number of dependent children in the household who are eligible for child element for various reasons. This includes children over the age of 16 in non-advanced full-time education, looked-after children and, other young people living in multigenerational households whose parents are not the claimant. Those affected by the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children may also have a larger number of children compared to the number of children entitled to the child element in their household.

4. Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.

5. The 'unknown' parliamentary constituency equates to 0.2% of all households and relates to households for which a constituency could not be determined due to incomplete postcode information.

6. Data for May 2023 has been provided in line with the latest available UC Household Statistics.

7. Claim numbers and number of children on UC will not match official statistics caseloads due to methodological differences.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Law Officers Department Update

Attorney General (Victoria Prentis):

[\[HCWS1022\]](#)

I am today announcing the appointment of Stephen Parkinson as the next Director of Public Prosecutions.

Under the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, it is my duty to appoint a person to be the Director of Public Prosecutions, who shall discharge their functions under my superintendence.

This appointment was conducted in line with Civil Service guidance and the process was overseen by the First Civil Service Commissioner.

DEFENCE

■ Formal Response to the Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2022 on the Service Complaints System

Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families (Dr Andrew Murrison):

[\[HCWS1023\]](#)

I am pleased to place in the Library of the House today the MOD's formal response to the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Force's annual report for 2022 on the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of the service complaints system.

The Ombudsman's report assessed the Service Complaints system and the work of her office in 2022. The response sets out the MOD's comments and approach to each of the Ombudsman's recommendations and includes a summary of our position on recommendations that remain open from previous annual reports.

The MOD values the strong independent oversight that the Ombudsman brings to the Service Complaints system and remains committed to having a system in which our personnel can have confidence.

Attachments:

1. MOD Formal Response to SCOAF [20230822-Min Sub for SCOAF AR 2022 Formal Response-O.docx]

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Alleged Serious and Significant Offences (Diplomatic Immunity): 2019 - 2022**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Americas and Caribbean (David Rutley):
[\[HCWS1028\]](#)

Between 2019-2022, fifteen serious and significant offences allegedly committed by people entitled to diplomatic or international organisation-related immunity in the United Kingdom were drawn to the attention of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office by Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection of the Metropolitan Police Service, or other law enforcement agencies. We define serious offences as those which could, in certain circumstances, carry a penalty of 12 months' imprisonment or more. Also included are driving under the influence and driving without insurance.

Around 25,500 people are entitled to diplomatic or international organisation-related immunity in the UK and the vast majority of diplomats and dependants abide by UK law. The number of alleged serious offences committed by members of the diplomatic community in the UK is proportionately low.

Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961 and related legislation, we expect those entitled to immunity to obey the law. The FCDO does not tolerate foreign diplomats or dependants breaking the law.

We take all allegations of illegal activity seriously. When the police or other law enforcement agency bring instances of alleged criminal conduct to our attention, we ask the relevant foreign government or international organisation to waive immunity where appropriate. For the most serious offences, and when a relevant waiver has not been granted, we request the immediate withdrawal of the diplomat or dependant.

Listed below are alleged serious and significant offences reported to the FCDO by UK law enforcement agencies between 2019 - 2022.

2019**Domestic servitude/Modern Slavery ^{a)}**

Saudi Arabia 1

Sexual Assault

Iraq 1

Fraud by abuse of position

Commonwealth Secretariat 1

Causing Death by Careless Driving

USA 1

Driving under the influence of alcohol

Oman 1

Driving under the influence of alcohol

Kyrgyzstan 1

a) Historical allegations

2020

Common assault/cruelty to a child

Nigeria 1

Driving under the influence of alcohol

India 1

2021

Driving under the influence of alcohol

Saudi Arabia 2

Driving under the influence of alcohol

Ethiopia 1

2022

Driving without insurance

Myanmar 1

Common Assault/Threats to kill

Greece 1

Fraud by false representation/Perverting the course of justice/Money laundering

Democratic Republic of the Congo 1

Sexual Assault

USA 1

Figures for 2018 are available in the then Secretary for State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' written statement to the House on 25 February 2020 (HCWS119) which can be found at: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-02-25/debates/20022539000011/AllegedSeriousAndSignificantOffences\(DiplomaticImmunity\)2018](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-02-25/debates/20022539000011/AllegedSeriousAndSignificantOffences(DiplomaticImmunity)2018)

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) / Chagos Archipelago**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Americas and Caribbean (David Rutley):
[\[HCWS1029\]](#)

Since the Written Ministerial Statement made on 17 March, the UK and Mauritius held further constructive negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)/the Chagos Archipelago on 2 to 3 June 2023 and 31 July to 1 August 2023. The Prime Minister, my Rt Hon Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) and Prime Minister Jugnauth met in the margins of the G20 Summit on 9 September in New Delhi. The two Prime Ministers assessed the progress made in the negotiations since

they spoke in February, and agreed to meet again soon. The next round of negotiations will take place later this month.

■ Debts owed by Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations in the United Kingdom: 2022

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Americas and Caribbean (David Rutley):
[\[HCWS1030\]](#)

Coronavirus restrictions imposed in March 2020, even though since lifted, have affected the compilation of debt information for National Non-Domestic Rates and parking fine debts by the responsible authorities. As a result this WMS includes details only of Congestion Charge debt owed by diplomatic missions and international organisations in the UK.

London Congestion Charge: The value of unpaid Congestion Charge debt incurred by diplomatic missions and international organisations in London since its introduction in February 2003 until 31 December 2022 as advised by Transport for London (TfL) was £145,411,143. TfL publishes details of diplomatic missions and international organisations with outstanding fines at <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/cclez-online-factsheet-embassy-debt-dec22.pdf>. The table below shows those diplomatic missions and international organisations with outstanding fines of £100,000 or more.

We consider that there are no legal grounds to exempt diplomatic missions and international organisations from the London Congestion Charge, which is comparable to a parking fee or toll charge they are required to pay. Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations diplomats have an obligation to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State. The British Government therefore expects all diplomatic missions to respect UK laws and regulations, which includes payment of the Congestion Charge.

COUNTRY	TOTAL OUTSTANDING
Embassy of the United States of America	£14,643,495
Embassy of Japan	£10,044,758
Office of the High Commissioner for India	£8,547,985
High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria	£8,383,735
Embassy of the People's Republic of China	£7,928,360
Embassy of the Russian Federation	£5,993,625
Embassy of the Republic of Poland	£5,266,160
Embassy of France	£4,835,820
Office of the High Commissioner for Ghana	£4,789,295

COUNTRY	TOTAL OUTSTANDING
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan	£4,651,235
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany	£4,629,330
The Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan	£3,516,070
High Commission for Kenya	£3,254,280
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	£3,116,830
Embassy of the Republic of Korea	£2,625,880
Embassy of the Republic of Cuba	£2,465,520
High Commission for the United Republic of Tanzania	£2,285,390
Embassy of Spain	£2,178,120
Embassy of Algeria	£2,160,130
High Commission for the Republic of South Africa	£1,975,200
High Commission for Sierra Leone	£1,914,495
Embassy of Romania	£1,865,560
Embassy of Ukraine	£1,670,950
Embassy of Greece	£1,660,690
Embassy of the Republic of Turkey	£1,575,760
High Commission for the Republic of Cyprus	£1,415,430
Embassy of Hungary	£1,373,880
High Commission for the Republic of Zambia	£1,146,050
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen	£1,055,100
High Commission for Botswana	£954,120
Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria	£919,910
High Commission of the Republic of Mozambique	£861,760
High Commission for the Republic of Malawi	£836,225

COUNTRY	TOTAL OUTSTANDING
Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	£822,550
Uganda High Commission	£811,100
High Commission for the Republic of Zimbabwe	£795,385
Embassy of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	£784,560
High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon	£759,660
Embassy of the Republic of Belarus	£733,285
High Commission for the Republic of Namibia	£726,550
High Commission for Malta	£712,335
Embassy of the Slovak Republic	£691,720
High Commission for Mauritius	£669,735
Embassy of Belgium	£666,420
High Commission for the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	£652,120
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco	£651,790
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania	£650,505
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia	£627,150
Embassy of Austria	£626,020
Kingdom of Eswatini High Commission	£620,540
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	£605,040
Embassy of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea	£557,690
High Commission for the Kingdom of Lesotho	£530,360
Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	£518,280
Embassy of the Republic of Guinea	£501,170
Embassy of the Czech Republic	£480,190

COUNTRY	TOTAL OUTSTANDING
Embassy of the Republic of Iraq	£473,580
High Commission for Jamaica	£473,020
Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo	£427,680
Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan	£417,990
Royal Danish Embassy	£403,835
Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia	£384,290
Embassy of the Republic of Latvia	£346,190
High Commission for Antigua & Barbuda	£345,795
Embassy of Portugal	£325,240
Embassy of Luxembourg	£320,195
Embassy of Tunisia	£294,820
High Commission for Belize	£280,050
Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	£275,960
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt	£243,820
Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	£243,590
Embassy of Estonia	£218,420
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia	£211,290
High Commission of the Republic of Maldives	£201,250
High Commission for Guyana	£186,490
Embassy of the State of Eritrea	£185,350
High Commission of the Republic of Seychelles	£169,935
Embassy of the Dominican Republic	£164,650
Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines	£156,840
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania	£140,930
Embassy of El Salvador	£129,805

COUNTRY	TOTAL OUTSTANDING
High Commission for Saint Lucia	£127,460
Embassy of the Republic of Albania	£124,480
Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic	£120,680
Embassy of the Republic of Moldova	£114,310

Figures for previous years are available in the then Secretary for State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' written statement to the House on 25 February 2020 (HCWS120) which can be found at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-02-25/HCWS120>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Preparing the NHS and Social Care System for Winter

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay): [\[HCWS1027\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House today that we are spending an additional £240 million to support health and care services over winter.

This includes:

- £200 million in new and additional funding for the NHS to ensure patients continue to get the care they need through its busiest period, and
- £40 million funding to improve social care provision, £30 million of which forms part of the £600 million social care workforce package previously announced in July and a further £10 million identified from existing departmental budgets.

We know that winter is the most challenging time for the NHS and our preparations began very early. In January we published the Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Plan, which aims to deliver one of the fastest and longest sustained improvements in waiting times in the NHS's history. This includes delivering an additional 5,000 permanent staffed hospital beds this winter, backed by £1 billion of dedicated capacity funding. We have seen progress, including a marked improvement in ambulance response times compared to last year. Innovations such as virtual wards have been put in place towards a target of 10,000 before winter, and money allocated to successful capital schemes build on the progress made in implementing ambulance hubs and discharge facilities.

More widely, we have already made available up to £14.1 billion available for health and social care over this year and next, including £7.5 billion to support Adult Social Care and discharge – the biggest funding increase in history – and £3.3 billion in each of 2023-24 and 2024-25 to support the NHS in England, and enable rapid action to improve urgent and emergency, elective, and primary care performance to pre-pandemic levels.

This follows the £38.9 billion cash increase by 2024-25 (as compared to 2019-20) confirmed at Spending Review 2021, to help place the NHS in England on a sustainable footing and tackle the elective backlog.

The pandemic has put enormous pressures on the NHS with elective waiting lists growing, but we remain committed to ensuring people get the right care at the right time. That is why we are delivering record staffing numbers, and putting in record levels of funding, to help the NHS recover and transform services.

In February 2022, NHS England published its delivery plan for tackling the Covid-19 backlog of elective care. This set out a clear vision for how the NHS will recover and expand elective care and cancer services in the next three years.

There is a new COVID 19 variant - BA.2.86. While we do not yet know if it will be a variant of concern, as a precautionary measure we have brought forward the autumn vaccine programme for COVID and flu, which will deliver greater protection, supporting those at greatest risk of severe illness and reducing the potential impact on the NHS.

As we move toward the winter period I am pleased to be able to report that there are record numbers of staff working across NHS trusts and integrated care boards, over 63,000 compared to more than a year ago, including over 6,000 more doctors. We are currently on track to meet the 50,000 nurses manifesto commitment, with nursing numbers over 45,000 higher in June than they were in September 2019.

Thanks to the hard work of all those NHS staff, we met our target to eliminate long waits of two years or more for elective procedures in July 2022 and virtually eliminated 18-month waits in June 2023. The new investment of £200 million will help ensure NHS trusts can keep up this vital work over winter as we look to mitigate the impact of ongoing industrial action.

I would also like to provide a further update on the allocation of an additional £40 million to improve social care provision, £30 million of which forms part of the social care workforce package of £600 million over two years announced on 28 July. This will allow local authorities to strengthen admissions avoidance services and boost discharge rates this winter. The funding is being targeted at areas facing the greatest urgent and emergency care challenges.

The funding announced today will be vital for the NHS, and wider health and care sector, through its most demanding period and will help the health service drive forward our plans to cut waiting lists and deliver for patients.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Local Government Update

Minister for Local Government and Building Safety (Lee Rowley): [\[HCWS1024\]](#)

Today I am updating the House on the intervention at Slough Borough Council. I was extremely concerned by the content of the Commissioners' second report, which was submitted on 22 December 2022, and made it clear that many in leadership roles in the

Council were not fully committed to the improvement journey, and that a fundamental shift in behaviours was needed. I highlighted these concerns in my statement to the House on 16 March 2023, in which I made it clear that things had to change.

On 13 July 2023, I received a copy of the Commissioners' third report on the progress of the intervention, which I am publishing today on gov.uk and also placing a copy in the Libraries of both Houses. This report was submitted after a period of change for the Council. Following the resignations of Max Caller CBE, the Lead Commissioner, on 1 March, and Margaret Lee, the Finance Commissioner, on 12 March, two new Commissioners, Denise Murray and Ged Curran, were appointed on 22 May, and the existing Commissioner Gavin Jones was made Lead Commissioner. In addition, May's elections brought new political leadership and, over recent months, the corporate leadership of the Council has also gone through significant change.

This latest report provides a more positive update and evidence for cautious optimism that things are beginning to move in the right direction. I am pleased to see that the Council has made progress in some areas, including improvement in report quality and financial oversight, improved scrutiny arrangements and a successful move to all-out elections.

At the same time, and whilst acknowledging those improvements, the scale of the challenges facing Slough remains significant. I have today written to Commissioners to set out that it will be vital for the Council to demonstrate a commitment to accelerating the pace of improvement, to provide evidence of further implementation, to show a clear change being embedded over the coming months and to demonstrate greater grip on the financial position. I have acknowledged that the new leadership of the Council is keen to resolve the challenges facing Slough. I know that they will be keen, as I am, to see that a resolution moves forwards as quickly as possible.

Given the changes at Slough in recent months, this is an excellent opportunity for the Council to make substantial progress towards resolving their Best Value failure. I know that they will be keen to take it.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's China Report

Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS1026\]](#)

On 13 July 2023, the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament published its report on China. We are grateful to the committee for devoting time and attention to the subject.

Today, the government is publishing its response to this report. This response sets out the government's overall approach to China, which is closely aligned with our allies, and provides significant detail on the measures and legislation we have put in place to support it. The government has already taken actions that are in line with many of the committee's recommendations and will consider further action where necessary.

The government published the Integrated Review (IR) of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy in 2021, and its subsequent IR Refresh in 2023. Recognising the epoch-defining and systemic challenge that China represents, these reviews considerably strengthened the United Kingdom's position on China, set out as a comprehensive approach comprising three integrated themes to Protect, Align and Engage. The IR Refresh recognised China's size and significance on almost every global issue and, in close alignment with all G7 partners, outlined the UK's preference for a relationship in which there was room for cooperation, understanding, predictability and stability. Equally, it was clear on the need to increase our protections and do more in concert with close partners to ensure that our vital interests and values are protected.

I am particularly conscious that many of the issues detailed in the committee's report, and wider concerns about foreign interference, highlight the necessity for a robust approach to any and all state threat activity. It remains an absolute priority for the government to take all necessary steps to protect the United Kingdom from any foreign state activity which seeks to undermine our national security, prosperity and democratic values. I am clear-eyed about that challenge and will call out unacceptable behaviour directly just as I did last weekend with Premier Li at the G20 Summit in New Delhi.

We recognise that the report identifies areas where we can do better and welcome these insights and recommendations as we further develop our approach. Earlier this year, the government passed the National Security Act which overhauled legislation applicable to espionage, sabotage and any persons acting on behalf of foreign powers against the safety and interest of the United Kingdom. We also passed the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act to further protect our campuses from threats to lawful freedom of speech, whether those relate to China or any other source. Measures in these Acts will enable our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to deter, detect, and disrupt the full range of modern-day threats, including from China.

I am acutely aware of the particular threat to our open and democratic way of life. In 2022, the government established the Defending Democracy Taskforce. Chaired by the Security Minister, the Taskforce coordinates cross-government activity to protect the integrity of our democracy from the threats of foreign interference. It works with government, Parliament, the UK's intelligence community and the devolved governments on a range of threats including electoral security. The Taskforce established a new Joint Election Security & Preparedness (JESP) Unit to lead on work to ensure the security of the next election and beyond. The Taskforce is also undertaking a review to understand how diaspora communities in the United Kingdom are threatened by foreign states and make recommendations to address this harm to our society and communities. The Taskforce is working with Parliament and National Cyber Security Centre to develop an enhanced cybersecurity offer for elected officials, including MPs, and their teams to help better protect them from the cyber-attacks that threaten them personally and our national security. Finally, the Taskforce is working with the government's partners to better understand and mitigate the threats of AI and is developing new means for tackling mis- and disinformation during elections, both of which have the potential to harm our democracy and the people of the United Kingdom.

Copies of the government response have been laid before both Houses.

TREASURY

■ Draft Finance Bill legislation – Stamp Taxes on Shares

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew Griffith):

[[HCWS1025](#)]

The government will legislate to ensure that the existing 0% charge, under Stamp Duty and Stamp Duty Reserve Tax, on the issue of UK shares (or other chargeable securities) onto foreign markets and on certain related transfers of shares, will remain in place and be brought permanently into UK law following the changes in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 taking effect.

In line with this commitment, and with the Tax Policy Making framework, the government is today publishing draft legislation ahead of its inclusion in an upcoming Finance Bill. While the final contents of the next Finance Bill will be a decision for the Chancellor, the draft legislation is being published to seek stakeholder views at this stage. This allows for technical consultation and provides taxpayers with predictability over this area of tax policy.

This draft legislation is designed to ensure the competitiveness of the UK's tax code in relation to financial services as the government takes steps to provide additional certainty within the Stamp Taxes on Shares regime.

The draft legislation is accompanied by a Tax Information and Impact Note and an Explanatory Note. All relevant documents can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stamp-taxes-on-shares-removal-of-15-charge-on-issues-and-certain-related-transfers>