



## Daily Report

Monday, 18 September 2023

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 September 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 18 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

#### ■ **Economic Growth: Northern Ireland**

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[199236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department has taken to increase opportunities for economic growth in (a) Foyle constituency and (b) Northern Ireland in the last three years.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

At Spending Review 2021, the government announced a £1.6 billion commitment to the nations and regions including £70m to provide a new Investment Fund for Northern Ireland, delivered by the British Business Bank. Other British Business Bank programmes are demand-led, without any geographical allocation.

Government supports early-stage entrepreneurs from all areas of the UK through the Start Up Loans Company. As of August 2023, 87 loans were issued to SMEs in Foyle, with a total value of £609,680.

Department for Business and Trade officials based in Northern Ireland also support local businesses to export and expand internationally.

#### ■ **Employment: EU Law**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[199282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what her Department's planned timescale is to publish the results of the Retained EU employment law reforms consultation.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Retained EU employment law consultation ran between 12 May 2023 and the 7 July 2023 and we are currently analysing the responses received. We will publish the Government's response in due course.

#### ■ **Energy: Meters**

**Dr Jamie Wallis:**

[\[198537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether it is her Department's policy to roll out the made smarter programme nationally.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Government has committed almost £200 million for Made Smarter to help UK manufacturers capitalise on Industrial Digital Technologies.

The £50m Made Smarter Adoption programme is available in 5 English regions.

It is complemented by a £147m Innovate UK-led Made Smarter Innovation programme.

The £9m invested in the Adoption programme's pilot phase added an estimated £68m gross value added to the region and an increase in 800 SME manufacturing jobs. Further evidence is being gathered including through a full evaluation of the programme. This will inform any future iterations of the programme, as part of the usual policy-making process.

## ■ Tickets: Touting

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[199300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to correspondence from the Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business entitled Government response to CMA's report on secondary ticketing, published 10 May 2023, whether her Department sought advice from the (a) live music industry and (b) artists to inform its response to the secondary ticketing report.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The government has regular discussions with external stakeholders including the live music industry but other than with regulators, none of these were specific to the government's response to the CMA's report on secondary ticketing.

The CMA report was issued during a period when this department was consulting more broadly on consumer protection issues, but few of these respondents made any reference to secondary ticketing or the CMA recommendations.

## CABINET OFFICE

## ■ Cost of Living

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[199045\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Point 1 of his Department's Freedom of Information response on 11 September 2023 to the Rt hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (reference 2023/09623), what the total spend was on (a) creative development, (b) media buying and (c) other miscellaneous services relating to the Help for Households campaign in the months of (i) April, (ii) May, (iii) June, (iv) July, and (v) August 2023.

**Alex Burghart:**

The Cabinet Office has had no funding allocated to the Help for Households campaign so far in this financial year.



## ■ Vetting

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199411\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department provides officials with (a) developed vetting and (b) other security clearances on public interactions.

**Jeremy Quin:**

All staff are given a security induction when joining the department that includes the required security behaviours, a modified version of this induction is repeated for experienced Civil Servants when a new access pass is required.

Alongside this the Resilience and Security team also offer security briefings to Ministers, staff with security concerns or elevated risk and travel advice for all staff.

All staff are reminded, in writing, on receipt of their vetting clearance, that their actions should meet the standards of behaviour set out in the Civil Service Code and the Civil Service Management and that their behaviour must not place themselves in a position where they could be compromised.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Archives: Buildings

**Lilian Greenwood:**

[\[199363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department has taken to determine the prevalence of reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC) in (a) the National Archives, (b) other UK national archives, (c) local archives and (d) specialist archives.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

[\[199364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what information her Department holds on how many buildings containing (a) the National Archives, (b) other UK national archives, (c) local archives and (d) specialist archives contain reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Lilian Greenwood:**

[\[199365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with (a) the National Archives, (b) other UK national archives, (c) local archives and (d) specialist archives on the presence of reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC) in their buildings.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Standing Committee on Structural Safety issued a safety alert on the failure of RAAC planks on 1 May 2019. Since then, individual organisations have been surveying properties and taking action in line with Institution of Structural Engineers guidance.

Government Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC on their estates as soon as possible. This will be updated on a regular basis as new buildings are identified and surveying and remediation are carried out. This work is being co-ordinated by the Office of Government Property.

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the National Records of Scotland are both under the jurisdiction of their respective devolved administrations, and their work is not overseen by the UK Government.

## ■ Arts: Carbon Emissions

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[199116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support the creative industries to reach net zero.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

As set out in the Creative Industries Sector Vision, published in June 2023, the creative industries has an important role to play in helping the UK reach net zero. The sector vision set out how the government can work with industry to reduce the creative industries' direct impact on the environment, improve the infrastructure to support net zero transition and seize the growth opportunity that improved sustainability can provide.

This includes the development of a Creative Climate Charter, led by the Creative Industries Council; providing a forum for creative sub-sectors to share their experiences and best practice on sustainability; creative clusters that demonstrate our world-leading sustainable and circular fashion sector; and working with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to provide tailored advice to creative businesses via the UK Climate Hub.

## ■ BBC

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[199187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what her Departments planned timeline is for the BBC mid-term review.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Mid-Term Review is an important milestone in the government's Roadmap for BBC Reform.

We have assessed evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, and consulted the BBC, Ofcom and DAs on our findings, as required by the Terms of Reference. We are now finalising our findings and are working at pace to publish the results of the review.

**■ Buildings: Concrete**

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[199077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department has taken to determine the prevalence of reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC) in (a) museums, (b) art galleries, (c) listed buildings, (d) buildings owned by charities and (e) libraries.

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[199078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many (a) museums, (b) art galleries, (c) listed buildings, (d) buildings owned by charities and (e) libraries her Department knows contain reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[199079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with (a) charities and civil society organisations, (b) museums and (c) art galleries on the presence of reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC) in their buildings.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

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

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

**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[199113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what information her Department holds on the number of (a) theatres, (b) libraries and (c) sports halls that are affected by reinforced autoclave aerated concrete.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

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

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

**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[199114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) theatres, (b) sports halls and (c) libraries have access to surveyors for reinforced autoclave aerated concrete.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

Individual building owners and managers are responsible for health and safety, including responding to safety alerts such as RAAC.

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

The government has already funded extensive RAAC mitigation works across the NHS and are working closely with responsible bodies to manage RAAC in the long-term across the education estate, via capital funding provided to the sector each year.

Government will consider the approach to any RAAC in other public sector estates on a case-by-case basis.

### ■ Community News Project

**Derek Thomas:** [\[199422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will meet representatives of regional news groups to discuss the viability of the Community News Project.

**Dan Carden:** [\[199429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has had recent discussions with Meta on funding for the Community News Project.

**Dan Carden:** [\[199430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of discontinuing of funding for the Community News Project on diversity and representation of local news teams across the UK.

**Dan Carden:** [\[199431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to take steps to help support community journalism projects.

**Dan Carden:** [\[199433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the announcement by Meta that it plans to discontinue funding for the Community News Project on (a) student journalists, (b) local communities and (c) the broader media landscape.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The government is disappointed to see that Meta is closing its Community News Project. We are working to support journalism and local newsrooms to ensure the sustainability of this vital industry, and our new digital markets regime will help rebalance the relationship between the most powerful platforms and those who rely on them – including press publishers.

Additionally, our support for the sector has included the delivery of the £2 million Future News Fund; the zero rating of VAT on e-newspapers; the extension of a 2017 business rates relief on local newspaper office space until 2025; the publication of the

Online Media Literacy Strategy; and the BBC also supports the sector directly, through the £8m it spends each year on the Local News Partnership, including the Local Democracy Reporting Scheme.

Ministers and officials regularly meet with stakeholders, including from the local press and from among the tech platforms, to discuss relevant policy interests and concerns.

## ■ Cultural Heritage: Customs

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[199034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on reducing the cost of the ATA Carnet for cultural goods.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[199036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the UK music industry.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[199037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of rules on spending 90 days in any 180 day period in the Schengen area on the income of UK musicians touring in Europe.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

Ministers and officials regularly engage with industry and ministerial colleagues from other departments on issues facing creative and cultural sectors.

The government is committed to supporting touring artists and the wider music industry to adapt to new arrangements following our departure from the EU. We have worked with the sector and directly with Member States to clarify what creative workers need to do, noting that the vast majority of EU Member States, including the biggest touring markets such as Spain, France, Germany and the Netherlands, have confirmed they offer visa and work permit free routes for some short-term touring activities. The Government also launched an Export Support Service where UK businesses, including touring professionals, can access advice and guidance.

We will continue to engage with industry to understand challenges facing the live music sector and options to address these issues.

## ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Domestic Visits

**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[199112\]](#)

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

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

In 2023, the current Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Secretary of State has so far made one visit to the DCMS Manchester office, with Ministers yet to visit. In 2022, former DCMS Secretaries of State made two visits to the DCMS Manchester office, with then Minister for Sports and Tourism, Nigel Huddleston, visiting the office once.

■ **Digital Broadcasting**

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the renewal of Digital Terrestrial Television beyond 2034.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

I refer the honourable member to the answer I gave on 11 July 2023 to question UIN [192774](#).

■ **Football**

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking with (a) the FA and (b) FIFA to help ensure the proper conduct of officials towards players during (i) national and (ii) international competitions.

**Stuart Andrew:**

There is no place for inappropriate conduct within sport, and it is vital that sports bodies continue to work together to tackle it.

Sport should be welcoming to all, and everyone - whether at a grassroots or elite level - should have confidence that the highest standards of safeguarding are followed. That is why as part of our Sport Strategy we launched a call for evidence, to understand how the prevention and handling of integrity issues could be strengthened. It is open to participants, parents and guardians, coaches, athlete support personnel, sports governing bodies, academics and other relevant stakeholders.

■ **Listed Buildings: Concrete**

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[199080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with (a) local planning authorities and (b) owners of listed buildings on the potential presence of reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC) in their listed buildings.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Standing Committee on Structural Safety issued a safety alert on the failure of reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC) planks on 1 May 2019.

Individual building owners and managers are responsible for health and safety, including responding to safety alerts such as this. Local authorities, like other building owners, are advised to follow available professional guidance.

The Cabinet Office is co-ordinating the development of a Government RAAC Register to capture and track suspected and confirmed presence of RAAC in Government buildings. This will be updated regularly as buildings are surveyed and mitigation measures are put in place.

## ■ **O2 Academy Brixton: Closures**

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[198615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with Lambeth Council on the potential closure of Brixton Academy.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The details of the O2 Brixton Academy incident which took place on 15 December 2022 are being examined and investigations are ongoing. Licensing decisions for the O2 Brixton Academy are a matter for Lambeth Council. The government is grateful to the Metropolitan Police, Lambeth Council and the Security Industry Authority (SIA) for the work they are doing in this space. We will continue to carefully monitor the investigation's progress, and want to ensure that the events of 15 December 2022 are not repeated.

## ■ **Public Libraries: Concrete**

**Jamie Stone:**

[\[197552\]](#)

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

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The delivery of public library services, including the maintenance of the buildings through which that is done, is a responsibility for upper-tier local authorities under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

On 1 May 2019, the Standing Committee on Structural Safety issued a safety alert on the failure of RAAC planks. Local authorities, like other building owners, are advised to follow available professional guidance. We are working with sector bodies, like the LGA, to ensure library services are alerted to available advice and guidance.

## ■ **Sports: Children**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[199426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a scheme to give all people under the age of 18 free access to a local sports club.



**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[199427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps is she taking to encourage young adults to participate in the recommended levels of sport and physical activity each week.

**Stuart Andrew:**

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

As part of this strategy, we have set up a new National Physical Activity Taskforce to ensure we meet these targets, and will work closely with Sport England to track and measure the impact of our interventions. This will include measuring the progress made in tackling inactivity annually through the Active Lives Children survey, and in real time by seeking new sources of data that allow us to monitor progress.

Schools play a key role in allowing all children to have high quality opportunities to take part in PE and sport. In July we published an update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan. This builds on the announcement we made in March that set out new ambitions for equal access to PE and sport and guidance on how to deliver 2 hours of quality PE a week, alongside over £600 million funding for the Primary PE and Sport Premium and the School Games Organiser network.

The Department for Education will be introducing a new digital tool to support schools with their reporting requirements for their PE and sport premium spend. This will hold schools accountable for how they use their PE and sport premium funding allocation to measure and improve the quality of PE and sport they provide.

## ■ Sports: Facilities

**Julie Elliott:**

[\[198799\]](#)

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

**Stuart Andrew:**

Individual building owners and managers are responsible for health and safety, including responding to safety alerts such as RAAC.

On the 1st May 2019, the Standing Committee on Structural Safety issued a safety alert on the failure of RAAC planks. Following this, the Cabinet Office wrote to all government departments and NHS England wrote to NHS Trusts highlighting the latest developments and advice.

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



## ■ Sports: France

**Julie Elliott:**

[\[198798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with her French counterparts on the safety of British supporters at sporting events in France in the context of the experience of (a) Liverpool fans at the Stade de France in 2022, and (b) Rugby fans in Marseille in 2023.

**Stuart Andrew:**

Following some spectators experiencing delays entering the Stade Velodrome in Marseille on 9 September, HM Government officials engaged with the French authorities and counterparts at the France 2023 Organising Committee and have received reassurance that improvements, including clearer signage, will be in place for future Rugby World Cup 2023 matches.

Improvements were in place for matches on Sunday 10 September and we continue to engage with the French authorities on security arrangements for the tournament.

The safety of all attendees at sporting events is of the highest importance to the government and the Secretary of State and I have engaged with counterparts regularly following the Champions League Final in Paris in 2022. We continue to consider and reflect on the lessons learned from the events witnessed in Paris in 2022 to inform planning for the UEFA Champions League Final in 2024 at Wembley, as well as our UK and Ireland EURO 2028 bid.

## ■ Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[199188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how frequently the new Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation Taskforce intends to meet.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[199189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to measure the (a) progress and (b) success of the Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation Taskforce.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs) Taskforce will meet every two months over a fixed, 12 month period. The Taskforce will report into the [National Committee for the Safety of Journalists](#), which is chaired by the Minister for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries and the Minister for Safeguarding, and will publish its Terms of Reference shortly.

**■ Tickets: Sales**

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[199301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the protection available to consumers buying tickets in the UK with those available to consumers in the Republic of Ireland.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

His Majesty's Government is committed to supporting fair and transparent ticket pricing and tackling unacceptable behaviour in this market.

We have strengthened the law in relation to ticketing information requirements and have introduced a criminal offence of using automated software to buy more tickets online than is allowed. We also support the work of enforcement agencies in this area, such as the Competition and Markets Authority, National Trading Standards, and the advertising industry's own regulator, the Advertising Standards Authority.

We are aware that other countries, including Ireland, have their own legislative measures relating to consumer protection, including for the sale and resale of tickets for live events. We carry out ongoing monitoring of the legislative landscape in the ticketing market and in the light of technological, enforcement and other market developments, but agree with the recommendation in the Competition and Markets Authority's 2021 report on secondary ticketing that there should not be a ban on the uncapped secondary ticket market.

**■ Tickets: Touting**

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[199297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many times (a) Ministers and (b) officials from her Department have met representatives from (i) secondary ticketing websites and (ii) the music industry to discuss the price of ticket resales on online platforms in the last 12 months.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[199298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many times (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have met representatives from (i) ViaGoGo and (ii) StubHub in the last 12 months.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

His Majesty's Government is committed to supporting fair and transparent ticket pricing and tackling unacceptable behaviour in this market.

We engage with a range of key organisations and individuals operating in the ticketing sector to ensure a fair and transparent system. This includes STAR (the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers, the self-regulatory body for the entertainment ticketing industry in the UK), the Competition and Markets Authority, Fanfair Alliance (the campaigning body against industrial scale online ticket touting), and, where appropriate, primary and secondary ticketing businesses.

We are in regular discussions with all parts of the music industry to understand the opportunities for growth and challenges facing the sector, including ticketing.

Ministers and officials have had no meetings with either Viagogo or Stubhub in the last twelve months. It should be noted that officials have met with Stubhub International, a separate company to Stubhub, in the last twelve months to discuss general ticketing issues.

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[199299]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increases in the use of automated technology by secondary ticketing websites on consumer choice.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

His Majesty's Government is committed to supporting fair and transparent ticket pricing and tackling unacceptable behaviour in this market.

We have strengthened the law in relation to ticketing information requirements and have introduced a specific criminal offence of using automated software to buy more tickets online than is allowed. We also support the work of enforcement agencies in this area, such as the Competition and Markets Authority, National Trading Standards, and the advertising industry's own regulator, the Advertising Standards Authority.

The Department for Business and Trade has responsibility for policy on consumer protection and its enforcement, in partnership with National Trading Standards and the Competition and Markets Authority, whilst the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) leads on the specific area of secondary ticketing for DCMS-related events (sport, live music, theatre, etc.).

## ■ **Tourism: Taxation**

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[199425]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of a tourist tax on (a) Treasury receipts, (b) tourist numbers and (c) tourists' experiences; and if she will enable the introduction of pilot schemes for such a tax in local areas.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Chancellor continually keeps the tax system under review. At present, HM Government does not have any plans to introduce a national tourism tax or a pilot scheme for such a tax in local areas. An assessment on the potential impact of a national tourist tax on Treasury receipts, tourist numbers and tourists' experiences has therefore not been made.

## DEFENCE

## ■ Air Force: Military Bases

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many RAF Quick Reaction Alerts have occurred in each of the last 36 months.

**James Heappey:**

Quick Reaction Alerts (QRA) are not recorded as occurrences. However, the MOD does record the number of launches of Typhoon Quick Reaction Aircraft to fulfil national air counter terrorism operations and wider air security responsibilities, such as the escorting non-compliant foreign military aircraft. Since September 2020 to August 2023 (inclusive) there have been 25 launches of RAF Typhoon Quick Reaction Alert aircraft. The table below provides a breakdown of QRA launches since January 2020:

	2020	2021	2022	2023
JAN	-	1	1	-
FEB	2	-	2	-
MAR	-	1	-	2
APR	-	-	-	1
MAY	-	-	1	-
JUN	-	-	-	2
JUL	1	-	1	1
AUG	1	3	-	3
SEP	-	1	1	1*
OCT	1	-	2	N/A
NOV	-	1	-	N/A
DEC	-	-	-	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>

\*Up to 10 Sept

## ■ China and Russia: Warships

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[198704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on the alleged incursion by a Russo-Chinese flotilla into US waters; and whether he has had recent discussions with his US counterpart on this matter.

**James Heappey:**

The UK remains in close coordination with the US on our shared defence and security priorities, including state-based threats and homeland security. It is routine business for each nation state to monitor and protect its own territorial waters in line with international law, as was the case for the US on this issue.

## ■ D-Day Landings: Anniversaries

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[198943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day in Portsmouth in 2024.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) recognises the significance of the 80th Anniversary of D-Day next year as an important opportunity to recognise the service and sacrifice of those who fought to liberate Europe in the closing stages of World War Two, as well as to mark the United Kingdom's significant, ongoing, contribution to peace and security in Europe and beyond.

Defence officials are working with colleagues in other Government departments, and with various external stakeholders, to put together an appropriate programme of events to mark the occasion in the UK and in France. To that end, initial discussions have taken place between Defence officials and Portsmouth City Council, and the MOD aims to work with the Council to ensure that an appropriate event is held in Portsmouth as part of that wider programme.

## ■ Defence

**John Healey:**

[\[197357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Command Paper Refresh, published on 18 July 2023, what benefits he expects from transferring responsibility for the Global Defence Network to STRATCOM.

**James Heappey:**

The Global Defence Network (GDN) currently provides a cross-defence capability in British diplomatic missions around the world and a service for international defence engagement to all Ministry of Defence commands. The transfer of responsibility for GDN to UK Strategic Command is expected to deliver better integration between Defence sections and the other parts of Defence's global footprint held in the command, including overseas bases, global hubs, specialist liaison officers and loan service staff.

The transfer gives UK Strategic Command an opportunity to better coordinate and expand the regional and cultural expertise provided by the GDN, as well as a capability to develop further a trained and experienced defence diplomacy cadre drawn from the three single Services. The move also allows the GDN to leverage all the resources available to UK Strategic Command to better prepare and support Defence Attachés and Loan Service colleagues working alongside our Allies and International partners.

#### ■ Dumfries and Galloway: Wind Power

**Dave Doogan:** [\[199394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what criteria his Department uses to determine whether a potential wind farm development is acceptable in the area surrounding the Eskdalemuir Seismic Array.

**James Cartlidge:**

The essential criteria used by the Ministry of Defence to determine whether a potential wind farm development is acceptable in the area surrounding the Eskdalemuir Seismic Array is turbine locations, hub height, and rotor diameter. There is also a 10km exclusion zone around the Array.

#### ■ F-35 Aircraft

**Dave Doogan:** [\[199398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to upgrade all its F-35B aircraft with new Block 4 modifications.

**James Cartlidge:**

I can confirm the Department intends to upgrade the UK F-35B Lightning fleet with Block 4 modifications.

#### ■ F-35 Aircraft: Engines

**Dave Doogan:** [\[199396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the F-35B fleet has experienced cooling considerations requiring engines to regularly provide higher than the expected 15 kW of bleed air extraction to support system cooling.

**James Cartlidge:**

I can confirm the UK F-35B Lightning fleet has not been experiencing system cooling problems.

**Dave Doogan:** [\[199397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to upgrade all its F-35B aircraft with the new Technology Refresh 3 software upgrade.

**James Cartlidge:**

I can confirm the Department intends to upgrade the UK F-35B Lightning fleet with the Technology Refresh 3 upgrade.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Iron and Steel

**John Healey:**

**[198629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has taken steps to develop a future steel pipeline.

**James Cartlidge:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 13 September 2023 to Question number 198306.

**Attachments:**

1. Ministry of Defence; Procurement [198306 - Ministry of Defence Procurement.docx]

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Procurement

**John Healey:**

**[198986]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what procurement contracts his Department has signed over the value of £100 million since February 2022.

**James Cartlidge:**

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

## ■ Reserve Forces: Conditions of Employment

**Stella Creasy:**

**[199383]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish (a) parental leave policies and (b) policies relating to flexible working which apply to members of the (i) Army Reserves, (ii) RAF Reserves, (iii) Naval Reserves and (iv) other military reserve units.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Parental leave policies are contained in Joint Service Publication (JSP) 760 '*Tri-Service Regulations for Leave and other Types of Absence*' and tri-Service policies on flexible working are contained within Joint Service Publication (JSP) 750 '*Centrally Determined Terms of Service*'.

JSP 760 can be found at the following website:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1144674/JSP760\\_20230321.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144674/JSP760_20230321.pdf). The relevant chapter of JSP 750 is Chapter 1 (Flexible Working - Alternative Working Arrangements), which is applicable to both Regular and Reserve personnel. Chapter 2 (Flexible Working – Flexible Service) is not applicable to Reserves; however, Reservists' terms and conditions of service already offer a range of commitment types that cover part-time working and full-time working with limits on separation from assigned location. A copy of Chapters 1 and 2 of JSP 750 will be placed in the Library of the House.

JSPs are usually detailed, deep policy publications and therefore to make the information more accessible a ' *Flexible Working and You* ' guide has also been produced to complement the JSP. A copy can be found at the following website: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1153094/Flexible Working and You Apr 2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1153094/Flexible_Working_and_You_Apr_2023.pdf)

Additionally, policy for parental leave and flexible working for Army Reservists is contained within the Reserve Land Forces Regulations 2016, the latest amendment of which can be found at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-reserve-land-forces-regulations-2016-amendment-number-3>

### ■ Unidentified Flying Objects

**Julian Knight:** [\[196630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many reports his Department received of unidentified flying objects in 2022.

**James Heapey:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has no opinion on the existence of either extra-terrestrials, Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO) or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP), and ceased to investigate reports of UFO or UAP in 2009.

### ■ Veterans: LGBT+ People

**Dave Doogan:** [\[199395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the LGBT Veterans Independent Review Final Report, published in May 2023, how many of that report's recommendations he plans to implement.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Government has accepted in principle the vast majority of the report's recommendations and, whilst we agree with the intent behind them, there are a number we will deliver in a slightly different way to that described in the report. We will set out these differences when we publish, in due course, the Government's full response to the review.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Arts: Recruitment

**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[199115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of trends in entries for art and design GCSEs and A-levels on the future ability of creative industries to recruit skilled staff.



**Robert Halfon:**

The government set out plans for addressing the skills needs of the creative industries in the Creative Industries Sector Vision published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in June. As the vision sets out, the skills needs of the creative industries are complex and qualifications needed to enter the wide range of posts available in the industry will vary. In light of this, an assessment of the specific impact of art and design GCSE and A-level entry on the creative industry has not been carried out. The department is, however, delivering a wide range of skills programmes and reforms to deliver the skills needed by employers in this industry.

Employers in the Creative and Design sector have developed 58 high-quality apprenticeship standards including Creative Venue Technician, VFX artist, and Media Production Coordinator. Alongside this, T Levels, which are aligned to the same employer-led standards as apprenticeships, will also support the pipeline of talent into the creative industries. New T Levels in Craft and Design, and Media, Broadcast and Production will be rolled out in 2024.

The department's reforms to higher technical education (level 4/5) include the introduction of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). These are current (and new) level 4-5 qualifications approved, and quality marked by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education as providing the skills demanded in the workplace by employers. 31 Digital HTQs launched for AY 22/23. Creative and Design HTQs will be available for teaching from September 2025.

**■ British Students Abroad: Brexit****Stewart Malcolm McDonald:****[196434]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential financial impact of leaving the EU on students who wish to study abroad; and whether she plans to provide funding to support those students.

**Robert Halfon:**

English-domiciled students attending an overseas institution as part of their UK course are charged a tuition fee of up to £1,350 for their overseas year of study, 15% of the full year fee rate, and they also qualify for fee loans to meet the full costs of their tuition. The department is freezing maximum tuition fees for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years to deliver better value for students and to keep the cost of higher education (HE) under control. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years.

English-domiciled students attending an overseas institution as part of their UK course also qualify for partially means-tested loans for living costs paid at the overseas rate. We have increased maximum loans for living costs each year with a 2.8% increase for the current 2023/24 academic year.

The Government prioritises support for eligible English-domiciled students undertaking designated courses at UK HE institutions to ensure the student finance system remains sustainable.

The Turing Scheme, the UK Government's global programme for students to study and work abroad, also exists to support students at UK institutions who wish to do so. This is on top of the student finance support that HE participants may already qualify for. A UK-wide scheme, funding is available at set rates to contribute to the living costs of participating students. All schools and further education participants will receive funding for travel costs, as well as HE students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Funding also covers visas, passports and related travel insurance for all participants from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as up to 100% of actual additional costs participants might incur as a result of being disabled and/or having a special educational need.

Turing Scheme funding for students across the UK is only available for students who are studying at registered UK education providers. The Scheme supports international mobilities of up to a year, and not the entire duration of a course of study or training undertaken overseas.

#### ■ Children in Care

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[196035]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number of looked after children who live in unregulated accommodation in England.

**David Johnston:**

Information on children looked after in England, including the number of children in unregulated accommodation (independent living or placements in semi-independent accommodation) is published in the annual 'Children looked after including adoptions' national statistic: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

#### ■ Children: Social Services

**Helen Hayes:**

**[196440]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of children that required social care placements from their local authority in the last 12 months.

**David Johnston:**

The department has not yet published information on the number of children and young people who are looked after during the reporting year ending 31 March 2023. This data will be published in the annual statistical release later this year.

Information on the number of children looked after as at 31 March 2022 and at any point during the 2021/22 reporting year is published in the annual statistical release 'Children looked after including adoptions' at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

## ■ Degrees

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[196998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 July to Question 906018 on Degrees, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of students graduating from universities without receiving their degree classification on their future career prospects.

**Paul Bristow:**

[\[197166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has plans to assist university students affected by marking and assessment boycotts.

**Robert Halfon:**

Unlike some other education sectors where the government has taken part in negotiations with trade unions, universities are autonomous. They are therefore responsible for the pay and pension provision of their staff.

While government plays no formal role in such disputes, the department is deeply concerned about the impact of the marking and assessment boycott on students. It is unacceptable that students, many of whom have already suffered significant disruption to their studies over recent years, face further disruption and uncertainty. This disruption is particularly damaging to those students who are due to graduate and looking to enter the jobs market or progress to further study. The department has made clear that whatever the rights and wrongs of the current dispute, action that damages students' prospects is the wrong thing to do.

Our current understanding is that the vast majority of students have been unaffected by the industrial action and, in most cases, have received their full results on time, and progressed or graduated as normal. However, the department appreciates that, at some higher education (HE) providers, the impact of the boycott has been more significant.

This government believes students should be at the heart of the HE system. This is why the Office for Students (OfS) has been set up to regulate the HE sector in England, protect student rights and ensure the sector is delivering real value for money. The OfS wrote to institutions affected by the boycott on 12 June to reiterate its expectations in relation to its conditions of registration. The OfS have also published guidance to students on their rights during industrial action and will continue to monitor this ongoing situation through their normal regulatory mechanisms.

I have held discussions with the Russell Group, Universities UK and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) to better understand the impact on students and the mitigating actions their members are taking to minimise disruption. I have also written to the Russell Group and Universities UK, encouraging them to continue to do everything within their powers to protect the interests of students during this phase of industrial action. On 11 August, I wrote to UCEA and the

University and College Union (UCU) urging them both to resume negotiations which, if successful, will bring an end to the boycott and further industrial action.

Universities have worked to reduce the impact on students in a variety of ways, including reallocating marking to other staff members and hiring external markers. Moreover, many universities have awarded degrees when they have enough evidence of a student's prior attainment to do so. Others have assigned provisional grades to students to allow them to progress, and, once all papers have been marked, most institutions will award degree classifications that either remain as provisionally assigned or are uplifted to reflect the student's achievements.

The department strongly urges all parties involved in this industrial dispute to resume negotiations. We will continue to engage with the HE sector to help better understand how students' interests can be protected during this time.

## ■ Department for Education: Labour Turnover

**Julian Knight:**

[196864]

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

**Nick Gibb:**

Information on the Department's staffing and turnover can be found in the Annual Report and Accounts, which is available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1171616/Department\\_for\\_Education\\_Consolidated\\_annual\\_report\\_and\\_accounts\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1171616/Department_for_Education_Consolidated_annual_report_and_accounts_2023.pdf).

The Department has comprehensive people strategies in place covering all areas of the employee lifecycle and experience, with a vision to create a workforce with world class skills and capabilities. The strategies aim to make the best use of excellent talent by supporting increased diversity and social mobility, ensuring staff have well defined development plans and that clear career paths are set out for all those who want to progress and develop their expertise.

Employee feedback is used to ensure targeted plans can be developed.

## ■ Engineering: Admissions

**Alexander Stafford:**

[197195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of engineering degree places at universities.

**Robert Halfon:**

In the 2021/22 academic year, 29,130 students at UK higher education (HE) providers qualified with a first degree in Engineering and Technology (CAH10). This is a decrease of 735 compared to 2020/21, where the number of first degree qualifications in Engineering and Technology stood at 29,865, the highest in the series.

Over the last 20 years, the number of students qualifying with a first degree each year has generally increased. The number qualifying in this subject increased from 19,455 in 2002/03 to 29,130 in 2021/22, an increase of 9,675. However, in 2019/20, the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) system replaced the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) system as a way classifying academic subjects and modules. Therefore, caution is advised when interpreting subject information over time.

NUMBER OF ENGINEERING [1] QUALIFIERS ON A FULL-PERSON  
EQUIVALENT (FPE) [2] BASIS

First degrees only

All domiciles

All modes of study

UK HE providers

Academic year	JACS Subject Area	CAH Level 1
2002/03	19,455	[z]
2003/04	19,780	[z]
2004/05	19,575	[z]
2005/06	19,765	[z]
2006/07	19,900	[z]
2007/08	20,420	[z]
2008/09	20,805	[z]
2009/10	21,955	[z]
2010/11	22,905	[z]
2011/12	23,595	[z]
2012/13	24,755	[z]
2013/14	25,870	[z]
2014/15	25,400	[z]
2015/16	25,085	[z]
2016/17	26,280	[z]
2017/18	27,410	[z]

NUMBER OF ENGINEERING [1] QUALIFIERS ON A FULL-PERSON  
EQUIVALENT (FPE) [2] BASIS

2018/19	27,580	[z]
2019/20	[z]	29,630
2020/21	[z]	29,865
2021/22	[z]	29,130

Source: HESA Table-50, HESA Table-17, HESA Publications Archives

Footnotes:

1. From 2019/20, Engineering and technology is defined as code CAH10 of HESA's Common Aggregation Hierarchy: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos/cah>. Prior to 2019/20, Engineering and technology is defined as code 9 in HESA's Joint Academic Coding System (JACS): <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/jacs>. The different subject classification systems are split into two columns to highlight that caution should be taken when comparing data across time. The system not in use at the time of the academic year is denoted with "[z]".

2. Counts are on the basis of full-person-equivalents (FPE). Where a student is studying more than one subject, they are apportioned between the subjects that make up their course.

Universities are independent, autonomous institutions, and are therefore responsible for their own decisions about the courses that they deliver.

The department is investing an additional £3.8 billion in further education (FE) and higher education (HE) over the course of this Parliament. This will ensure people can access high-quality training and education that addresses skills gaps and boosts productivity, meaning that industries such as engineering get people with the skills that they need.

Apprenticeships are a great way for people to receive high-quality training and begin or progress in a career in engineering. The department is increasing investment in apprenticeships to £2.7 billion by 2024/25 financial year. Employers in the engineering and manufacturing sectors have developed over 150 apprenticeship standards, right up to Masters level, supplying the skills they need for today and supporting them to develop a pipeline of talent for the future.

T Levels offer a two-year technical qualification alternative to A levels. Designed with employers, T Levels are boosting access to high-quality technical education for thousands of young people and creating our skilled workforce of the future. Eleven T Levels are now available in STEM subjects, including Engineering and Manufacturing, opening up great careers to young people and helping to address the UK's STEM skills gap.

The department has established 21 Institutes of Technology (IoTs) across the country to help close skills gaps in key STEM areas. IoTs are partnerships between further education providers, universities and employers, with employers at the heart of identifying the technical skills needs in their specific geographical areas to inform IoTs' curriculum development and delivery. Supported by departmental capital investment in state of the art facilities and industry standard equipment, IoTs offer higher technical education pathways through Engineering from L3 through to L6 including T Levels, HTQs and Degree Apprenticeships. So far, IoTs have seen 7,255 starts in Engineering over three academic years with year on year increases expected.

In HE, around £750m is being invested in the Strategic Priorities Grant funding over a three year period from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to support high-quality teaching and facilities including in science and engineering, subjects that support the NHS, and degree apprenticeships. This includes the largest increase in government funding for the higher education sector to support students and teaching in over a decade.

Moreover, as part of [cross-government work](#) the UK Science and Technology Framework, sets out 10 key interventions to cement the UK's status as a science and technology superpower by 2030. The Unit for Future Skills is developing a Skills Dashboard for the department to understand the supply and demand of science and technology skills for critical technologies.

## ■ Engineering: Graduates

**Alexander Stafford:**

**[197196]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many undergraduate engineering students graduated (a) last year, (b) on average over the last five years and (c) on average over the last 20 years.

**Robert Halfon:**

In the 2021/22 academic year, 29,130 students at UK higher education (HE) providers qualified with a first degree in Engineering and Technology (CAH10). This is a decrease of 735 compared to 2020/21, where the number of first degree qualifications in Engineering and Technology stood at 29,865, the highest in the series.

Over the last 20 years, the number of students qualifying with a first degree each year has generally increased. The number qualifying in this subject increased from 19,455 in 2002/03 to 29,130 in 2021/22, an increase of 9,675. However, in 2019/20, the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) system replaced the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) system as a way classifying academic subjects and modules. Therefore, caution is advised when interpreting subject information over time.

NUMBER OF ENGINEERING [1] QUALIFIERS ON A FULL-PERSON  
EQUIVALENT (FPE) [2] BASIS

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First degrees only

All domiciles

All modes of study

UK HE providers

Academic year	JACS Subject Area	CAH Level 1
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2006/07	19,900	[z]
2007/08	20,420	[z]
2008/09	20,805	[z]
2009/10	21,955	[z]
2010/11	22,905	[z]
2011/12	23,595	[z]
2012/13	24,755	[z]
2013/14	25,870	[z]
2014/15	25,400	[z]
2015/16	25,085	[z]
2016/17	26,280	[z]
2017/18	27,410	[z]
2018/19	27,580	[z]
2019/20	[z]	29,630
2020/21	[z]	29,865
2021/22	[z]	29,130



Source: HESA Table-50, HESA Table-17, HESA Publications Archives

Footnotes:

1. From 2019/20, Engineering and technology is defined as code CAH10 of HESA's Common Aggregation Hierarchy:  
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos/cah>. Prior to 2019/20, Engineering and technology is defined as code 9 in HESA's Joint Academic Coding System (JACS): <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/jacs>. The different subject classification systems are split into two columns to highlight that caution should be taken when comparing data across time. The system not in use at the time of the academic year is denoted with “[z]”.
2. Counts are on the basis of full-person-equivalents (FPE). Where a student is studying more than one subject, they are apportioned between the subjects that make up their course.

Universities are independent, autonomous institutions, and are therefore responsible for their own decisions about the courses that they deliver.

The department is investing an additional £3.8 billion in further education (FE) and higher education (HE) over the course of this Parliament. This will ensure people can access high-quality training and education that addresses skills gaps and boosts productivity, meaning that industries such as engineering get people with the skills that they need.

Apprenticeships are a great way for people to receive high-quality training and begin or progress in a career in engineering. The department is increasing investment in apprenticeships to £2.7 billion by 2024/25 financial year. Employers in the engineering and manufacturing sectors have developed over 150 apprenticeship standards right up to Masters level, supplying the skills they need for today and supporting them to develop a pipeline of talent for the future.

T Levels offer a two-year technical qualification alternative to A levels. Designed with employers, T Levels are boosting access to high-quality technical education for thousands of young people and creating our skilled workforce of the future. Eleven T Levels are now available in STEM subjects, including Engineering and Manufacturing, opening up great careers to young people and helping to address the UK's STEM skills gap.

The department has established 21 Institutes of Technology (IoTs) across the country to help close skills gaps in key STEM areas. IoTs are partnerships between further education providers, universities and employers, with employers at the heart of identifying the technical skills needs in their specific geographical areas to inform IoTs' curriculum development and delivery. Supported by departmental capital investment in state of the art facilities and industry standard equipment, IoTs offer higher technical education pathways through Engineering from L3 through to L6 including T Levels, HTQs and Degree Apprenticeships. So far, IoTs have seen 7,255

starts in Engineering over three academic years with year on year increases expected.

In HE, around £750m is being invested in the Strategic Priorities Grant funding over a three year period from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to support high-quality teaching and facilities including in science and engineering, subjects that support the NHS, and degree apprenticeships. This includes the largest increase in government funding for the higher education sector to support students and teaching in over a decade.

Moreover, as part of [cross-government work](#) the UK Science and Technology Framework, sets out 10 key interventions to cement the UK's status as a science and technology superpower by 2030. The Unit for Future Skills is developing a Skills Dashboard for the department to understand the supply and demand of science and technology skills for critical technologies.

## ■ Engineers

**Alexander Stafford:**

**[197194]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to encourage school leavers to become engineers.

**Robert Halfon:**

Science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) skills are in demand by employers across the country and demand is growing. The department is committed to delivering the Talent and Skills strand of the UK Science and Technology Framework, a cross-government strategy which aims to cement the UK's status as a science and technology superpower by 2030. Further information about the strand is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-science-and-technology-framework/the-uk-science-and-technology-framework#talent-and-skills>. The department is investing in STEM education at all levels so people have access to high-quality STEM teaching and can access STEM career opportunities, including roles in engineering. The department supports school leavers by:

- Providing an excellent STEM curriculum which gives students the skills they need for future careers, including the opportunity to study GCSE Engineering.
- Raising awareness and inspiring young people to consider engineering as a career.
- Developing a strong technical education system that offers new opportunities for young people.

More students are being encouraged into entering STEM courses across all stages of education. The number of students studying STEM subjects is already growing. Since 2010, there has been a 31% proportional increase in STEM A level entries by 16-to-18-year-olds in England. Since 2017, students have had the opportunity to study an Engineering GCSE in which they can develop the subject knowledge, skills and understanding to solve engineering problems, as well as understanding engineering's contribution to society and the economy. The Design and Technology curriculum was

also developed to provide the skills pupils need to become the next generation of British designers and engineers.

Careers guidance is a vital step on the ladder of opportunity, setting individuals on the path to success and allowing talent to flourish. The department is investing over £34 million in 2023/24 to help schools and colleges improve their careers programmes for young people. Over 4,000 senior business volunteers are supporting schools and colleges in Careers Hubs to develop career strategies and employer engagement plans. In 2021/22, 81% of institutions in well-established Careers Hubs involved 10 or more businesses in careers activity, including many in the engineering sector. The Careers Enterprise Company who established the Careers Hubs have also worked with Engineering UK to develop a resource for employers around virtual work experience for young people to increase access to opportunities.

On top of this, the National Careers Service also supports young people over 13 and all adults in England with careers advice. The website includes around 800 job profiles, covering a range of industry sectors including engineering available at: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>.

The government also supports programmes such as STEM Ambassadors, which inspires young people from under-served backgrounds to engage with STEM subjects and consider STEM careers. The department is a partner signatory to the Tomorrow's Engineers Code which works with the engineering community to improve the quality, targeting, inclusivity and reach of engineering specific inspiration activities.

For young people that want to explore engineering as a career and pursue further education, departmental technical reforms are designed to provide them with a quality education which equips them with the skills and experience to meet employers needs and enable them to get great jobs. 21 Institutes of Technology (IoTs) are being established across the country, providing access to industry standard facilities which focus on the needs of employers and learners in their specific geographical areas. IoTs aim to help close skills gaps in STEM sectors, including engineering and manufacturing.

T Levels, a two-year technical qualification alternative to A levels, are boosting access to high-quality technical education for thousands of young people and creating our skilled workforce of the future. 11 T Levels are now available in STEM subjects, including Engineering and Manufacturing, opening up great careers to young people and helping to address the UK's STEM skills gap.

Apprenticeships are a great way for school leavers to receive high-quality training and start a career in engineering. The department is increasing investment in apprenticeships to £2.7 billion by financial year 2024/25. Employers in the engineering and manufacturing sectors have developed over 150 apprenticeship standards, right through to Masters level.

## ■ Further Education: Low Incomes

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[195767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to make tertiary education more accessible to students from low-income families.

**Robert Halfon:**

As at Results Day 2023, an English 18-year-old from a disadvantaged background is 73% more likely to go to university than at the same point in 2010. This year, 22,540 English 18-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds secured a university place on Results Day, compared to 18,960 at the same point in 2019.

In November 2021, the department issued guidance to the Office for Students (OfS), asking it to refocus the access and participation regime to create a system that better supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access and succeed in higher education (HE). As a result, all approved (fee cap) providers who are intending to charge fees above the basic amount, are required to fully rewrite their Access and Participation plans to be in place for September 2025.

This work aims to drive up standards in education and focus on genuine social justice by making getting on at university as important as getting in.

We want to see universities working with schools to drive up standards and encourage aspiration and attainment, supporting students through paths that benefit them the most, including traditional undergraduate degrees, but also apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications.

The department has provided Uni Connect with £30 million funding for 2023/24, to bring together partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners to offer activities, advice and information on the benefits and realities of going to university or college, broadening the horizons of students in areas of low HE progression.

In March 2023, the OfS launched its Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR). This will empower providers to deliver interventions for groups of students least likely to experience equal opportunity in HE settings by highlighting 12 key sector risks and the groups most likely to experience these. The department welcomes the EORR as a key marker for social justice that will help ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to be supported once they have started their chosen course.

## ■ Higher Education: Standards

**Matt Western:**

[\[196484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the regulatory framework for higher education in England at ensuring that there is adequate monitoring of (a) completion, (b) continuation and (c) progression rates.

**Robert Halfon:**

The Office for Students' (OfS) approach to regulation is underpinned by the functions, duties and powers given to it in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. This

risk-based approach focuses regulatory attention on providers that are at greatest risk of breaching their conditions of registration.

The OfS sets minimum thresholds for three student outcome metrics, course continuation, course completion, and progression to graduate employment or further study.

Following extensive consultation, the OfS announced new minimum thresholds for student outcomes in October 2022. It has since undertaken 18 investigations into compliance with student outcomes requirements, the outcomes of which are due to be published in due course.

The department will review the outcome reports with interest to understand the regulatory decisions the OfS has made, and what action is being taken in response. The department has confidence in the OfS to ensure that all students benefit from high quality, world-leading higher education that leads to excellent outcomes.

## ■ National School Breakfast Programme

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

[\[198585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to engage with schools during the tender process for the national school breakfast club programme.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has confirmed that the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) has been extended for an additional year, from July 2023 until July 2024. The Department is currently undertaking market engagement on future arrangements for school breakfast provision for delivery after July 2024.

Any future funding invested by the Department in National Breakfast Clubs is subject to future funding approvals and the outcome of the next Spending Review.

The contract will be awarded to a provider that is able to demonstrate that they can meet the needs of a school taking part in the NSBP. To achieve this, the Department will engage with schools to ensure that the tender process meets the needs of schools that are currently on the NSBP and those looking to join the programme.

Engaging with schools will ensure their views are listened to and influence the evaluation process. This will help retain what is currently working well and improve any areas that may not be meeting the expectations of schools.

## ■ Pupil Premium: Enfield North

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[197935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils are eligible for the pupil premium in Enfield North constituency.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government provides additional funding through the Pupil Premium (PP) to support disadvantaged pupils. PP rates have increased by 5% for 2023/24, taking total PP funding nationally to almost £2.9 billion.

As of June 2023, 7,470 were eligible for PP in Enfield North constituency this year, equating to £9,570,205 in funding. The Department publishes PP allocations, including at constituency level, here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2023-to-2024>.

**■ Pupil Premium: Hendon****Dr Matthew Offord:****[197408]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium in Hendon constituency.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government provides additional funding through the Pupil Premium to support disadvantaged pupils. The Pupil Premium rates have increased by 5% for 2023/24, taking total Pupil Premium funding nationally to almost £2.9 billion.

As of June 2023, 5931 pupils were eligible for Pupil Premium in Hendon constituency this year, equating to £7,566,158 in funding. The Department publishes Pupil Premium allocations, including at constituency level, here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2023-to-2024>.

**■ Pupils: Disadvantaged****Bridget Phillipson:****[195386]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to risk 2 on page 25 of her Department's annual report and accounts 2022-23, published on 18 July 2023, what steps her Department is taking to mitigate the potential risk of a widening in pupils' attainment gap as a result of a differential recovery from the pandemic.

**Nick Gibb:**

Raising attainment for all pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged, is a priority for the Government. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the attainment gap index narrowed by 9% at secondary school level and by 13% at primary school level between 2011 and 2019.

For over a decade, the Department has consistently taken a range of steps to give priority support and deliver programmes that help disadvantaged pupils, including improving the quality of teaching and curriculum resources, strengthening the school system, and providing targeted support where needed.

As part of the nearly £5 billion recovery package over 4 million children and young people, many of whom are disadvantaged, have benefited from one to one and small group tutoring in schools and colleges.

The pupil premium, worth over £2.9 billion this year, continues to support schools to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

More widely, funding for Free School Meals ensures 2 million of the most disadvantaged children are receiving a healthy, nutritious meal. On top of almost 1.3 million further infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meals policy, over one third of all pupils receive a free meal in school.

The Department's National School Breakfast Programme will support up to 2,700 schools in disadvantaged areas, and the Department is providing over £200 million this year for the Holiday Activities and Food programme to support disadvantaged pupils.

Alongside this, the Department is channelling funding into 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) where outcomes in literacy and numeracy are the poorest, including £86 million in trust capacity funding to help strong trusts to expand into areas most in need of improvement. 24 Priority Education Investment Areas (PEIAs), which have particularly low attainment and high rates of disadvantage, will receive more intensive support in addition to the significant help available to all EIAs.

## ■ Social Services: Young People

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[195769]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support young adults transitioning from full-time social care into employment.

**David Johnston:**

The government recognises that supporting young people to transition successfully from care to employment requires all government departments and relevant public bodies to play their part. This is why the care leaver Ministerial Board has been established, co-chaired by Department for Education and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretaries of State, and including Ministers from 12 other departments, to consider what more can be done collectively to improve care leavers' outcomes. In response to the independent review of children's social care 'Stable Homes, Built on Love: strategy and consultation', the department has committed to legislate to extend corporate parenting responsibilities to government departments and other relevant public bodies, when Parliamentary time allows. The strategy is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love>.

In helping to increase the proportion of care leavers in education, employment and training, the department recently increased the apprenticeship bursary from £1,000 to £3,000. In addition, local authorities are required to provide a £2,000 bursary if the young person is studying in higher education. Care leavers are also a priority group



for the 16-19 bursary (up to £1,200 per year) if studying in further education. The department is also committing £24 million between 2023/25 to expand the support provided by virtual school heads to care leavers in 16-19 education.

At present, over 400 businesses have signed the care leaver covenant and are offering employment opportunities to care leavers, including big employers such as John Lewis, Sky, Amazon and the NHS (which has pledged to offer up to 1,000 employment opportunities for care leavers over the next 3 years). Further to this, the Civil Service care leaver internship scheme will continue, which has led to nearly 1,000 care leavers taking up paid jobs across government since the scheme began.

### ■ Special Educational Needs: Birmingham

**Helen Hayes:**

**[198153]**

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 (a) services for children with special educational needs and disabilities and (b) the processing of Education, Health and Care plan applications.

**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.

Departmental officials, along with colleagues from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Commissioner remain in regular contact with Birmingham City Council, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

### ■ Special Educational Needs: Derbyshire

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[198494]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary and (b) secondary school students have been identified as requiring Special Education school provision outside mainstream schools in Derbyshire; and how many such children attend specialist schools.

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[198496]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children at (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in Derbyshire have Education, Health and Care plans; and how many such children are receiving education in line with the plan.



**David Johnston:**

The department does not hold the data requested. The department does publish data online in relation to special educational needs (SEN), including:

- Data on the number of children in schools with SEN, including those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or SEN support is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. This data can be broken down by the type of establishment at which the pupil attends
- Data on all children and young people with an EHC plan, including those with provision outside of schools is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>

The local authority can provide further information on children with SEN in Derbyshire.

**■ Special Educational Needs: Enfield North****Feryal Clark:****[197923]**

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

**David Johnston:**

High needs funding for supporting children and young people with complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in England is increasing by a further £440 million, or 4.3%, in the 2024/25 financial year, which will bring the total high needs budget to £10.5 billion. This is an increase of over 60% from the 2019/20 high needs allocations. This funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of provision for these children and young people.

The department has recently announced provisional 2024/25 high needs allocations for local authorities. Funding is provided to local authorities rather than constituencies.

Enfield Council's allocation is £79 million, which is £2.6 million more than the Council will receive this year. This is an increase of 30% per head over the three years from 2021/22.

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

Of the £1.4 billion announced, Enfield Council received £6.1 million.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Private Education

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:** [\[197894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of providing funding for education, health and care plan support for children with SEND at independent schools.

**David Johnston:**

Local authorities have the flexibility to place children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans in independent schools. Where they choose to do so, the local authority must fund the cost of the placement. In January 2023, local authorities placed 21,324 children and young people in independent special schools and 6,337 in other independent schools.

## ■ Student Loans Company: Contracts

**Mary Glindon:** [\[198052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department held discussions with disability groups prior to the award of the assessment contract to Capita by the Student Loans Company.

**Robert Halfon:**

Procurement for this contract was managed by the Student Loans Company (SLC). SLC, through its Disabled Students' Stakeholder Group (DSSG), has important relationships with third sector bodies and advocacy groups in the education and disability sectors. SLC engaged with a number of organisations who support disabled students to gather their feedback and insights in developing quality standards for the new model, prior to the invitation to tender, which was published in July 2022. To support the new service design, SLC also established a DSSG Procurement sub-group consisting of DSSG members and other sector bodies to discuss how the new quality standards could be defined and measured at each stage of the customer journey. SLC also invited written contributions from members.

As this procurement was managed by SLC, the Department did not hold any discussions with disability groups on this matter prior to the contract being awarded.

## ■ Students: Public Transport

**Dr Neil Hudson:** [\[199510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department have made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the statutory requirement for funding of educational and training transport to people aged over 16.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department has given local authorities the flexibility to decide what transport arrangements to put in place to help young people aged 16 to 19 and those aged up to 25 with a special educational needs to access education or training, based on the

needs of their population, local transport infrastructure and the resources they have available.

The department recognises that the cost and availability of transport can be difficult for some pupils. Many local authorities do offer some form of subsidised transport to young people over the age of 16. In addition, our 16 to 19 bursary provides financial support to pupils from low income households and this can be used to support travel costs. For example, Westmoreland and Furness Council offer concessionary fares and free transport for young people from low income families, and that local schools and colleges offer the 16 to 19 bursary fund.

In academic year 2023/24 the department allocated over £160 million of bursary funding to institutions to help disadvantaged 16 to 19 year olds with costs including travel. The department has also made available £20 million each year specifically to support pupils in defined vulnerable groups, such as those in care, care leavers and those supporting themselves in receipt of certain social security funds.

## ■ Teachers: Qualifications

**Stephen Morgan:**

**[195602]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the uptake of National Professional Qualifications.

**Nick Gibb:**

National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) provide teachers and head teachers with access to high quality professional development

A total of 63,454 teachers and head teachers have started a fully funded NPQ since the reformed suite of NPQs was introduced in autumn 2021. This equates to around 11% of the school workforce having started an NPQ in two academic years.

NPQ take up increased by 20% from the 2021/22 academic year to the 2022/23 academic year, significantly increasing the number of teachers and head teachers engaging in high quality evidence based continuing professional development. The latest publication on NPQ take up is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/teacher-and-leader-development-ecf-and-npqs-2022>.

Emerging findings, reported by current NPQ participants, suggest the courses are having a positive effect on classroom practice and school wide strategies. The emerging findings are available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1131108/Emerging\\_findings\\_from\\_the\\_evaluation\\_of\\_National\\_Professional\\_Qualifications\\_Interim\\_report\\_1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1131108/Emerging_findings_from_the_evaluation_of_National_Professional_Qualifications_Interim_report_1.pdf).

## ■ Training: Offshore Industry

**Olivia Blake:**

[\[199237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many hours officials in her Department have spent working on the alignment of training standards between the offshore (a) oil and gas and (b) wind sectors in each year from 2018.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department does not collect data on officials' detailed hourly activities. However, work on this topic is ongoing across government and industry.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education engages in ongoing reviews of apprenticeship standards, including Level 3 Maintenance and Operations Engineering Technician which has a wind turbine specialism. The skills learnt in this apprenticeship are transferrable to other sectors including offshore oil and gas. These reviews are led by employers to ensure our apprenticeships are staying up to date with the latest developments in industry.

Industrial bodies such as the Oil and Petroleum Industry Training Organisation (OPITO) are doing extensive work on policies including the all-energy qualification and skills passport. Industry-based training pathways are a crucial part of ensuring a continually robust offshore workforce. The department works with OPITO to collaborate on skills policy for England.

The Green Jobs Delivery Group is carrying out sectoral assessments through industry-expert task and finish groups to consider current and future demand for skills including for power generation, oil and gas, carbon capture, and hydrogen.

Please refer to the North Sea Transition Authority for further information on the work ongoing to ensure workers in offshore oil and gas have the skills they need for the green economy, including offshore wind.

## ■ Young People: Employment

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[196488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to respond to the report of the APPG on Youth Affairs entitled Empowering Youth for the Future of Work, published July 2023.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department is aware of the APPG on Youth Affairs Report, Empowering Youth for the Future of Work. Much of the report covers important matters that match our aims and policies, such as ensuring education and training meet future skills needs, giving young people the opportunities to thrive, the value of work experience and careers advice, and the importance of apprenticeships.

The government is committed to creating a world-leading skills system that is employer-focused, high-quality and fit for the future. Departmental 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.

The department has invested over £7 billion during the 2022/23 academic year, to ensure there was a place in education or training for every 16- to 18-year-old who wanted one.

The 2021 Spending Review made available an extra £1.6 billion in 2024/25 for 16-19 education compared with the 2021/22 financial year, which is the biggest increase in a decade.

In January 2023 the department announced a further £125 million funding available in 2023/24. In July further announcements were made of investments of £185 million in 2023/24 and £285 million in 2024/25 to help 16-19 providers address key priorities.

The department is investing over £90 million in the financial year 2023/24 to help young people and adults to get high-quality careers provision. The department is supporting schools and colleges, through the Careers & Enterprise Company, to make sustained progress in developing their careers programmes, in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks, which set out what good careers advice looks like. The department has strengthened legislation to ensure all secondary pupils have access to independent careers guidance and at least six encounters with providers of technical education or apprenticeships. Currently about two thirds (65%) of year 13 students have experiences of the workplace.

The department wants to support more young people to start and achieve apprenticeships that offer good earnings potential and career progression and funding for apprenticeships will be £2.7 billion by 2024/25. The department is also paying employers and providers £1,000 when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18 and covering 100 per cent of the training cost for smaller employers when they take on these younger apprentices.

T Levels will also 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 significantly 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.

In 2021/2022 the department engaged closely with the Education Select Committee on Youth Unemployment which covered similar matters to the APPG report, providing evidence and a government response, which can be found at <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/506/youth-unemployment-committee/publications/>.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Dr Alan Whitehead:** [\[198969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero what assessment she has made of the adequacy of progress on the Smart Meter Targets Framework.

**Dr Alan Whitehead:** [\[198970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the smart meter rollout beyond 2025.

**Dr Alan Whitehead:** [\[198974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact on the UK's net zero and power decarbonisation targets of the decision to lower minimum market-wide smart coverage projection by 2025 to 74.1% .

**Amanda Solloway:**

The smart metering Targets Framework sets energy suppliers annual, individual minimum installation targets over a four-year period and is driving the momentum of the rollout.

Ofgem is responsible for regulating and enforcing energy suppliers against their minimum installation targets.

The Government will consider whether further measures are needed after 2025 in addition to the existing smart metering New and Replacement Obligation to maximise the benefits of the rollout beyond the end of the four-year Framework.

The smart meter rollout continues to unlock energy system flexibility which is forecast to reduce system costs by up to £10bn a year by 2050.

### ■ Alternative Fuel Payments

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[199284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many eligible households that had applied for an Alternative Fuel Payment had not yet been paid on 13 September 2023.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The most up-to-date figures on households receiving the Alternative Fuel Payment Alternative Fund can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-bills-support-scheme-alternative-fund-gb-ni-and-alternative-fuel-payment-alternative-fund-applications-made-by-customers>

## ■ Carbon Emissions

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[198534]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much funding the Government has provided to support net zero innovation projects in 2020 Parliament.

**Graham Stuart:**

Across financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22, UK government spent £1.975 billion on energy research, development and demonstration. This included support for net zero innovation projects across energy efficiency, renewables, nuclear, hydrogen, carbon capture utilisation and storage, power and storage technologies as well as cross-cutting research on clean energy solutions.

## ■ Energy Bills Rebate: Travellers

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

**[198571]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) provide Gypsies and Travellers living on roadside encampments with support through Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding and (b) work with (i) Traveller Liaison Officers and (ii) other Local Authorities Officers to confirm the eligibility of those people for that scheme.

**Amanda Solloway:**

After stakeholder engagement sessions and research exercises, the government has been unable to establish a robust method for households in caravans not on permanent sites to prove that their caravan is their main or sole residence, whilst protecting public funds against fraud.

We recommend that these households should contact their local authority to apply for the Housing Support Fund and also visit the 'Help for Households' webpage on GOV.UK to view what other support they may be eligible to receive -

<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>.

## ■ Energy: Hospitality Industry

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[198559]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to report by Ofgem entitled Non-domestic market review: Findings and policy consultation, published on 6 September 2023, whether she plans to take steps to support hospitality businesses to access competitively priced energy contracts.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The consultation closed on 6 September and the responses are currently being analysed by Ofgem.

Contractual terms offered to businesses are a commercial matter. As noted in the consultation, over half of suppliers are now offering 'blend and extend' arrangements for their customers, extending the fixed contract over a longer period of time but lowering the monthly customer bill.



The Energy Bills Discount Scheme continues to provide support to non-domestic customers.

## ■ Energy: Meters

**Angela Crawley:** [\[198512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to help support people who use prepayment meters with increases in the cost of living.

**Amanda Solloway:**

On 25 August, Ofgem announced that from 1 October the prepayment meter (PPM) level of the price cap will decrease by £128 from £2,077 to £1,949 for average dual fuel consumption.

In addition, the Energy Price Guarantee currently aligns costs for comparable PPM and direct debit customers, ensuring that those on PPMs are not paying a premium for their costs.

Ofgem has launched a consultation on levelling the cost of standing charges on prepayment meters which closes on 22 September.

**Angela Crawley:** [\[198513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to prevent the forced installation of pre-payment meters.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Ofgem, the energy regulator, has developed a Code of Practice to strengthen protections and support for consumers who may be moved onto a prepayment meter involuntarily. This has been agreed with energy suppliers who will be required to demonstrate readiness to implement the Code of Practice.

Ofgem intends for these new protections to be in licence conditions ahead of this winter. Customers remain protected by the current pause on involuntary installations of prepayment meters in the meantime.

**Angela Crawley:** [\[198514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department are taking to support consumers who have accumulated energy debt as a result of using pre-payment meters.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Ofgem rules require energy suppliers to provide extra support where appropriate, including an obligation to make emergency and friendly-hours credit available to all pre-payment meter customers. When assessing how a customer will repay any credit offered, suppliers must also consider their ability to pay.

The Government introduced the 'Breathing Space' scheme, which aims to address consumers' ability to tackle debt and offers legal protections from creditors for 60 days. A standard breathing space is available for anyone with problem debt,



administered by debt advice providers and local authorities who provide debt advice to residents.

Customers may also be eligible for cost-of-living payments from the Department for Work and Pensions.

## ■ Fuels: Prices

**Louise Haigh:**

**[199152]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September to Question 198403 on Fuels: Prices, if she will publish a list of (a) the retailers that have signed up to share their prices and (b) which of those share their live prices.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published information on the voluntary road fuel prices scheme on their website [here](#), which includes further information on the scheme, a list of participating retailers and retailer fuel price data.

## ■ Geothermal Power

**Royston Smith:**

**[198503]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the British Geological Society paper entitled the case for deep geothermal energy – unlocking investment at scale in the UK, published 17 July 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government commends the British Geological Society's work on this paper and welcomes its findings. The department is working on securing evidence to inform potential funding mechanisms and consider ways in which data can be better captured and shared across the industry. The Government engages with industry stakeholders so that any interventions unlock the potential role of deep geothermal energy in decarbonising heat, at an acceptable cost to consumers and the taxpayer.

## ■ Geothermal Power: Southampton

**Royston Smith:**

**[198502]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made an assessment of the suitability of Southampton as a location for geothermal energy production.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department has funded feasibility studies to examine potential for heat network development in Southampton. Deep Geothermal has been identified as a potential heat source for heat networks which would supply consumers within the city. A more detailed study is required to understand the full potential of heating available from the Wessex Basin Aquifer, building on lessons learnt from the UK's first geothermal

power scheme which supplied the Southampton District Energy Scheme. Funding is available to the public sector to explore this opportunity further.

### ■ **Insulation: Housing**

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

**[199513]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department has taken to help ensure that people who experience problems with work completed under the Sustainable Warmth Scheme can have their issues put right.

**Graham Stuart:**

All work completed under the Sustainable Warmth Scheme must be installed to PAS (Publicly Available Specification) 2035 and lodged with Trustmark, the Government-endorsed Quality scheme for home improvements. TrustMark registration ensures installers have been vetted for technical competence, customer service and trading practices, and operate in accordance with the TrustMark Customer Charter and Framework Operating Requirements. This includes a comprehensive level of financial protection to customers. Information on the consumer protection offered by TrustMark can be found online at <https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowners>.

People who experience problems with work completed under the Sustainable Warmth scheme should follow Trustmark's dispute resolution process.

### ■ **Local Net Zero Forum**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[198487]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions she has had with the Local Net Zero Forum; and if she will list the outcomes generated by the Local Net Zero Forum.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Local Net Zero Forum has met five times at official level and held a ministerial level meeting on 09 February 2023. Forum discussions feed into ongoing policy and delivery work but the Forum itself does not make decisions or produce publications.

### ■ **Motorway Service Areas: Fuels**

**Bill Esterson:**

**[199075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions she has had with fuel retailers on fuel prices within motorway service stations.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The former Secretary of State met with fuel retailers in July 2023 to discuss the Competition and Market Authority's (CMA) market study findings and strongly encourage their participation in the CMA implemented voluntary scheme, in place until the government can place the open data scheme on a statutory footing.

The Government is aware customers often pay more at motorway fuel stations than elsewhere. The Government has accepted the CMA recommendation to create a

statutory open data scheme and monitoring function, that together will facilitate greater competition and put downward pressure on road fuel prices.

The Government will consult this autumn.

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[199076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made a comparative assessment of the cost difference between fuel sold by petrol stations on motorway service stations and other petrol stations.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Competition and Market Authority's (CMA) final report found drivers without access to fuel cards are paying more at motorway service stations than elsewhere. This is due to limited competitive pressure and opportunities for customers to observe prices and shop around. Differences in 'fixed' and 'variable' costs, such as rent, staff wages and fuel volume sold also cause price variations.

The Government accepted the CMA's recommendation to create an open data scheme and monitoring function for road fuel prices and will consult this autumn. These recommendations should facilitate greater competition in the UK market and put downward pressure on prices.

## ■ National Grid

**John Redwood:**

[\[198581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the capacity of the UK electricity grid by the end of 2025.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The electricity network must have enough capacity to support peak electricity demand. The Electricity Networks Strategic Framework outlines that peak electricity demand is expected to be around 60GW by 2025 in Great Britain.

## ■ Social Rented Housing: Energy

**Samantha Dixon:**

[\[198574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure energy companies inform (a) the landlord and (b) the relevant housing provider of any social housing tenant who is about to have their energy supply stopped.

**Amanda Solloway:**

In 2022 there were 13 electricity and 6 gas meters disconnected in Great Britain due to a failure to pay a debt owed. Energy suppliers must explore all other options first, such as payment plans.

An energy supplier would only be able to inform a landlord in cases where the landlord is the party that holds the contract with the energy supplier, or where the

householder has given their permission for their energy supplier to communicate directly with their landlord.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Animal Welfare: Electronic Training Aids

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of banning the use of electric shock collars on animals.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Following a 2018 consultation, the Government committed to banning the use of hand-controlled electric shock collars (e-collars) on cats and dogs, given their scope to cause harm to these animals. This was reiterated in Defra's 2021 Action Plan for Animal Welfare. The draft regulations were developed after considering a broad range of factors. Academic research, public consultation responses, and direct engagement with the sector, with training organisations and with other stakeholders led the Government to conclude that the use of these electric shock collars should be prohibited.

Regarding other animals, the independent Animal Welfare Committee examined the welfare implications of using virtual fencing systems on livestock, where livestock are fitted with electronic collars as part of a system for containing, monitoring and moving livestock. The Committee's report was published in October 2022.

### ■ Coastal Erosion

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[199204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Coastal Change Management Areas there are; and if she will publish a list showing where each one is located.

**Rebecca Pow:**

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 18 October 2022 to [PQ 60017](#).

### ■ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[199035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of making the Eurostar St Pancras a CITES designated Point of Entry of Exit.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government has closely considered the case for designating St Pancras as a CITES Point of Entry and Exit (PoE), including data and information provided by stakeholders. Given the nature of CITES trade and the demands a PoE would place

on the terminal's resources and facilities, we do not consider it appropriate to designate it at this time. Since leaving the EU, we have worked to expand the number of PoE across the UK. This ensures the movement of CITES goods can take place in the most efficient way possible. Defra keeps the list of designated PoEs under review and will continue to work closely with Border Force and industry to evaluate and update the PoE list as appropriate.

#### ■ **Dangerous Dogs: Livestock Worrying**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[198983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to prevent dangerous dogs killing sheep in the context of the American Bully XL dog breed.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government takes the issue of livestock worrying very seriously, recognising the distress this can cause farmers and animals, as well as the financial implications. We will be taking forward measures to modernise current livestock worrying legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows. In the meantime, we will continue to work on messaging and awareness about controlling all breeds of dog around livestock.

#### ■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Public Expenditure**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which grants will be impacted by the planned £200m reduction in her Department's capital expenditure in 2024-25.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra's capital budget was set at Spending Review 21 on the basis of the funding needed in each year to deliver our outcomes. The profile of our spend reflects these needs, which fluctuate.

#### ■ **Dogs: Animal Breeding**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[198722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2023 to Question 189127 on Dogs: Animal Breeding, whether the Government plans to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 in addition to- Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In respect of canine fertility clinics, there is currently no timetable to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

## ■ Fish Farming: Animal Welfare

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[197143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to introduce mandatory pre-stun slaughter for farmed fish.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Animal Welfare Committee has updated its 2014 Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing and we will study their recommendations carefully, including those around stunning of farmed fish.

Current legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing requires that farmed fish are spared avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations.

## ■ Food: Production

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[198864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to (a) incentivise and (b) support domestic food production.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government is backing British farmers with £2.4 billion of investment every year. In May 2023 the Prime Minister and the Defra Secretary of State met with representatives from across the whole UK supply chain, from farm to fork, for a Summit on how Government and industry can work together to support a thriving UK food industry. Support for farmers includes our Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes. These schemes will ensure our long-term food security by investing in the foundations of food production: healthy soil, water and biodiverse ecosystems. ELM schemes have been developed so that there is an offer for all farm types, including for tenant farmers.

ELM includes the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). This pays farmers for actions that support food production and can help improve farm productivity and resilience, while protecting and improving the environment. It has been expanded and made more flexible in response to farmers' feedback, with 23 actions on offer under the new and improved 2023 scheme, including on soil health, moorland, hedgerows, integrated pest management, farmland wildlife, buffer strips, and low input grassland. In recognition of the challenges faced with inflation and rising input costs, the Government has confirmed farmers will receive a payment in the first month of their Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023 (SFI) agreement to help with cashflow. The scheme will open for applications from 18 September. Before then farmers can contact the RPA to join the thousands of farm businesses that have already expressed their interest in applying.

ELM also includes Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Landscape Recovery (LR). CS will pay farmers and land managers to look after and improve the environment in specific habitats, features and local areas. LR is for landowners and managers who

want to take a more large-scale, long-term approach to producing environmental and climate goods on their land. LR projects will demonstrate how food production and environmental delivery can go hand in hand.

The Government has also confirmed that farmers producing sustainable British food under ELM schemes will be able to use them to help meet public procurement standards, benefiting our British farmers and allowing the public sector to benefit from more excellent British food. We are providing tailored business advice to all farmers. We have cut red tape, brought in fair enforcement regimes, and helped the sector access the seasonal labour it needs. We are looking closely at the Shropshire review into labour shortages in the food chain that we commissioned to see how we can go further.

We are also reviewing supply chain fairness in the sector: the Government announced in July that it plans to introduce regulations this autumn to make sure supply contracts in the dairy sector are fair and transparent, meaning farmers can challenge prices or raise concerns with contracts more easily. This represents a key milestone in our commitment to promote fairness and transparency across food supply chains to support farmers and build a stronger future for the industry, and will be followed by reviews into the egg and horticulture sector supply chains this Autumn to ensure farmers are paid a fair price. We will also identify opportunities to remove unnecessary burdens for Small Abattoirs. We are also trying to unlock opportunities for genetic technologies.

Further information on how we are supporting farmers can be found on our webpage: [Our record on farming: 30 actions we have taken to support our farmers and growers](#).

## ■ Livestock: Animal Housing

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[196212]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Action Plan for Animal Welfare, published in May 2021, when her Department plans to publish the consultation on the cage keeping of farm animals.

**Mark Spencer:**

We have delivered an ambitious legislative programme since the publication of the Action Plan, which will deliver significant improvements for animals in the UK and abroad. We are firmly committed to maintaining our strong track record on animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements, both in the course of this Parliament and beyond. We do not, however, consider the time is right to consult on cage reforms, being mindful of the challenges the laying hen and pig sectors are facing. The market is already driving the move away from using cages for laying hen production. The proportion of eggs that come from caged hens has steadily decreased from 47% of total throughput in Q4 2017, to 21% in Q1 2023. The UK is ahead of most other pig producing countries in terms of zero confinement farrowing, in that 40% of the national sow breeding herd farrow freely on outdoor pig units with no option of confinement.



We continue to work with the sectors to maintain and enhance our high standards. The Government's animal welfare priorities for its Animal Health and Welfare Pathway include supporting producers to transition away from confinement systems.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to introduce a reciprocal free movement zone within the UK for Russian diplomatic staff.

**Leo Docherty:**

In response to Russia's decision to impose travel notification requirements on British diplomats in Russia, we have introduced commensurate reciprocal travel notification requirements for Russian diplomats accredited to the Russian Embassy in London and the Consulate-General in Edinburgh. This is in line with the concept of reciprocity in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

### ■ Africa: Politics and Government

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198542\]](#)

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

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The state of democracy in Africa and around the world matters to the UK. The Integrated Review notes that flourishing democracies are important for UK sovereignty, security and prosperity. We believe that strong democratic institutions and accountable governments, which uphold universal rights and the rule of law, are key building blocks for secure and prosperous states. The UK has established strong bilateral partnerships across Africa to bolster democratic institutions. Examples of our work include judicial training around elections in Kenya, public financial management support in Mozambique, and supporting civil society to hold government to account for service delivery in Nigeria.

### ■ Bosnia and Herzegovina: EUFOR

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[199473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans that the UK will re-join the EUFOR peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina if its mandate is extended by the UN in November.

**Leo Docherty:**

EUFOR Operation Althea remains vital to Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) peace and security and the UK will support its mandate renewal in the UN Security Council in



November. We continue to explore options for supporting the security of BiH both through bilateral support to the BiH Armed Forces and through NATO HQ in Sarajevo. The UK Government has supported BiH Ministry of Defence to increase its capabilities, including in the areas of gender integration, officer training and international interoperability.

## ■ **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Sovereignty**

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[199474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it remains his policy to support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK fully supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) sovereignty and territorial integrity. In 2022 we sanctioned Milorad Dodik and Željka Cvijanović, for threatening the Dayton Peace Agreement and the integrity of the BiH State. The UK Government works in partnership with a number of BiH civil society organisations, such as the Srebrenica Memorial Centre, in their efforts to promote reconciliation and inter-ethnic dialogue in BiH and across the region. We will continue to support those working for a safe, prosperous and united BiH.

## ■ **Caribbean Community: Economic Cooperation**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[199177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to promote economic cooperation between the UK and the CARICOM region.

**David Rutley:**

The Foreign Secretary co-chaired the biennial UK-Caribbean Forum with the Jamaican Foreign Minister, in Kingston, Jamaica on 18 May. The Foreign Secretary discussed improving two-way trade and signed an MoU that will provide an overarching framework for UK-Caribbean cooperation and is the first of its kind between The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and a nation state.

## ■ **China: Cybercrime**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in China on attempts made by cyber attackers based in China to unlawfully access UK Parliament systems.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We continually monitor threats to our national security and do not hesitate to take action when necessary. During his recent visit, the Foreign Secretary challenged his Chinese counterparts on a number of areas of disagreement, including calling on China to cease its malign activities in cyberspace. Building strong defences and

resilient systems remains the best way of countering malicious cyber activity, and we continue to invest in the National Cyber Security Centre. We have also implemented deterrents to prevent foreign actors conducting hostile acts against the UK, including through the Defending Democracy Taskforce and the newly established National Security Act.

## ■ Colombia and Mexico: Drugs

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[198634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his (a) Colombian and (b) Mexican counterpart on the recent Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Drugs.

**David Rutley:**

During his visit to Colombia last May, the Foreign Secretary met with the Colombian Foreign Minister to discuss our ongoing support to peace and security in Colombia, which includes helping to tackle serious organised crime. Whilst the Foreign Secretary did not specifically discuss this conference with his counterparts in Colombia and Mexico, we continue to work bilaterally with international partners to disrupt the narcotics supply chains that feed European and UK markets. HMG officials from our Embassy in Bogotá attended the conference and we are firmly committed to our international obligations under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

## ■ Development Aid

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[199000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the (a) effectiveness and (b) viability of the Productive Safety Net Programme.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK has been a longstanding supporter of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) which has reached millions of vulnerable people throughout Ethiopia and has helped to promote resilience to drought. In January this year I [Minister Andrew Mitchell] announced a package of support to the PSNP budgeted at £11.6 million. This will reach 250,000 people living in extreme poverty.

As a member of the Donor Working Group responsible for overseeing PSNP the UK is working with the Government of Ethiopia and other donors to track programme performance against agreed aims.

## ■ Ecuador: Elections

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[199334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recent shooting of

Fernando Villavicencio in Ecuador; and what discussions has he had with his counterpart in Ecuador on maintaining the integrity of the forthcoming presidential elections.

**David Rutley:**

We have been closely monitoring the security situation in Ecuador and the implications of the assassination of Presidential candidate, Fernando Villavicencio, on the current election process. I [Minister Rutley] met the Ecuadorean Ambassador to London on 12 September and discussed security challenges facing Ecuador and the implications for the elections. The UK is committed to supporting Ecuador in ensuring that the upcoming elections take place peacefully and in good faith.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Buildings**

**Catherine West:**

[\[199146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has assessed its premises (a) in the UK and (b) overseas for the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**David Rutley:**

For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. Cabinet Office is coordinating development of a Government RAAC Register to capture and track suspected and confirmed presence of RAAC in Government buildings. This will be updated regularly as buildings are surveyed.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Gyms**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[198324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department spent on gym (a) facilities and (b) equipment in each of the last five financial years.

**David Rutley:**

FCDO expenditure on gym facilities and equipment in King Charles Street, Hanslope Park, and Abercrombie House in the last 5 financial years is as follows:

	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23
Equipment	£1,900.33	£77,292.58	£9,328.87
Facility	£0.00	£45,334.06	£17,293.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,900.33</b>	<b>£122,626.64</b>	<b>£26,622.51</b>

FCDO expenditure on gym facilities and equipment overseas is the responsibility of individual posts, this information is not centrally held and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: National Security****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether their Department has a Chief Risk Officer for national security risks relating to the work of their Department.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Permanent Under Secretary holds ultimate responsibility on all risks to the FCDO and its objectives. The FCDO's Centre for Delivery coordinates Risk Management for senior leadership and ensures that supervision of individual risks is delegated to relevant Directors General or Directors with the appropriate remit.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff****Lisa Nandy:** [\[199063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK-based personnel in his Department have worked on international development programmes in each financial year since September 2020.

**David Rutley:**

It is not possible to provide a precise figure for the total number of people working on international development programmes in any given year. The FCDO Programme Operating Framework (PrOF) provides the basis for the management of international development programmes. PrOF rules require two mandatory roles in every programme - the Senior Responsible Owner and Programme Responsible Owner. Each programme will also include other staff performing a range of project management and technical advisory functions. The total number of staff involved in each programme will depend on a range of factors such as programme risk, scale, complexity and the stage of delivery.

**■ Gabon: Politics and Government****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[198687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his French counterpart on the political situation in Gabon.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Foreign Secretary is in regular contact with the French Foreign Minister, including on UK-French cooperation in Africa. UK officials have been in contact with French counterparts in Libreville, Paris and London. The UK and French Governments, alongside the UN, African Union and others, have condemned the military takeover in Gabon. We call for the restoration of constitutional government.

## ■ Hong Kong: Politics and Government

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he discussed (a) democracy within Hong Kong and (b) the Sino-British Joint Declaration with his Chinese counterpart during his recent visit to China.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

During his recent visit to China, the Foreign Secretary raised Hong Kong during detailed discussions with Vice President Han Zheng and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The Foreign Secretary raised the damage caused by the Beijing-imposed National Security Law to rights and freedoms in Hong Kong and China's ongoing non-compliance with the Sino-British Joint Declaration. He also raised the case of Jimmy Lai. As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, we will continue to raise the issues where we disagree with the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities.

## ■ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[199057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's policy is on renewing the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia until September 2024.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

In 2021, we co-sponsored the EU-led resolution creating the mandate for the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) which we voted to renew in 2022. The UK continues to support the ICHREE given the need for accountability and an improvement in human rights more widely across Ethiopia. We continue to urge all parties to cooperate with both the Commission and with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## ■ Iraq and Turkey: Pipelines

**Jack Lopresti:**

[\[198073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of whether the oil pipeline between the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and Turkey will be re-opened.

**David Rutley:**

The UK supports a secure, stable, and thriving Kurdistan Region in Iraq (KRI) within a peaceful and prosperous Iraq. Through our diplomatic engagements, we continue to encourage all parties to work together to find a satisfactory and speedy resolution, noting the importance of oil exports via the pipeline to the health of the economy of the KRI and to Iraq.

It would not be appropriate, given the ongoing negotiations between the governments of Iraq and Turkey regarding the pipeline, for HMG to speculate on any timelines for its reopening.

**■ Israel: Palestinians**

**Sarah Champion:** [\[198525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Israel on the treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system.

**Sarah Champion:** [\[198526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the implications for his policies of the Government of Israel's level of compliance with the recommendations made in UNICEF's report entitled Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and recommendations, published in 2003.

**Sarah Champion:** [\[199219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with the Israeli Government to help secure improvements to the condition of Palestinian children in military detention.

**David Rutley:**

The UK draws on a wide range of sources when assessing human rights issues in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. We have issues about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary. The Israeli authorities must comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees. We remain committed to working with the Israeli government to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and continue to raise this with the Israeli Ministry of Justice through our embassy in Tel Aviv. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, also frequently meets with charities and NGOs regarding issues relating to the occupation. He most recently discussed child detention in a meeting with representatives of Save The Children, Oxfam GB, Medical Aid for Palestinians and Christian Aid on 4 July.

**■ Libya: Storms**

**Mr David Jones:** [\[199004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support Libya with damage caused by Storm Daniel.

**David Rutley:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are closely monitoring and assessing the impact of Storm Daniel on Eastern Libya. The UN have announced \$10 million in support through the UN's Central Emergency Relief Fund, of which the UK is the third largest donor. We have also announced an initial package of up to £1 million for life saving support. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq)

Ahmad of Wimbledon, is in touch with the Libyan authorities, reiterating the UK's readiness to support Libya and expressing our deepest condolences to the Libyan people at this tragic time.

#### ■ **Mali: Armed Conflict**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[198498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the government of Algeria and (b) other regional states and partner organisations on peace and security in northern Mali.

**David Rutley:**

On 5 September, the Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed the situation in northern Mali with the Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf. We continue to engage the Government of Algeria, regional partners, local organisations and all parties to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation to encourage commitment to peace in Mali. We are encouraging the United Nations to continue to support and oversee the implementation of the Peace Agreement during and after the departure of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. As we have said frequently, Mali's reliance on Russia will not deliver long-term peace or security for the Malian people. The UK will continue to monitor the situation in Mali and provide vital humanitarian aid to support those affected by conflict.

#### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**John McNally:**

[\[199460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will respond to the email correspondence of 1 August 2023 from the office of the hon. Member for Falkirk relating to a bereaved constituent.

**David Rutley:**

Leo Docherty, Minister of State for Europe responded to the letter in question on 14/09/2023.

#### ■ **Montserrat: Health Services**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help improve healthcare provision in Montserrat.

**David Rutley:**

The UK is supporting Montserrat through a £40 million capital investment programme over 6 years from 2019-2025 which supports strategic infrastructure development, including a new hospital. A CT scanner and 3D mammography unit have been purchased with funding from the Improving Essential Equipment for Aided Overseas Territories Programme with an oxygen generator and a neonatal incubator to come. The UK Government funded a £1.5m COVID-19 programme which supplied



vaccines, PPE, test kits, specialist healthcare staff, training programmes, in addition to a new laboratory with the ability to test for multiple viruses not just those pandemic-related. The UK Government more recently agreed to provide funds towards a new ambulance.

■ **Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[199472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK fully supports the High Representative. In a statement on 8 September the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for the Western Balkans, the Lord Peach, made clear that attacks by Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik against the High Representative were illegal and anti-constitutional. We welcome the decision by the state prosecutor of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take legal action against Dodik for his failure to implement the decisions of the High Representative.

■ **Russia: Diplomatic Service**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to review the (a) security of accommodation and (b) other security arrangements for UK diplomatic staff posted to Russia.

**Leo Docherty:**

We keep the security of all our posts under constant review to identify what more might be done to enhance their security against potential threats in host countries. It is not our practice to comment about the security arrangements at specific diplomatic missions overseas.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Migrants**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[199221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September to Question 197866 on Saudi Arabia: Migrants, what the response was of the (a) Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and (b) President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission to the representations made by the Minister for the Middle East and Human Rights.

**David Rutley:**

The UK Government discussed the allegations in private and will continue to do so using a range of diplomatic channels. No aspect of our relationship prevents us from speaking frankly about human rights.



## ■ **Ukraine: International Assistance**

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[199062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take (a) multilaterally and (b) bilaterally to support Ukraine's (i) state institutions and (ii) anti-corruption strategies.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government is committed to supporting Ukraine's reform agenda. We plan to spend up to £3 million on anti-corruption efforts in the Financial Year 2024/25 through the £38 million UK-programme, Good Governance Fund Ukraine. UK -funded expertise has helped to relaunch the High Council of Justice and High Qualification Commission of Judges, institutions critical to a judiciary free from unlawful interference. Through the G7, the UK has been instrumental in delivering progress on anti-corruption, judicial reform and energy sector governance. We also coordinate with the EU on Ukraine - we worked closely in preparation for the 2023 Ukraine Recovery Conference to support Ukraine's recovery and reform.

## ■ **Visas: Musicians**

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[199033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many full-time equivalent staff in his Department are working in roles supporting musicians to secure visas to tour overseas.

**Leo Docherty:**

As a department, we have worked with a number of others (including DCMS, DBT and DfT) to support touring musicians. The majority of Member States (24 out of 27) have now confirmed that UK musicians and performers do not need visas or work permits for some short-term touring. To help businesses across sectors navigate the visa and work permit rules of EU countries, DBT has published guidance on GOV.UK on the entry requirements for EU Member States, as well as for Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

## ■ **West Africa: Armed Conflict**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[198497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in (a) territorial control, (b) levels of threat to state integrity and (c) risks of atrocities by jihadist armed groups in (i) Mali, (ii) Burkina Faso and (iii) Niger.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK notes with concern the worsening security situation in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. We assess that the two largest terrorist groups operating in the Sahel - Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) - will likely seek to exploit opportunities including the crisis in Niger, rising conflict in northern Mali and deteriorating security in Burkina Faso to increase their operational

activities, whilst also progressing their regional expansion plans. The terrorist threat in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso will likely increase as a result of ongoing instability, as will the risk of atrocities by jihadist armed groups. The UK is monitoring the security situation in the Sahel closely and continues to provide vital humanitarian aid to support those affected by conflict.

## ■ World Bank: Climate Change

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[198999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on whether the World Bank has fully incorporated its sovereign lending in line with the Paris Agreement.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

In 2021, during the UK COP26 Presidency, the World Bank Group made a commitment to fully align its sovereign operations with the Paris Agreement by 1 July 2023, and non-sovereign operations by 1 July 2025. In March this year the World Bank published a comprehensive set of methodologies and sector notes detailing its approach to Paris alignment. Since 1 July, all projects are assessed for Paris alignment. While the Bank is still in the early stages of implementation, HMG is confident that the Bank is implementing a rigorous process and is applying oversight through its seat on the Board.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Derek Twigg:**

[\[199029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take further steps to increase levels of uptake in the breast cancer screening programme.

**Derek Twigg:**

[\[199030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to make breast cancer screening more (a) accessible and (b) convenient.

**Will Quince:**

The Department has invested £10 million into the NHS Breast Screening Programme for 28 new breast screening units targeted at areas where they are needed most. This will provide extra capacity for services to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, boost uptake of screening in areas where attendance is low, and tackle health disparities.

Further steps to remove barriers to attending breast screening include promoting the use of text message alerts to remind women of upcoming appointments. National Health Service breast screening providers are also being encouraged to work with their partners to bring together work to make sure as many people as possible can access breast screening services.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department have made of the adequacy of resources for podiatric care in the NHS.

**Will Quince:**

No assessment has been made. Integrated care boards are responsible for ensuring that the services they commission meet the needs of their local population with the resources they are allocated, including in respect of podiatry services.

## ■ **Breast Cancer: Diagnosis**

**Derek Twigg:**

[\[199028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on increasing rates of early diagnosis for breast cancer.

**Will Quince:**

Improving early diagnosis of cancer, including breast cancer, remains a priority. We are working towards the NHS Long Term Plan ambition of diagnosing 75% of stageable cancers at stage 1 and 2 by 2028. The latest published data shows this was 52% from January to December 2020. Achieving this will mean that, from 2028, 55,000 more people each year will survive their cancer for at least five years after diagnosis.

The Government has also expanded the Breast Screening programme, with an additional £10 million funding for 28 new breast screening units and nearly 60 life-saving upgrades to services in the areas where they are most needed.

## ■ **Cancer: Diagnosis**

**Wes Streeting:**

[\[199157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Question 353 of the oral evidence on Cancer services given by the Minister of State for Patient Safety and Primary Care to the Health and Social Care Committee on 20 January 2022, HC 551, what progress he has made on the development of national cancer hotlines to improve the rapid diagnosis of cancer.

**Will Quince:**

Self-referral models, including cancer hotlines, are currently being considered. The Cancer Programme at NHS England has funded several local pilots to understand the feasibility and impact of self-referral mechanisms in cancer pathways. These small-scale, local pilots are at different stages of development. NHS England are in the process of gathering and analysing the data from local systems to assess the effectiveness of these interventions.

The NHS Cancer Programme continues to scope opportunities to streamline cancer pathways to support earlier and faster diagnosis of cancer, including piloting direct referral routes from community pharmacies, increasing general practice direct access to diagnostic tests and expanding the roll-out of Community Diagnostic Centres.

**Dental Services**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution by the Minister for Primary Care and Public Health of 11 July 2023 during Health and Social Care oral questions, column 172, what is his Department's expected timescale for the publication of the NHS Dental Plan.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We expect to publish our Dental Recovery Plan shortly.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to strengthen the data that is available for the purposes of understanding demand for and supply of NHS dental services in England.

**Neil O'Brien:**

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

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Primary Care and Public Health on 11 July 2023, Official Report, column 172, when he plans to publish the dental plan; and what steps he is taking to ensure that the dental health needs of local populations are met by integrated care boards.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We expect to publish our Dental Recovery Plan shortly.

From 1 April, responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. ICBs are responsible for undertaking oral health needs assessments, identifying areas of need and determining the priorities for investment. Prior to delegation decisions being taken, NHS England undertook a comprehensive assessment process, ensuring ICBs were ready to take on commissioning responsibility for delegated functions.

NHS England has published an Assurance Framework which sets out its approach to providing assurance that commissioning functions are carried out safely and effectively by ICBs, and is providing active support to all ICBs during the transition period.

## ■ Electric Cigarettes: Children

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[199373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of (a) the industry proposal to introduce fines of £10,000 to retailers found selling e-cigarettes to children and (b) other alternative strategies to reduce youth access to single use e-cigarettes.

**Neil O'Brien:**

No assessment has been made of the proposal to introduce fines of £10,000 to retailers found selling vapes (e-cigarettes) to children. The Government recently ran a call for evidence on youth vaping, which closed on 6 June. This will identify opportunities to reduce the number of children accessing and using vaping products and explore where the Government can go further, including on single use vapes. We will respond to the call for evidence shortly.

## ■ Electronic Cigarettes: Regulation

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[199367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a consultation on banning the sale of single-use e-cigarettes.

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[199369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential (a) health and (b) economic impact of banning the sale of single-use e-cigarettes on ex-smokers with low incomes.

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[199371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had discussions with (a) Trading Standards and (b) other bodies on the practicalities of implementing a ban on single-use e-cigarettes.

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[199372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of how many vapers will switch to cigarettes if the sale of single-use e-cigarettes is banned.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Government recently ran a call for evidence on youth vaping (using an e-cigarette), which closed on 6 June. This will identify opportunities to reduce the number of children accessing and using vaping products and explore where the Government can go further, including on disposable vapes. As part of this process, we are assessing a range of factors such as the economic impact of any future restrictions including related to disposable vapes. We will respond to the call for evidence shortly.

**■ General Practitioners: Mid Bedfordshire****Emily Thornberry:** [\[199047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time for patients to see their GP has been in Mid-Bedfordshire constituency for (a) non-emergency appointments and (b) emergency appointments in (i) the last 12 months for which figures are available and (ii) the equivalent 12 month period prior to that.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[199048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was for patients to see their GP for (a) non-emergency and (b) emergency appointments in Tamworth constituency in (i) the last twelve months for which figures are available and (ii) the twelve month period prior to that.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The data is not held in the format requested.

**■ General Practitioners: Standards****Wes Streeting:** [\[199493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients with urgent needs could not be offered an appointment with their GP on the day that they asked for it in each of the past 12 months.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The data is not held in the format requested.

**■ Genomics: Health Services****Wes Streeting:** [\[198889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patient genomes have been sequenced by the Genomics Medicine Service as of 11 September 2023.

**Will Quince:**

The NHS Genomic Medicine Service, in partnership with Genomics England, is the first clinical service in the world to offer whole genome sequencing as part of routine care for rare disease and cancer patients. As of September 2023, 66,266 whole genome equivalents (the number of whole genome sequences undertaken, including, and adjusting for the complexity of, cancer tumour sequences) have been sequenced through this service.

**■ Healthy Start Scheme****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:** [\[199416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Healthy Start scheme.

**Neil O'Brien:**

In June 2022, the Department commissioned a 30-month evaluation of the Healthy Start scheme in England through the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

**Mental Health Act 1983****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[199147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether legislative proposals to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 will be announced in the King's Speech.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The contents of the King's Speech are not announced before it has been delivered by His Majesty.

**Social Services: Labour Turnover****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[199084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve workforce retention rates in adult social care.

**Helen Whately:**

We are investing at least £250 million over the next two years on workforce reforms, a key objective of which is to improve retention and turnover rates.

In July we announced the £570 million Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund – Workforce Fund to support increased adult social care capacity, improve market sustainability, and enable local authorities to make tangible improvements to adult social care services, with a particular focus on workforce pay. Local authorities can choose to use this funding to increase the adult social care workforce and improve retention.

**Social Services: Staff****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[199085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's planned timescale is for publishing a response to the consultation entitled Care workforce pathway for adult social care, which closed in May 2023.

**Helen Whately:**

We intend to publish the first version of the Care Workforce Pathway, focused on staff in direct care roles, in autumn 2023. This will include a response to the call for evidence which closed in May 2023.

**Surgery: Private Sector****Wes Streeting:**[\[199195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS elective procedures were carried out by the independent sector in each of the last 10 years.



**Will Quince:**

The Department does not hold this data for the last 10 years.

However, a breakdown of independent sector weekly activity for both inpatient and outpatient activity from 11 July 2021 to 6 August 2023 is available at the following link:

[https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/recovery-of-elective\\_activity-mi/](https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/recovery-of-elective_activity-mi/)

NHS England data shows that from 1 August 2021 to 30 July 2022, a total of 4,014,730 National Health Service elective inpatient and outpatient appointments were completed by the independent sector. From 31 July 2022 to 5 August 2023, the total number of NHS elective inpatient and outpatients that were completed was 4,854,125.

**■ Surgical Hubs****Jim Shannon:****[199385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many procedures have been delivered by NHS England's Surgical Hubs as of 13 September 2023.

**Will Quince:**

There are currently 94 elective surgical hubs operational across the National Health Service in England. Of those, 63 have implemented unique data codes which allow for their activity to be measured separately from the wider activity of the hospital trust which runs the hub. As of the week ending 30 July 2023, the most recent available data, these 63 hubs have delivered 10,253 elective procedures and 41,067 outpatient appointments.

Implementation of the unique site codes for the remaining 31 hubs is ongoing and is expected to be completed by November 2023. The total number of elective procedures and outpatient appointments above is therefore likely to be an underestimate of total activity.

**■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme****Sir Christopher Chope:****[199272]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2023 to Question 197990 on Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme:

Coronavirus, how many data subject access requests have been submitted for the 1,784 Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme claims which have been outstanding for over three months; and of those, how many data subject access requests have been outstanding for more than (a) six months, (b) three months and (c) one month.

**Maria Caulfield:**

As of 1 September, of the 1,784 COVID-19 related claims that have been waiting for the provision of medical records for over three months, 314 claims have had subject access requests (SARs) submitted, with a total of 492 SARs between them. Claims



usually have an average of two to three healthcare providers listed on their claim form, which results in multiple SARs being submitted for one claim. 1,470 claims have not had any SARs submitted. Due to previous SARs not receiving the desired outcome, steps are being taken to identify other avenues to engage with healthcare providers to gather medical records as quickly as possible and improve processing times.

Of the 492 SARs submitted, 62 (12%) have been outstanding more than six months, 276 (56%) have been outstanding more than three months, 280 (57%) have been outstanding more than one month, and two have been outstanding for less than a month. 210 (43%) of these SARs have resulted in the records being received.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Abortion: Demonstrations

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[199375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to bring section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 into force.

**Chris Philp:**

The timescales for commencing the new Section 9 offence of interference with access to, or provision of, abortion services will be confirmed in due course.

### ■ Asylum: Applications

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[198491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to recommendation 1 of the policy paper entitled The Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's report: An inspection of asylum casework (August 2020 to May 2021), published 18 November 2021, when she plans to publish a service standard.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Reducing the backlog in asylum cases and establishing a more efficient and robust decision-making system is not in and of itself a strategy to stop illegal migration, but it is important for taxpayer value and we have prioritised it. We have transformed the productivity of asylum decision making by streamlining processes, creating focused interviews and instilling true accountability for performance. As of 1 September, we have met our commitment to have 2,500 decision makers, an increase of 174% from the same point last year. As a result, I am pleased to report to the House that we are on track to clear the legacy backlog by the end of the year, and that recently published provisional figures for July show that the overall backlog fell.

On 13 December 2022, the Prime Minister pledged to clear the backlog of the 92,601 initial asylum decisions relating to claims made before 28 June 2022 ("legacy claims") by the end of 2023.

We have taken immediate action to accelerate decision-making and rapidly speed up processing times by streamlining guidance, accelerating decision-making procedures, including more focused and fewer interviews, as well as enhancing the use of technology.

**Christine Jardine:**

[\[906431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the backlog of asylum applications.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We have transformed the productivity of asylum decision making by streamlining processes, creating focused interviews and instilling accountability for performance. And as of 1 September, we have met our commitment to have 2,500 decision makers, an increase of 174% from the same point last year.

As a result, I am pleased to report to the House that we are on track to clear the legacy backlog by the end of the year, and that recently published provisional figures for July show that the overall backlog fell.

#### ■ Asylum: Catterick Garrison

**Sir Edward Leigh:**

[\[195642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made recent progress on temporarily housing asylum seekers at Catterick Garrison; and what recent estimate she has made of when that site will begin receiving asylum seekers.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office is considering a range of options to deliver accommodation requirements as part of the implementation of the Illegal Migration Act. Work is ongoing to bring forward accommodation at Catterick garrison as part of wider efforts to relieve pressure on the asylum system.

#### ■ Asylum: Children

**Gordon Henderson:**

[\[906434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on resourcing Kent County Council to look after unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office and the Department for Education are working closely with HMT to resolve funding arrangements as soon as possible. This is subject to litigation so I am afraid I cannot say much more at this stage.

## ■ Asylum: Deportation

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[198865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to prevent people subject to deportation orders from being able to submit further asylum claims.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Work is underway to bring the provisions in the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 relating to priority removal notices and expedited appeals into force as soon as possible. The aim of these measures is to reduce the volume of further claims or repeat claims from those liable to deportation or removal from the UK.

## ■ Asylum: Detainees

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[198567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the report entitled Evaluation of the Refugee and Migrant Advice Service's Alternative to Detention Pilot, published on 23 August 2023, whether her Department plans to accept the 10 recommendations of the UNHCR.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There are six recommendations for the Home Office in this evaluation report, which we have accepted either in full or partially as set out in the Home Office management response.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[198967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the research by the National Centre for Social Research entitled Alternatives to detention: evaluation of second pilot, published on 23 August 2023, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for its policies of that research.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There are six recommendations for the Home Office in the second pilot's evaluation report, which have either been accepted in full or partially. Learning and insights from the pilot are set out in the published Home Office response which is included within the evaluation report.

## ■ Bibby Stockholm: Fire Extinguishers

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[197265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there is a functioning sprinkler system on the Bibby Stockholm.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the Home Office has a legal obligation to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute.

In the Netherlands and Belgium, the authorities have delivered accommodation for asylum seekers on vessels in a safe and secure manner.

The Bibby Stockholm vessel has been used for decades to provide safe and decent accommodation to oil rig workers and was used between 1995 to 1998 to accommodate refugees in Germany.

Corporate Travel Management (CTM) are responsible for managing the services on the barge. CTM, who managed two Scottish vessels housing refugees in Edinburgh, has a strong track record of providing this kind of accommodation, and we are confident that it can manage the vessel and its supporting services. CTM has worked closely and successfully with local authorities and other public and voluntary organisations in Scotland.

The Bibby Stockholm adheres to the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005 and has an appropriate fire risk assessment that complies to those regulations including safety features such as fire doors, fire detection systems and firefighting equipment at strategic locations.

#### ■ Crime: Rural Areas

**Dr Neil Hudson:** [\[199514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle rural crime.

**Dr Neil Hudson:** [\[199515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle hare coursing.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government is committed to driving down rural crime, which is why we are providing funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit and the National Rural Crime Unit (NRCU).

The Home Office committed to provide one-off funding of £200,000 to the NRCU this year to assist with set up costs of the new unit. The NRCU will provide support to forces nationally in their responses to rural crime, such as the theft of farming or construction machinery, livestock theft, rural fly tipping, rural fuel theft and equine crime.

New measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act came into force on 1st August 2022, which empower and equip the police and courts with the powers they need to combat hare coursing. These powers included creating two new criminal offences; trespass with the intention of using a dog to search for or pursue a hare; and being equipped to trespass with the intention of using a dog to search for or pursue a hare.

The Government supported the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 will help to prevent the theft of agricultural equipment such as quad bikes, by requiring immobilisers and forensic markings to be fitted before new equipment is sold to

customers, and equipment to be registered on a database. The Act gained Royal Assent on 20 July.

Police Uplift Programme (PUP) funding has been used to tackle rural crime by forces and led to the formation of new teams and to bolster capabilities. For example, the Uplift enabled Cumbria constabulary to place officers back out 'on the beat' in rural communities.

## ■ **Drugs: Misuse**

**John McDonnell:** [\[198588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Amendment) Order 2023 on the (a) workload of and (b) resources available to police forces.

**John McDonnell:** [\[198603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Amendment) Order 2023 on (a) court caseloads and (b) the prison estate.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office has undertaken an assessment of the potential impacts of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Amendment) Order 2023, which will ban nitrous oxide, on the police, courts and prison systems.

The impact assessment is published at [The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 \(Amendment\) Order 2023 - Impact Assessment](#)

## ■ **Entry Clearances**

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[199399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Paragraph E-ECP.3.3 of Appendix FM of the Immigration Rules, if she will bring forward proposals to ensure that people receiving Adult Disability Payments benefit from the same provisions as those receiving Personal Independence Payments.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We are aware that the Scottish Government have made changes to the benefits system in Scotland and certain benefits previously paid by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have been amended and are now paid by Social Security Scotland, including Adult Disability payments. We keep the Immigration Rules under constant review and these changes will form part of that ongoing review process.

## ■ **Fraud: Internet**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to help reduce online fraud.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

In May, the government published a new strategy to address the threat of fraud. One of the three pillars included in the strategy focuses on blocking fraud at source, which includes actions to prevent online fraud.

The Online Safety Bill will tackle online harms, including fraud and fraudulent advertising. This means that social media and search engine companies will have to take robust, proactive action to ensure that their users are not exposed to these crimes in the first place.

We are also working with the large tech companies to agree an online fraud charter, which will include actions to help tackle online fraud.

**■ Home Office: Ascension Island**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[195811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many officials her Department has stationed on Ascension Island as of September 2023.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Home Office does not comment on staffing levels for operational security.

**■ Home Office: National Security**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198549\]](#)

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

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The Home Office takes national security risks extremely seriously. Our approach ensures named individuals are accountable for specific risks, with cross cutting items owned at board level by the Home Office Executive Committee. For example, the aim of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) is to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK.

The Director General for Homeland Security is senior responsible officer for CONTEST. In addition, all Home Office risks are identified and managed using principles set by the Director General for Corporate and Delivery.

**■ Immigration: Biometrics**

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[198484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued on the criteria used to triage family reunion applications once biometrics have been submitted.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office published updated Family Reunion Casework Guidance in July 2023. This is viewable at Family reunion: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK

([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) and covers guidance on prioritisation for particularly vulnerable applicants.

## ■ Immigration: EU Nationals

**Martyn Day:**

[196457]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many British citizens were wrongly assigned pre settled status in each of the last five years; how many and what proportion of these people subsequently requested to have their pre settled status removed; and how many and what proportion of those requests were successful.

**Robert Jenrick:**

If a British citizen mistakenly applies to the EU Settlement Scheme, the Home Office will void their application as they have a right of abode in the UK. Status under the scheme would only be granted in circumstances where, based on the information and evidence submitted in the application, it was not clear that the applicant was a British citizen.

The requested data on the number of British citizens wrongly assigned pre-settled status is not available. Where pre-settled status is granted to a British citizen, it has no legal effect.

The Home Office strives to make the correct decision for applicants first time in every case.

## ■ Joint Fraud Taskforce

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[199326]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times and on what dates the Joint Fraud Taskforce has met since October 2021.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The Joint Fraud Taskforce is a partnership between the private sector, Government and law enforcement. The Joint Fraud Taskforce met on 11 July 2023, 21 November 2022, 22 March 2022 and 21 October 2021.

The Joint Fraud Taskforce meeting minutes are available on Gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-fraud-taskforce#joint-fraud-taskforce-meeting-minutes>

## ■ Kent Intake Unit: Paintings

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[198113]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 July 2023 to Question 193218, for what reason there was no financial cost for (a) materials and (b) labour for painting over murals at the Kent Intake Unit.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Existing contractors based onsite carried out the work, using materials left over from the building's construction in 2022.



**■ Magistrates' Courts****Michael Fabricant:****[906436]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has a mechanism by which to review magistrates' decisions following arrests by the police.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office does not have any jurisdiction over the decision making of the independent judiciary. However, if my Hon Friend wishes to raise any points of law that may lead to an appeal, the Minister of State for Courts and Justice is happy to work with him on how this may be taken up with the Attorney General.

**■ Meta: Information Sharing****Nadia Whittome:****[198565]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with police forces on the sharing of data with the social media company Meta.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The Home Secretary and Ministers hold regular meetings with policing colleagues to discuss a range of matters, which could include sharing of data.

The Home Office is unable to comment on any specific case or incident. However, as a matter of general practice, the Information Commissioners' Office (ICO) sets out in their guidance how data should be shared by competent authorities, including law enforcement. This is available online at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-sharing/data-sharing-and-reuse-of-data-by-competent-authorities/>

**■ Police: Conduct****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[199124]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of perceived reputational damage on the likelihood that a police force will take steps to investigate allegations of criminality against members of its force; and if she will take steps to ensure that perceived reputational damage does not serve as a barrier to tackling (a) such allegations and (b) other matters relating to public safety and wider public interest.

**Chris Philp:**

All police forces have specialist departments focused on investigating serious wrongdoing – including criminality – by members of their force. There is a comprehensive legislative framework governing these processes, including a statutory requirement for the most serious allegations to be referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

The Government is committed to ensuring transparency in how such matters are handled by police forces and so collects and publishes data on police misconduct

and criminal investigations in the [‘Police misconduct, England and Wales’](#) statistical bulletin

On 31 August, the Government announced a series of reforms to strengthen the police disciplinary system, including giving Chief Constables greater responsibilities to decide who is fit to serve in their force.

## ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**John Healey:** [\[199011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2023 to Question 195655 on Afghanistan: Refugees, for what reason data on separating principals and dependants is not publicly available.

**John Healey:** [\[199012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2023 to Question 195655 on Afghanistan: Refugees, if she will publish the data her Department holds on how many (a) principals and (b) dependents have been relocated to the UK under the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (i) Pathway 2 and (ii) Pathway 3 as of 1 September 2023.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Afghan operational data is released quarterly with the next release due for publication in November 2023. This will include data on the number of people resettled under Pathway 2 and Pathway 3 of Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme.

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the code of practice for statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

## ■ Retail Trade: Crime

**Steve McCabe:** [\[906433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce retail crime in Birmingham.

**Chris Philp:**

I would like to group this question with question 19. Following the recent police commitment to investigate all reasonable lines of enquiry I have made clear to forces I expect them to take a zero-tolerance approach to retail crime. The Home Office is supporting Pegasus which will provide a national picture of organised retail crime. I continue to work with the sector to tackle this important issue.

## ■ Shoplifting

**Grahame Morris:** [\[199082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what statistical data her Department collects on the reasons and underlying causes of shoplifting incidents reported to the police.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office collects and publishes data on incidents of shoplifting as part of the Commercial Victimisation survey, which was last published in May 2023 and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-against-businesses-findings-from-the-2022-commercial-victimisation-survey>

The department also collects data on the number of incidents of shoplifting which have been reported to the police, which was last published in July 2023 and is available at :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023>

Neither source provides information on reasons and underlying causes of shoplifting incidents.

**Tom Hunt:****[906432]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress her Department has made on reducing levels of theft from shops.

**Chris Philp:**

Following the recent police commitment to investigate all reasonable lines of enquiry I have made clear to forces I expect them to take a zero-tolerance approach to retail crime. The Home Office is supporting Pegasus which will provide a national picture of organised retail crime. I continue to work with the sector to tackle this important issue.

**■ Short-term Holding Facilities: Children****Ms Diane Abbott:****[198470]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department will accept donations of (a) toys for children at her Department 's short-term holding facilities and (b) funds for the express purpose of procuring toys for children staying at such facilities.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Under contractual arrangements Home Office has Mitie Care & Custod provides, toys and games are for children in Short-Term Holding Facilities (STHF).

All local authorities are under a mandatory duty to comply with the National Transfer Scheme, ensuring all local authorities play a part in caring for unaccompanied children and that responsibility is fairly distributed across the UK.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to protect all children.

**■ Special Constables: Flexible Working and Parental Leave****Stella Creasy:****[199384]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish (a) parental leave policies and (b) flexible working policies which apply to special constables.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government recognises and values the professionalism, dedication and sacrifice shown by special constables in their work, alongside other policing volunteers. The Home Office continues to work closely with policing partners, particularly the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing on the Citizens in Policing Programme and the National Strategy for the Special Constabulary. These partnerships support the development of a national approach to the attraction, retention and training of special constables

There are no plans to publish national parental leave policies and flexible working policies which apply to special constables. It is a matter for each police force to decide how best to support and reward special constables in the form of allowances, expenses or other benefits, as part of their retention and attraction plans. National guidance is set by the College of Policing and Home Office on expenses and allowance rates for special constables - [Special constables: expense and allowance rates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-constables-expense-and-allowance-rates).

**■ Undocumented Migrants: Deportation****Dame Diana Johnson:****[199320]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when section 2 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 will come into force.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Illegal Migration Act received Royal Assent on 20 July 2023.

As is standard practice for any legislation, commencement of wider measures in the Act will take place over the coming months.

We have to take away the incentive for people to jump the queue by coming here illegally – and that is what we are focused on delivering through the Illegal Migration Act to break the cycle and stop people-smuggling gangs.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel****Stephen Kinnock:****[198827]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to An inspection of Border Force insider threat (January – March 2023), published by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration on 7 September 2023, what recent assessment she has made of the potential implications of low morale among Border Force officers for her Department's efforts to reduce the number of asylum seekers crossing the channel in small boats.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The ICIBI's report acknowledged that Border Force has built strong organisational trust and has a supportive culture through a specific programme for identifying and preventing insider threats, which built on existing vetting and security procedures. The Home Office has also instituted several support mechanisms to provide help to its staff.

However, the Home Office does not recognise the morale of staff to be a current issue in the response to, and management of, dangerous, illegal and unnecessary crossings of the Channel by migrants in Small Boats. The Small Boats Operational Command (SBOC) of Border Force has a number of support mechanisms in place to provide help to its staff and so lessens risks to morale. Since integrating into Border Force, and with new governance structures in place, the Small Boats Operational Command (SBOC) can proactively manage and prioritise mental health and wellbeing in line with the wider Command, ensuring staff feel supported.

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[198872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure support from the French authorities in preventing small boats from crossing the Channel.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Home Office officials regularly meet with French counterparts to exchange information so that operational activity against these dangerous, illegal and unnecessary crossings is optimised. As a result of those joint efforts nearly 33,000 crossing attempts were prevented in 2022, an increase of over 40% on 2021 and over 16,000 more have been prevented so far this year.

Measures introduced to tackle illegal migration since the Prime Minister took office include a package of measures agreed with France which will see the deployment of more than double the number of French personnel and enhanced technology to patrol beaches.

A strengthened partnership with Turkey which includes UK and Turkish law enforcement officers stepping up joint operations to tackle Organised Immigration Crime and disrupt the supply chain of boat parts and other materials used as part of illegal migration journeys.

A new partnership between social media companies and government to tackle people smuggling content online. Backed by a new Online Capability Centre, it will undermine and disrupt organised crime groups using the internet to facilitate these journeys

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[199266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is her Department's policy to assess the age of every person that arrives in the UK illegally on a small boat.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office will only conduct an age assessment in circumstances where an individual who arrives does not have genuine documentary evidence of their age and where there is doubt about their claimed age.

An initial age assessment is conducted as a first step to prevent individuals who are clearly an adult or child from being subjected unnecessarily to a more substantive age assessment and ensure that new arrivals are routed into the correct accommodation and processes for assessing their asylum or immigration claim.

The Home Office will only treat an individual claiming to be a child as an adult, without conducting further enquiries, if two Home Office members of staff independently determine that the individual's physical appearance and demeanour very strongly suggests they are significantly over 18 years of age. The lawfulness of this process was endorsed by the Supreme Court in the case of *R (on the application of BF (Eritrea)) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2021] UKSC 38.

Where doubt remains and an individual cannot be assessed to be significantly over 18, they will be treated as a child for immigration purposes until further assessment of their age by a local authority or the National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) which launched in March 2023. This will usually entail a careful, holistic age assessment, known as a 'Merton compliant age assessment', which are undertaken by social workers and must adhere to principles set out in case law by the Courts.

Separately, secondary legislation laid by the Ministry of Justice will, once approved by Parliament, authorise the use of x-rays in scientific age assessments, paving the way for the Home Office to improve their ability to effectively determine the age of illegal entrants making disputed claims to be children. Age assessment is an important process to help to prevent asylum seeking adults posing as children as a way of accessing support they are not entitled to, and allow genuine children to access age-appropriate services.

Legislation will then be laid by the Home Office, taking forward powers under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, which will specify that x-rays of teeth and bones of the hands and wrist and MRIs of knees and collar bones can be used as part of the age assessment process.

## ■ Windrush Compensation Scheme

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[198932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of compensation payments made under the Windrush scheme to former armed forces personnel.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[198933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of compensation payments made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme for people who experienced discrimination from public services because they could not prove their right to stay in the UK.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[198934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of compensation payments made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme to people experiencing psychological trauma resulting from discrimination because they could not prove their right to stay in the UK.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Windrush Compensation Scheme is designed to compensate members of the Windrush generation and their families for the losses and impacts they have suffered because they were unable to demonstrate their lawful immigration status.

The scheme acts as a single gateway for compensation in fourteen categories covering a broad range of impacts, including denial of access to services and a deterioration in mental or physical health. There is no cap on the amount of compensation we will pay. This is in recognition of the wide-reaching ways people have been affected.

Since its launch, the Home Office has continued to listen and respond to feedback from affected individuals and stakeholders about the scheme, expanding and amending it as our understanding of the way people have been affected has improved. In August 2022 we expanded the homelessness category and introduced a completely new 'Living Costs' category for close family members.

Compensation payments are made as quickly as possible. Decision makers draw upon all the evidence that has been provided and gathered, to make a holistic assessment of the effect on an individual's life. Each person's claim is deeply personal and requires careful and detailed consideration to understand their individual circumstances and experiences. All claims are processed with the utmost care and sensitivity.

**JUSTICE****■ Confiscation Orders****Julie Elliott:****[198803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much money has accrued to the public purse from confiscation orders in each year since 2010.

**Mike Freer:**

Confiscation orders are the principal means by which the government carries out its policy to deprive criminals of the proceeds of their crime. They are used with the intent to disrupt and deter criminality. Confiscation orders are not punitive in nature but are designed to require the defendant to pay back the proceeds of their crime and to thus deprive them of the benefit of their crime.

A confiscation order is issued against an individual after they have been convicted of an offence, ordering them to pay back the amount that the court has determined they had benefited from their crime.

The court will determine the amount of the benefit received based upon the relevant criminal conduct. In determining the benefit amount the court can take into consideration all the financial assets of the defendant including gifts, "hidden assets" and the "criminal lifestyle" of the defendant. By including the value of assets such as those classed as "hidden" or "gifts", the aim of the court is to effectively deprive the



defendant of their use and take them out of circulation. The court will then determine the available amount which may be less than the benefit amount.

Receipts from confiscation orders, excluding any compensation amounts, are paid to the Home Office.

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONFISCATION ORDERS IMPOSED (NOTE 1) £000	AMOUNTS COLLECTED (NOTE 2) £000
2022-23	153,088	162,620
2021-22	154,829	127,390
2020-21	107,257	77,923
2019-20	140,947	103,889
2018-19	115,538	128,840
2017-18	176,091	106,401
2016-17	85,643	118,621
2015-16	357,694	135,313
2014-15	161,925	125,601
2013-14	140,730	109,576

Prior to 2013-14 the available data reports do not distinguish between confiscation orders and compensation and thus the amounts due to the “public purse” cannot readily be identified.

#### Note 1

A confiscation order can include a compensation order to compensate the victims of the crime which the court will instruct is to be paid from the proceeds of the confiscation order. In this situation the compensatees are paid from the first available receipts that are received. The amounts shown above exclude any compensation payable from the order.

Confiscation orders can have multiple defendants linked to them, in these cases the cases can be classed by the court as joint and several liability cases, the effect of which is that even though orders may be issued against every defendant they can only be enforced to the extent that the same sum has not been recovered through another confiscation order made in relation to the same joint benefit. i.e the benefit amount can only be collected once. The numbers above have not been adjusted for any joint benefit cases.

#### Note 2

Collections relate to all amounts collected in that financial year, the amounts will include receipts for orders imposed in prior financial years

## ■ Crimes of Violence: Emergency Services and Police

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[199210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people received a custodial sentence for assaulting (a) an emergency worker and (b) a police officer in the course of their duties in each year since 2019.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[199211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of custodial sentence was for assaulting (a) an emergency worker, and (b) a police officer in the course of their duties in each year since 2019.

### **Edward Argar:**

The Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 created an aggravated offence of common assault or battery when committed against an emergency worker acting in the exercise of their functions as an emergency worker, including a police constable. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 increased the maximum penalty from 12 months to 2 years' imprisonment for any offence committed on or after 28 June 2022.

The Police Act 1996 includes an offence of assault of a constable in the execution of his duty, with a maximum penalty of 6 months imprisonment. This offence remains on the statute book as it has broader application than the assaults on emergency workers offence and includes the wilful obstruction of a constable, or the assault of a person assisting a constable. However, there may be circumstances in which this offence remains to be used for an assault on a constable.

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of offenders sentenced and the average custodial sentence length for both offences in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2022](#), using the following HO codes:

- 10423 - Assault on a constable
- 00873 – Common assault or battery of an emergency worker

While improving our data processing in 2022, a data mapping issue was discovered in the Courts Proceedings Database whereby an estimated 1,301 convictions (227 in 2019, 530 in 2020 and 544 in 2021) for the offence '00873 – Common assault or battery of an emergency worker' were not correctly mapped to this offence at Crown Court, therefore were not presented in the published data. We are exploring ways to add these convictions to the Outcomes by Offence data tool in future publications. This mapping was corrected in data for 2022 and therefore all data going forward will present correct figures.

There are also several other assault offences which may be charged depending on the level of harm caused including actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm, and grievous bodily harm with intent. These are not specific to emergency workers or

police officers. However, the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 created a statutory aggravating factor where such offences are committed against an emergency worker

## ■ **Drugs: Sentencing**

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[198920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department plan to take steps to strengthen sentencing guidance on dealing and supplying drugs which lead to the death of those who consume them.

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[198921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Northern Ireland on trends in the level of deaths from pregabalin consumption in the north west of Northern Ireland; and whether he plans to take steps to amend sentencing guidelines in the context of these trends.

**Edward Argar:**

The maximum penalty specified in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 for supply of a class A controlled drug is life imprisonment, and for class B or C it is 14 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. The government reclassified pregabalin as a Class C controlled drug in 2019 following an assessment of its harms by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

Sentencing guidelines are developed by the Sentencing Council for England and Wales ('the Council'). The Council is an independent body which decides on its own priorities and work plan. Guidelines produced by the Council are not applicable to courts in Northern Ireland, as sentencing is a devolved matter.

The Council recently reviewed and revised its drug offences sentencing guidelines, which came into force on 1 April 2021. They set out that exposure of a drug user to the risk of serious harm over and above that expected by the user is an existing aggravating factor for the offence of supplying a controlled drug. An aggravating factor makes an offence more serious and is considered by the court when sentencing.

Justice Ministers have not discussed pregabalin-related deaths with the Northern Ireland Department for Justice.

## ■ **Ministry of Justice: Procurement**

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[\[198482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reasons his Department withdrew a procurement tender, reference 385640/1254843; and whether he has plans to re-open that tender process.

**Mike Freer:**

The contract award notice (reference 385640/1254843) was withdrawn as we noted that the attachment included some information due to an error.

The error has been corrected and the Contract Award Notice has been re-published.

■ **Nitrous Oxide: Misuse**

**Alison Thewliss:** [199207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions have been made for the illegitimate supply of nitrous oxide under the The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

**Edward Argar:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of offenders convicted for various offences under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, including for the supply of a psychoactive substance, in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2022](#).

However, it is not possible to disaggregate the supply of nitrous oxide from other psychoactive substances, as detail of exactly what substance is supplied is not held centrally in the Court Proceedings database.

■ **Police: Criminal Injuries Compensation**

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [199208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority have been made by serving police officers injured during the course of their duties in each year since 2019.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [199209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the most common reason is for claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority by a serving police officer injured during the course of their duties not succeeding.

**Edward Argar:**

The GB-wide Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (the Scheme) provides state-funded compensation to victims of violent crime who cannot pursue compensation or redress from other routes. Payments are available for physical or psychological injuries resulting directly from a crime of violence, as defined in Annex B of the Scheme.

Under the Scheme, any emergency worker who is assaulted while working, including serving police officers, will be considered as a direct victim of an intentional crime of violence in the same manner as any other victim group, with the same eligibility criteria being applied. An applicant who was not the direct victim of an intentional crime of violence may also be eligible for an award if they are injured whilst taking an exceptional and justified risk in the course of limiting or preventing a crime under paragraph 5 of the Scheme.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA), which operates the Scheme, does not hold data on how many (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful claims have been made by serving police officers injured during the course of their duties or the most common reason for claims by serving police officers injured during the course of

their duties not succeeding. CICA does not request or record information relating to the occupation of applicants for criminal injuries compensation.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Julie Elliott:**

[\[199382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what percentage of eligible British Citizens living overseas submitted a successful application to register to vote in each of the last five years.

**Jacob Young:**

The data requested is not held centrally.

### ■ Almshouses: Regulation

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

[\[198586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a new regulatory body for almshouses.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

[\[198587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has plans to bring forward secondary legislation on the regulation of almshouses.

**Rachel Maclean:**

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to my answer to Question UIN [194656](#) on 24 July 2023.

### ■ Buildings: Heating

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps is he taking to amend (a) planning and (b) housing regulations to help prevent overheating in new (i) housing and (ii) buildings.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of (a) dense and (b) high rise residential buildings on the (i) mental and (ii) physical health of their residents.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help ensure that (a) light and (b) noise issues are addressed in (i) planning and (ii) building regulations.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the regulation of space within residential accommodation to provide for a safe and healthy living environment.

**Lee Rowley:**

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that policies and decisions should ensure that a new development is appropriate for its location. These should take into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions, including the risk of overheating, and the natural environment. Government policy is that by encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light.

The National Planning Policy Framework is also clear that planning policies should mitigate, and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts on health and quality of life resulting from noise from new development. They should also identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and have high recreational and amenity value for this reason. Part E of the Building Regulations 2010 requires protection against sound from other parts of a building, adjoining buildings and within a dwelling-house, and prevention of unreasonable reverberation in common internal parts of buildings with residential flats or rooms.

The National Planning Policy Framework also highlights the importance of development creating places that have a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and recommends that planning policies for housing should apply the nationally described space standard where this is justified.

## ■ **Burlington House: Tenancy Agreements**

**Tim Loughton:**

[\[198971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential public benefit loss of the Learned Societies having to re-locate from New Burlington House.

**Tim Loughton:**

[\[198972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has taken steps to identify potential similar occupants of New Burlington House if the Learned Societies have to re-locate.

**Tim Loughton:**

[\[198973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has had discussions with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the (a) continued tenancy of the Learned Societies at New Burlington House and (b) heritage status and purpose of the New Burlington House buildings.

**Tim Loughton:**

[\[198976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had discussions with the Crown Estate on the approach they take to lease

agreements with (a) institutional and (b) cultural tenants in heritage buildings in St James's, London.

**Jacob Young:**

The department is exploring with the Learned Societies whether there is a solution that can deliver value for taxpayers and enable the Learned Societies to remain in their historic home at New Burlington House.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on Gov.uk.

■ **Elections: Proof of Identity**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[198945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of voter ID requirements during local elections in May 2023 on people with the protected characteristics of race and disability.

**Jacob Young:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [196991](#) on 11 September 2023.

■ **Housing: Oxfordshire**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the decision by the Planning Inspectorate not to approve the proposed West Oxfordshire Area Action Plan for a new garden village.

**Rachel Maclean:**

A Judicial Review claim has been issued in relation to the proposed West Oxfordshire Area Action Plan. It is therefore not appropriate to comment directly on this matter at this time.

■ **Leasehold and Rented Housing: Pets**

**Stephen McPartland:**

[\[199368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to give tenants the right to keep pets in (a) rented accommodation and (b) leasehold properties.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government recognises that pets can bring joy and comfort to their owners, as well as supporting their mental and physical wellbeing.



The Renters (Reform) Bill will ensure that private landlords cannot unreasonably refuse a request from their tenant to keep a pet. The Bill provides added flexibility where they need to obtain consent of a superior landlord when considering a request. We know that some landlords are concerned about the potential damage caused by pets, so we will also allow landlords to require insurance covering pet damage.

The ability of a leaseholder to keep a pet will depend on the terms of individual leases. We are due to bring forward further leasehold reforms later in this Parliament. Where leases restrict the keeping of pets however, this would be a matter for individual leaseholders to raise with their landlord.

### ■ **Lighting: Pollution**

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[198590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities on taking light pollution into account when considering applications for new housing developments.

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[198602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking with local authorities to help reduce light pollution in new housing developments.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that policies and decisions should ensure that a new development is appropriate for its location. These should take into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions, including the risk of overheating, and the natural environment. Government policy is that by encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

### ■ **Private Rented Housing: Discrimination**

**Catherine West:** [\[198929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent discussions with estate agencies in England on potential discrimination faced by (a) pregnant women and (b) people with children when engaging with the private rented sector.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Estate agents are prohibited from discriminating against pregnant women in the private rented sector. A victim of unlawful discrimination can seek damages through the County Court or an injunction to compel compliance with the law.

In addition, we are committed to outlawing unacceptable discriminatory blanket ban practices against families in the private rented sector.

## ■ Private Rented Housing: Rents

**Catherine West:**

[\[198931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the level of inflation on private rented tenants.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government recognises the cost of living pressures that tenants are facing, and that paying rent is likely to be a tenant's biggest monthly expense.

ONS data shows that the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by 6.8% in the 12 months to July 2023, while private rental prices paid by tenants in the UK rose by 5.3% in the 12 months to July 2023. However, we understand asking rents are rising more quickly, and we recognise that some families are facing difficulties.

## ■ Property Management Companies: Costs

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that property management companies publish the costs they incur on each building they manage.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to require property management companies to publish transparent records of expenses incurred on each building they manage.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for tenants and homeowners and making sure that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. This includes raising professionalism and standards amongst property agents (letting, estate and managing agents), and protecting consumers while defending the reputation of good agents from the actions of rogue operatives.

We strongly believe that service charges should be reasonable, transparent and communicated effectively for both tenants and leaseholders. We are committed to better protection and empowerment for leaseholders by giving them more information on what their costs pay for, and removing barriers to challenge when things go wrong. We are due to bring forward further leasehold reforms later in this parliament.

## ■ Renters (Reform) Bill

**Catherine West:**

[\[198928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he plans to present the Renters (Reform) Bill to Parliament before the end of 2023.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Renters (Reform) Bill was presented to Parliament and had its First Reading on 17 May. The Bill's Second Reading is subject to parliamentary scheduling and will be announced in the usual way.

■ **Rents****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[198912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation to ban bidding on marketed rental prices.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Letting agents and landlords should behave professionally and responsibly in advertising rents and they are not permitted to engage in pricing practices that are false or misleading.

■ **Stoke-on-Trent City Council: Local Government Finance****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[198238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding his Department has provided to Stoke-on-Trent City Council in each year since 2019.

**Lee Rowley:**

A breakdown of the key elements of annual funding for each local authority in England, including Stoke-on-Trent, since 2016-2017, as announced at that year's settlement, are set out [here](#).

**NORTHERN IRELAND**■ **Anticoagulants: Northern Ireland****Jim Shannon:**[\[199333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will take steps to (a) reduce the variation and (b) improve outcomes in the management of anticoagulant-associated bleeds between Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The management of anticoagulant-associated bleeds between Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Department of Health and the Health Trusts in Northern Ireland.

## ■ Elections: Northern Ireland

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[199285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the recent report from the Electoral Commission, if he will take steps to review the operational requirements at elections of the Digital Registration Number.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The 2023 local election was the second election where most electors had a Digital Registration Number (DRN).

The DRN is an important security feature in preventing fraudulent applications for absent votes in Northern Ireland and protecting the integrity of elections.

We will carefully consider the points that the Electoral Commission has raised in their report.

## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ Jagtar Singh Johal

**Catherine West:**

[\[199148\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he held discussions with Prime Minister Modi on the detention of Jagtar Singh Johal during the G20 summit.

**Rishi Sunak:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton during my statement on the G20 on 11 September 2023, Official Report, Column 686.

### ■ Natural England: Correspondence

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[198698\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, if he will publish all correspondence sent between Natural England and his Department on changes to regulations on nutrient neutrality and the delivery of new homes since 1 May 2023; and if he will make a statement.

**Rishi Sunak:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 12 September 2023, PQ 198372.

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ Broadband: Rural Areas

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[199512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the retirement of the public switched telephone network on the broadband connectivity of rural communities.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The retirement of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) will not have any impact on broadband connectivity. The replacement Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services only require a very basic internet connection to function correctly. As a result, rural communities with limited digital connectivity can be upgraded to digital telephony services. For additional information, I would like to refer the Hon. Member to the answer Minister Julia Lopez gave to Question 135333 on 7 February 2023.

**■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: National Security****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198548\]](#)

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

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Government identifies and assesses risks to the nation through the internal, classified National Security Risk Assessment, and the external National Risk Register, the most recent version of which was published in August.

As set out in the UK Government Resilience Framework, each risk in the National Security Risk Assessment is owned and managed within Lead Government Departments. Where those risks, including national security risks, relate to the work of the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), then they are managed through the department's risk management processes. This includes oversight from a Chief Risk Officer.

**■ Pornography****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[199323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which Minister in which Department has lead responsibility for the pornography review.

**Paul Scully:**

Further details on the leadership of the Review will be set out in due course.

**■ Tech Nation: Finance****Chi Onwurah:**[\[198499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding her Department provided to Tech Nation for its Libra Growth programme between March 2021 and March 2023; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of Tech Nation ceasing its (a) Libra Growth programme and (b) the other operations on equalities and diversity in the technology ecosystem.

**Paul Scully:**

Between March 2021 and March 2023, the Department awarded a total of £10.8 million in grant-funding to Tech Nation to support UK tech businesses. Of this, £111,804 was allocated to the Libra programme, excluding Tech Nation's staff

overhead costs. We thank Tech Nation for their valuable work and are pleased to hear that Founders Forum will be relaunching Tech Nation later this year. The Department is not involved in any decisions regarding the continuity of the Libra programme.

The Department assessed the impact of Tech Nation's growth programmes, such as Libra, through the recently published independent evaluation of DSIT funding to Tech Nation between FY 2020-21 and FY 2022-2023. The Libra Programme supported at least 75 founders from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Given the importance of this issue, the Department embedded diversity and inclusion in the design of the £12m Digital Growth Grant competition. Via this new grant delivered by Barclays Eagle Labs, the Department is continuing to fund dedicated programmes that support underrepresented tech founders. Targeted programmes include the Black Venture Growth Programme, which will support 20 founders per year, and the Female Founders Programme, supporting over 100 founders per year. In addition, Barclays Eagle Labs aims for all grant-funded activities to support a minimum of 35% of founders from backgrounds underrepresented in the tech sector.

In addition to the Digital Growth Grant, the Department also continues to support equality and diversity initiatives in the tech ecosystem more widely, including via its funding to the Tech Talent Charter (TTC). Government has supported the Tech Talent Charter (TTC) since 2017 and this funding has enabled TTC to support over 800 organisations to drive diversity and inclusion in their workforces.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ A46: East Midlands

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[199293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the western carriageway of the A46 between Lincoln and Newark was last examined for defects; and when that stretch of carriageway is scheduled to be resurfaced.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The last inspection on the westbound A46 between Lincoln and Newark was conducted on 7 September 2023. National Highways did not identify any safety critical defects during their last inspection.

NH currently has a resurfacing scheme ongoing:

- A46 Northbound and Southbound - Winthorpe Roundabout to Brough Lane.
- Immediately following these resurfacing works NH will be completing some road surface repair work on the Southbound carriageway between the Hykeham and Halfway House roundabouts.

These works are due to be completed in October 2023.

National Highways are also currently in the process of scheduling some short-term road surface repairs between Brough and Hykeham. They currently anticipate these will be completed by the end of 2023.

### ■ Carbon Emissions

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[199002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Steering Board on the Operation Zero implementation plan next plans to meet.

**Jesse Norman:**

The next Operation Zero steering board meeting will take place at the beginning of October. A specific date is yet to be agreed by members.

### ■ Department for Transport: Meetings

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answers to Questions 193235 and 194771 on Railways: Ticket Offices, what protocols his Department follows to record meetings attended by Ministers.

**Huw Merriman:**

All ministerial meetings with external organisations are published in the quarterly transparency returns.

### ■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Post Office

**Claire Hanna:** [\[199240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 June 2023 to Question 187126 on Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Post Office, how long the extension to the DVLA's contract with the Post Office to provide those DVLA services is.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

An extension to the contract between the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the Post Office has been agreed, ensuring that DVLA services will be available at post offices to 31 March 2024.

### ■ Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency: Buildings

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[199046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2023 to Question 197747, whether the equivalent surveys undertaken in October and December 2021 by Faithful and Gould Ltd. at a cost of £97,472.78 to the DVSA were considered insufficient to assess the use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete across the DVSA estate.



**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), like other Government Departments, has been asked to report on RAAC in their estates as soon as possible.

For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. The Office for Government Property are coordinating this work.

**Motor Vehicles: Tax Evasion****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[198892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the resources available to the DVLA to seize untaxed vehicles.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) aims to make vehicle excise duty easy to pay but hard to avoid.

A comprehensive package of measures is in place to tackle vehicle excise duty evasion, ranging from reminder letters, penalties and court prosecutions through to the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras, wheelclamping and the removal of unlicensed vehicles. The DVLA holds monthly meetings with their wheelclamping and removal partners to ensure resources are maximised and performance targets are being met.

The DVLA also have devolved powers partners (DPPs) who adopt the DVLA's legal powers to clamp and remove untaxed vehicles. These include various local authorities and police forces across the UK.

**Railway Stations: Parking****Daisy Cooper:**[\[198893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an equality impact assessment of train station car park contactors permitting payment by smart phone apps only.

**Huw Merriman:**

Charging for car parking is a commercial decision for train operating companies and Network Rail, and the train operating companies are responsible for making decisions on station car park charges and payment methods at the stations they manage. The Department expects train operators to consider the needs of their passengers and views of local partners on these issues, and to consider the equalities impacts of operational changes.

**■ Railways: Edinburgh**

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Edinburgh Waverley each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Edinburgh Haymarket each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Glasgow Central each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Lockerbie each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Carlisle each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Penrith each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Oxenholme the Lakes each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Wigan North Western each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[198782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Lancaster each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Blackpool each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Preston each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Warrington Bank Quay each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Liverpool Lime Street each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Runcorn each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Crewe each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Wilmslow each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Manchester Piccadilly each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Stockport each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Macclesfield each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Stoke-on-Trent each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[198795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of trains that will leave Stafford each hour following the construction of HS2 phase (a) 2a and (b) 2b.

**Huw Merriman:**

No decisions have yet been taken on the train services that will operate when HS2 opens. These decisions will be taken nearer the time of delivery, drawing on advice from the West Coast Partnership and Network Rail. These proposals will be subject to public consultation and will cover the high-speed services as well as the recommended use of the capacity that will become available on the West Coast Main Line.

The Department is clear that the high-speed and West Coast services will complement each other to seek to maximise the benefits for passengers across the region.

## ■ Railways: Greenwich

**Wera Hobhouse:**

[\[199495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating direct trains from Greenwich and Woolwich to London Charing Cross.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The train operator Southeastern are responsible for the detailed planning and operation of their timetable. The realignment to Cannon Street, as the terminal station for Woolwich Line services, was required to reduce congestion at the busy Lewisham Junction and delivers the most benefit for the greatest number of passengers by improving punctuality, reducing cancellations, and improving the network's ability to recover from disruption.

Passengers on the Woolwich Line wishing to travel to Charing Cross now need to change at either Lewisham or London Bridge where there are frequent connecting trains.

I understand that this structural change is fundamental to delivering the operational and performance benefits of Southeastern's new timetable.

## ■ Railways: Ticket Offices

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[198887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken by his Department on the potential closure of railway station ticket offices in England.

**Huw Merriman:**

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours – including closures – train operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of passengers who are disabled, and to include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups. When consulting, operators should have also clearly considered other equality-related needs. Operators prepared Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), and these were available on train operators' websites during the consultation.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

[\[199027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to require rail companies to publish the number of rail tickets sold from (a) ticket offices and (b) ticket machines in all stations for a four week reference period to be agreed with rail operators.

**Huw Merriman:**

Rail ticket sales data is commercially sensitive and managed by the Rail Delivery Group on behalf of train operators. If a train operator proposes to make a change to the opening hours, or closing of a ticket office, it must follow the rules set out in the rail industry's Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA). This is not a Government consultation exercise, but an industry led process. It would be for train operators to determine whether to publish information on rail ticket sales.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[199143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to publish its own impact assessment of the closure of rail ticket offices.

**Huw Merriman:**

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours – including closures – train operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of passengers who are disabled, and to include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups. When consulting, operators should have also clearly considered other equality-related needs.

Operators prepared Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), and these were available on train operator's websites during the consultation. Government departments do not typically publish EIAs whilst policy is under development. We will consider publishing the EIA once we have considered the outcomes of the industry-led Ticketing and Settlement Agreement process.

**■ Railways: Tickets****Greg Clark:****[198483]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of when the contactless pay as you go scheme will be extended to (a) Tunbridge Wells, (b) High Brooms and (c) Paddock Wood Stations.

**Huw Merriman:**

I would like to assure you that our commitment to improving ticketing for passengers by expanding contactless pay as you go (PAYG) does not end with these initial 53 stations we announced this year. We are still developing our proposals for the next phase of contactless PAYG rollout. We will announce further details of any wider expansion of PAYG in due course.

**■ Road Traffic Offences: Speed Limits****Alexander Stafford:****[198561]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of vehicles travelling more than 10mph above the signposted speed limit on (a) pedestrians, (b) other road users and (c) the number of fatalities in the last nine months.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Whilst we keep the issue of speed limits and the impact of them under regular review, there is no plan for a specific assessment on this issue.

**■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance****Dr Matthew Offord:****[198489]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the public purse of maintenance per mile on (a) motorways, (b) the strategic road network and (c) the local road network in the 2022-23 financial year.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The plans for maintaining and renewing the Strategic Road Network (SRN) are set as part of a five-year Road Investment Strategy and are aimed at sustaining the availability, safety, performance, operation, reliability, and longevity of the SRN's physical assets to deliver value to road users.

National Highways are responsible for the management of the Strategic Road Network which includes motorways and some major A roads, and their expenditure on Maintenance and Renewals is published online in its annual report and accounts:

[https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/0k1mwvsp/nh\\_ar23\\_interactive.pdf](https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/0k1mwvsp/nh_ar23_interactive.pdf).

This reflects that in the financial year 2022/23 National Highways spent £240 million on maintenance of the SRN and £908 million on renewals (replacement or refurbishment of assets as they reach the end of their service life).

The Annual Report and Accounts also outlines that NH oversees 4,541 miles of road across its network. On average more is spent on maintaining each mile of the SRN

compared to each mile of the local road network, which reflects the considerably higher traffic volumes carried.

On the local road network, local authority expenditure data is collected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Total expenditure data is only available up until 2021/22, where total maintenance expenditure for local authority roads was £4.168 billion.

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[199072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the rate of road repairs.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The government is providing £6.5bn during the second road investment strategy (2020-2025) to National Highways for the operation and maintenance of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). National Highways are required to report against a Key Performance Indicator which measures the overall road surface condition of the SRN, through its monitoring of this performance indicator National Highways can focus its efforts on areas most in need and priority repairs.

To undertake road repairs National Highways have to part or fully close the road. National Highways have to weigh up the impact of closing the road on users against the benefit of carrying out the repairs as quickly as possible. Safety of the workforce and road users and the needs of neighbouring communities are some of the key factors considered when determining traffic management measures.

For local roads, between 2020/21 – 2024/25 the Government is providing over £5.5 billion to eligible local highways authorities in England, outside of London and the Mayoral Combined Authorities to help carry out maintenance of the highway. This funding is not ringfenced, enabling local authorities to spend flexibly according to local needs and priorities. Maintenance of the local highway network is the responsibility of the local authority.

Highway authorities are also able to introduce and operate lane rental schemes. As part of these, utility companies may need to pay charges of up to £2,500 per day for works on the busiest roads at the busiest times, unless they move the works to less busy roads or carry them out at less busy times.

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[199073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of overrunning highway road works on the economy.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Utility street works are needed to install and update the vital infrastructure on which we all rely, including for broadband and to install EV chargepoints. Permits are needed from the relevant highway authority before works begin on local roads. Authorities can impose charges of up to £10,000 per day for works that overrun the



period allowed by the permit during weekdays, which reflect the costs of congestion caused by overrunning works.

Authorities are also able to introduce and operate lane rental schemes. As part of these, utility companies may need to pay charges of up to £2,500 per day for works on the busiest roads at the busiest times, unless they move the works to less busy roads or carry them out at less busy times.

**Bill Esterson:** [\[199074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of road maintenance on the economy.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Secretary of State for Transport has regular discussions with his Cabinet colleagues on a range of topics, including transport and the economy.

## ■ Union Connectivity Review

**Helen Morgan:** [\[198879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the Union Connectivity Review.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The UK Government is grateful to Lord Peter Hendy for his Union Connectivity Review. We are taking the time necessary to consider his recommendations, and have been working closely with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government, Northern Ireland Executive and key stakeholders, to identify the solutions that work best for the people of the UK. We will publish the Government's response as soon as is practicable.

## TREASURY

### ■ Bank Services

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[198596\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an estimate of the number of people who do not have access to a bank account.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Financial Conduct Authority estimates that 1.1 million of UK adults (2.1%) were 'unbanked' in May 2022 – down from 1.3 million UK adults (2.5%) in 2017.

The government is committed to improving access to financial services and recognises that access to a transactional bank account is key to enabling people to manage their money on a day-to-day basis effectively, securely and confidently. That is why the Payment Account Regulations 2015 require the largest UK banking providers to provide fee-free Basic Bank Accounts to anyone who doesn't already

have a current account. As of 30 June 2022 there were 7,361,707 basic bank accounts open in the UK.

In addition, the Chancellor has written to the FCA to request an urgent review into the matter of 'de-banking' more broadly. The FCA have agreed to undertake this review, and to share the evidence and findings with the Treasury. This will help inform whether further action is necessary to ensure nobody is being unfairly denied banking facilities.

## ■ Banks: Closures

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198670\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is taking steps to tackle the potential impact of high street bank branch closures on vulnerable individuals who rely on cash.

**Andrew Griffith:**

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

The government legislated through the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 to establish a new legislative framework to protect access to cash. This establishes the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) as the lead regulator for access to cash and provides it with responsibility and powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities across the UK, including free withdrawal and deposit facilities in relation to personal current accounts.

Decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue, and the government does not intervene in these. However, under FCA guidance, firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on the everyday banking and cash access needs of their customers and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This seeks to ensure that the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

Alternative options for access to banking can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking, and the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows 99% of personal banking and 95% of business banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

## ■ Collective Investment Schemes: Regulation

**Scott Benton:**

[\[198844\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to identify and prevent entities and individuals promote unregulated collective investment schemes.

**Scott Benton:**

[\[198845\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what measures his Department has in place to protect investors from the promotion of unregulated collective investment schemes; and

what penalties or enforcement action is being pursued against those found promoting such schemes.

**Scott Benton:** [\[198846\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data his Department holds on the number of (a) cases investigated and (b) enforcement actions taken against individuals and entities involved in the promotion of unregulated collective investment schemes in each of the last five years.

**Scott Benton:** [\[198847\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what regulatory framework is in place to supervise (a) unregulated collective investment schemes and (b) the promotion of those schemes.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The UK's financial promotions regime, underpinned by Section 21 and Section 238 of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (FSMA), seeks to ensure that consumers are provided with clear and accurate information that enables them to make appropriate decisions for their individual circumstances. Under this regime, the FCA has imposed rules on the promotion of unregulated collective investment schemes, including that such schemes cannot be promoted to ordinary members of the public.

Enforcement relating to the promotion of unregulated collective investment schemes is generally a matter for the FCA, which is operationally independent from the Government. These questions have therefore been passed to the FCA who will respond directly to the honourable Member by letter. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

## ■ Inflation

**Matt Vickers:** [\[198866\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to tackle core inflation.

**Andrew Griffith:**

High inflation is the greatest immediate economic challenge that we must address. That is why the Government has made it a priority to halve inflation this year, on the path back to the target of 2% CPI inflation.

While recent data shows halving inflation will not be easy the government is doing three key things to deliver on this plan. First, remaining steadfast in our support for the independent MPC at the Bank of England, as they take action to return inflation to target of 2%. Second, making difficult but responsible decisions on tax and spending so we are not adding fuel to the fire. Third, tackling some of the causes of high inflation, including by introducing the labour market package at the Spring 2023 Budget, as the relative resilience of the economy and the tightness in the labour market are reflected in current domestic inflationary pressures.

In May, the IMF confirmed that we have taken “decisive and responsible” action to bear down on inflation, and achieved the right balance of fiscal and monetary response, while also focusing on growing the economy.

## ■ Politically Exposed Persons

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[198595]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on how many people are listed as Politically Exposed Persons.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Money Laundering Regulations 2017 require businesses within the regulated sector (such as banks) to treat individuals who are entrusted with prominent public functions as PEPs. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) provides guidance to businesses within the regulated sector on which customers should be regarded as PEPs under the Money Laundering Regulations, and how a proportionate risk-based approach to these customers (and their known close associates and family members) should be applied. It is for each business within the regulated sector to decide which of its customers are PEPs, in accordance with this guidance. The Government does not maintain a register of PEPs, and does not hold information on the number of people designated by regulated businesses as PEPs.

The FCA guidance on the treatment of politically exposed persons for anti-money laundering purposes is available at <https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/finalised-guidance/fg17-6-treatment-politically-exposed-persons-peps-money-laundering> The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 committed the FCA to conduct a review into financial institutions' adherence to its guidance on PEPs, and the appropriateness of that guidance. This review is currently underway.

## ■ Tax Avoidance: Legal Opinion

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[198518]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC has received legal advice on collecting loan charge refunds from (a) employees and (b) employers.

**Victoria Atkins:**

HMRC's lawyers considered all relevant legal points when providing the advice that informed HMRC's approach to collecting disguised remuneration tax liabilities including the Loan Charge from employers and, where appropriate, employees.

## ■ Taxation: Disclosure of Information

**Julian Knight:**

**[196647]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether His Majesty's Revenue and Customs have made ex gratia payments to whistle-blowers for information about individuals' tax affairs.

**Victoria Atkins:**

There are times when it is appropriate for HMRC to make payments to individuals in return for providing information that helps tackle tax avoidance and evasion.

Such payments are discretionary and are based on the quality of the information provided, the extent and value to which the information contributed to HMRC assigned matters, and what is achieved as a result.

**Treasury: Domestic Visits****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[198481\]](#)

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

**Gareth Davies:**

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

**Whisky: Excise Duties****Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[199005\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the increase in alcohol duty on (a) economic growth and (b) job creation within the Scotch Whisky industry.

**Gareth Davies:**

The potential impacts of the recent changes to alcohol duty rates were published at Spring Budget in HMRC's Tax Information and Impact Note and can be found online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-alcohol-duty-rates/alcohol-duty-rate-changes#summary-of-impacts>.

This Government is supporting Scotch Whisky. We have provided a series of cuts and freezes to alcohol duties in the past decade. Before Spring Budget 2023, the spirits industry has benefitted from cuts or freezes to spirits duty at eight out of the last nine fiscal events, since the end of the duty escalator for spirits in 2013. The most recent alcohol duty freeze from Autumn Budget 2021, including the extension to 1 August 2023, represented a total tax cut of £2.7 billion over the next four years.

We have also undertaken the biggest reform of alcohol duties in 140 years and moved all alcohol products to being taxed based on their strength, narrowing the gap between spirits and still wine.

Further, we have removed punitive tariffs on Scotch Whisky imposed on the US market and are committed to protecting the interests of Scotch Whisky in trading agreements, ensuring that they face lower tariffs for export, and that the unique characteristics and global reputation of Scotch is protected, as demonstrated recently in our free trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand, and the CPTPP.

**WORK AND PENSIONS**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Jim Shannon:****[199101]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that Personal Independent Payment assessors receive training on the (a) symptoms of Parkinson's disease and (b) effects that Parkinson's disease has on people's lives.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Health Professionals (HPs) delivering Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments receive comprehensive training in assessing functional capability relating to physical and mental health conditions. They also have access to a wide range of clinical resources to research any conditions presented. Both PIP providers have condition specific information on Parkinson's disease, which has been quality assured by relevant external experts.

Understanding the effects of health conditions and impairments on the claimant's daily life is fundamental. PIP providers ensure HPs are experts in disability analysis, focusing on the effects of health conditions and impairments on the claimant's daily life.

**Jim Shannon:****[199104]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had with the (a) Department for Communities and (b) Department of Education in Northern Ireland on (i) educational and (ii) work opportunities for young people aged 18-24 in Northern Ireland.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Education and employment support are transferred matters in Northern Ireland, and educational opportunities in England are a matter for the Secretary of State for Education. My department is in frequent discussion with the Department for Communities on a number of matters, but these have not specifically covered work opportunities for young people aged 18-24 in Northern Ireland.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Domestic Visits****Liz Kendall:****[199043]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many times (a) the Secretary of State and (b) each Minister in his Department has visited a (i) Government Hub and (ii) ministerial office outside of London in the last 12 months.

**Mims Davies:**

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

**■ Department for Work and Pensions: National Security****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[199123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether their Department has a Chief Risk Officer responsible for national security risks relating to the work of their Department.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department for Work and Pensions has a dedicated Chief Risk Office (CRO) who is accountable for risk management across the Department. This includes responsibility for assuring effective identification, management and reporting of key risks including those of national security. Specific risks are owned by accountable specialists which in this instance would be a combination of the Chief Security Officer, the Director for Resilience or the Digital Director who leads on security, depending on the specific national security issue. The CRO constantly keeps the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) under review.

**■ Financial Assistance Scheme: Inflation****Daisy Cooper:** [\[198911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he has made an assessment the potential merits of (a) adjusting and (b) abolishing the 2.5% cap on inflation related increases for recipients of the Financial Assistance Scheme.

**Laura Trott:**

While all legislation is kept under review as a matter of course, there are currently no plans to review the Financial Assistance Scheme indexation rules. The Secretary of State has therefore made no such assessment.

**■ Jobcentres: Greater London****Feryal Clark:** [\[199479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of a face-to-face appointment with a work coach at a job centre is in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

**Guy Opperman:**

The requested information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Maintaining an effective Work Coach diary is a joint responsibility between a team leader and the Work Coach, and is reached collaboratively through regular discussion and agreement.

The duration of each appointment is determined by the appointment type, and the length of time the appointment is expected to take is recorded by our diary management tool. We do not hold information on the actual duration of an appointment, for example, whether the appointment was longer or shorter than the allocated time.



## ■ Jobcentres: Staff

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[199200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what is the average length of a face to face appointment with a work coach at a job centre.

**Guy Opperman:**

The requested information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Maintaining an effective Work Coach diary is a joint responsibility between a team leader and the Work Coach, and is reached collaboratively through regular discussion and agreement.

The duration of each appointment is determined by the appointment type, and the length of time the appointment is expected to take is recorded by our diary management tool. We do not hold information on the actual duration of an appointment, for example, whether the appointment was longer or shorter than the allocated time.

## ■ Jobcentres: Travel

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[199091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the accessibility by public transport of established Jobcentres.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department explores Jobcentre operational views on site accessibility when reviewing the suitability of its existing Jobcentre sites in the context of considering network improvements. Good public transport links and accessibility also form part of our criteria when seeking new Jobcentre sites.

## ■ Long Term Unemployed People

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to help ensure support for people who have experienced long-term unemployment and experiencing difficulty with reintroduction to the workforce.

**Guy Opperman:**

Restart supports long-term unemployed people who have been out of work for nine months or more. Restart providers support participants to break down their employment barriers by developing a bespoke action plan built on understanding their employment history, skills and needs to help them to move into sustained work.

Additional support for 50+ long term unemployed (LTU) customers was announced in September 2022 as part of the Growth Plan Since SR21 and the Growth Plan in September 2022. This will provide access to additional intensive support for long-term unemployed jobseekers in jobcentres across Great Britain.

## ■ Pensioners: Enfield North

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[199251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of inflation on pensioners in Enfield North constituency.

**Laura Trott:**

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

In April, the State Pension saw its biggest ever rise, increasing by 10.1%. The full yearly amount of the basic State Pension will be over £3,050 higher, in cash terms, than in 2010. That's £790 more than if it had been uprated by Prices, and £945 more than if it had been uprated by earnings (since 2010).

## ■ Pensions: Telephone Services

**Justin Madders:**

[\[198719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, to confirm what the average answering time is on the Pension Service Helpline.

**Laura Trott:**

The table below shows data from the Pension Service lines, Pension Credit and State Pension. The metrics include Average Speed to Answer as requested for the last complete calendar month.

DATE	PRODUCT LINE	AVERAGE SPEED TO ANSWER(HH:MM:SS)
Aug-23	Pension Credit	0:06:08
Aug-23	State Pension	0:03:08
	<b>Average</b>	<b>0:04:22</b>

Please note this information is derived from the Department's management information designed solely for the purpose of helping the Department to manage its business. As such, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. As DWP holds the information internally, we have released it. However, it is possible information held by DWP may change due to operational reasons and we recommend that caution be applied when using it.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Up-rating

**John McDonnell:**

[\[198604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to uprate social security benefits in line with inflation in April 2024.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is required by law to undertake an annual review of benefits and the State Pension, and this review will commence shortly.

The outcome of the review will be announced in the Autumn – and therefore it would not be appropriate to pre-judge the outcome.

## ■ Statutory Sick Pay

**Martyn Day:**

[\[199193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to increase statutory sick pay this autumn.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Government has already increased Statutory Sick Pay this year as part of the annual uprating exercise in April 2023. This was in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which has been the default inflation measure for the Government's statutory annual review of benefits since 2011.

The Secretary of State is required by law to undertake a review of benefits and pensions annually. This review will commence shortly and the outcome will be announced in the Autumn in the usual way.

## ■ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[198886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission entitled *Seven Years On: disabled people's rights to independent living, employment and standard of living in the UK*, published on 17 August 2023, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the conclusions of that report on the Government's progress in implementing the recommendations of the report by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entitled *Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* carried out by the Committee under article 6 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, published in October 2017.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We note the report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission entitled *“Seven Years On: disabled people's rights to independent living, employment and standard of living in the UK”*, published on 17 August 2023.

This Government is committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to improving the lives of disabled people.

We have implemented numerous policies and programmes to tackle the barriers faced by disabled people, including investing in employment support initiatives, improving social care support and better the accessibility of homes and transport. In March, the Department for Work and Pensions published the Health and Disability White Paper, which sets out the Government's plans to reform the welfare system and make it better meet the needs of disabled people in Great Britain.

The Government supported the passage of the British Sign Language Act 2022, which recognises BSL as a language of England, Wales and Scotland in its own right. To further improve accessible communication, we have appointed the non-statutory BSL Advisory Board.

In July, we launched an accessible 12-week consultation on our new Disability Action Plan, which is part of this Government's commitment to create a society that works for everyone, where all can participate and be fully included. The Disability Action Plan will set out the immediate action the Government will take in 2023 and 2024 to improve disabled people's lives, as well as laying the foundations for longer term change, and it complements the long-term vision set out in the National Disability Strategy.

We will be shortly setting out our plans for taking forward individual commitments in the National Disability Strategy, to make the greatest possible impact for disabled people .

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[199106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether representatives of the Government were invited to attend the meeting of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva on 28 August 2023.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities informed the UK Government of the public hearing which was held on 28 August 2023. It was arranged in relation to the Committee's review of the UK Government's follow-up reports to the 2016 inquiry under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This Government has followed all of the Committee's rules and procedures, and agreed with the Committee to attend this non-compulsory hearing at the Committee's session in March 2024. At this hearing, representatives of the UK Government will provide further information on the UK's progress, as agreed by the Committee. We remain strongly committed to implementing the Convention and improving the lives of disabled people.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[199228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of conducting a review of into the adequacy of the level of universal credit payments.

**Guy Opperman:**

No assessment of such a review has been made.

## ■ Universal Credit: Deductions

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[198527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is his Department's policy to remove sanctions from Universal Credit claimants who were wrongly awarded a benefit due to an administration error.

**Guy Opperman:**

The DWP has taken significant steps to ensure the accuracy of benefit payments and the vast majority of benefit expenditure is paid correctly.

The question is difficult to answer without the specifics of any individual case but the broad policy is as follows:

Where overpayments do occur, Section 105 of The Welfare Reform Act 2012, amending the Social Security Act 1992 (Section 71ZB), states that any overpayment of Universal Credit, new style JSA or ESA in excess of entitlement, is recoverable.

If the claim is subsequently found to be invalid due to administrative error, then the entirety of the claim is removed, and any sanction imposed would be removed.

A sanction can only be applied if entitlement to benefit has been established and if the claimant has failed to meet their agreed requirements or failed to take up or stay in employment without good reason.

## ■ Universal Credit: Students

**Catherine West:**

[\[199393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that students with long-term health conditions are able to access the financial support to which they are entitled; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of deducting loans that cover maintenance from Universal Credit on the income of affected students.

**Guy Opperman:**

Students, including disabled students and those with health conditions, access fees and living costs support for their higher education courses through various loans and grants funded through the student support system. It is important that UC does not duplicate this support, which is designed for the needs of students unlike the social security system. This includes support which recognises a person's disability, such as

the Disabled Students Allowance for those in higher education and discretionary bursaries and grants if undertaking further education. Disabled students also have access to discretionary Hardship Funds which are made available by universities and colleges.

It is important that Universal Credit does not duplicate this support. A condition of entitlement for Universal Credit is that the claimant must not be in education, which excludes most students. There is an exception where a person has already been determined to have limited capability for work before entering education and is entitled to a qualifying disability benefit, such as Personal Independence Payment. The rules for this exception are designed to encourage those already claiming Universal Credit because of disability or ill health to take up education that may help them into work in the future.

Treatment of student income under Universal Credit broadly mirrors that in income related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Income Support and income-based Jobseekers Allowance which safeguards fairness whilst also ensuring simplification of the benefit system. If an eligible student makes a claim to Universal Credit we take into account, as income, any financial support which provides for the student's basic maintenance, such as student maintenance loans and grants. We do not take into account student income which covers additional costs, such as loans for tuition fees and books. The first £110 of any student maintenance loan or grant paid to meet living costs is not taken into account in each monthly Assessment Period where benefits are calculated. Over a typical 9 or 10 month academic year claimants are able to keep between £990-£1100 more of their Universal Credit award. The intention behind this is to help students with any added costs of books, equipment and travel which may be incurred whilst studying or training.

Whilst it is acknowledged that maintenance loans are to be paid back, if they were not treated as income and were ignored this would result in Universal Credit (and most legacy benefits) duplicating support already provided through the student finance system.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Tata Steel: Port Talbot Transformation

**Minister of State (Ms Nusrat Ghani):**

[\[HCWS1039\]](#)

Government has agreed on a proposed joint investment package to provide £500m to Tata Steel as part of their proposed £1.25bn project to move to low carbon steel making in Port Talbot, subject to the necessary information and consultation processes that will be led by the company.

Through investment in a state-of-the-art Electric Arc Furnace at Port Talbot, this deal will support the UK's efforts to meet increasing demand over the next decade and enable industry to take a significant step towards decarbonisation. It will strengthen our supply chain resilience, as well as protect thousands of skilled jobs across South Wales and the UK for the long term.

The Conservative Government has been supporting the UK steel industry for many years. The industry has been acutely impacted by recent wider geopolitical and macro-economic developments that have made traditional, blast-furnace steelmaking financially unviable. The global steel market has become saturated with heavily subsidised, carbon-intensive steel, whilst Putin's invasion of Ukraine has dramatically increased energy costs. This Conservative Government will continue to stand by our steel industry, and this deal is part of our long-term plan for UK steel.

This ambitious transformation is the culmination of several years of negotiations between the Government and Tata Steel, and is one which has been backed by a majority investment by the company.

This transition will

1. Secure continued production of steel at Port Talbot;
2. Enable the industry to take a significant step towards decarbonising; and
3. Provide a clear pathway towards a long-term financially and environmentally sustainable business model, removing the repeated need for Government intervention.

Government is also enabling this major transformation and modernisation of the steel sector through key policy changes, including delivering the British Industry Supercharger to make electricity prices competitive for energy intensive industries.

Steel is a strategically significant industry which plays a vital role in the UK economy. The sector supports tens of thousands of UK jobs and remains a key driver for local economic growth in regions with proud steelmaking histories. It is also an industry in urgent need of modernisation. Decarbonising industry is a global challenge to meet the temperature goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement.



By replacing Port Talbot's existing coal-powered blast furnaces, and assets nearing the end of their effective life, with an Electric Arc Furnace, this proposed project is expected to reduce the UK's entire business and industry carbon emissions by 7 percent, Wales's overall emissions by 22 percent and the Port Talbot site's emissions by 85 percent.

This agreement with Tata represents the best offer and result for the UK and the people of South Wales. This package represents one of the largest support offers in recent history and will secure long term jobs, not just in Port Talbot, but across all of Tata Steel's sites in England and Wales. It is a deal that not only safeguards jobs, but one that will help build greater resilience in the UK economy and will help create new opportunities in our construction, automotive and energy sectors.

During this transition, the UK Government will also ensure a broad range of support for staff who are affected by the transition, working with the Welsh Government and Tata Steel to provide up to £100 million of funding (in addition to the transformation investment) for a dedicated taskforce to support both employees and the local economy.

As part of the proposal Tata Steel will also release land in Port Talbot for redevelopment and use for new industrial businesses. Alongside the UK Government's proposal for the Celtic Freeport and the land at Port Talbot which Tata expects to release for transfer or sale following the transition from blast furnaces, the investment could help unlock thousands of new jobs in both the South Wales and wider UK economy.

The funding proposal is subject to extensive scrutiny of detailed business plans, vigorous due diligence and subsidy control assessments. It will include strong conditions around financial probity, governance and delivery.

The landmark proposal builds on other major investments in UK green technology by Tata Group, including the July announcement of a £4 billion battery gigafactory creating 4,000 direct jobs, and represents a major vote of confidence in the UK.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ UK Commission on Covid Commemoration

**Parliamentary Secretary (Alex Burghart):**

**[[HCWS1033](#)]**

The Minister of State, Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG, has today made the following statement:

I am today publishing the final report of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration. The Commission was established in July 2022 to secure a broad consensus across our whole United Kingdom on how we mark and commemorate this very distinctive period in our history.

The Chair of the Commission, the Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes, submitted the report to the Prime Minister following a series of meetings with stakeholders across the UK and a UK-wide public consultation.

Communities across the UK have already started to find ways of commemorating our country's experience of the pandemic and the Government is keen to support their efforts. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport will work with the devolved administrations to consider carefully the Commission's wide-ranging recommendations and will respond in due course. I would like to thank all those who have engaged with the Commission, particularly the bereaved family members who took the time to share their difficult experiences.

I would also like to thank the Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes and the ten members of the Commission for their work.

I have requested that a copy of the Commission's report be deposited in the libraries of the Houses of Parliament. A copy will also be published on GOV.UK.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Update on Nuclear

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Nuclear and Networks)  
(Andrew Bowie):**

[\[HCWS1036\]](#)

Britain needs a nuclear renaissance to help deliver a low cost, clean and secure electricity system. New nuclear will result in reliable, abundant energy, whilst driving down consumers' bills and boosting economic growth.

Sizewell C is a crucial project for delivering against these objectives. As a near replica of the Hinkley Point C project under construction in Somerset, Sizewell C is our country's next most mature new nuclear project under development, which can benefit from the design certainty and construction learnings that have been developed at Hinkley Point C.

Sizewell C would generate reliable, low-carbon power for 6 million homes – equivalent to 7 percent of the UK's electricity – for 6 decades or more. Beyond keeping the lights on, in each year of operations it could avoid 9 million tonnes of CO2 emissions, moving the UK forward on our path to Net Zero.

It would also act as a vehicle for levelling up nationwide, through the huge opportunities for jobs and skills provided by nuclear projects. Sizewell C Limited ("the Company") has plans for 70% of the construction value to go to UK businesses, and to bring £4.4 billion of investment to the East of England economy during construction. As well as creating and supporting thousands of jobs in Suffolk and nationwide, the Company also plans to create 1,500 apprenticeships, helping to build Britain's nuclear workforce of the future.

In short, Sizewell C represents the next step in meeting our longer-term ambition to provide up to a quarter of the UK's electricity from homegrown nuclear energy by 2050.

That is why this Government made a historic investment of c.£700m in Sizewell C (Holding) Limited ("SZC HoldCo") last November, joining EDF – our valued partner as the operator of the UK's existing nuclear fleet, and the lead developer of Hinkley Point C – as a co-shareholder.

Since then, the Government has worked with EDF and the Company to continue the project's development, and to establish the best conditions for successful delivery. As a shareholder in SZC HoldCo, this summer we have made available £511m of further funding, supporting site preparation and investing in the local community.

We are now seeking to progress to the next stage.

As highlighted in my predecessor's Written Ministerial Statement in November 2022, we intend to use the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model to enable a private equity raise, with the aim of bringing new expertise and experience into the Company. In our assessment, this approach has true potential to result in a good value for money outcome for consumers and taxpayers, with the RAB structure incentivising the Company and private investors to drive efficient construction on schedule, and, in due course, ensure efficiency in operations.

This summer, the Government and the Company undertook a market testing process, with a cross-section of potential investors in order to understand their views on the project, financing approach and how they could assist in project delivery.

Having received positive feedback from this market testing process, and following agreement with our co-shareholder EDF, the Government and the Company are commencing pre-qualification for potential investors, as the first stage of an equity raise process.

To ensure that investment benefits the Company, consumers and taxpayers, the intention is to secure investment from qualified organisations able to take a meaningful ownership stake, such that new investors' incentives are aligned with other shareholders and, importantly, they are able to substantively and positively influence Company governance and delivery over the construction period.

Investment is being sought from those with significant experience in the delivery of major infrastructure projects, especially in large-scale nuclear or other complex energy or infrastructure projects. Drawing from this experience would ensure Sizewell C benefits from expertise in areas such as project risk management, cost control, and instilling projects with a culture of commercial focus.

In taking this stake, at the time of a positive Final Investment Decision, investors would be expected to make a commitment to their share of the Company's equity requirement. This would provide confidence to the Government, EDF and the Company that new investors would fulfil their shareholder obligations as Sizewell C moves into the full construction phase.

Any prospective investor interested in participating in the equity raise process will need to complete a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire. My officials, together with SZC GenCo's management, will assess investors' suitability against pre-determined criteria and confirm investors' eligibility for inclusion in the equity raise process. Details of how to access the questionnaire will be available and signposted on GOV.UK.

I wish to assure the House that the interests of consumers and taxpayers are central as we progress the project. The Government will only accept private investment if it is likely

to result in value for money. We will continue to assess and consider our approach over the coming months and will take the time needed to reach a deal which satisfies this objective. As committed to during the passage of the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Act 2022, the Government will publish a full value for money assessment of the Company and the project at the point of any Final Investment Decision.

I also want to be clear that the equity sought at this stage does not represent the limit of potential private investment in the Company, and that following the outcome of this process there may be further opportunities for private investment during construction and operations.

Finally, as well as value for money, I want to assure the House – as well as British consumers and taxpayers – that should any investments reach the relevant statutory thresholds, investors will be required to pass through the process set out in the National Security and Investments Act 2021, allowing scrutiny of any risks posed with respect to this legislation. The Government will also hold a special share in the Company, enabling us to require investors to take certain actions in respect of their shareholdings should future risks appear, including on national security or public policy grounds.

I will continue to update the House on Sizewell C more broadly over the coming months.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Dangerous Dogs

**Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):**  
[\[HCWS1040\]](#)

The Government is taking urgent action to bring forward a ban on XL Bully dog types following a concerning rise in attacks and fatalities, which appear to be driven by this type of dog.

Under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, a definition of the ‘American XL Bully’ breed type needs to be specified in order to impose a ban. The Environment Secretary and the Home Secretary will convene experts to define the ‘American XL bully’ breed type. This group will include police, canine and veterinary experts, and animal welfare stakeholders. This is a vital first step towards adding it to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act. We will engage with the relevant devolved administrations about adopting a UK-wide approach.

The Government will then legislate to add it to the list of dogs banned under the Act. I intend to have the legislation in place to deliver this ban by the end of the year. This will make it an offence to own an unregistered XL bully, or to breed, gift or sell one. We need to safely manage the existing population of these dogs, therefore there will be a transition period. Further details on how this period will work will be provided ahead of the tabling of the legislation later this year. Dog owners do not need to take any action at this stage.

We have been working hard with the police, local authorities and animal welfare groups to help prevent attacks by encouraging responsible dog ownership, to ensure dog control

issues are addressed before they escalate and to make sure the full force of the law is applied. Owners whose dogs are dangerously out of control are already breaking the law, and we already have a full range of powers to apply penalties to them. Under the Dangerous Dogs Act, any dog that is dangerously out of control can be euthanised and their owners put in prison for up to 14 years and be banned from ever owning a dog.

While the courts have the power to allow people to keep banned breeds with certain conditions, like being muzzled and neutered, the number of so-called exempted dogs is higher than a decade ago. That was not the intention of the legislation passed over 30 years ago. Therefore, we will also review our guidance to enforcers of the law.

## ■ National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure

**Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):**  
[\[HCWS1037\]](#)

Following the approval of the House, I am pleased to inform the House that I am today (18 September 2023) designating the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Water Resources Infrastructure under section 5(1) of the [Planning Act 2008](#), and have arranged for publication as required by section 5(9)(a) of that Act.

The National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure provides a clear framework for those making development consent applications for water resources infrastructure, in particular by setting out the need for infrastructure providing assessment principles against which an application should be examined and determined. The NPS gives water companies clarity regarding the government's planning expectations, and added certainty about the areas Planning Inspectors might consider at a planning inquiry. This also supports the implementation of the Government's Plan for Water and securing our water supplies by enhancing the resilience of water infrastructure.

The next step is for applicants to develop their plans, and then carry out further public consultation as required under the Act. Any application for development consent will of course be considered carefully and with an open mind based on the evidence provided, including through a public examination by the independent Planning Inspectorate, before a final decision is made.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Government response to a consultation on fixed recoverable costs (lower damages clinical negligence claims)

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy) (Maria Caulfield):** [\[HCWS1031\]](#)

On 15 September, the Government response to the consultation on fixed recoverable costs in lower damages clinical negligence claims was published on GOV.UK.

The rising costs of clinical negligence claims are of great concern to the Government. Costs have more than quadrupled in the last 16 years, with legal costs comprising a

notable proportion of this rise. Claimant legal costs have risen sharply in lower damages claims (claims valued up to and including £25,000) and are often disproportionate to the value of those claims. These costs are funded from the core NHS budget and use resources that could otherwise have been spent on patient care.

The length of the legal process can also be disproportionate given the relative straightforwardness of many claims at this level, meaning that people who have been harmed are waiting longer to receive compensation.

The consultation response sets out a way forward for these lower damages claims: a set of fixed legal costs and a new streamlined process. Our aim is to facilitate faster resolution for claimants and defendants at a lower, more proportionate cost than under the current system for these claims. The scheme would only affect the amount of legal costs that claimant lawyers can recover from defendants following a successful claim, not the compensation that a claimant could receive.

We also believe that these reforms will achieve significant cost savings and make an important contribution towards addressing the overall rise in clinical negligence costs. The Department's modelling indicates that introducing these reforms could realise cashflow savings to the NHS in England of c. £500million over a decade. These reforms would apply to care provided by NHS, non-profit and private healthcare providers in England and Wales, but would not apply in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

The responses to our 2022 consultation on introducing fixed costs in 'lower value' clinical negligence claims have been vital in helping us shape these reforms and informed some changes to the original proposals, in particular around strengthening the safeguards we have in place to protect claimants' access to justice.

Alongside the response, I have launched a further consultation focusing on the specific issue of disbursements under the fixed recoverable costs scheme, inviting views on a proposed way forward on disbursements for all claims in the scheme. That further consultation will run for 6 weeks, ending on 27 October 2023. I welcome views from all interested parties on those proposals.

We will work with the Civil Procedure Rule Committee to ensure the smooth delivery of these reforms. Subject to agreement, the Government expects that legislation will be in place to implement the reforms by April 2024.

## ■ Living and deceased tissue and cell donation

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Primary Care and Public Health) (Neil O'Brien):**

[\[HCWS1032\]](#)

The findings of the Government commissioned review into donor selection policies, that was carried out by the 'For Assessment of Individualised Risk' (FAIR) Steering Group, led to the implementation of changes in summer 2021 to address inequalities in blood donation. These changes mean that anyone who attends a blood donation centre regardless of sex or sexuality will be assessed for eligibility according to individual risk.



It is almost two years since the implementation of the changes for blood donation and I am pleased to announce today the publication of recommendations in the FAIR III report for tissue and cell donation. The report highlights an individualised risk-based approach for living tissue and cell donation (surgical bone, amnion, stem cells and cord blood) and deceased tissue donation. The Government has now reviewed the evidence presented by the FAIR III Steering Group, together with the advice of the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs, and has accepted this recommendation.

This change will provide equity in access to donation for men who have sex with men across the UK, aligning with changes to blood donor selection related to sexual behaviours and the Government's commitment to address health inequalities, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper and the NHS Long Term Plan.

The Government wishes to pay tribute to the tissue and organ donation experts and the patient and donor family representatives on the Steering Group, as well as health and academic colleagues whose valuable engagement led to the development of this important evidence-based report.

The Government is also grateful to the work the Joint United Kingdom Blood Transfusion and Tissue Transplantation Services Professional Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs and NHS Blood and Transplant in developing recommendations that are based on robust evidence from epidemiology, behaviour and psychosocial data and engaging with service users and providers.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with NHS Blood and Transplant and the Devolved Governments to implement this change. We will have monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure the safety of donors and patients, including continued monitoring of infections. The changes will be reviewed in twelve months.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022 – Unexplained Wealth Order Report 2022-2023

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):**  
[\[HCWS1034\]](#)

Today I lay before Parliament the Unexplained Wealth Order (UWO) report for the period 2022-2023. The UWO report details the number of UWOs made by the High Court in England and Wales during that period, and the number of applications made to that Court by enforcement authorities for such an order during that period.

In total, one UWO was applied for during the reporting period. This was obtained in June 2023. One other UWO was applied for since Royal Assent of the Economic Crime Transparency and Enforcement Act 2022 but before the reporting period began. This case has been adjourned to a date outside of this reporting period.

The number of UWOs applied for and obtained for the period is low but this must be understood within the wider context of the UK's asset recovery system. Enforcement

authorities have a number of powers available to them to investigate, search for and seize assets. Even a single UWO may have a high impact. A UWO used in one investigation resulted in civil recovery proceedings that led to the recovery of almost £10 million.

While law enforcement agencies remain committed to using UWOs where they will add value to an investigation, they are operationally independent from Government and cannot be tasked to use UWOs. We will continue to keep the UWO regime under review.

Copies of the report will be available in the Vote Office.

## ■ Police Integrity

### **The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):**

**[[HCWS1035](#)]**

The vast majority of officers are brave and hard-working individuals but serious concerns persist regarding standards and culture in policing, particularly in light of recent cases and the concerning findings of Baroness Casey's review into culture and standards in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). The government is committed to ensuring the police discipline system is fair and effective at removing those officers who fall seriously below the high standards we rightly expect of them.

It is for this reason that we launched a review into the police dismissals process in January of this year. The review considered evidence from stakeholders, as well as the results of a national data collection. The core recommendations from this review were announced on 31 August and today (18 September 2023) we are publishing the report of the review, setting out the evidence collected and full list of proposals we intend to take forward. These proposals include:-

- Creating a presumption for dismissal where gross misconduct is proven. This change will ensure that – unless exceptional circumstances apply – officers found guilty of gross misconduct can expect to be dismissed.
- Ensuring officers who fail vetting can be dismissed. We intend to make it a statutory requirement for officers to hold vetting – and supporting a legislative routeway to dismiss those who are unable to do so.
- Specifying that certain criminal offences automatically amount to gross misconduct. We intend to introduce a list of barred offences, meaning that conviction of certain criminal offences – including sexual offences – automatically constitute gross misconduct.
- Returning responsibility for chairing misconduct hearings to senior officers. To ensure chief constables are afforded a stronger role in the system – whilst retaining necessary independence – the responsibility for chairing hearings will now sit with senior officers. A Legally Qualified Person (LQP) and Independent Panel Member (IPM) will sit alongside the senior officer.
- Streamlining of the unsatisfactory performance procedures (UPP) We intend to streamline the current statutory performance system for police officers to make it



easier to use - identifying under-performing officers and, where there is no improvement in their performance, effectively dismissing them.

A number of other changes is expected to improve the efficiency of the system and ensure greater transparency.

The Government is committed to delivering these important reforms, the majority of which require changes to secondary legislation, and will work with stakeholders to deliver these as soon as practicable.

The review report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on Gov.UK.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Update on the National Disability Strategy

**Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Tom Pursglove):**  
[\[HCWS1038\]](#)

In my [written statement](#) of 12 July, I informed the House of the judgment handed down by the Court of Appeal on 11 July 2023 regarding the National Disability Strategy Judicial Review. In that ministerial statement I was pleased to inform the House that the Court of Appeal found in favour of the Government. This meant that both the UK Disability Survey and the National Disability Strategy have now been found to be lawful by the Court of Appeal, and we are able to continue with the important work of implementing this long-term strategy to transform disabled people's everyday lives for the better.

I further committed to providing the House with an update in September on how this Government will take forward work on the strategy now that it has been found to be lawful.

The Government's intention has always been to create more opportunities for disabled people to participate and thrive; to protect and promote the rights of disabled people; and to tackle the barriers that prevent disabled people from fully benefiting from, and contributing fully to, every aspect of our society.

The vast majority of departmental commitments outlined in the National Disability Strategy 2021 were not impacted by the High Court's initial judgment. The Government has progressed well on delivering these and other commitments, as can be seen by all the Government's achievements as set out in my [letter](#) placed in the House Library in July.

I will place a note in the House Library which provides an update:

- on how the Government now proposes to take this the 14 commitments that were paused to comply with the High Court's declaration; and .
- on all departmental commitments in the National Disability Strategy. This includes details as to whether the individual commitments have been delivered or are in progress. There are 47 commitments which have been 'completed', 54

commitments 'in progress', 1 which is currently 'paused' and 2 which are no longer being taken forward.

In parallel with taking forward the commitments in the National Disability Strategy, the Government is also pressing ahead with our Disability Action Plan, focused on concrete actions to improve disabled people's lives in 2023 and 2024.

I am pleased to confirm that on 18 July 2023 we published the Disability Action Plan Consultation. The Disability Action Plan consultation is open for 12 weeks and responses can be submitted until 6 October. The consultation document sets out a number of proposals and consultation questions - informed by the experiences of disabled people, research and the current policy landscape - as an initial step to make sure policy development direction is correct. The findings of this consultation will inform the final published Disability Action Plan.

Taken together, the National Disability Strategy and the Disability Action Plan set out a complementary, ambitious programme of work across government to improve disabled people's lives in the short, medium and long term. I will continue to work with my Ministerial Disability Champion colleagues across government to drive progress against these commitments and to make the greatest possible positive impact for disabled people.