



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 September 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:29 P.M., 15 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

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Manufacturing Industries: Carbon Emissions

**Ian Paisley:**

[\[198098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether manufacturers are required to declare how they plan to reach (a) Net Zero and (b) Net Zero within their supply chains.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

Climate transition plans allow companies to set out how they plan to reach climate targets, including supply chain decarbonisation.

The Government has established the Transition Plan Taskforce, which launched in April 2022. The Taskforce is developing guidance to support companies to disclose information about their transition plans, and is due to publish its finalised Disclosure Framework in October 2023. The Government has also committed to consult on our approach to transition plans, and we will do so after the Taskforce has published its finalised Framework.

#### ■ Parental Pay: Self-employed

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[195844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make it her policy to provide self-employed parents who have a baby in neonatal care with statutory support equivalent to that provided to employed parents; and if she will make a statement.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government is committed to introducing Neonatal Care Leave and Pay as soon as possible.

In line with other leave and pay entitlements in the UK, the Government has prioritised ensuring that employed parents have access to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay. Those who are self-employed have greater flexibility to decide when they work and do not have the additional pressure of needing to seek an employer's permission in order to take time off to be with their baby.

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Cabinet Office: Gyms

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[198325\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on gym (a) facilities and (b) equipment in each of the last five financial years.

**Alex Burghart:**

Departmental spend on gym equipment is factored into facilities management. To calculate this spend specifically would incur a disproportionate cost to the department.

**Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee**

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[198373\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of how much the Government will spend on the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee in the (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26 financial year.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[198374\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the projected number of full-time equivalent civil servants is that will support the work of the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee.

**Alex Burghart:**

A detailed assessment of the resourcing requirements, and estimated spend associated with the operation of the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee will be made once it is fully established.

Following the appointment of the Chair, Lord Janvrin, the Committee's Secretariat is being delivered by existing civil servants as part of their wider duties. Any increase in dedicated resources to support the work of the Committee will be considered in due course.

It is right that as a country we honour Her Late Majesty's legacy. For more than 70 years, she was our greatest public servant, an anchor of stability in an ever-changing and often uncertain world.

**DEFENCE****Armed Forces: Recruitment**

**John Healey:** [\[198004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) original and (b) most recent estimate was of the whole life cost of the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

I am withholding information concerning the costs of the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme as its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice commercial interests.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Compensation****Emily Thornberry:****[198315]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 122 of his Department's annual report and accounts for 2022-23, how many of the special payments reported for financial year 2022-23 were payments made under the (a) Common Law Compensation Scheme, (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and (c) War Pensions Scheme.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Special Payments table of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts (ARAc) for 2022-23 (page 122) does encompass payments made in settlement of claims made under common law.

Payments made under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are voted for separately by Parliament and accounted for in the separate Armed Forces Pension Scheme Annual Report and Accounts.

(link: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-pension-scheme-annual-accounts-2022-to-2023>)).

Payments made under the War Pensions Scheme are accounted for as a separate expenditure item in the Department's ARAc - see the "War Pension Benefits" item on page 109 of the 2022-23 ARAc.

**Emily Thornberry:****[198316]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 122 of his Department's annual report and accounts for 2022-23, how much of the £114.53 million in special payments reported for financial year 2022-23, was made under the (a) Common Law Compensation Scheme, (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and (c) War Pensions Scheme.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Special Payments tables within the Department's annual report and accounts (ARAc) for 2022-23 includes information relating to compensation payments made under common law. Of the £114.53 million total disclosed, £111.20 million relates to such payments with the remainder principally associated with ex-gratia or extra-contractual payments.

Payments made under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are voted for separately by Parliament and accounted for in the separate Armed Forces Pension Scheme Annual Report and Accounts.

(link: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-pension-scheme-annual-accounts-2022-to-2023>)).

Payments made under the War Pensions Scheme are accounted for as a separate expenditure item in the Department's ARAc - see the "War Pension Benefits" item on page 109 of the 2022-23 ARAc.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[198317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 122 of his Department's annual report and accounts for 2022-23, how many of the special payments reported for financial year 2022-23 were made to (a) service personnel and (b) other individuals affected by defence activities.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The majority of the 4,609 special payments disclosed relate to common law compensation claims (3,865). An analysis of this data is provided below;

- 2,307 payments to Service personnel
- 1,558 payments to Others

It should be noted that this analysis reflects the volume of payments made and that individuals may receive more than one compensation payment depending on the settlement reached.

The remaining volume will include payments made in settlement of contractual disputes where it has been judged that this represents the best value for money course of action for the Department. Two of these payments are separately disclosed in the ARAc table as they exceed the >£300,000 threshold for more detailed reporting (specifically MSI Instruments (£959,000) and Land Remediation Payment (£321,000)).

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[198318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 122 of his Department's annual report and accounts for 2022-23, how much of the £114.53 million in special payments reported for financial year 2022-23 consisted of payments made to (a) service personnel or (b) other individuals affected by defence activities.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The majority of the 4,609 special payments totalling £114.53 million disclosed relate to common law compensation claims (£111.20 million). An analysis of this data is provided below;

- 2,307 payments equating to £78 million to Service personnel
- 1,558 payments equating to £33 million to others

It should be noted that this analysis reflects the volume of payments made and that individuals may receive more than one compensation payment depending on the settlement reached.

The remaining value will include payments made in settlement of contractual disputes where it has been judged that this represents the best value for money course of action for the Department. Two of these payments are separately disclosed in the table as they exceed the >£300,000 threshold for more detailed reporting (specifically MSI Instruments (£959,000) and Land Remediation Payment (£321,000)).

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[198319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the cost of compensation payments reported on page 122 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022–23, published in July 2023, is lower than the costs for common law compensation claims for each of the financial years from 2017-18 to 2021-22 in the MOD common law compensation claims statistics published in December 2022.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Common Law data disclosed within the ARAc, relates solely to the value of compensation paid in settlement of claims. It does not include legal costs incurred by the Department or the claimant.

The data disclosed in the MOD common law compensation claims statistics, which are published separately to the Annual Report and Accounts, include all payments made including where appropriate reimbursement of the claimant's legal costs. This is the main reason why the values in the published common law compensation statistics are higher than those disclosed in the ARAc.

#### ■ **Ministry of Defence: National Security**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether their Department has a Chief Risk Officer for national security risks.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has a Chief Risk Officer (CRO) who supports the Defence Board, chaired by the Secretary of State for Defence, to manage departmental risks. The MOD conducts risk management in line with government best practice as outlined in the HM Treasury Orange Book.

National security risks are included within the Department's risk management processes where MOD is the Lead Government Department (LGD). The Department also provides input into the National Risk Register (NRR) and National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA), which is owned by the Cabinet Office.

#### ■ **Ministry of Defence: Telecommunications**

**John Healey:**

[\[195747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) original and (b) current programme completion date is of Project Bramley.

**James Cartlidge:**

I am withholding this information on the grounds of National Security as its disclosure would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Ministry of Defence.



## ■ Puma Helicopters

**John Healey:**

[\[198304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the current out of service date for the Puma helicopter?

**James Cartlidge:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the previous Minister for Defence Procurement (Alex Chalk KC) on 13 March 2023 to Question 161244 to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Kevan Jones).

**Attachments:**

1. Puma Helicopters [UIN 161244.docx]

## ■ Remembrance Day

**James Wild:**

[\[199261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the potential impact of changes in the level of road closure fees on the number of Remembrance Service parades.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Road closure fees are not a Defence matter and are the responsibility of Local Authorities. It is for Local Authorities when setting the level of their fees to consider what impact this will have on requests by their communities for road closures, including for Remembrance parades.

## ■ Veterans: LGBT+ People

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[198950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if the Government will commit to a specific deadline for the publication of its response to Lord Etherton's Independent Review into the treatment of LGBT+ Veterans in the Army.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 June 2023 to question 190453.

**Attachments:**

1. LGBT Veterans Independent Review [190453 - LGBT Veterans Independent Review.docx]

## EDUCATION

### ■ Adult Education: Finance

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to amend the adult education budget funding procurement process in the next six months.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department has recently concluded a procurement exercise to award around £65 million of adult education budget (AEB) and £12 million of free courses for jobs (FCFJ) funding to 56 providers in non-devolved regions. These contracts are for a minimum of one year, with the option to extend for up to an additional three years. The department has no plans to amend the AEB procurement process in non-devolved regions for AEB or FCFJ in the next six months.

■ **Children: Exercise****Rachael Maskell:**[\[198136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has taken recent steps to help ensure that children from nursery to school leaving age engage in a daily active mile.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has been working alongside The Daily Mile and Sport England to support more nurseries and schools to take up the Daily Mile. Sport England has committed nearly £2 million of public funding between 2018 and 2024 to increase participation and build sustainable partnerships. Currently over 8,000 nurseries and schools in England are signed up to take part.

The Department has promoted the Daily Mile to Early Years settings through the Department's Foundation Years website. Local Authority Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) coordinators and providers have received information through webinars and weekly newsletters on the Daily Mile, highlighting the programme to provide physical activity in HAF clubs.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has highlighted the Daily Mile within 'Get Active', the Government's new sport strategy, as a successful programme to raise physical activity levels of pupils. The strategy was published in August and introduces an ambition that all pupils should meet the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity, supported by a target of over 1 million more active pupils by 2030.

■ **Children: Social Services****Helen Hayes:**[\[198152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Birmingham Council issuing a Section 114 notice on children's social (a) care and (b) services in Birmingham.

**Julian Knight:**[\[198202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that (a) children's safeguarding, (b) social care and (c) other essential services continue in Birmingham.

**David Johnston:**

Councils are responsible for their own finances and the decision to issue a Section 114 notice is one taken locally. The issuing of a notice means the council is subject to a 21-day spending prohibition during which the council may not enter into any new spending agreement without approval by the Chief Financial Officer.

Birmingham City Council are tightening their current financial controls, and a framework will be set in place to ensure they have a complete grip, whilst ensuring that statutory and key services to children and vulnerable people are not affected because of these controls.

The Department for Education, along with colleagues from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the SEND Commissioner remain in regular contact with Birmingham City Council and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

**■ Pupils: Absenteeism****Mark Logan:**[\[198236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce absence rates of pupils in secondary schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>.

The launch of the £2.32 million attendance mentor pilot aims to deliver intensive one-to-one support to a group of persistently and severely absent pupils from year 6 through to year 11. The findings from this pilot should enable schools, trusts, and Local Authorities to address persistent and severe absence more effectively. The

Department recently launched new attendance hubs with ten lead schools sharing their effective practice on attendance with up to 600 partner schools, reaching hundreds of thousands of pupils. This is alongside intensive support to children in need through Virtual Schools Heads.

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

### ■ Schools: Redundancy Pay

**Feryal Clark:**

**[198249]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many paid severances have been made by (a) schools and (b) academy trusts in (i) Enfield North constituency, (ii) the London Borough of Enfield and (iii) London for each of the last five years; and what the total cost to the public purse for these severances was in each of the last five years.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government requires a high level of accountability and transparency of academy trusts. Academy trusts' status as companies, charities, and public sector bodies, means they have a rigorous tri-partite framework, and are held up to greater scrutiny.

Academy trusts' responsibilities on severance payments are set out in the Academy Trust Handbook, which can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-handbook>. Additional guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-severance-payments-form>.

Data on severance payments is published in academy trusts' accounts, which are available on trusts' websites and Companies House, and at sector level in the Academies Consolidated Annual Report and Accounts, found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-sector-annual-reports-and-accounts>. The latest sector data for the Consolidated Annual Report and Accounts

year ending 31 August 2022 will be published in autumn 2023.

As academy trusts report at trust rather than individual school level, their accounts do not specify which school any severance payment relates to. Because trusts often operate across geographic locations, it is not possible to align this information to a specific borough, constituency or city.

As the responsibility for maintained schools' severance payments sits with the school and the Local Authority, the Department does not collect the number of severances or amounts paid by Local Authority maintained schools.

## ■ Schools: Vocational Guidance

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[197991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve careers advice in schools in rural areas.

**Robert Halfon:**

Careers guidance is the first rung on the ladder of opportunity, setting individuals on the path to success and allowing talent to flourish. The department is spending over £18.8 million to support the full rollout of Careers Hubs across England, so that every secondary school and college can be part of a Careers Hub. The Careers Hubs Network (CHN), delivered by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), is a tried and tested model for partnership and collaboration in careers education.

As of April 2023, coverage of the CHN has been expanded to cover over 90% (4,621) of schools and colleges. Our ambition is to go further still and for 95% of schools and colleges, including in rural areas, to be part of a Careers Hub by August 2024.

Cornerstone Employers are also a key part of our careers offer. The CEC has built a network of around 400 Cornerstone Employers across the country, including rural areas, who support clusters of secondary schools and colleges. They provide strong local leadership in the area and drive the delivery of encounters for pupils.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Bradford South

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[198348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing SEND state school provisions in Bradford South constituency.

**David Johnston:**

The government recognises that there is a growing need for specialist special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision across the country and establishing sufficient school places is one of the government's top priorities. This is why the department has invested £2.6 billion of high needs capital funding between 2022 and 2025. As well as supporting 41 new special free schools, this will enable local authorities to deliver new places for SEND pupils in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings, and also to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings. As part of this, the department has published over £1.5 billion of High Needs Provision Capital Allocations for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years, of which Bradford have been allocated £12.1 million.

In addition, to support local authorities to manage their specialist provision the department has started to collect data on the capacity of special schools and SEND units/resourced provision in mainstream schools, as well as forecasts of the numbers of specialist placements local authorities expect to make in SEND units/resourced provision, special schools (of all types) and alternative provision. This is expected to be an annual data collection, forming part of the existing School Capacity Survey

(SCAP). The department is working closely with local authorities and other sector stakeholders to ensure the data we collect best supports the needs of users across the 0-25 system and will explore options for improving and broadening the data we collect in future years. Guidance on completing the SCAP survey, including tools to support local authorities in assessing the capacity of special schools, is available at: [https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capacity-survey-guide-for-local-authorities#:~:text=The%20annual%20school%20capacity%20survey%20\(%20SCAP%20\)%20collects%20information%20on%3A,the%20next%205%20academic%20years.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capacity-survey-guide-for-local-authorities#:~:text=The%20annual%20school%20capacity%20survey%20(%20SCAP%20)%20collects%20information%20on%3A,the%20next%205%20academic%20years.)

### ■ Special Educational Needs: Private Education

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[198349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of earmarking funding to local authorities for funding SEND school places at independent institutions.

**David Johnston:**

Local authorities have considerable flexibility to use the high needs funding within their Dedicated Schools Grant allocations to fulfil their statutory duties. This includes using their high needs budgets to discharge their special educational needs duties under the Children and Families Act.

Local authorities are able to fund educational placements for children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans in independent schools. Where they choose to name an independent special school on an EHC plan, the local authority must fund the cost of the placement.

### ■ Teachers: Selby and Ainsty

**Keir Mather:**

[\[198453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of teachers in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

**Nick Gibb:**

Recent data shows that there are now over 468,000 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state funded schools in England, which is an increase of 27,000 (6%) since 2010. This makes it the highest number of FTE teachers on record since the School Workforce Census began in 2010. The number of FTE teachers in North Yorkshire Local Authority rose to 4,582 in 2022, an increase of 342 (8%) since 2010.

The Department is taking action to increase teacher recruitment and retention.

The Department recently announced that the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendations for the 2023/24 pay award for teachers and head teachers have been accepted in full. This means that teachers and head teachers in maintained schools will receive a pay award of 6.5%. This is the highest pay award for teachers in over 30 years. The award also delivers the manifesto commitment of a minimum

£30,000 starting salary for school teachers in all regions in England, with a pay award of up to 7.1% for new teachers outside London.

The Department announced a financial incentives package worth up to £181 million for those starting initial teacher training (ITT) in the 2023/24 academic year. The Department is providing bursaries worth up to £27,000 and scholarships worth up to £29,000 to encourage trainees to apply to train in key secondary subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computing.

The Department is also providing a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 annually for mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers who work in disadvantaged schools nationally, including within Education Investment Areas (EIAs). North Yorkshire is an EIA. There are 30 schools in the North Yorkshire Local Authority area eligible for the Levelling Up Premium, including three schools in the Selby and Ainsty constituency. The eligibility criteria and list of eligible schools is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/levelling-up-premium-payments-for-teachers>.

The Department has created an entitlement to at least three years of structured training, support, and professional development for all new teachers, underpinned by the Initial Teacher Training (ITT), Core Content Framework (CCF) and the Early Career Framework (ECF). Together, these ensure that new teachers will benefit from at least three years of evidence based training, across ITT and into their induction.

To support teacher retention, the Department has worked with the education sector and published a range of resources to help address staff workload and wellbeing and to support schools to introduce flexible working practices. This includes the workload reduction toolkit and the education staff wellbeing charter. More than 2,800 schools have signed up to the charter so far. The education staff wellbeing charter can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>. The workload reduction toolkit is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-workload-reduction-toolkit>.

The Department recently announced that it will also convene a workload reduction taskforce to explore how we can go further to support trusts and head teachers to minimise workload.

## ■ Teachers: Sick Leave and Vacancies

**Jim Shannon:**

**[198045]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce (a) permanent vacancies and (b) sickness absences among teachers.

**Nick Gibb:**

Education is a devolved matter, and this response outlines relevant information for England only.

Recent data shows that there are now over 468,000 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state funded schools in England, which is an increase of 27,000 (6%)

since 2010. This makes it the highest number of FTE teachers on record since the School Workforce Census began in 2010.

The Department is taking action to increase teacher recruitment and retention and reduce vacancies. The Department accepted, in full, the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendations for the 2023/24 pay award for teachers and head teachers, resulting in a pay award of 6.5%. This is the highest pay award for teachers in over thirty years. The Department has put in place tax free bursaries worth £27,000 and tax free scholarships worth £29,000, to encourage talented trainees in key subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing to apply to teacher training.

Additionally, the Department supports schools and trusts with their recruitment through Teaching Vacancies. The Department's free vacancy listing service for state funded schools in England can be found here: <https://teaching-vacancies.service.gov.uk/>.

Staff wellbeing is a crucial element of our commitment to recruit and retain more teachers. The Department has published a range of resources to help schools address teacher workload issues, prioritise staff wellbeing and support schools to introduce flexible working practices.

The Department has worked in partnership with the education sector and mental health experts to develop the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>. Building on a successful pilot, the Department is also funding the charity, Education Support, to provide professional supervision and counselling to school and college head teachers. Over 1000 head teachers have benefitted from this support so far and the Department recently announced the expansion of the programme, by doubling places for this year. School and college leaders can find support by visiting Education Support's website, which is available at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/get-help/help-for-your-staff/wellbeing-services/school-and-fe-leaders-service/>.

The Department does not provide guidance on teachers' sick leave. For most teachers, sick leave entitlements are set out in the Burgundy Book national agreement. This is an agreement on conditions of service between Unions and Local Authorities, facilitated by the Local Government Association, which the Department has no jurisdiction or input into. The vast majority of Local Authorities follow the terms of the Burgundy Book scheme, which is incorporated into their teachers' contracts of employment.

All schools must ensure that they oversee the health and welfare of their staff and should have a clear sickness absence management policy. Governing bodies may find it helpful to refer to Acas's Managing Absence guidance, available at: <https://www.acas.org.uk/creating-absence-policies>.

The Health and Safety Executive also provides extensive advice on managing sickness absence and returning to work, which includes a toolkit to help with absence management, which can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence/>.



## ■ University Technical Colleges

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to (a) improve the training and (b) increase the funding provided to technical colleges in (i) Romford, (ii) London borough of Havering and (iii) Essex.

**Robert Halfon:**

The government is committed to creating a world leading skills system which is employer-focused, high-quality and fit for the future. The department's reforms are strengthening higher and further education to help more people get good jobs and upskill and retrain throughout their lives, and to improve national productivity and economic growth. The reforms are backed with an additional investment of £3.8 billion over the course of this Parliament to strengthen higher and further education.

This additional funding will help providers such as those in Romford, Havering and Essex to deliver high-quality education and training.

- New City College at the Havering Campus offers a wide range of vocational courses for people of all ages. In 2020, it opened a new £15 million Construction Trades Skill Centre. It has received Capital funding of £2.2 million through the Strategic Development Fund, £6.5 million through the further education (FE) Capital Transformation and £625,000 for T Levels.
- Barking and Dagenham College offers a wide range of vocational courses for people of all ages including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, construction and digital skills. The East London Institute of Technology (IoT) is based at the College and offers a range of science and technology, construction and infrastructure, advanced engineering and robotics courses. It has received Capital funding of £2.95 million for the IoT, £1.2 million through the FE Capital Transformation Fund and £1.05 million for T Levels.
- Havering Adult College in Romford and Barking and Dagenham Adult Colleges offer a wide range of vocational qualifications.
- USP College (Unified Seevic and Palmers), based in Benfleet and Grays in Essex, has a wide-ranging post-16 vocational offer. In 2023, it opened a state of the art digital and creative media training centre. It has received Capital Funding of £2.4 million through the FE Capital Transformation Fund and £785,000 for T Levels.
- Colchester Institute offers a wide range of vocational provision. It has received Capital Funding of £1.26 million through the FE Capital Transformation Fund and £246,000 for T Levels.
- South Essex College in Basildon, offers a full range of FE provision. South Essex IoT is also based at the College. It has received Capital Funding of £1.61 million through the FE Capital Transformation Fund, £1.14 million for T Levels and £3.25 million for the IoT.

Apprenticeships are crucial in driving growth and social mobility; they boost skills across the economy and improve people's earnings and career opportunities nationwide. Since 2010, there have been 130,790 apprenticeship starts in Essex, 22,390 in London Borough of Havering and 9,080 in Romford constituency, and the department wants to ensure that this number continues to grow. To support this, the government is increasing its investment in apprenticeships to £2.7 billion by 2024/25, encouraging more employers across the country to recruit new apprentices.

The department is implementing major reforms to technical education to equip people with the technical skills that employers demand.

The department has introduced T Levels which will equip more young people with the skills, knowledge and experience to access skilled employment or further study. They represent a real shift in the quality of technical education and the department has invested heavily to support providers in their implementation. From September 2023, 18 T Levels will be available, being delivered through nearly 300 providers across all regions of the country. T Levels are being delivered widely by providers in Romford, Havering and Essex in subjects such as Engineering & Manufacturing, Digital, health and science.

The department plans to invest approximately £300 million to establish 21 IoTs across the country. The 21 IoTs include the East London IoT and the South East IoT. IoTs are partnerships between FE colleges, higher education and employers and provide access to industry standard facilities. They focus on the technical training needs of employers and learners in their local areas.

The department has introduced the Free Courses for Jobs scheme which enables eligible adults to gain a qualification for free. Residents in Romford, Havering and Essex can access provision that is delivered through colleges and training providers in the area across a range of sector subject areas. In addition, the department has also introduced Skills Bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with an employer.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Biofuels

**Andrew Percy:**

[\[198386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has had recent discussions with biomass generators on the potential merits of implementing a bridging mechanism to support generators as they transition from unabated biomass to power bioenergy and carbon capture.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department has held preliminary discussions with biomass generators that passed the power bioenergy with carbon capture and storage project submission process about the potential merits of a bridging mechanism.

## ■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage: North Sea

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make it her policy to promote the North Sea as a location for carbon capture, usage and storage technology.

**Graham Stuart:**

Carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) is a priority for this Government. The UK continental shelf, and particularly the North Sea, provides a unique geological opportunity for the UK to become a world leader in this sector. The recent announcements on Track 1 and Track 2 reaffirm Government commitment, and the North Sea Transition Authority has estimated that as many as 100 CO<sub>2</sub> stores could be required to meet net zero.

## ■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Policy

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, 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.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero committed to transforming Britain's energy security and scaling up affordable, clean and homegrown power after its creation in February 2023. To address the long-term strategic challenges associated with its remit, the Department has a dedicated senior leadership team and Strategy Directorate which ensure strategic thinking and horizon scanning is bolstered and embedded across the breadth of the Department's work.

## ■ Drax Power: Energy Supply

**Andrew Percy:**

[\[198385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero on 30 March 2023, Official Report, column 1193, on the need to work with Drax on a bridging option between 2027 and 2030, whether she expects her Department to consult publicly on a bridging mechanism by 1 January 2024.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is considering whether transitional support may be appropriate for when existing arrangements end for electricity generators using biomass. The Government will consider whether public consultation may be appropriate as part of this process.

## ■ Electricity Generation

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Contracts for Difference scheme in supporting low-carbon electricity generation.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme is the Government's main mechanism for supporting new low-carbon electricity generation projects in Great Britain. It has awarded contracts to renewable projects totalling over 30 Giga Watts (GW) of capacity, including around 20GW of offshore wind. On 8 September the Government published Allocation Round 5 results, which awarded contracts to a record 95 projects with total generation capacity of 3.7GW. The scheme now runs annual auctions and the evidence base is reviewed every round. The Government has published the timeline for the next round, which opens in March 2024.

## ■ Energy Bills Rebate

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of support provided to households by her Department's energy support schemes in the last 12 months.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government has already spent nearly £40 billion protecting households and businesses from spiralling energy bills over last winter and we welcome recent reductions to household energy bills.

Together, the Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bills Support Scheme covered around half of a typical household energy bill this past winter, and by the end of June this year had saved a typical household around £1,500. Analysis for 2022, published 28 February 2023, indicates that 350,000 households in England were kept out of fuel poverty as a result of temporary support offered to households with energy bills.

The Government is continuing to closely monitor energy prices and keeping energy support schemes under review and is planning for a range of possible scenarios. This planning is being guided by extensive experience in delivering household support last year that is also taking onboard the lessons learned from doing so.

## ■ Fossil Fuels

**Mark Logan:**

[\[198237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps she is taking to increase domestic oil and gas production.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government supports new licensing rounds in the North Sea to slow the decline in production from what is a mature basin while supporting industry to reduce

production emissions. As reaffirmed in the Powering Up Britain Energy Security Plan, the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) launched the 33rd oil and gas exploration licensing round in October last year and is expected to award the first licences from this round later this year. The Government and the NSTA have announced a joint commitment to undertake future licensing rounds, subject to a climate compatibility test.

## ■ Fossil Fuels: Licensing

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department is taking steps to ensure that any new oil and gas licences will be compatible with the Government's 2050 net zero target.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has strict measures in place to ensure emissions from oil and gas production are accounted for in legally binding domestic carbon budgets; new oil and gas licences will not increase emissions above carbon budgets.

As a net importer of oil and gas and a rapidly declining producer, new oil and gas licences simply reduce the fall in the UK supply; they do not increase it above current levels.

## ■ Gases: Carbon Emissions

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make a comparative assessment of the carbon footprint of (a) domestically-produced gas and (b) imported liquified natural gas.

**Graham Stuart:**

Recent research from the North Sea Transition Authority shows that the production of gas extracted from the UK Continental Shelf has an average emission intensity of 21 kilogrammes of CO<sub>2</sub> kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/boe, whereas imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) has a significantly higher average production and transportation intensity of 79 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/boe.

This means that domestically produced gas releases around four times less carbon dioxide during the process of extraction, treatment and transportation, when compared to imported liquefied natural gas.

## ■ Heat Pumps: Housing

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[198041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress his Department has made on incentivising the installation of heat pumps in homes.

**Graham Stuart:**

By the end of July 2023 over £69m worth of grants have been paid out through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme. Earlier this year government announced the scheme has been extended to 2028.

We have introduced 0% VAT on heat pump installations and made a commitment on rebalancing of gas and electricity prices, ensuring that stronger incentives for consumers to switch to low-carbon technologies are in place.

From April 2024, we will be introducing the Clean Heat Market Mechanism to provide industry with the confidence and incentive to invest in evolving and expanding the consumer proposition for heat pumps in the UK, finding ways to stimulate demand by making it easier and more attractive to make the decision to install a heat pump.

**■ Help to Grow Schemes: Environment Protection****Dr Jamie Wallis:**[\[198408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a Help to Grow Green scheme for businesses.

**Graham Stuart:**

Government recognises the role businesses play in helping meet our net zero target, and already offers a range of support. The Government has relaunched the UK Business Climate Hub, providing free net zero advice to small businesses and signposts funding opportunities. The Hub will soon be complemented by a new Energy Advice Service for small businesses.

Alongside local support schemes, Government offers the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, Workplace Charging Scheme and Cycle to Work scheme.

The Net Zero Council has also established a working group to address the barriers small businesses face in reducing their emissions.

**■ Houseboats: Carbon Emissions****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make it her policy to introduce grants for houseboat (a) owners and (b) occupiers to decarbonise their heating systems.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government currently has no plans to introduce grants for houseboats.

**■ Insulation: Housing****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress her Department has made on delivering the Great British Insulation Scheme in making homes energy efficient.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Great British Insulation Scheme was fully established in law on 25 July 2023, but energy suppliers have been able to deliver insulation measures under the scheme since 30 March 2023. Industry reports show measures are being installed however official statistics are not yet available.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the average cost is per household of the the Great British Insulation Scheme as of 4 September 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Great British Insulation Scheme is estimated to be worth £150m in 2023/24, which would add around £5 to the average domestic energy bill.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the total amount of funding was awarded to households under the Great British Insulation Scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Great British Insulation Scheme is not a grant or loan scheme, but a legal obligation placed on larger energy suppliers who fund the delivery of energy efficiency measures to eligible households. The Scheme is worth a total of £1bn and will run until March 2026.

**■ Nuclear Fusion****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment her Department has made of the potential (a) merits and (b) feasibility of developing nuclear fusion technology.

**Andrew Bowie:**

Fusion energy could be the ultimate clean power solution, representing a low carbon, safe, continuous, and sustainable source of energy.

More work is required to make fusion energy a reality. In line with our *Fusion Strategy*, we are investing over £700 million from 2021/22 to 2024/25 in cutting-edge research programmes and facilities, to grow the capability of UK industry and make the UK the global hub for fusion innovation. We have committed over £240 million towards the first phase of STEP – a programme which aims to develop and build, by 2040, a prototype fusion power plant capable of delivering energy to the UK grid.

**■ Nuclear Power****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Great British Nuclear on the Government's domestic nuclear energy targets.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The British Energy Security Strategy set out our ambition for deploying up to 24 gigawatts of civil nuclear by 2050, around 25% of our projected 2050 electricity demand. We launched Great British Nuclear (GBN) to help deliver new nuclear projects.

GBN is currently conducting a Technology Selection Process to select the best Small Modular Reactor technologies for the UK to facilitate the Government's ambition to take two Final Investment Decisions next parliament.

Chosen SMR technologies will be offered an unprecedented level of support and funding to support technology development and site-specific design, as well as a close partnership with GBN, which will be ready and able to provide developer capability and support in accessing sites.

GBN will also support the Government's consideration of further large Gigawatt-scale projects to help us deliver on our net zero ambitions.

**■ Solar Power****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment her Department made of the potential impact of solar power on national net zero targets.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is aiming for 70 gigawatts of solar capacity by 2035. Solar power will make a significant contribution to electricity supply by 2050 alongside other low carbon sources.

**■ Solar Power: Housing****Richard Fuller:**[\[198049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential contribution of rooftop solar energy to the Government's net zero targets; and whether her Department plans to require a certain proportion of solar energy to be delivered through rooftop solar.

**Graham Stuart:**

As set out in the Powering Up Britain Energy Security Plan, the Government is aiming for 70 gigawatts of ground and rooftop solar capacity together by 2035. Maximising deployment of both types of solar is important to achieve this target. Rooftop solar is a key priority for the Government and is one of the most popular and easily deployed renewable energy sources.



**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Bovine Tuberculosis****Matt Vickers:****[198862]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that dairy farmers whose herds are affected by bovine tuberculosis are provided with adequate support.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government is acutely aware of the devastating impacts bTB can have on livestock owners and their families. Defra is working hard to support dairy farmers whose herds experience a bTB breakdown and ensure that information and tailored support is accessible.

Defra is committed to helping farmers and their families tackle the mental health and livelihood impacts of bTB and has provided grant funding to the [Farming Community Network](#) since 2010. The TB Advisory Service (TBAS) is a Defra funded project that by means of over-the-phone advice, farm visits and badger sett surveys offers free, bespoke, practical and cost-effective advice to all eligible farmers in England to help reduce the risks associated with TB. In late 2021, Defra launched a new, nationwide TBAS, delivered by Farmcare Solutions: [Home - TB Advisory Service \(tbas.org.uk\)](#)

Defra is also working in partnership with the livestock sector and a wide range of academics, charities, and other experts to deliver the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, supporting continual improvement in farm animal health and welfare. That includes a programme of financial support for farmers in the pig, cattle, sheep, and poultry sectors, to help them continually improve animal health and welfare.

**■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions****Sir Bill Wiggin:****[198031]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to meet its obligations under Article 2, section 1b of the Paris Agreement.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In December 2020, the UK became one of the first countries in the world to fulfil a key commitment of the Paris Agreement by publishing its first Adaptation Communication. This sets out what the UK is doing to prepare for the effects of climate change at home, and support those facing impacts overseas. Aims include to increase the visibility and profile of adaptation and its balance with mitigation and enhance learning and understanding of adaptation needs and actions. The UK government provided a short update in October 2021, to signal its ongoing commitment to transparency on the adaptation action we are taking.

The third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3), published in July 2023, addresses all 61 risks and opportunities identified in the third Climate Change Risk Assessment. NAP3 includes dedicated responses to risks to domestic agricultural productivity and

UK food availability, safety, and quality from climate change overseas. This publication marks a step-change in the UK government's approach to climate adaptation. We're responding to threats to domestic food production through our Environmental Land Management farming schemes, better protecting hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses with a record-breaking £5.2 billion investment in flood and coastal schemes, and safeguarding future water supplies by working with regulators to accelerate £2.2 billion of investment through our ambitious Plan for Water.

Adapting to this changing climate is vital to strengthen our national security and resilience and to protect the economy from higher costs in the future. We are working with the Met Office Hadley Centre and others to develop R&D which will help enhance the resilience of the agri-food system in response to climate change.

## ■ UK Trade with EU: Food

**Richard Thomson:**

[\[198266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to improve (a) awareness of and (b) compliance with upcoming import checks on food products arriving from the EU to Great Britain among food importers in the (i) UK and (ii) EU.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is engaging stakeholders in all SPS sectors within the United Kingdom, across the EU and with global trading partners, to raise awareness of the Border Target Operating Model (TOM). Information will be shared through a series of live and virtual engagement events. Online guidance will be available on GOV.UK.

From 30 April, our approach to compliance and enforcement will balance an expectation that businesses will do their best to comply, with an understanding that there will be a period of adjustment to the new controls. We are working with APHA and PHAs to reach a clear and consistent understanding of how this calibrated approach will be implemented. We will continue to pursue an approach of supporting businesses towards full compliance via guidance and warnings, only escalating to enforcement where necessary.

**Richard Thomson:**

[\[198267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to improve its communications with food importers in the (a) UK and (b) EU on upcoming import checks on food products arriving from the EU.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is engaging stakeholders in all SPS sectors within the United Kingdom, across the EU and with global trading partners, to raise awareness of the Border Target Operating Model (TOM). Information will be shared through a series of live and virtual engagement events and communications detailing actions required as a result of the new changes. Online guidance will be available on GOV.UK.

**Richard Thomson:**

[\[198269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to minimise the disruption of import checks on food products arriving from the EU.

**Mark Spencer:**

From 30 April, our approach to compliance and enforcement will balance an expectation that businesses will do their best to comply, with an understanding that there will be a period of adjustment, and the importance of minimising disruption to supply chains. We will continue to pursue an approach of supporting businesses towards full compliance via guidance and warnings, and only escalating enforcement where necessary.

To support business in preparing for controls, Defra is engaging stakeholders in all SPS sectors within the United Kingdom, across the EU and with global trading partner. Information will be shared through a series of live and virtual engagement events. Online guidance will be available on GOV.UK.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Burkina Faso and Niger: Humanitarian Aid

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[198103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the border closures between Niger and ECOWAS countries on the ability of NGOs to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in (a) Niger and (b) Burkina Faso; and whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in the ECOWAS nations on steps to help ensure this assistance reaches those in need.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK condemns in the strongest possible terms attempts to undermine democracy, peace and stability in Niger. We stand firmly with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in calling for an end to the unacceptable infringement on the democratic rights of the people of Niger. The crisis in Niger and resultant border closures have led to blockages of food, nutrition, and medical humanitarian supplies to Niger. We are not aware that these have had a major impact on aid delivery to Burkina Faso. On 17 August, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator wrote to the President of the ECOWAS Commission asking for unimpeded movement of humanitarian cargo and personnel, and allowing financial transactions for humanitarian operations. ECOWAS has reacted favourably, indicating willingness to allow the transit of humanitarian consignments. The UK welcomes this and continues to monitor the situation to ensure that relief goods can pass into Niger.

**■ Mahmoud Abbas****Greg Smith:** [\[198882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implication for his policies of reported anti-Semitic comments by the President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas in the context of the Middle East Peace Process.

**David Rutley:**

The UK condemns the recent antisemitic remarks made by President Abbas. The UK stands firmly against all attempts to distort the Holocaust. Such statements do not advance efforts towards reconciliation. President Abbas' comments are completely unacceptable and can only serve to exacerbate tensions and undermine efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution that is in the interests of both Israelis and Palestinians. Officials at the British Consulate General in Jerusalem have raised this matter with the Palestinian Authority and the Foreign Secretary intends to do the same during his visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**■ Niger: Politics and Government****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support democracy in Niger.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK condemns in the strongest possible terms attempts to undermine democracy, peace and stability in Niger. We stand firmly with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in calling for an end to the unacceptable infringement on the democratic rights of the people of Niger. The UK has suspended long-term development assistance to Niger, though we continue to provide critical humanitarian aid. The Foreign Secretary and Minister for Africa are regularly engaging with both regional leaders and international partners to support regionally led mediation efforts and bring about a peaceful resolution in Niger as soon as possible.

**■ Refugees: Families****Rachael Maskell:** [\[198399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the UNHCR on the reunification of families in safe countries.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The FCDO engages systematically with partners, such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and regularly discusses treatment of refugees, including family reunification. The UK actively promotes the implementation of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. We also

provide a safe and legal route to bring families together through its family reunion policy. This allows individuals with protection status in the UK to sponsor their partner or children to stay with or join them here.

### ■ **Sudan: Christianity**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to persecuted Christians in Sudan.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We welcomed the progress made by the Sudanese transitional government from 2019 to 2021, which included decriminalising apostasy, declaring Christmas a national holiday and lifting public order laws that disproportionately affected Christian women. However, we are aware that these significant steps taken to improve religious freedom have stalled since 2021. In May this year, following the outbreak of conflict in April, we announced £21.7 million in humanitarian assistance for Sudan, part of a £143 million package of aid for East Africa. This includes support to protection activities for vulnerable people affected by the conflict. The UK continues to fund and support the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sudan (OHCHR), a UN body that provides a crucial role in monitoring and reporting on human rights violations.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ **Brain Cancer: Immunotherapy**

**Caroline Ansell:**

[\[198515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to make an assessment of the effectiveness of immunotherapy as a treatment for brain cancer; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service on whether medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources. All new medicines, including immunotherapies, are appraised by NICE within their licensed indications, and the NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended by NICE.

NICE is currently developing guidance on the immunotherapy dabrafenib with trametinib for treating BRAF V600E mutation-positive glioma in children and young people aged 1 to 17. If this is recommended for use on the NHS, it will be eligible for funding through the Cancer Drugs Fund from the point that NICE issues positive draft guidance.

## ■ Breast Cancer: Screening

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[198696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many breast cancer rescreening units use an open invitation model as of 1 September 2023; what the average uptake is of breast cancer screening in areas where (a) an open invite and (b) timed appointment model is used; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The decision to have timed or open appointments in the National Health Service breast screening programme is the responsibility of providers with agreement from commissioners.

Information on the average uptake of breast screening categorised by areas that use open and timed appointments is not held centrally by NHS England.

NHS England has commissioned a series of national evaluative projects as part of the Uptake Improvement Plan, including on the impact on screening uptake using different invitation methodologies.

## ■ Fertility: Medical Treatments

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[198926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to help reduce waiting times for fertility treatments.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Funding decisions for local health services in England are made by integrated care boards, based on the clinical needs of their populations. The Government expects these organisations to commission fertility services in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, ensuring equal access to fertility treatment across England.

Diagnostic checks are a key part of fertility treatment pathways. Our national ambition is that 95% of all patients needing a diagnostic check receive it within six weeks by March 2025.

## ■ Health Services: Northern Ireland

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[198538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his letter to his counterparts in Scotland and Wales on 13 August 2023, what steps he plans to take to ensure that patients on waiting lists in Northern Ireland can receive treatment in England.

**Will Quince:**

The Government are committed to reducing waiting times across England and the United Kingdom, and my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has written to the devolved administrations to offer to work collaboratively to reduce long waits. He also indicated that he would consider any request for patients

waiting for lengthy periods for treatment in Scotland and Wales to be able to choose from alternate providers in England.

Officials in the Department are seeking an initial meeting with the devolved administrations to discuss how we can work jointly and share lessons on tackling the longest waits.

More generally, the UK Government has a longstanding history of close working with the Devolved Governments on cross-border commissioning arrangements. These have been in place for several years and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland already have the power to contract with any National Health Service provider in England for specific services.

For example, NHS England commissions five specialised services on behalf of patients from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: choriocarcinoma; craniofacial services; liver transplantation (where this takes place at English providers); retinoblastoma; and specialist paediatric liver services.

## ■ NHS: Labour Turnover

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve staff retention in the National Health Service.

**Will Quince:**

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

NHS priorities and operational planning guidance 2023/24 has asked systems to refresh their 2022/23 whole system workforce plans to improve staff retention through a systematic focus on all elements of the NHS People Promise. Staff wellbeing should be strategically aligned with elective recovery plans, including workforce demand and capacity planning. In addition, the NHS Retention Programme is continuously seeking to understand why staff leave, resulting in targeted interventions to support staff to stay whilst keeping them well.

The Long Term Workforce Plan builds on the People Plan and sets out how to improve culture and leadership to ensure that up to 130,000 fewer staff leave the NHS over the next 15 years. This includes: implementing actions from the NHS People Plan that have been shown to be successful; implementing plans to improve flexible opportunities for prospective retirees and delivering the actions needed to modernise the NHS pension scheme; and committing to ongoing national funding for continuing professional development for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, so NHS staff are supported to meet their full potential.

## ■ NHS: Staff

### Wes Streeting:

[\[198377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many retired NHS staff returned to work in the NHS in each of the last five years.

### Will Quince:

*[Holding answer 13 September 2023]:* The National Health Service is committed to offering flexible retirement options to help it attract and retain experienced staff.

The Department does not hold data covering all staff who may have begun claiming their NHS pension (either with or without a break in service) and who subsequently returned in any given time period. NHS England do publish quarterly data on the 'reasons for leaving' that are recorded in the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) on staff leaving National Health Service Hospital and Community Health Service (HCHS) bodies. One of these is 'flexible retirement', which is used to show where bodies know the member of staff is returning to service after 'leaving'. This likely, but not necessarily, requires a break in service. If, for example, someone moves to shorter hours, and takes a portion of their pension, local processes in ESR may generate a 'reason for leaving' record. The table below shows the headcount number of staff recorded with a 'flexible retirement' reason for leaving for each of the past five financial years.

FINANCIAL YEAR	HEADCOUNT NUMBER OF HCHS STAFF WITH RECORDED 'REASON FOR LEAVING' AS 'FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT'
2018/19	4,180
2019/20	4,806
2020/21	4,721
2021/22	6,293
2022/23	5,752

Sometimes staff may not be certain of returning when they initially retire, or NHS bodies may not be aware of staff intentions, and as such the above may be an underestimate.

## ■ NHS: Strikes

### Wes Streeting:

[\[198226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the total cost incurred by the NHS in England as a result of industrial action since 1 December 2022.



**Will Quince:**

NHS England have made a broad estimate of the costs of industrial action since April 2023. This estimate has a wide range, given that assumptions have had to be made on pay rates for staff used to provide cover. Direct costs of cover for striking staff are thought to be between £400 million and £600 million.

In addition, the disruption caused by strikes significantly impacts efforts to improve efficiency and productivity, but it is much more difficult to directly evidence the impact of strikes on delivery and provide a robust estimate of knock-on costs.

**Podiatry: Waiting Lists****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an estimate of the number of patients waiting for podiatry care in (a) Slough, (b) the South East and (c) England and Wales.

**Will Quince:**

In England, in June 2023, according to published data on Community Health Services waiting lists, there were 126,746 adults waiting for podiatry and podiatric surgery across the providers surveyed. In the South East region, 14,052 adults are on the waiting list for podiatry or podiatric surgery.

Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB) commissions National Health Service services for the population of Slough. Across Frimley ICB, 680 adults were on the waiting list for podiatry and podiatric surgery.

Data on waiting lists in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Government.

**Prescription Drugs****Cat Smith:**[\[196444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 137239 on Prescription Drugs, what information his Department holds on the number of unique patients who have been prescribed drugs categorised under the drug groups (a) benzodiazepines including clonazepam, (b) z-drugs, (c) antidepressants and (d) opioids in each of the last two years.

**Will Quince:**

The methodologies used by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) for calculating these statistics have changed since January 2021. Therefore, the below tables include data for each of the last five financial years to address the additional two-year datasets requested as well as reflect the new methodologies used.

The following table shows the number of unique patients who were prescribed benzodiazepines including clonazepam in each financial year 2018/2019 to 2022/2023:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIED PATIENTS - BENZODIAZEPINES INCLUDING CLONAZEPAM	PERCENTAGE (%) OF ITEMS WHERE THE PATIENT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED
2018/2019	1,545,014	95.27
2019/2020	1,497,077	95.97
2020/2021	1,368,092	97.16
2021/2022	1,339,417	97.23
2022/2023	1,324,792	97.21

The following table shows the number of unique patients who were prescribed Z-Drugs in each financial year from 2018/2019 to 2021/2022:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIED PATIENTS – Z-DRUGS	PERCENTAGE (%) OF ITEMS WHERE THE PATIENT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED
2018/2019	945,510	96.65
2019/2020	897,451	96.94
2020/2021	876,746	98.05
2021/2022	825,382	98.12

The following table shows the number of unique patients who were prescribed an antidepressant in each financial year from 2018/2019 to 2022/2023:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIED PATIENTS – ANTIDEPRESSANTS	PERCENTAGE (%) OF ITEMS WHERE THE PATIENT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED
2018/2019	7,590,802	97.92
2019/2020	7,856,297	98.21
2020/2021	7,909,516	99.10
2021/2022	8,359,838	99.14
2022/2023	8,563,148	99.16

The following table shows the number of unique patients who were prescribed opioids from financial year 2018/2019 to 2021/2022:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIED PATIENTS - OPIOIDS (INCLUDES COMPOUND ANALGESICS)	PERCENTAGE (%) OF ITEMS WHERE THE PATIENT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED	TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIED PATIENTS - OPIOID ANALGESICS (EXCLUDES COMPOUND ANALGESICS)
2018/2019	5,935,454	96.65	3,036,777
2019/2020	5,730,095	96.94	2,971,092
2020/2021	5,525,899	98.05	2,883,897
2021/2022	5,589,348	98.12	2,927,983

Note: Our reply to the previous question predated the official statistics used here, and used a different classification of opioids using the standard classification used in the NHSBSA Data Warehouse. Comparable data is shown in the final column of the above table; this counts patients without including any prescriptions for compound analgesics such as co-codamol and co-dydramol.

All figures included above are correct as of 5 September 2023 and could be subject to revision once audited reports are published.

### ■ Radiotherapy: Rotherham

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[198524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is her policy to devolve areas of radiotherapy commissioning within NHS Trusts to local Integrated Care Systems in Rotherham constituency.

**Will Quince:**

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

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

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum: Applications

**Tim Farron:**

[\[198338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims withdrawn between June 2022 and June 2023 have been reinstated.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office does not publish data on the number of asylum claims withdrawn and reinstated.

The caseworker guidance for withdrawing asylum claims can be found at the following link on gov.uk. This guidance further provides information about the process of requesting a reinstatement of an asylum claim: [Withdrawing asylum applications: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/withdrawing-asylum-applications-caseworker-guidance)

**Tim Farron:****[198387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department have taken to (a) support people who have had their asylum claim withdrawn and (b) ensure that people who have had their asylum claims withdrawn do not become victims of (i) exploitation and (ii) modern slavery.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Asylum claims may be implicitly withdrawn for a variety of reasons, for example because the claimant fails to maintain contact with the Home Office or fails to attend an asylum interview or reporting event. All withdrawals are administered on a case-by-case basis. Claimants are given the opportunity to explain their reasons for non-compliance before their claim is to be withdrawn implicitly. Where a reasonable explanation is provided, claims will not be withdrawn.

Following withdrawal of an asylum claim, if the claimant does not otherwise have the legal right to remain in the UK, leave to remain on other grounds following a separate application or an outstanding application, they will be liable for removal. For those eligible, The Home Office Voluntary Returns Service can provide support for those required to return to their home country if they do not have permission to remain in the UK.

**■ Asylum: Hotels****Andrew Rosindell:****[198064]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish details of the hotel chains with which her Department has signed contracts for the exclusive use of asylum seeker accommodation within the last 12 months.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Details of the hotel chains contracted for asylum accommodation are considered commercially confidential and we do not routinely publish these details. Published statistics of where asylum seekers are accommodated can be viewed under the Local Authority Dataset Asy-D11 at:

[Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets)

## ■ Immigration: Applications

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[198405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many family reunion applications have not been completed by her Department within (a) the 60 day service standard, (b) six months and (c) one year.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Information regarding processing times for family reunion applications is not routinely published and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. We are working outside the 60 working day service standard, with the majority of applications being considered at over double the service standard timescale.

We remain committed to improving and speeding up processing times for family reunion applications.

The latest [Immigration system statistics, year ending June 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-june-2023) show that since 2015, 46,511 family reunion visas have been granted to family members of refugees.

We prioritise all applications where the application has been made by an unaccompanied child, under the age of 18. We will also prioritise applications where there is an evidenced urgent or compelling reason.

## ■ Overseas Students: Sponsorship

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[198406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many subscribers to the Student premium customer service for sponsors made representations to her Department opposing planned changes to the service between 1 January and 7 September 2023.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We are not able to provide the data requested as the information is not held in a reportable field.

## ■ Passports: Postal Services

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[198404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the ongoing Ofcom investigation into Royal Mail's compliance with its quality-of-service performance targets in 2022-23 was relevant to the decision to award Royal Mail the contract to collect and deliver passports and travel documents; and if she will make a statement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The contract for the secure delivery of passports and other mail services on behalf of the Home Office was awarded in October 2022, prior to the Ofcom investigation.

The contract was awarded following a fair and open competition and extensive due diligence, with Royal Mail best demonstrating that they could meet the requirements of the Home Office and its customers.

**LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES****■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Policy****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198441\]](#)

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

**Dehenna Davison:**

Addressing long term strategic challenges is integral to the work of the department across all our policy areas.

**■ Housing Estates: Defibrillators****Julian Knight:**[\[196063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to encourage housing developers to install automated external defibrillators on new housing estates.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Planning conditions can enhance the quality and mitigate any adverse effects of a development, but local authorities are required to provide specific justification for every planning condition they impose as part of a planning permission. Conditions must also meet the policy tests for conditions as set in the National Planning Policy Framework. This states that a condition must be necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other aspects. There should not be duplication with other relevant regulatory frameworks which cover the development

Planning conditions generally do not cover health and safety matters in relation to first aid provision as these matters are subject to health and safety legislation. Although there is no absolute requirement under health and safety legislation for employers to provide defibrillators in the workplace, including construction sites, employers might identify the need for a defibrillator following the first aid needs assessment they are required to carry out under the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981. These regulations state that employers must provide the equipment and facilities they need to deliver adequate and appropriate first aid for their employees, if they are injured or become ill at work.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Annual Reports****Emily Thornberry:**[\[198327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which Department has responsibility for publishing the 2022-23 annual report of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's; and when she expects that report to be published.

**George Freeman:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) annual accounts for 2022-23 are being prepared by a cross departmental team covering the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Department for Business and Trade. The accounts will formally be laid by the Treasury and it has been agreed they will be signed by the Permanent Secretary in DSIT, as the previous Accounting Officer for BEIS.

When the National Audit Office complete the audit the accounts will be laid in the normal manner and we anticipate this will be in mid October when the House returns. It will be for the successor departments to respond to any questions based on the relevant area.

**■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero****Julian Knight:**[\[196650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she made of the effectiveness of the new Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

**George Freeman:**

DSIT was set up in February 2023. Since then, DSIT's key achievements include:

- Launching the Science and Technology Framework as our strategic vision, which sets out 10 priority areas for action to make the UK a science and technology superpower by 2030.
- Establishing the Frontier AI Task Force, supported by £100 million, and committed to hold the world's first AI summit on safety this autumn;
- Progressing the Online Safety Bill, which is on track to achieve Royal Assent this parliamentary session;
- Launching the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy, announcing a new ambition that all populated areas should have high-quality, standalone 5G by 2030, and investing £40 million to drive take up of innovative 5G-enabled services for businesses and the public sector;
- Investing up to £100 million in a new future telecoms mission, the 6G Strategy;

- Committing up to £1 billion through our Semiconductors Strategy;
- Announcing £2.5 billion over the next decade for quantum technologies;
- Pledging £1 billion for the next generation of supercomputing and AI research;
- Announcing a £650 million package for life sciences jointly with DHSC;
- Convened the Global Leaders on Space Sustainability Symposium and launched the Earth Space Sustainability Initiative's Memorandum of Principles;
- Agreed strategic SRTI Bilateral frameworks with 5 key R+D nations;
- Overseen the founding cohort of Programme Directors at ARIA – the scientists and engineers tasked with designing and overseeing ARIA's initial programmes;
- Negotiated an agreement for Horizon & Copernicus association

## ■ Horizon Europe

**Adam Holloway:**

[\[198477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will publish a value for money assessment of the UK's participation in the Horizon Europe programme; and if she will make a statement.

**George Freeman:**

The Government will not publish a value for money assessment. The Government has negotiated a bespoke deal in the UK's national interest.

The Secretary of State made a statement to the House of Commons on 7 September 2023 and set out why the bespoke deal negotiated by the Government was the best outcome for the UK research and innovation sector.

**Adam Holloway:**

[\[198485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to ensure the Horizon Scheme aligns with the UK's priorities.

**Adam Holloway:**

[\[198486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to ensure that the UK's participation in the Horizon scheme cannot be (a) suspended and (b) terminated by the EU.

**George Freeman:**

On 7th September the Prime Minister announced a new UK- EU agreement on the UK's association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus. This is a landmark moment for scientific and space collaboration between the EU and the UK. Horizon Europe strengthens UK science and boosts economic growth. The Government has negotiated a bespoke deal in the UK's national interest.

This agreement secures UK association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus through to 2027 when these programmes finish. The agreement will now be adopted by both



sides, confirming the UK's association to these two programmes as well as binding both parties to the terms of this deal.

#### ■ Internet: Cost of Living

**Angela Crawley:**

[\[198168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the rise in cost of living on the affordability of internet access for households.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

In April 2023, Ofcom's [Affordability Report](#) showed 6% of UK households were experiencing affordability issues with their fixed broadband services, and 8% with their mobile connectivity. For those on benefits these numbers rose to 11% in broadband and 17% in mobile.

To support low-income households, the Government has worked with telecoms providers to ensure market provision of low-cost broadband and mobile tariffs. Social tariffs are available from 27 providers (including BT, Sky, Virgin Media, and Vodafone), across 99% of the UK and start from £10 per month.

In June 2022, following Government negotiations, broadband and mobile operators agreed a set of public commitments to support their customers through the rise in the cost of living, including allowing those struggling with their bills to enter into affordable payment plans or switch to cheaper deals without penalty.

#### ■ Pandemic Sciences Institute: Finance

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[197399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department plans to provide £150 million funding to the Oxford Pandemic Sciences Institute.

**George Freeman:**

The Department has no current plans to fund this. The Department of Health and Social Care holds the responsibility for future pandemic preparedness. Pandemic Preparedness is an area the government keeps under constant review and our strategic approach to pandemic preparedness evolves in response to new scientific information, lessons learned from prior pandemics, responses to other infectious disease outbreaks and rigorous exercising to test our response mechanisms. In addition, over £405 million has been invested to date to secure and scale up the UK's vaccine manufacturing capabilities to ensure a robust response to COVID-19 and potential future health emergencies.

## ■ Research

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[198444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department made a comparative assessment of the potential merits of (a) joining Horizon Europe on the new terms and (b) pursuing the Pioneer research programme.

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[198445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will publish any impact assessments conducted by her Department on the UK's return to the EU Horizon research programme.

**George Freeman:**

The Government has negotiated a bespoke deal in the UK's national interest. The Secretary of State made a statement to the House of Commons on 7 September 2023 and set out why the bespoke deal negotiated by the Government was the best outcome for the UK research and innovation sector.

The Government is grateful to the sector for their feedback during the development of the Pioneer proposals. These plans will now be used to inform future R&D policy development.

## ■ Research: Costs

**Adam Holloway:** [\[198478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what estimate her Department had made of the cost of (a) implementing and (b) running the Pioneer programme prior to the Government securing an agreement to join Horizon Europe.

**George Freeman:**

As set out in the Pioneer Prospectus published April 2023, the government would have committed up to £14.6billion to implement and run the Pioneer Programme until 2027/28. This was part of a wider package of contingency measures the government developed in the event that the UK had been unable to associate to Horizon Europe and Copernicus.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Aircraft: Exhaust Emissions

**Jim Shannon:** [\[198040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to regulate emissions produced by private planes.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Department is taking active measures to reduce emissions from aviation whilst retaining ability to fly. The aviation sector, including business aviation, is important for

the whole of the UK economy, making an important contribution in terms of connectivity, direct economic activity, trade, investment and jobs.

The Department's Jet Zero Strategy shows how the sector can achieve net zero aviation by 2050 without Government intervention to limit aviation growth. The Department will achieve its targets by focusing on new fuels and technology, which have economic and social benefits, without limiting demand.

## ■ Aviation: Hornsey and Wood Green

**Catherine West:**

[\[198158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help reduce noise pollution from aircraft in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government's overall policy on aviation noise seeks to balance the economic and consumer benefits of aviation against their national and local social and health impacts. The effect of aviation noise must be mitigated as much as is practicable and realistic to do so, limiting, and where possible reducing, the total adverse effects on health and quality of life from aviation noise.

The Government sets noise controls, including restrictions on night operations, at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted Airports as these airports are "designated" under the Civil Aviation Act 1982. This reflects these airports' strategic importance and the need to balance the effects on communities with benefits to the UK economy.

Regarding other airports, the Government's view is that controls should be locally set.

## ■ Department for Transport: Policy

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Department monitors and prepares for long-term strategic challenges as part of its regular work. Strategy teams exist for a range of transport modes and well-established structures and processes allow the Department to manage short-term operational issues while minimising the effect on long term work. In 2022, the Department established the Decarbonisation, Technology and Strategy Group, reporting directly to the Second Permanent Secretary, which brings together cross-modal teams to work on long-term strategic issues and undertake horizon scanning.

### ■ DfT OLR Holdings: Staff

**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[198183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many officials in his Department are allocated to each DfT OLR Holdings contract as of 6 September 2023.

**Huw Merriman:**

There are four franchises managed by OLR Holdings which have Departmental officials allocated to them. The teams of officials managing OLR TOC contracts are comparable in size to those managing National Rail Contracts. These officials provide a range of a technical, contractual, and financial support to ensure the successful daily operation of the franchise.

LONDON NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY	12
Southeastern Trains	11
TransPennine Trains	8
Northern Trains Ltd	8

As with commercial operations, the day-to-day decisions which drive safe delivery and manage to budget and policy are performed by the companies themselves, supported by their owning group. The DfT market teams use the same processes to manage the relationships and deliverables with OLR operators as with commercial operators.

### ■ Network Rail: Apprentices

**Grahame Morris:** [\[198691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will list the intake dates for Network Rail apprentices.

**Huw Merriman:**

The next intake of Railway Engineering Technician Apprentices is October 2023, with 189 apprentices due to start. The following intake will be October 2024. Network Rail will have one large intake a year for this scheme moving forward.

### ■ Public Transport: Environment Protection

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage the transition to greener forms of public transport.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan sets out how the UK plans to decarbonise public transport by 2050. The Government is accelerating the rollout of zero-emission buses and trains in order to deliver this. Twelve hundred miles of railway have been electrified in England and Wales since 2010, and 4000 zero-emission buses have

been funded across the UK. The Government is continuing this progress: it is electrifying the Midland Mainline and Transpennine railway routes and has just announced a further £129 million to support the transition to an entirely zero-emission bus fleet.

## ■ Railways: Property Development

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[198282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting Hong Kong MTR Corporation's Rail plus Property (R+P) model for incentivising housing development near or over railway lines; and if he will make a statement.

**Huw Merriman:**

We are committed to the role of private sector in UK rail, increasing private investment, and learning lessons from international models. Our railways can be a catalyst for regeneration and development. Currently for station upgrades, we consider a range of possible models and how these might be combined with development opportunities around the station. In future, Great British Railways will work proactively with partners to support better development near stations and share best practice, using the essential understanding of how to develop sites alongside operational railways that it will take on from Network Rail.

## ■ Railways: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of undertaking planned maintenance of the rail network( a) midweek, (b) in solid blocks of time which do not require start stop overnight repairs and (c) not on bank holiday weekends.

**Huw Merriman:**

The rail industry is committed to delivering its investment and maintenance programmes with the minimum disruption to passenger services, however it is necessary at times to close the railway to enable these essential works to take place.

The industry takes into account a number of factors when making decisions about access. The number of passengers disrupted is a key factor considered when making decisions about access, however it is not the only factor. For example, the cost and the ability of the industry to deliver are also taken into account. There are times when access is taken midweek, in long solid blocks of time. The Milton Keynes to Rugby via Northampton week-long blockade is a recent example of this.

Network Rail has carried out a trial of different blockades to take account of changed passenger demand patterns. NR will want to understand the outcome of the trial this year before looking at future years.

**TREASURY**■ **Landfill Tax: Enfield****Feryal Clark:**[\[198254\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment has he made of the potential impact of the level of landfill tax on the (a) amount and (b) proportion of waste sent to landfill in Enfield.

**Gareth Davies:**

Since 2000, Landfill Tax has contributed to a 90% reduction in local authority waste sent to landfill in England. Landfill Tax works hand in hand with wider measures in the 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy for England which are designed to encourage waste to be managed more sustainably and support the government's ambitious target of zero avoidable waste by 2050.

To inform tax decisions on tax policy, the government undertakes relevant and proportionate environmental and wider impact assessments. No recent assessment has been carried out on the specific impact of Landfill Tax on waste sent to landfill in Enfield.

The government will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, on the impact of Landfill Tax as part of the ongoing Landfill Tax review.

■ **Treasury: Gyms****Emily Thornberry:**[\[198323\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much his Department spent on gym (a) facilities and (b) equipment in each of the last five financial years.

**Gareth Davies:**

No costs have been incurred by the Treasury in relation to gym facilities and equipment, as gym services are provided by a private contractor and funded through memberships.

■ **Treasury: Policy****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198125\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

**Gareth Davies:**

The Treasury is leading on three of the Prime Minister's five priorities: reducing inflation, growing the economy and reducing debt. Delivering on these priorities is vital during a period of short-term economic challenge for both the UK and the global

economy, and also essential to improve the UK's long term economic outlook and to deliver for the people of the UK.

The department has a portfolio of policies to invest in strong public services, drive sustainable economic growth, build a culture of enterprise, enable the transition to net zero, and support people and businesses to thrive, while ensuring fiscal sustainability and value for money for the taxpayer. At the heart of these plans is the Government's ambition for the UK to be one of the most prosperous countries in Europe.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Cost of Living Payments

**Matt Western:**

[\[198880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he plans to make autumn 2023 cost of living payments available to recipients.

**Mims Davies:**

Qualifying dates for the means-tested Cost of Living Payments are being set out in secondary legislation and payment dates for the vast majority of people will be announced on our dedicated page on gov.uk once the relevant regulations have been made.

All Cost of Living Payments will be paid automatically in the same way benefit payments are made, meaning those eligible do not need to apply or take any action in order to receive it.

### ■ Exercise: Employment

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that his Department's consultation, Occupational Health: Working Better, updated on 9 August 2023, encourages working people to engage in the daily mile.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to ensure that his Department's consultation, Occupational Health: Working Better, updated on 9 August 2023, encourages the development of facilities to allow working people to engage in (a) the daily mile and (b) other physical and mental health activities.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Tackling economic inactivity due to long-term sickness is a top priority for the Government. The Occupational Health: Working Better consultation was announced alongside the Chancellor's £2 billion package at the Spring Budget 2023 to support disabled people and those living with health conditions to succeed in work.

The consultation recognises the role of Occupational Health in supporting employee health and wellbeing and it seeks to drive an ambitious increase in Occupational Health coverage.

We cannot pre-empt the outcome of the consultation by specifying interventions that will be included as the consultation is ongoing. Following its conclusion on 12 October, responses will be analysed and policy options will be developed.



## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Compensation

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[198317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 122 of his Department's annual report and accounts for 2022-23, how many of the special payments reported for financial year 2022-23 were made to (a) service personnel and (b) other individuals affected by defence activities.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 15 September 2023. The correct answer should have been:**

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The majority of the 4,609 special payments disclosed relate to common law compensation claims (3,865). An analysis of this data is provided below;

- 2,307 payments to Service personnel

- 1,558 payments to Others

It should be noted that this analysis reflects the volume of payments made and that individuals may receive more than one compensation payment depending on the settlement reached.

The remaining volume will include payments made in settlement of contractual disputes where it has been judged that this represents the best value for money course of action for the Department. Two of these payments are separately disclosed in the ARAc table as they exceed the >£300,000 threshold for more detailed reporting (specifically MSI Instruments (£959,000) and Land Remediation Payment (£321,000)). **The majority of the 4,609 special payments totalling £114.53 million disclosed relate to common law compensation claims (£111.20 million). An analysis of this data is provided below;**

- 2,307 payments equating to £78 million to service personnel

- 1,558 payments equating to £33 million to others

It should be noted that this analysis reflects the volume of payments made and that individuals may receive more than one compensation payment depending on the settlement reached.

The remaining value will include payments made in settlement of contractual disputes where it has been judged that this represents the best value for money course of action for the Department. Two of these payments are separately disclosed in the table as they exceed the >£300,000 threshold for more detailed reporting (specifically MSI Instruments (£959,000) and Land Remediation Payment (£321,000)).