



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 September 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 19 September 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

### CONTENTS

<b>ANSWERS</b>	<b>8</b>	■ Exercise	16
<b>BUSINESS AND TRADE</b>	<b>8</b>	■ Exercise: Children and Young People	16
■ Africa: Trade Promotion	8	■ Gambling	17
■ Audit: Reform	8	■ Gambling: Video Games	18
■ Department for Business and Trade: National Security	9	■ National Physical Activity Taskforce	18
■ Department for Business and Trade: Northern Ireland	9	■ Public Libraries	18
■ Department for Business and Trade: Policy	10	■ Sports	19
■ Post Offices: Stockport	10	■ Sports: Children	20
■ Trade Agreements: India	10	■ Sports: Girls	21
■ Wilko: Insolvency	11	■ Tickets: Sales	21
■ Wilko: Portsmouth	11	<b>DEFENCE</b>	<b>22</b>
■ World Economic Forum	12	■ Air Force: Cadets	22
■ World Trade Organisation: Electronic Commerce	12	■ Aircraft Carriers	22
<b>CABINET OFFICE</b>	<b>12</b>	■ Armed Forces: Absenteeism	23
■ Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	12	■ Armed Forces: Sexual Offences	23
<b>CHURCH COMMISSIONERS</b>	<b>13</b>	■ Chinook Helicopters: Procurement	24
■ Church of England: Derelict Land	13	■ Defence: Buildings	25
■ Church of England: Finance	14	■ HMS Queen Elizabeth: Military Aircraft	25
<b>CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>	<b>15</b>	■ Military Corrective Training Centre Colchester	26
■ Culture: Disadvantaged	15	■ Portsmouth Dockyard: Flood Control	27

■ Ukraine: Military Aid	27	■ Unit for Future Skills	71
■ Veterans: Identity Cards	28	■ Universities: Student Wastage	72
■ War Widows: Pensions	29	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET	
EDUCATION	30	ZERO	72
■ Apprentices	30	■ Alternative Fuel Payments	72
■ Apprentices: Finance	30	■ Aviation: Fuels	73
■ Apprentices: Taxation	31	■ Biofuels	73
■ Art and Design: Secondary Education	32	■ Biofuels: Vegetable Oils	73
■ Care to Learn Scheme	33	■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Finance	73
■ Childcare: Students	33	■ Carbon Emissions: Innovation	74
■ Department for Education: Buildings	34	■ Climate Change	74
■ Free School Meals	34	■ Climate Change and Temperature	74
■ Further Education: Reform	35	■ Climate Change Convention: United Arab Emirates	75
■ Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education	35	■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: National Security	75
■ Mathematics: Higher Education	35	■ Electricity and Natural Gas: Standing Charges	76
■ Music: Education	36	■ Electricity: Prices	76
■ Nurseries: Buildings	40	■ Energy and Heating: Buildings	76
■ Physical Education and Sports: Schools	40	■ Energy Bills Discount Scheme	77
■ Pre-school Education: Finance	41	■ Energy: Disability	77
■ Pupils: Transgender People	42	■ Energy: Housing	77
■ Schools: Art and Design	42	■ Energy: Meters	78
■ Schools: Buildings	44	■ Energy: Planning	78
■ Schools: Closures	63	■ Energy: Storage	79
■ Schools: North of England	64	■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	80
■ Schools: Processed Food	65	■ Hartlepool Power Station: Outages	80
■ Schools: Standards	66	■ India: Visits Abroad	81
■ Special Educational Needs: Finance	66	■ Industrial Energy Transformation Fund	81
■ Students: Loans	67	■ Lighting: Public Consultation	82
■ Teachers: Art and Design	67		

■ Nuclear Power	82	■ Forests: Environment Protection	92
■ Offshore Industry: Marine Protected Areas	82	■ Hornets	93
■ Petrol: Excise Duties	82	■ Horses: Animal Welfare	93
■ Public Houses: Energy	83	■ Hunting	94
■ Renewable Energy	83	■ Landfill	94
■ Sizewell C Power Station: Construction	83	■ Local Adaptation Advisory Panel	95
■ Solar Power: Manufacturing Industries	84	■ Meat: Antibiotics	95
■ Wind Power: Manufacturing Industries	84	■ Peatlands	96
■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans	84	■ Sewage: Sunderland	96
		■ Sewage: Waste Disposal	96
		■ Water Companies: Fines	98
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	85	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	99
■ Agriculture	85	■ Afghanistan: Women's Rights	99
■ Air Pollution	86	■ Africa: Military Coups	100
■ Air Quality Grant Scheme	86	■ China: Official Visits	100
■ Animal Welfare	87	■ China: Ukraine	100
■ Climate Change: Weather	87	■ Climate Change: Finance	101
■ Concrete: Recycling	87	■ Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda: Floods	101
■ Dairy Farming	88	■ Development Aid: Climate Change	101
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Buildings	88	■ Development Aid: Water	102
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Domestic Visits	89	■ Diplomatic Service: Debts	102
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Recycling	89	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Travel	102
■ Firewood: Regulation	90	■ Gabon: British Nationals Abroad	103
■ Flood Control	90	■ Gabon: Military Coups	103
■ Floods: Mortgages	91	■ India: Development Aid	104
■ Forests: Commodities	91	■ India: Visits Abroad	104
		■ Iran: Detainees	104
		■ Kenya: Cholera	105

■ Kenya: Economic Cooperation	105	■ Dental Services: Waiting Lists	119
■ Libya: Floods	105	■ Department of Health and Social Care: Concrete	119
■ Madagascar: Food Aid	106	■ Department of Health and Social Care: National Security	120
■ Mahmoud Abbas	106	■ Diabetes: Drugs	120
■ Mohammad Ghobadloo	107	■ Electronic Cigarettes: Young People	121
■ Morocco: Earthquakes	107	■ Epilepsy: Health Services	121
■ Nepal: Religious Freedom	108	■ Gambling: Rehabilitation	122
■ Russia: Sanctions	108	■ General Practitioners and Primary Health Care: Concrete	122
■ Sierra Leone: Elections	108	■ General Practitioners: Enfield North	122
■ Sri Lanka	109	■ Health Services	123
■ Uganda: LGBT+ People	109	■ Healthy Start Scheme	123
■ Ukraine: Cereals	109	■ Healthy Start Scheme: Social Security Benefits	124
■ West Africa: Peacekeeping Operations	110	■ Hospitals: Buildings	124
■ Zimbabwe: Development Aid	110	■ Hospitals: Concrete	126
■ Zimbabwe: Economic Cooperation	111	■ Hospitals: Construction	128
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	111	■ Hospitals: Food	128
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	111	■ Hospitals: Safety	129
■ Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption	112	■ Integrated Care Systems: Patients	129
■ Alcoholism	112	■ Kidney Diseases: Screening	130
■ Alcoholism: Rehabilitation	112	■ Maternity Services	131
■ Breast Cancer: Screening	113	■ Medical Treatments: Children	131
■ Cancer: Drugs	114	■ Neurodiversity: Children	131
■ Cancer: Medical Treatments	114	■ NHS Learning Support Fund	131
■ Care Homes and Hospitals: Concrete	115	■ NHS: Buildings	132
■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services	116	■ NHS: Complaints	133
■ Dementia: Research	116	■ NHS: Concrete	133
■ Dementia: Solihull	117	■ NHS: Pensions	134
■ Dental Services	118	■ Podiatry: Finance	134
■ Dental Services: Integrated Care Boards	118		

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges	135	■ Legal Aid Scheme: Disability	149
■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus	135	■ Ministry of Justice: Buildings	150
■ School Milk: Christchurch	136	■ Offenders: Sentencing	151
■ Suicide	136	■ Prison and Probation Service: Staff	151
■ Thyroid Diseases: Drugs	136	■ Prison Officers	152
■ UK Health Security Agency: Finance	137	■ Prison Sentences	152
■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme	137	■ Prisoner Escorts: Safety	152
■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus	138	■ Prisoners' Release: Rehabilitation	153
■ Walking	138	■ Prisons: Education	154
HOME OFFICE	139	■ Wandsworth Prison: Security and Staff	154
■ Agricultural Machinery: Theft	139	■ Wandsworth Prison: Staff	155
■ Asylum: Greater London	139	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	155
■ Drugs: Scotland	140	■ Antisocial Behaviour	155
■ Fires: Green Belt	140	■ Buildings: Concrete	155
■ Home Office: Social Media	141	■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance	156
■ Iran	141	■ Buildings: Safety	156
■ Missing Persons	141	■ Community Ownership Fund	156
■ Offenders: Deportation	141	■ Empty Property: Business Rates	157
■ Police: Disciplinary Proceedings	142	■ Hostels: Young People	157
■ Police: Medals	142	■ Housing Estates: Repairs and Maintenance	157
■ Public Houses: Licensing	143	■ Housing: Construction	158
■ Retail Trade: Crime	143	■ Housing: Standards	158
■ Sports: Unmanned Air Vehicles	147	■ Recreation Spaces	158
■ Visas: EU Countries	148	■ Sleeping Rough	159
JUSTICE	148	■ Social Rented Housing: Evictions	160
■ Crimes of Violence: Convictions	148	■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund	160
■ Crown Court: Harrow	148		
■ Homicide: Children	149		

NORTHERN IRELAND	160	■ Alternative Fuels: Tax Allowances	168
■ Higher Education: Northern Ireland	160	■ Aviation: Taxation	168
■ Infrastructure: Northern Ireland	160	■ Beer: Excise Duties	168
■ Investment: Northern Ireland	161	■ Dental Services	169
■ Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill	161	■ Development Banks	169
TRANSPORT	162	■ Electric Vehicles: Taxation	170
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	162	■ Financial Services	170
■ Bus Services: North East	162	■ Revenue and Customs: ICT and Security	171
■ Cycling and Walking: Finance	162	■ Self-employed: Fines	171
■ Cycling: Accidents	163	■ Taxis: VAT	172
■ Cycling: Clothing	163	■ Treasury: National Security	172
■ Dartford-Thurrock Crossing: Tolls	163	■ Treasury: Public Appointments	173
■ Department for Transport: National Security	164	■ Unemployment: Young People	173
■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists	164	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	174
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	164	■ Public Lavatories: Incontinence	174
■ Elizabeth Line: Standards	165	WORK AND PENSIONS	174
■ Govia Thameslink Railway: Timetables	165	■ Carer's Allowance	174
■ Jet Skis	165	■ Carers: Finance	175
■ Luton Airport: Construction	165	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Freedom of Information	176
■ Manchester Airport: Freight	166	■ Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment: Internet	176
■ Manchester Airport: Passengers	166	■ Disability: Cost of Living	177
■ Motor Vehicles: Noise	166	■ Economic Situation: Health	178
■ Union Connectivity Review	167	■ Housing Benefit	179
TREASURY	167	■ Housing Benefit: Supported Housing	180
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	167	■ Jobcentres: Closures	180
■ Air Passenger Duty	167	■ Jobcentres: Pay	181
		■ Jobcentres: Staff	181

■ Jobcentres: Training	182	■ Membership of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA)	190
■ Personal Independence Payment: Epilepsy	183	■ NATO Parliamentary Assembly	191
■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations	183	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	191
■ Social Security Benefits: Working Hours	184	■ Minimum Service Levels – Hospital Settings	191
■ Universal Credit: Fraud	184	HOME OFFICE	192
<b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>	<b>186</b>	■ Publication of the Report of the Inquiry into Brook House Immigration Removal Centre	192
BUSINESS AND TRADE	186	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	192
■ Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme Update	186	■ UK Artificial Intelligence Policy Update	192
DEFENCE	186	TRANSPORT	195
■ New Accommodation Offer	186	■ Rail Update	195
■ Revised Terms of Reference for the Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan	188	TREASURY	196
EDUCATION	188	■ Quadrennial valuations of the public service pension schemes	196
■ Schools and Colleges Update	188	■ War Widow(er)s Recognition Payment tax treatment	198
ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	189	WORK AND PENSIONS	198
■ Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects	189	■ Additional Jobcentre Support Pilot - Phase 2 rollout	198
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	190		
■ Hong Kong Six-monthly Report	190		

**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

## ■ Africa: Trade Promotion

**Ruth Jones:**[\[199445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much from the public purse was spent on travel for UK trade envoys to nations on the African continent in each of the last five years.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Please find below a table giving the number of visits and costs by the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to nations on the African continent over the last five years.

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF VISITS	COSTS
2019-2020	11	£43,764
2020-2021	1	£7,132
2021-2022	9	£49,455
2022-2023	10	£63,800
2023-2024*	8	£24,465
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>£188,616</b>

\*Figures for 2023-24 are up to 15 September 2023.

## ■ Audit: Reform

**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[199565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many civil servants worked on legislative proposals relating to audit reform in each of the last five years.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The table below gives the number of officials in the Department working on legislative proposals relating to reform of audit and associated legislative reforms of corporate governance, in September of each of the last five years. Figures for 2019-21 are estimates based on information readily available.

SEPTEMBER 2019	c. 20
September 2020	c. 15
September 2021	c. 21



---

SEPTEMBER 2019	c. 20
----------------	-------

---

September 2022	19
----------------	----

September 2023	15
----------------	----

## ■ Department for Business and Trade: National Security

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198858\]](#)

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

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

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 for Business and Trade (the Department), then they are managed through the department's risk management processes. The Department has a Chief Risk Officer, (the Chief Operating Officer), who oversees all risks relating to the work of the Department, including national security risks. Within the Department, risk is managed and recorded through risk registers that are regularly reported to the Performance and Risk Committee and the Executive Committee.

## ■ Department for Business and Trade: Northern Ireland

**Colum Eastwood:** [\[199238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, for what reason Northern Ireland is not covered on her Department's webpage under the stated responsibility to advise, support and promote British businesses to grow and export.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Department for Business and Trade's export support services are available free of charge to businesses across all parts of the UK, including Northern Ireland. Full details about these services are available at [www.great.gov.uk](http://www.great.gov.uk). My officials in the DBT Northern Ireland team are also working closely with businesses and stakeholders to promote these services across all parts of Northern Ireland.

**■ Department for Business and Trade: Policy****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[199620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which Minister in their Department is responsible for overseeing work on long-term strategic challenges; and how many officials in their Department (a) undertake horizon scanning work and (b) focus on delivering long-term priorities.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Secretary of State has overall responsibility for delivery and strategy in the Department, but each minister is responsible for overseeing work on long-term strategic challenges within their policy portfolios.

The Department has around 20 officials dedicated to horizon scanning, this includes a central Foresight function and specialists within policy areas. Around a further 20 have partial focus on horizon scanning.

Ultimately, all policy, operational, analysis and communications officials work towards delivering the Department's long-term priorities. However, around 40 focus solely on setting the strategy of our long-term priorities, and around a further 200 have a partial focus on this remit.

**■ Post Offices: Stockport****Navendu Mishra:**[\[199688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2023 to Question 197616 on Post Offices, whether her Department has (a) made an assessment of and (b) had discussions with relevant stakeholders on the future of the Crown Post Office branch in Great Underbank Stockport.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

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

Matters relating to individual post office branches are the responsibility of Post Office, not the Department for Business and Trade.

**■ Trade Agreements: India****Navendu Mishra:**[\[198902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to issue a waiver to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in the context of the negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of India.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

In negotiations with India, as with all our trading partners, the UK's approach to intellectual property (IP) is to strike a balance between rewarding research, innovation and creativity, which can benefit all countries, whilst ensuring that medicines remain affordable and reflecting wider public interests, such as access to and use of IP on reasonable terms.

The UK considers the TRIPS Agreement as an essential tool to achieve this balance, including our support for flexibilities enshrined in the Agreement.

■ **Wilko: Insolvency****Stephen Morgan:**[\[198948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions she has had with Wilko on their announcement of bankruptcy and the potential closure of stores.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

It is not appropriate for Government to involve itself in the running of an independent business. Nor is it appropriate to be involved in the independent exercise of the administration of a business.

Officials at the Insolvency Service's Redundancy Payments Service have been working with the Administrators of Wilko to ensure that statutory redundancy payments can be made to the former employees as soon as possible. Retail officials have had regular engagement with the administrators, PwC, the GMB Union, as well as DWP, the Cities and Local Growth Unit and the Insolvency Service.

I remain concerned for the many employees who now face an uncertain future. We will continue to provide support to those employees directly impacted by the outcome.

■ **Wilko: Portsmouth****Stephen Morgan:**[\[198947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department plans to take to support people made redundant due to the closure of Wilkos stores in Portsmouth.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

We recognise that this must be a worrying time for Wilkos' employees and their families.

The Insolvency Service's Redundancy Payments Service, on behalf of the Secretary of State will make statutory redundancy and related payments to all eligible employees who have been made redundant. The Redundancy Payments Service has been working with the administrators to ensure that employee claims can be paid as soon as possible.

Further information for employees and creditors can be found at

[www.gov.uk/government/news/wilko-in-administration-information-for-employees-and-creditors](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/wilko-in-administration-information-for-employees-and-creditors).

DWP's Rapid Response Service can help affected employees at both national and local level.

The National Employer and Partnership Team (NEPT) are also speaking to all employers on the national portfolio to identify possible alternative employment opportunities for the Wilko workforce.

## ■ World Economic Forum

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[199561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the data on Ministerial travel for the Department for International Trade, January to March 2023, last updated on 20 July 2023, how much was spent on (a) flights and (b) accommodation for her visit to the World Economic Forum from 17 to 20 January 2023.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The total cost of the flights and accommodation for the Secretary of State's visit to the World Economic Forum from 17 to 20 January 2023 is set out within the "DIT Ministers' Overseas Travel: January to February 2023" transparency data published on GOV.UK.

## ■ World Trade Organisation: Electronic Commerce

**Jonathan Reynolds:** [\[199564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether it is her Department's policy to support the renewal of the WTO e-commerce moratorium beyond 2024.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

My Department supports the renewal of the WTO e-commerce moratorium. We are working with WTO Members and interested stakeholders to deliver this outcome at the 13<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference. The moratorium underpins global digital trade and provides certainty that electronic transmissions will not be subject to customs duties. My Department is clear that we support a permanent prohibition of such duties, as outlined in our Digital Trade Objectives and the G7 Digital Trade Principles developed under the 2021 UK Presidency.

My Department is also committed to agreeing rules against customs duties on electronic transmissions in the UK's bilateral trade agreements.

## CABINET OFFICE

## ■ Advisory Committee on Business Appointments

**Catherine West:** [\[199637\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 47, paragraph M of Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee report on China, whether the Government plans to update guidelines for the Advisory Committee on Business

Appointments in relation to intelligence and security matters with particular reference to China.

**Alex Burghart:**

The Government's recently published response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on China states: "The government will consider the findings of the committee's report ... and consider strengthening the Business Appointment Rules in relation to intelligence and security matters as appropriate."

The report can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-isc-china-report>

It is already the case that, depending on the nature of the role, national security implications may form part of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments' considerations.

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

### ■ Church of England: Derelict Land

**Julian Knight:**

**[196061]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to release brownfield sites within its Estate to the Church Housing Association to increase social housing.

**Andrew Selous:**

Following the 'Coming Home' report published by the Archbishops' Housing Commission, the Bishop of Chelmsford (as Lead Bishop for Housing) has been working with colleagues from across the Church, including the Church Commissioners, to implement the recommendations from that report. This work includes plans to establish a Church Housing Association. As and when that Housing Association is in place we hope there will be scope for the Commissioners and other church land owners to be able to work in partnership with it to enable the construction of much-needed affordable homes.

At the same time, the Church Commissioners are exploring the potential to boost the supply of affordable homes on their own land through the provision of Rural Exception Sites within existing communities.

More information about the Archbishops' Housing Commission, and its Report 'Coming Home', can be read here: [About Coming Home | The Church of England](#).

Information on the Church Commissioners' approach to delivering land for housing can be found here [New development – defining what matters \(churchofengland.org\)](#)

**■ Church of England: Finance****Mr Ben Bradshaw:****[198286]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, with reference to Review of Lowest Income Communities and Strategic Development Funding, published in March 2022, what steps the Church Commissioners have taken to implement new governance arrangements to ensure that Lowest Incomes Communities Funding is distributed to dioceses by the Archbishops' Council is accounted for (a) effectively and (b) transparently.

**Andrew Selous:**

The Independent Review of Lowest Income Communities Funding and Strategic Development Funding led by Sir Robert Chote was published in March 2022 and can be read here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/irls-final-report-2.pdf>

In respect of improving governance arrangements of Lowest Income Communities Funding (LInC) the Review recommended:

- Recommendation 2 - "Refocusing annual returns ... towards more strategic reporting".
- Recommendation 3 - asked staff to "identify and promote best practice ... perhaps convening a learning symposium".
- Recommendation 5 – asked staff to "communicate more clearly the extent to which LInC funding is sustaining ministry".

The action taken so far by the Archbishops' Council's Vision and Strategy team in response to those recommendations has been to:

- Raise the profile of LInC funding within ongoing strategic conversations between its staff and diocesan teams, as part of dioceses' strategic development processes, with the aim of improving its effectiveness.
- Ask dioceses to give information about the intended outcomes from their planned use of LInC funding, together with how they will be measured, as part of their annual return on LInC funding for 2022.
- Plan a learning event to bring together diocesan representatives to share and develop their approaches on the use of LInC funding, aiming to improve the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of LInC funding.

The Independent Review also made further suggestions in Recommendation 1: "encouraging dioceses to use LInC funding more for clergy transitions" and in Recommendation 4: "maintaining current levels of LInC funding". While not related directly to governance, these may also feature in the learning event and in ongoing conversations with dioceses.

From the start of 2023, the new Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB), a committee of the Archbishops' Council, has replaced the previous Strategic Investment Board and Strategic Ministry Board. It distributes and monitors

funds made available by the Church Commissioners and Archbishops' Council via LInC, SDF, and other similar funds.

The Boards of the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners are regularly updated by the SMMIB about funding decisions and projects supported by these funds. Members of the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners Boards are part of the SMMIB and help monitor funding decisions and spending. The SMMIB will also provide an annual report to the General Synod.

More information about the role the SMMIB plays can be found here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/new-board-oversee-unprecedented-church-england-investment-mission-and>

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Culture: Disadvantaged

**Matt Vickers:**

[198869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for cultural activities for (a) adults and (b) children in low-income areas.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

His Majesty's Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality arts and cultural opportunities and activities, regardless of their background or where they live.

With the encouragement of the government, Arts Council England has developed a focus on Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places to address historic imbalances in investment. As part of this, priority places receive dedicated Arts Council staff resources to build local capacity. The Arts Council's Investment Programme for 2023–26, which is funding a record number of organisations in more places than ever before, has resulted in funding of £42.9 million per year in Levelling up for Culture Places. Stockton-on-Tees is a Levelling Up for Culture Place, and Tees Valley Combined Authority is a Priority Place.

The government's Cultural Development Fund supports culture-led regeneration projects in areas across the country with the lowest levels of investment and engagement in arts and culture. This fund has provided £76 million of capital investment to 20 transformative, place-based creative and cultural projects over three rounds (2019 to 2023). In addition to this, in January 2023, the Government awarded £546 million to 31 culture and heritage projects as part of the second round of the Levelling Up Fund.

## ■ Exercise

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department are taking steps to measure the proportion of adults that carry out 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a 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.

## ■ Exercise: Children and Young People

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan, what steps the Government plans to take to (a) measure and (b) track the proportion of children and young people who participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

**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.

## ■ Gambling

**Martyn Day:** [\[198761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2023 to Question 194250 on Gambling, which targeted consultations were published as of 11 September 2023.

**Stuart Andrew:**

On 26 July 2023 we published two consultations covering maximum stake limits for online slots games and measures relating to the land based sector. A third Department for Culture, Media and Sport consultation on the statutory levy committed in the white paper will also follow in the coming weeks.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[198811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people who are addicted to gambling.

**Stuart Andrew:**

As set out in [Public Health England's evidence review of gambling-related harms](#), the problem gambling rate for England was estimated as 0.4% in 2021, and has been relatively stable since 2012. However it should be noted that Covid impacted data collection for the latest Health Survey meaning comparisons between 2021 findings and those from earlier surveys cannot be made.

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate her Department has made of the cost of gambling and betting addiction to the economy.

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate her Department has made of the contribution of gambling and betting activities to the UK economy.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The government recognises the contribution that the betting and gaming industry makes to the economy. The sector pays approximately £2 billion per year to the government in duties (excluding Lottery Duty), accounted for £5.7 billion or 0.3% of UK Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2019, and employed approximately 98,000 people in Great Britain in 2019. While many gambling companies do operate overseas hubs, the jobs in this country are geographically dispersed, with hubs of high skill work in areas like Stoke-on-Trent and Leeds.

The government does not collect affirmative data on the costs of gambling and betting addiction to the UK economy specifically.

## ■ Gambling: Video Games

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with gaming industry on protection for young people against loot boxes in video games.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

Since publication of the [government response to the call for evidence on loot boxes in video games](#) in July 2022, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has facilitated engagement between the games industry and players, parents, government departments, independent bodies, regulators, academics and other external organisations. The output of this work was new [industry-led guidance](#) on loot boxes published by the industry trade body Ukie in July 2023, and a [Video Games Research Framework](#) published by DCMS in May 2023.

To support the development of industry-led guidance, DCMS convened a Technical Working Group with representatives of games companies and platforms. The Technical Working Group met eight times between September 2022 and June 2023, including a meeting chaired by the DCMS Secretary of State in June 2023.

## ■ National Physical Activity Taskforce

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[199625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the sport strategy, Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity, published by her Department on 30 August 2023, how frequently her Department plans to meet representatives of the National Physical Activity Taskforce.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The National Physical Activity Taskforce has been set up to connect relevant organisations across government and the sport sector to ensure that the government continues to make progress and deliver on the targets set out in the Sport Strategy. The taskforce will endeavour to meet quarterly and run for 18 months in the first instance. The first meeting will take place shortly.

## ■ Public Libraries

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[199580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the number of libraries that were used as warm spaces in winter 2022-23.

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[199581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with Local Authorities on the use of libraries as warm spaces in winter 2023-24.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The delivery of public library services is a responsibility for upper-tier local authorities under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. It is for those authorities to determine provision based on local needs and priorities, including the use of libraries as warm hubs.

Last winter, a number of local authorities indicated that they intended to use public and community-managed buildings including libraries to provide additional support and advice to local residents following the rise in energy costs. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport engaged with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to ensure that the Government's Energy Bill Relief Scheme supported businesses and non-domestic customers such as libraries and other community spaces. Libraries and archives were also eligible to receive an enhanced level of support under the Energy Bills Discount Scheme.

**Lilian Greenwood:**[\[199585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what information her Department holds on the number of public libraries that have reduced their opening (a) hours and (b) days in each year since 2010.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

This information is not collected by the department. Arts Council England collects data from local authorities and publishes a basic dataset of information on public libraries in England, which provides current, but not historical, information about opening hours.

The dataset can be found [here](#).

**■ Sports****Stephanie Peacock:**[\[199470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate her Department has made of the contribution of sport and sporting activities to the economy.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The government is committed to supporting economic growth in the sector, and ensuring this translates into tangible outcomes that span grassroots participation through to elite performance. In turn, this can help stimulate the contribution sport makes to growing the national economy.

The government's previous Sport Satellite Account estimated that the gross value added (GVA) of the sport sector in 2019 was £48.9 billion. This marked an increase of 2.9% between 2018 and 2019, and of 20.4% between 2010 and 2019, in real terms. In addition, major sporting events have significant benefits for the national economy and for attracting investment to the UK. The hosting of the 2022 events (excluding Commonwealth Games), had a direct economic impact of £132 million, supported 1,600 jobs and had a 6:1 return on investment. The short-term impact

alone of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games contributed almost £871 million GVA to the UK economy.

In our new sport strategy, Get Active, we have set out our ambition to deliver a new economic snapshot that articulates the economic value and growth opportunities that exist within sport in the UK. This will replace the previous government Sport Satellite reporting mechanism.

## ■ Sports: Children

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[199597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact on the health of people under the age of 18 of having access to free sports facilities for at least two hours a 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.

Alongside this, the government is also investing over £300 million in grassroots football, tennis, swimming pools and multi-sport facilities across the UK by 2025 to increase participation and ensure physical activity should be accessible to all, no matter a person's background or location. The historic level of direct investment to build or upgrade thousands of grassroots facilities across the UK and support swimming pools in England, will also increase access for thousands more young people.

## ■ Sports: Girls

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[199624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the new standards for equal access to sports announced by her Department on 8 March 2023, what plans her Department has to monitor the impact of the (a) standard and (b) associated funding on the participation of young girls in sport.

**Stuart Andrew:**

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

In March this year, the government announced a significant package of over £600 million to boost school sport, including confirmation of funding for the PE and School Sport Premium and the School Games Organisers network until the end of the summer term 2025. These programmes will improve the quality of PE and sports in primary schools to help children benefit from regular activity and ensure girls and boys have equal opportunity to play sport in school. The Department for Education will be introducing a new digital tool to hold schools accountable for how they use their PE and sport premium funding allocation to monitor and improve the quality of PE and sport they provide.

We are also investing over £300 million in grassroots football and multi-sport facilities across the UK by 2025 which will further support women and girls accessing sport. Projects in England will need to have a clear women and girls plan to receive this funding. Projects are monitored regularly to ensure the objectives are met.

We recently published our first sports strategy in eight years. This includes our ambition to provide the infrastructure and conditions needed to get as many women and girls involved in sport. The government will work with Sport England to monitor the impact of this ambition including 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.

## ■ 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.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Air Force: Cadets

**James Wild:**

[\[199263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many gliding hours were made available to air cadets in each of the last three years.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

No 2 Flying School provide glider training to the Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC). The total number of flying hours completed since 2020 is shown in the table below:

YEAR	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total number of gliding hours</b>	568	1,890	2,457	2,504

Data has been produced by calendar year and is correct as at 10 September 2023 and includes both RAFAC cadets and adults who may be receiving instructor training. It is currently not possible to provide data for Air Cadets only. 2023 data is year to date and data for 2020 is significantly lower due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Gliding flight times for Air Cadets usually range from a minimum of 6 minutes to a maximum of 20 minutes, depending on thermals and the exercises being flown.

### ■ Aircraft Carriers

**John Healey:**

[\[198630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how does his Department define its Carrier Enabled Power Projection.

**James Cartlidge:**

Carrier Enabled Power Projection (CEPP) consists of the acquisition of three core programme elements: the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers; Lightning II aircraft and the CROWSNEST radar system.

The capability that CEPP provides is primarily Carrier Strike but is also able to support littoral and discrete operations, provide humanitarian assistance and conduct defence diplomacy. It is fully interoperable with NATO and coalition allies.

**John Healey:**

[\[198631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is take to measure the value for money of Carrier Enabled Power Projection.

**James Cartlidge:**

In response to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report HC 684 November 2020, the Cost Assurance and Analysis Service were tasked to collect data on the costs of operating the UK Carrier Strike Group.

Their report on the 2021 deployment has been issued and they are concluding analysis of the 2022 deployment.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Absenteeism**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are absent without leave as of 11 September 2023.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

There are many types of absence ranging from unavoidable (being absent through factors beyond a Service person's control, such as transport problems), to short term periods of up to 48 hours, and long term periods in excess of 48 hours.

As at 13 September 2023, the total number of Armed Forces personnel who were absent without leave was 298.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Sexual Offences**

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[199692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the victims of sexual offences aged under 18 recorded in the Sexual Offences in the Service Justice System statistics published on 30 March 2023, how many perpetrators in those cases were based at the (a) Army Foundation College Harrogate, (b) Infantry Training Centre Catterick and (c) Army Training Centre Pirbright.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

In the interests of protecting the anonymity of both alleged perpetrators and the victims of sexual offences, and to ensure that victims of sexual offences are not deterred from coming forward, I will not be providing the requested information. This is consistent with my answer to Question 182068.

The published figures for victims of sexual offences under the age of 18 are based on investigations opened, and the most serious offence initially reported, not convictions. Not all investigations result in an arrest or a charge and anyone accused is innocent until proved guilty.

Information on the number of defendants found guilty of sexual offences is provided within the published data. It is categorised by the year of the Court Martial, not the year in which the investigation started.

### ■ Chinook Helicopters: Procurement

**John Healey:** [\[198987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Chinook Capability Sustainment programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[198988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Clyde Infrastructure programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[198990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Core Production Capability facility (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[198991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Crowsnest system (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[198993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Dreadnought programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[198995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Fleet Solid Support ships programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[199006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Future Defence Infrastructure Services programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[199007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Ground-Based Air Defence Capability programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[199008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Joint Crypt Key Programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.



**John Healey:** [\[199009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected whole life costs of the Land Environment Tactical Communication and Information System programme (a) were originally and (b) are as of 12 September 2023.

**James Cartlidge:**

I will write to the right hon. Member with the detail requested once it has been collated, and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

## ■ Defence: Buildings

**Luke Pollard:** [\[197594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in buildings on the defence estate was included in his Department's risk register.

**James Cartlidge:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2023]:* For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property.

Surveys are currently being conducted to identify buildings which may have been constructed with RAAC on Ministry of Defence (MOD) land.

**John Healey:** [\[198289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the first building on the Defence Estate identified as being constructed using RAAC was first so identified by his Department.

**James Cartlidge:**

For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property.

Surveys are currently being conducted to identify buildings which may have been constructed with RAAC on Ministry of Defence (MOD) land.

## ■ HMS Queen Elizabeth: Military Aircraft

**Dave Doogan:** [\[199660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on how many days 607 Squadron operated from HMS Queen Elizabeth between (a) 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 and (b) 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023; when it so operated; and for what exercises it operated.

**James Heapey:**

Before the period in question, 617 Squadron embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth in early May 2021 as part of the Operation FORTIS deployment to the Pacific between May and December 2021.

The number of days which 617 Squadron were embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth between 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 was 160 days. During this Operational

deployment a wide range of Defence Engagement and regional exercises were undertaken by 617 Squadron, including participation in exercises with the USS Ronald Reagan carrier strike group and the USS Iwo Jima amphibious ready group; Exercise Pacific Crown; Exercise Konkan Shasti; the UAE Advanced Tactics Leadership Course; Farallon de Medinilla range exercises; exercises with the USS Carl Vinson carrier strike group and cross-deck exercises with the Italian Lightning fleet.

For the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 617 Squadron embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth for 20 days conducting the Operation Achillean carrier strike group deployment.

### ■ Military Corrective Training Centre Colchester

**John Healey:** [\[198622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the requirement is for staff at the Military Corrective Training Centre; and how many staff are working at that Centre.

**John Healey:** [\[198623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is (a) the maximum and (b) current occupancy level for the Military Corrective and Training Centre as of 11 September 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[198624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the average length of time for an individual to spend at the Military Corrective Training Centre.

**John Healey:** [\[198625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the criteria under which an individual can be housed at the Military Corrective Training Centre.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

There are a mix of 122 civilian and military staff working at the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC). Releasing detailed information about workforce requirement alongside the strength could allow adversaries to infer the Army's capability, therefore this is not being released.

As at 11 September 2023 MCTC had 251 usable bedspaces, with 20 spaces occupied.

The average length of an MCTC sentence in 2022 was 110 days.

The figures above are not official statistics; they are based on data which is not gathered for statistical purposes or subject to the same level of scrutiny as official statistics.

Service personnel or civilians subject to Service Discipline who have been sentenced at Summary Hearing or Court Martial to periods of detention from 14 days up to two years serve their sentence at the MCTC. This includes Service Personnel who will remain in Service after serving their sentence and those who are being discharged.

MCTC also detains those in custody under investigation, awaiting trial at Court Martial or awaiting transfer to HM Prison having been sentenced at Courts-Martial.

**John Healey:**

[\[198626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Military Corrective Training Centre can be used to house individuals convicted under the Official Secrets Act.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

If an offender appearing in a civilian criminal court, in the same circumstances and with the same characteristics as the defendant, would have received an immediate prison sentence, an immediate prison sentence is also likely to be appropriate in the Court Martial. However, where it is in the Service interest and the interests of justice to do so, the court may consider imposing an immediate sentence of Service detention as a direct alternative to an immediate prison sentence.

Individuals who are convicted at Court Martial under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) and who are sentenced to a term of detention serve their sentence at the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC). A sentence of detention is for a maximum of two years.

If a defendant was awarded a term of imprisonment at Court Martial, they would be sent to the MCTC as a holding facility until they could be transported to a civilian prison.

#### ■ **Portsmouth Dockyard: Flood Control**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[198944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with Portsmouth City Council on the potential merits of including Portsmouth Naval Base in the local flooding protection plan.

**James Cartlidge:**

His Majesty's Naval Base (Portsmouth) engages regularly with the Portsmouth City Council (PCC) on a range of issues. No discussions have yet been held with PCC on including the Base in the local flooding protection plan. The Royal Navy does intend to engage with PCC in due course.

#### ■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

**John Healey:**

[\[198619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of the £770 million International Fund for Ukraine has been allocated to contractors as of 11 September 2023.

**James Cartlidge:**

Following a recent additional contribution of £10 million from Sweden, total contributions to the International Fund for Ukraine now stand at over £780 million.

£191 million, over 24% of the Fund, is now on contract. Further contracting activity is underway.

**John Healey:** [\[198620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many bids his Department (a) received and (b) accepted for round 2 of the International Fund for Ukraine.

**James Cartlidge:**

305 responses have been received from industry to the International Fund for Ukraine's round 2 requirements. As of 14 September 2023, Executive Panel approval has been given to contract for five critical air defence capabilities, valued at approximately £92 million. The next package of support to be procured through round 2 is subject to formal approval by the Executive Panel and will be announced in due course.

**John Healey:** [\[198621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to launch a third round of funding for the International Fund for Ukraine.

**James Cartlidge:**

Officials have begun discussions with counterparts from Executive Panel member countries on the possibility of launching a third International Fund for Ukraine Urgent Bidding Round. No decisions have yet been taken.

## ■ Veterans: Identity Cards

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[199671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans had received a veteran ID cards as of (a) 1 January, (b) 1 February, (c) 1 March, (d) 1 April, (e) 1 May, (f) 1 June, (g) 1 July, and (h) 1 August 2023.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Under Phase One, since 2018, Veterans ID cards have been issued to all Service leavers. The below table details the number of Veteran ID cards that have been issued as at the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month so far in 2023.

MONTH	TOTAL
January	60,970
February	62,092
March	63,705
April	65,143
May	66,736
June	68,246

---

MONTH	TOTAL
July	69,877
August	71,320

The Government will begin phase 2 of the Veterans Card roll-out by the end of the year, which will extend the scheme to pre-December 2018 Veterans.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[199672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much from the public purse was spent on the distribution of veteran ID cards in 2023, as of 14 September 2023.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[199673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many full-time equivalent staff were working on the veterans recognition scheme on 1 September 2023.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[199674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost to the public purse was of phase one of the veterans recognition scheme.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her to Question 183283 on 9 May 2023.

Under Phase One, since 2018, Veterans ID cards have been issued to all Service leavers; the cost of this is not separately recorded. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) project team responsible for developing and implementing the new digital verification service and issue of ID cards for Veterans who left service prior to 2018 currently consists of 4.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) civil servants and 6.0 FTE contractors in total. This number will fluctuate during the current financial year depending on skills requirements.

The MOD has allocated £1.5 million to phase two of the project for financial year 2023-24. Expenditure of £1.07m in financial year 2022-23 was funded by the Cabinet Office when the project was led by the Office of Veterans Affairs.

**Attachments:**

1. Veterans ID cards [183283 - Veterans ID cards.docx]

■ **War Widows: Pensions**

**Owen Thompson:** [\[197882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many war widows had their war pensions wrongly classed as taxable income in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022; and how many times his Department has been asked to rectify their records accordingly in this time period.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

I can confirm that the War Widow Pension has not been taxable since 1979 as per Section 639 of the Income Tax (earnings and Pensions) Act 2003.

Any tax wrongly applied to the payment would be as a result of a tax code provided by HMRC, which is responsible for correcting any tax records.

**EDUCATION****■ Apprentices****Seema Malhotra:****[198825]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons has there been a decline in apprenticeship starts in the 2022-23 academic year.

**Robert Halfon:**

Since 2010, there have been over 5.5 million apprenticeship starts. During that time, we have built a new skills system from the ground up which includes introducing new apprenticeship standards that better meet the needs of employers and apprentices today. There are now over 680 apprenticeships available from entry level right through to masters level, with over 5,000 employers involved in their development.

The government has introduced world class skills opportunities benefitting people whatever age or stage of life. Individuals now have more vocational training options than ever before with the introduction of T Levels, Higher Technical Qualifications, skills bootcamps and high quality apprenticeships. As well as being dependant on individuals choosing to undertake an apprenticeship, demand for apprenticeships is also dependent on employers choosing to offer new apprenticeship opportunities.

There have been 316,940 apprenticeship starts during the first eleven months of the 2022/23 academic year between August 2022 and June 2023, compared to 328,780 reported at the same point in the previous academic year. The department expects to publish full final year data in November 2023 at the following web-address:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2022-23>.

It is important to note that in 2021/22, the last full academic year for which data is available, apprenticeship starts were 8.6% higher than in 2020/21.

**■ Apprentices: Finance****Seema Malhotra:****[198768]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's budget was for apprenticeships in the (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 academic year.

**Robert Halfon:**

The apprenticeships budget in England is used to fund the training and assessment of new apprenticeship starts for all employers of all sizes, both those who pay the levy and those who do not. The budget is also used to cover the ongoing costs of

apprentices already in training and any additional payments made to employers, providers and apprentices.

The annual apprenticeship budget is set by His Majesty's Treasury. The table below shows the department's ring-fenced apprenticeships budget for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years. The budget is not set on an academic year basis.

YEAR	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Department's Ring-fenced Apprenticeships Budget (£ million)</b>	£2,466	£2,554

### ■ Apprentices: Taxation

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[199352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money was (a) raised by and (b) unspent from school organisations eligible to pay the apprenticeship levy in the (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23 academic years.

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[199355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money was (a) raised and (b) unspent by recruitment agencies eligible to pay the apprenticeship levy in the (i) 2021-2022 and (ii) 2022-2023 academic year.

#### **Robert Halfon:**

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of the government's reforms to create a high-quality, employer-led apprenticeships system, and it supports employers of all sizes to invest in high-quality apprenticeship training.

As employers, schools and recruitment agencies with a pay bill of £3 million or more will pay the apprenticeship levy, which is reported to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) via the Pay As You Earn scheme. HMRC holds the data on levy contributions and publish data on tax receipts here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>.

While levy-paying employers access their levy funding through their apprenticeship service accounts the department does not record their industry, sector or organisation type when they register an apprenticeship service account. For this reason, we are unable to provide data which shows the amount of levy funds entering the accounts of schools or recruitment agencies, or the proportion of that total which has been spent.

**■ Art and Design: Secondary Education**

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[198653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of increasing levels of art and design training in Primary Initial Teacher Education on levels of (a) uptake of and (b) attainment in art and design-related subjects at (i) GCSE and (ii) A level.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[198654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in Education entitled Art Now, published on 27 June 2023, whether her Department is taking steps to improve the quality of primary Initial Teacher Education for art and design related subjects.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government believes in providing a high quality education for all pupils, and integral to this is cultural education, including teaching music and the wider arts. All state funded schools are required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, and this includes promoting pupils' cultural development.

The Department will continue to invest around £115 million per annum in cultural education over three years, through the music, arts, and heritage programmes. With the real terms per pupil increases to core school funding and the nearly £5 billion that has been announced for education recovery, schools will continue to have the flexibility to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum and enrichment activities, including in arts and creative subjects.

The Department published the Model Music Curriculum in 2021 and a refreshed National Plan for Music Education (NPME) in 2022 to support teachers in delivering high quality music education. The NPME was jointly published with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in June 2022, and sets out a vision for music education to 2030 – to enable all pupils to learn to sing, play an instrument and create music together, and have the opportunity to progress their musical interests and talents, including professionally.

The Department will also publish a Cultural Education Plan in 2023, working with DCMS and Arts Council England. This will include how best to support pupils who wish to pursue careers in creative and cultural industries.

High quality teaching is the most important in school factor in improving outcomes for pupils. The Department therefore published the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) in November 2019. The CCF, alongside the Early Career Framework, establishes an entitlement to a three or more year structured package of support for future generations of teachers.

The CCF has been designed to cover the content required by trainee teachers irrespective of subject or phase, though there is a strong emphasis on the need for training to be subject and phase specific.



Qualified Teacher Status continues to be awarded at the end of ITT against the Teachers' Standards, which are reflected in the design of the CCF. Standard 3 requires teachers to 'have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings'.

## ■ Care to Learn Scheme

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[199570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much her Department spent on the Care to Learn scheme in each of the last five years; and how many people have (a) made a claim and (b) been eligible for support under that scheme in each of the last five years.

**Robert Halfon:**

Data showing the number of people eligible for support under the Care to Learn scheme and the total payments made for academic year 2022/23 is not yet available.

Eligible students apply for Care to Learn support through their education institution. The department does not routinely gather information about rejected applications from them.

The figures below cover the previous five academic years:

ACADEMIC YEAR	CARE TO LEARN TAKE-UP	TOTAL PAYMENTS
2017/18	2,345	£10,292,914
2018/19	2,003	£8,096,905
2019/20	1,376	£6,090,356
2020/21	1,155	£5,034,029
2021/22	1,052	£4,665,735

## ■ Childcare: Students

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[199569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much her Department spent on the Childcare Grant for undergraduate students in each of the last five years; and how many people have (a) made a claim and (b) been eligible for support under that scheme in each of the last five years.

**Robert Halfon:**

The information on how much the department has spent on the Childcare Grant for undergraduate students for each of the last five years and how many people have claimed this can be found in the Student Loan Company's (SLC) 'Student support for higher education in England 2022' publication, which can be found in Tables 4C(i) and 4C(ii) at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/student-support-for-higher->

[education-in-england-2022](#),. Data for the 2022/23 academic year will be available in November 2023. Data for the 2021/22 academic year is currently provisional, as it has an earlier effective date of 31 October of the relevant academic year, and will be finalised in November 2023.

In the 2019/20 academic year, Childcare Grant payments changed from being paid to new and continuing students based on estimated costs, to being paid to childcare providers directly via a third-party system, based on actual costs incurred. As a result of this change there is a break in the time series when reporting Childcare Grant amounts. Up until the 2019/20 academic year, Childcare Grant has been reported as awards based on a student's given estimates for the year, which are then finalised a year later in the subsequent publication. From the 2019/20 academic year, actual payments will be reported as with other loan products, in a new table, Table 4C (ii).

The department and SLC do not hold information on the number of people who have been eligible for Childcare Grants over the last five years.

#### ■ Department for Education: Buildings

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[197945\]](#)

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

**Nick Gibb:**

For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property. Survey work is underway.

#### ■ Free School Meals

**Justin Madders:**

[\[198717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of the grant paid for free school meals.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department recognises the cost pressures that some schools and suppliers may be facing. The Department is holding regular meetings with other Government Departments and with food industry representatives, covering a variety of issues including public sector food supplies.

The Department keeps funding under review to ensure that schools continue to be able to provide healthy and nutritious meals. The funding for the free school meals programme is increasing in 2023/24, in line with the latest available gross domestic product deflator forecast when the National Funding Formula was published in July 2022.

Universal Infant Free School Meals are funded through a direct grant to schools. The funding rate for the 2023/24 academic years stands at £2.53. This represents a 5% increase on the previous year's rate.

**■ Further Education: Reform****Seema Malhotra:**[\[198822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the adviser on skills policy delivery, on the implementation of reforms to the skills system since his appointment was announced.

**Robert Halfon:**

The government has built a new skills system from the ground up as we recognise that skills are crucial in driving long-term economic growth. This government is taking forward major reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper: delivering T Levels, boosting apprenticeships, approving Higher Technical Qualifications, rolling out Skills Bootcamps, and introducing the Lifelong Loan Entitlement from 2025.

Sir Michael Barber was appointed to provide private advice to my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, on the implementation of current skills reform in November 2022 for a term of six months.

The Chancellor and Secretary of State have decided to extend Sir Michael's role for a second term until 16 December 2023, to build on the work to date.

Sir Michael Barber continues to regularly meet the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor to provide ongoing advice, until there is an agreement for the appointment to end. He also meets with officials from the department, No.10 and His Majesty's Treasury monthly. His work in this capacity is unpaid and constitutes no more than one day a week.

**■ Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education****Seema Malhotra:**[\[198765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many staff were employed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in the latest month for which data is available.

**Robert Halfon:**

This is a matter for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. I have asked its Chief Executive, Jennifer Coupland, to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

**■ Mathematics: Higher Education****Chi Onwurah:**[\[199590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support post-18 mathematics education.

**Robert Halfon:**

The government is committed to supporting people to climb the ladder of opportunity towards better jobs, better wellbeing, and better options for the future.

To enable this, the department recognises the importance of maths skills, both in work and everyday life. Securing good levels of numeracy increases individual productivity, improves earnings and employment opportunities, supports economic growth and breaks cycles of intergenerational economic and social disadvantage. That is why we are continuing to support participation in maths provision through our 'essential skills entitlements' which provide the opportunity of free study for adults who do not have essential numeracy skills up to and including level 2.

Learners who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 or higher can undertake a range of courses fully funded through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) including GCSEs, Functional Skills and other relevant qualifications from entry level to level 2.

The department also supports training for adults in community settings through the AEB. Prioritised for disadvantaged learners, Community Learning can provide a 'stepping stone' for those adults who are not ready for formal accredited learning, or who would benefit from learning in a more informal way.

In addition, Multiply is the government's programme for improving adult numeracy, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the government's flagship fund for supporting people and places across the UK. Up to £270 million is directly available for local areas in England to deliver innovative interventions to improve adult numeracy.

The Free Courses for Jobs offer, which was launched in April 2021, gives eligible adults the chance to access high value Level 3 qualification for free, which can support them to gain higher wages or a better job. This offer allows eligible learners to access a high-value level 3 qualification for free, to gain higher wages and access new job opportunities. The offer includes a number of qualifications in maths for example a Level 3 Certificate in Mathematical Studies.

Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills, with an offer of a job interview with an employer on completion. Skills Bootcamps are available in a variety of skill areas including digital, technical, construction, logistics (HGV driving), and skills that support the green economy.

The department is scaling up Skills Bootcamps delivery to 64,000 starts by the 2024/25 financial year through national procurement and grant funding to 25 Mayoral Combined Authorities and local areas.

## ■ Music: Education

**Mr Robin Walker:**

[\[198824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has an expected timeline for implementing the National Plan for Music Education.

**Nick Gibb:**

In June 2022, the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published the 'national plan for music education - the power of music to

change lives'. The plan sets out the Government's priorities for music education up to 2030 and how it aims to achieve them. This plan can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-power-of-music-to-change-lives-a-national-plan-for-music-education>.

The Department is on track in delivering all of the commitments within the plan. Since publication, the Department established a monitoring board made up of experts in music, school music teaching, curriculum design, music education beyond schools, music charities and the music industry. The board will support the implementation of the plan, ensuring that the commitments set out in the plan are fulfilled.

As part of the plan, the Department set an expectation for all state funded schools to teach music to pupils from 5 to 14 year olds for at least one hour a week.

The Department's national network of music hubs will continue to provide support to schools in England, with £79 million per annum funding for the music hubs programme up to 2025, and £25 million capital for new instruments from September 2024.

In the plan, the Department also announced its intention to invite applications for the role of music hub lead organisations, and to transition to fewer music hub areas across England, covering larger geographical areas but working in greater partnerships with schools, other music education providers and the music industry. Arts Council England are leading this process, and following a two stage consultation earlier this year, they launched their investment programme, seeking applications in October with the intention of newly competed music Hub lead organisations being in place for September 2024. This will include all Music Hubs identifying and working with a small number of lead schools, as set out in the plan.

In June, the Department also launched a competition to identify a national partner to deliver the Music Progression Fund, also announced in the plan. The intention is to support up to 1,000 disadvantaged pupils to learn how to play an instrument or learn how to sing to a high standard, over a sustained period. The Department is currently considering grant applications, and more details will be published in due course.

The next phase is to establish national music hub centres of excellence for inclusion, continuing professional development, music technology and pathways to industry. The intention remains to appoint the centres by late 2024, with additional funding to provide specialist support to all music hubs across England.

Finally, the Department will also be working with the monitoring board to establish an impact framework for the plan. This will set out how to monitor and measure the plan's success, quantitatively and qualitatively, learning from the monitoring arrangements for the original plan.

The Department will also publish a progress report in 2025.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

**[198826]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made establishing new music hubs; and whether she has an expected timeline for when they will become active.

**Nick Gibb:**

In June 2022, the Department for Education and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport published the 'national plan for music education: the power of music to change lives'. This plan is accessible at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-power-of-music-to-change-lives-a-national-plan-for-music-education>. The plan sets out the Government's priorities up to 2030 for music education for pupils, including plans to strengthen the success of music hubs.

In the plan, the Department also announced its intention to invite applications for the role of music hub lead organisations, and to transition to fewer music hub areas across England, covering larger geographical areas but working in greater partnerships with schools, other music education providers and the music industry. Arts Council England are leading this process and following a two stage consultation earlier this year, they launched their investment programme, seeking applications in October with the intention of newly competed music Hub lead organisations being in place for September 2024. This will include all Music Hubs identifying and working with a small number of lead schools in this time frame, as set out in the plan.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

**[198828]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has undertaken an evaluation of the first ten years of the National Plan for Music Education.

**Nick Gibb:**

The original national plan for music education was published in 2011 in response to a review of music education in England, commissioned by the Government. The ten year plan set out what every pupil should expect at each stage of their education, and how music education providers would work together, as music education hubs, to ensure all pupils could participate and progress.

In terms of evaluation, to inform the refreshed national plan published in June 2022, the Department launched a Call for Evidence in February 2020 which received over 5,000 responses from parents, teachers, students and 275 responses from young people. The Department published a Call for Evidence report in August 2021, setting out wide ranging findings on music education.

Following this, the Government appointed an expert panel to advise on the development of the new national plan, which included experts representing schools, music hubs and the music industry. As part of this work, the Department also reviewed a range of research, reflecting on the ten years since the publication of the original plan, and proposed approaches for the future.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

**[198829]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has set national targets for increasing musical (a) proficiency and (b) engagement.

**Nick Gibb:**

Music is a statutory subject from ages 5 to 14 in the National Curriculum, and pupils have an entitlement to study at least one arts subject at Key Stage 4 in maintained schools. Although only maintained schools are required to teach the National Curriculum, academies are expected to teach a curriculum that is similar in breadth and ambition.

The Department has no plans to set national targets on musical proficiency and engagement. Schools have the autonomy to decide how best to teach music, setting expectations on good musical progression as part of their music curriculum, working with their local music hub as needed.

The Department has set out national expectations on high quality music education. This is reflected in the 2022 'national plan for music education', which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-education-information-for-parents-and-young-people/what-the-national-plan-for-music-education-means-for-children-and-young-people>. National expectations are also reflected in the non-statutory 'Model Music Curriculum' 2021 guidance for schools. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-music-in-schools>. The Department has also committed to continue funding a range of music education programmes, including the national music hubs network and the Music and Dance Scheme.

The national plan for music education also sets out expectations from September 2023 for schools. It outlines that:

- Schools should provide timetabled curriculum music of at least one hour each week of the school year for Key Stages 1-3, as well as co-curricular opportunities to learn instruments and sing, and to play and sing together in ensembles and choirs.
- Music should be represented in every school's leadership structure, with a designated music lead or head of department at school and/or academy trust level, for primary and secondary phases.
- In partnership with their music hub, every school should have a music development plan which sets out how it will be staffed and funded. The Department also wants to see every multi-academy trust develop music development plans for all of their schools.

The Department's national network of music hubs will continue to provide support to schools in England, supported by £79 million per annum funding for the music hubs programme up to 2025, and £25 million capital for new instruments.

## ■ Nurseries: Buildings

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[197808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has plans to assess maintained nurseries for risks associated with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Robert Halfon:**

The UK higher education (HE) system is amongst the best in the world. Attracting the brightest students internationally is good for our universities and delivers growth at home.

Domestic students continue to make up the vast majority of overall undergraduate students within UK universities. The proportion of international acceptances on results day this year was 12.3%, having been 14.7% at the same point in 2019.

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

Ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to access a world class education remains a top priority and is fundamental to the department's ambition to level-up skills, growth, and economic opportunity across the country.

As autonomous bodies independent from the government, universities are responsible for their own recruitment decisions. Most universities have separate home and international student recruitment targets, set before the admissions cycle even begins. Universities plan their student numbers very carefully, not least because there are important implications for the provision of student support and wellbeing services, accommodation, and everything else needed to deliver the best student experience.

The department and I regularly engage with the HE sector to support policy making and delivery and did so throughout the 2023 cycle.

Most recently, on 7 September 2023, I attended the Universities UK annual conference and discussed how the government is supporting universities to maximise their immense economic and social impact. Key topics discussed included degree apprenticeships, the Lifelong Loan Entitlement and Horizon.

## ■ Physical Education and Sports: Schools

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[199623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the new standards for equal access to sports announced by her Department on 8 March 2023, whether her Department has issued updated guidance for schools on using the funding to support pupils with physical education, sport and games.

**Nick Gibb:**

On 19 July 2023, the Government published an update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan (SSAAP). The update builds on the Government's announcement in March that set out new ambitions for equal access to PE and sport for girls and



boys, two hours of PE a week, alongside over £600 million funding for the primary PE and Sport Premium and the School Games Organiser Network.

Alongside the SSAAP, the Department has published updated guidance for primary schools on the PE and Sport Premium, including a new digital tool to support schools in using the funding to the best advantage of their pupils. This will be piloted in 2024 and become mandatory in 2025.

The Department will publish non-statutory guidance for schools later this year, which will illustrate the practical steps taken by schools to provide two hours of PE and equal access for girls and boys.

## ■ Pre-school Education: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure that early years funding for children in the north of England is at a level comparable to that made available to children in (a) London and (b) the south of England.

**David Johnston:**

The government currently funds local authorities to deliver the government-funded entitlements through the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) for 3 and 4-year-olds and a separate formula for 2-year-olds. These have been designed to allocate the department's record investment in early years entitlement funding fairly and transparently across the country.

The EYNFF is made up of a universal base rate, (which is the same hourly funding rate for every child in a local authority) plus funding factors for additional needs, using measures of free school meals, disability living allowance, and English as an additional language.

The formula also includes an Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) multiplier to reflect variations in costs across different areas of the country. This uses the general labour market measure to reflect staff costs and a Rates Cost Adjustment to reflect premises related costs.

Each local authority's EYNFF rate will vary depending on their level of additional needs and their ACA values.

Following a consultation in 2022, the department has updated the funding formulae to ensure the funding system remains fair, effective and responsive to changing levels of need across different local authorities.

To distribute the additional £204 million funding provided from September 2023 for the existing entitlements through the Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG), the department has used the existing funding formulae for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds. This allows us to recognise cost variations between local authority areas when determining the EYSG rates for individual local authorities.

With the introduction of the new entitlements for working parents of children aged 9 months to 2 years from the 2024/25 financial year, the department has recently

finished consulting on our proposed funding formula for distributing funding to local authorities. That consultation closed on 8 September 2023 and the department will announce our response and confirm the final hourly funding rates for the 2024/25 financial year in the autumn.

#### ■ Pupils: Transgender People

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[198597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with which organisations (a) she and (b) her officials have held discussions on the preparation of guidance on transgender pupils in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department engages with external bodies on a regular basis and a number of these conversations have related to the guidance the Department is developing for schools and colleges on gender questioning children. The Department will be undertaking a full public consultation on the draft guidance prior to finalisation, and will continue to engage with a range of stakeholders throughout this process.

#### ■ Schools: Art and Design

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[198662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding was allocated to art and design education at (a) primary and (b) secondary level in the 2022-2023 financial year.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[198664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of increases in the cost of living on art and design learning.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government remains committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a high quality education in art and design as part of a broad and ambitious curriculum. This starts during the early years and continues in school, with art and design forming part of the National Curriculum from age 5 to 14. Between 2018/2019 and 2021/2022 academic years, around three in ten pupils in state funded schools have taken art and design GCSE and this has remained broadly stable.

All schools have the freedom to choose how to spend their core funding according to their own circumstances and priorities, providing that all expenditure ultimately benefits their students. The Department does not provide additional in year funding for art and design. It is for schools to decide the allocation of resources at an individual school level, including funding in art and design and other arts subjects.

Overall, core schools funding increased by £4 billion in the 2022/23 financial year which is a 7% increase in cash terms per pupil from the 2021/22 financial year. This included an increase in mainstream school funding for 5 to 16 year olds of £2.5 billion in the 2022/23 financial year, compared to the 2021/22 financial year. This is

equivalent to an average 5.8% cash increase, or an average of £300 per pupil, with each Local Authority forecast to see at least a 4.8% increase per pupil.

Over and above core schools funding, the Department will continue to spend around £115 million per annum in cultural education over three years, through arts, music and heritage programmes. With the real terms per pupil increases to core school funding and the nearly £5 billion that has been announced for education recovery, schools will continue to have the flexibility to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum and enrichment activities, including in arts subjects.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living. Economic disadvantage has an effect on outcomes and disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs are more likely to fall behind and need extra support to reach their full potential. The Department therefore continues to provide support with pupils' education across all subjects, including art and design, in promoting pupils' cultural development.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living. Economic disadvantage has an effect on outcomes and disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs are more likely to fall behind and need extra support to reach their full potential. The Department therefore continues to provide support with pupils' education across all subjects, including art and design, in promoting pupil's cultural development.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[198663]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on art and design learning.

**Nick Gibb:**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused considerable disruption to the education of pupils. Helping them to recover from the pandemic is one of the Department's main priorities.

The Department made almost £5 billion of funding available to support education recovery. Much of this funding is focused on those that need it most, including the most disadvantaged and those with the least time left in education, whilst giving schools and colleges as much flexibility as possible to tailor help to their own circumstances.

With the real terms, per pupil increases to core school funding and the nearly £5 billion of funding allotted to education recovery, schools will continue to have the flexibility to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum and enrichment activities, including in art and design.

The Government remains committed to ensuring that all pupils continue to receive a high quality education in art and design as part of a broad and ambitious curriculum. Over the previous four years of the pandemic period between the 2018/19 and 2021/22 academic years, around three in ten pupils in state funded schools have taken Art and Design GCSE and this has remained broadly stable.

**■ Schools: Buildings****Charlotte Nichols:** [\[195297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Audit Office's report entitled Condition of school buildings, published on 28 June 2023, what plans her Department has to tackle the safety issues of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in school buildings; and by what date.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[195298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on capital funding to support the removal of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete from school buildings; and how much and what proportion of that capital funding (a) has been allocated under the school rebuilding programme and (b) comprises additional funding.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[195299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to remove Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete from school buildings; whether funding has been secured from HM Treasury to pay for this work; and when he expects this work to be completed.

**Feryal Clark:** [\[197045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of schools at risk of imminent closure as a result of the (a) condition of and (b) type of building material in school buildings in (i) Enfield North constituency, (ii) the London Borough of Enfield and (iii) London.

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[197366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what safety checks her Department is recommending that schools in Chipping Barnet constituency carry out on reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[197369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to provide additional funding to schools which have reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in their buildings.

**Imran Hussain:** [\[197478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have been surveyed for reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in (a) Bradford East constituency, (b) the City of Bradford Metropolitan District and (c) Yorkshire and Humber.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[197492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in England do not make use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[197557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support her Department is providing to schools found to have Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) where they have had to vacate facilities; and from which budget that funding will be met.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[197558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to complete its survey of the schools estate for Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[197559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools can continue to use and occupy buildings with Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) which are deemed to be structurally sound.

**Sally-Ann Hart:** [\[197603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the costs for remedying cases of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) on the availability of capital budget for (a) new school builds and (b) UTC Sleeves.

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[197613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the condition of school buildings in Battersea.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[197809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the assessment of risks associated with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools is being integrated with assessments for any other potential structural risks in school buildings.

**Julian Knight:** [\[197863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she expects the removal of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) from schools to be complete.

**Julian Knight:** [\[197864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding her Department provides to help schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) procure temporary accommodation.

**Julian Knight:** [\[197870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria her Department uses to prioritise schools for reconstruction related to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[197920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has (a) contacted every school in Erith and Thamesmead constituency that may be affected by the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), (b) assigned a caseworker to each affected school and (c) informed the relevant local authority of their (i) findings and (ii) actions.

**Dan Carden:** [\[197971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools that suspect that their estates contain RAAC are waiting for a specialist visit to assess the RAAC's (a) presence and (b) condition.

**Dan Carden:** [\[197972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the sum required to fulfil its commitment to address the immediate risks posed by RAAC.

**Dan Carden:** [\[197973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the potential implications of the presence of RAAC on the schools estate for the School Rebuilding Programme.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[197974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many free schools have reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete on their school estate.

**Tom Hunt:** [\[198246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what process her Department has put in place for identifying schools at risk of closure due to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Tom Hunt:** [\[198247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in what timeframe parents can expect to hear whether their child's school is affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Feryal Clark:** [\[198255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has (a) contacted every school in Enfield North constituency that may be affected by the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, (b) assigned a caseworker to each affected school and (c) informed the relevant local authority of their (i) findings and (ii) actions.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[198384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department has allocated to (a) Sheffield and (b) Abbey Lane Primary School for the remediation of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[198393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take to support (a) higher and (b) further education institutions with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in their buildings.

**Layla Moran:** [\[198465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in England and Wales have (a) submitted and (b) been returned the results of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete surveys.

**Layla Moran:** [\[198466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average number of days is for her Department to process and return a school's RAAC survey.

**Layla Moran:** [\[198467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools are currently waiting for the results of their reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete survey to be returned as of 7 September 2023.

**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[198572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department has allocated to (a) County Durham and (b) St Leonard's Catholic School for the remediation of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[198573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of schools closing due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete on children (a) with SEND and (b) in receipt of free school meals in County Durham.

**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[198575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure children and families impacted by the closure of St Leonard's Catholic School in Durham are supported with any potential costs related to the closure.

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[199083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, from which budget the Government will allocate funds for remedial work to schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Feryal Clark:** [\[199254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department has allocated to Enfield North constituency for the remediation of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Munira Wilson:** [199665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number and proportion of state-funded schools that are suspected to contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete that have not yet been surveyed.

**Munira Wilson:** [199666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of when all state-funded schools that are suspected to contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete will have been surveyed.

**Munira Wilson:** [199670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average waiting time is between a school informing her Department of suspected reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in its buildings and a surveyor appointed by her Department visiting the school.

**Nick Gibb:**

Nothing is more important than the safety of children and staff. It has always been the case that where we are made aware of a building that may pose an immediate risk, the Department takes immediate action.

It is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary-aided school bodies – who work with their schools on a day-to-day basis, to manage the safety and maintenance of their schools and to alert us if there is a concern with a building.

The Department has acted decisively and proactively to tackle this issue. This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK. The Department issued comprehensive guidance in 2018, and subsequent years, to all responsible bodies highlighting the potential risks associated with RAAC and supporting them to identify this within their buildings, as well as to take appropriate steps in meeting their obligations to keep buildings safe. The most recent guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-estates-guidance>.

There are over 22,000 schools and colleges in England, and the vast majority are unaffected. A significant proportion of the estate was built outside the period where RAAC was used, with around one third of the estate built since 2001, therefore, the Department has focused efforts on buildings built in the post-war decades.

The Department issued a questionnaire in March 2022, asking responsible bodies to inform the Department of any suspected RAAC identified in their estates. Responsible bodies have submitted questionnaires for over 98% of schools with blocks built in the target era, of which there are 14,900. We are pressing all remaining schools to get checks completed, to determine which schools require surveys.

The Department is contacting responsible bodies to help them respond to this request and to advise on what needs to be done, so that they can establish whether



they believe they have RAAC. This work will continue until we have a response for all target era schools.

Schools and colleges where RAAC is suspected are being fast tracked for surveying, which is used to confirm whether RAAC is actually present. All schools and colleges that have already told us they suspect they might have RAAC will be surveyed within a matter of weeks, in many cases in a matter of days.

All schools where RAAC is confirmed are provided with a dedicated caseworker to support them and help implement a mitigation plan and minimise the disruption to children's learning.

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

Schools will contact parents where RAAC is identified and inform them of any impacts on their child. The vast majority of schools are unaffected. Any parents that are unsure if their child's school is affected should contact their school directly.

While some short term disruption is inevitable, all available measures will be taken to minimise disruption to pupil learning and ensure that pupils continue to receive face-to-face teaching. Where there is any disturbance to face-to-face education, schools will prioritise attendance for vulnerable children and young people and children of key workers. The guidance published by the Department in August also includes guidance on provision for pupils with SEND and sets out expectations that schools continue to provide free school meals to eligible pupils.

The Department will fund emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall or office, the department will provide that support for all reasonable requests. The Department will also fund longer term refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, to rectify the RAAC issue in the long term.

All previously confirmed Schol Rebuilding Programme projects announced in 2021 and 2022 will continue to go ahead. A full list of confirmed projects can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme>.

Further information on RAAC in education settings is available on the Education Hub: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/06/new-guidance-on-raac-in-education-settings/> .

**Tim Farron:** [\[195929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will list the schools in England by (i) parliamentary constituency and (ii) local authority which have been contacted due to their buildings containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Sir Jake Berry:** [\[196299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools (a) are affected by and (b) have been forced to close due to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in Rossendale and Darwen constituency.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[197171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish details of schools (a) at risk of collapse and (b) containing unsafe building materials.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[197318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the transparency data on the number of education settings containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, published by her Department on 31 August 2023, how many state-funded education settings have closed to pupils (a) at least one classroom, (b) at least one building, (c) the entire site as of 31 August 2023.

**Michael Fabricant:** [\[197343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether any schools in Lichfield constituency have been identified as containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[197368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete has been identified in any school buildings in Chipping Barnet constituency.

**Imran Hussain:** [\[197477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have been identified as containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in (a) Bradford East constituency, (b) the City of Bradford Metropolitan District and (c) Yorkshire and Humber.

**Imran Hussain:** [\[197479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have been instructed to close by her Department due to concerns over reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in (a) Bradford East constituency, (b) the City of Bradford Metropolitan District and (c) Yorkshire and Humber.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[197491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether any schools in Slough use reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to publish a list of schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Munira Wilson:** [\[197577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the transparency data entitled Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC): management information, published by her Department on 31 August 2023, if she will publish a list of the education settings where RAAC is known to be present; and in which local authorities those settings are.

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[197614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in Battersea have been identified as containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Feryal Clark:** [\[197925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools (a) are affected by and (b) have been forced to close because of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in Enfield North constituency.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

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

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[196300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish a list of schools in which reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is believed to be present; when she first became aware of the presence of RAAC in each school; what assessment she has made of the level of risk that the RAAC could pose to staff and students in each school; what steps she is taking to mitigate those risks in each school; what assessment she has made of the impact of school closures on children's education in each school; and what estimate she has made of how long each school will be closed.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[196301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will set out the nature and amount of financial support which her Department plans to provide to cover the associated costs for mitigation and transitional requirements in terms of (i) revenue funding and (ii) capital funding in the context of schools where reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is understood to be present and to pose a risk to staff and students if unmitigated.

**Bridget Phillipson:****[196302]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the context of schools where reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is presently understood to pose a risk to staff and students if unmitigated, if she will publish a timeline (a) of when the issue was first identified and made known to her Department, (b) of when the decision was made to contact the school in respect of the issues and risk ahead of the beginning of the autumn school term and (c) on what day and at what time the school or the multi-academy trust to which it belongs was informed of the risks.

**Bridget Phillipson:****[197447]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria her Department is using to assess whether to provide additional support on revenue costs for school transport to other locations for children in schools impacted by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete; and if she will provide guidance to schools leaders in those schools to help them make transport arrangements.

**David Johnston:**

This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK.

We have acted decisively and proactively to tackle this issue. The Office of Government Property wrote to all Government Property Leaders in 2019, and again in September 2022, highlighting safety alerts on RAAC and signposting guidance on identification and remediation. The Government also created a cross-Government working group on RAAC this year to collectively address the issue. Since then, Departments have been surveying properties and depending on the assessment of the RAAC, decided to either continue or monitor the structure, reinforce it, or replace it. This is in line with the approach recommended by the Institute of Structural Engineers.

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible.

Guidance to schools since 2018 has been clear about the need to have adequate contingencies in place for the eventuality that RAAC-affected buildings need to be vacated at short notice.

The Department for Education began a programme working with the sector to identify and manage RAAC in March 2022, extended to colleges in December.

Following careful analysis of recent cases, the Department took a precautionary and proactive step has been taken to change the approach to RAAC in education settings ahead of the start of the academic year.

The Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates. The list is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>.

The Department has increased the survey rate, ensuring any setting that suspects RAAC is surveyed imminently. The vast majority of schools surveyed to date have been found to have no RAAC.

All settings that inform the Department via their questionnaire response that they have suspected RAAC are being fast-tracked for surveying and the aim is to have all education settings currently suspected as containing RAAC surveyed in a matter of weeks.

While some short-term disruption is inevitable, all available measures will be taken to minimise disruption to pupil learning and ensure that pupils continue to receive face-to-face teaching.

The Department will fund mitigation works that are capital funded, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall or office, the department will provide that support for all reasonable requests. Longer-term refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects will also be funded where these are needed, to rectify the RAAC issue in the long term.

The Department will always put the safety and wellbeing of children and staff in education settings at the heart of its policy decisions. The Government has taken proactive action to identify and mitigate RAAC. The Department is leading the way in identifying RAAC in education buildings to ensure that students and staff stay safe.

The Department has published guidance for affected settings available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-guidance-for-responsible-bodies-and-education-settings-with-confirmed-raac>.

**Dawn Butler:** [197386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on how many portacabins have been supplied by each provider to schools which need temporary accommodation because of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC); and how much her Department has paid to each such provider.

**Dawn Butler:** [197688]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her interview with Sky News on 4 September 2023, if she will provide details of the portacabin providers her Department has contracted to provide temporary accommodation for schools affected by the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Mr Robin Walker:** [198823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many mobile classrooms have been provided to schools as a result of (a) identified and (b) suspected reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**David Johnston:**

This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK.

It is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary aided school bodies – who work with their schools on a day to day basis, to manage the maintenance of their schools. These responsible bodies may deploy temporary buildings for a wide range of reasons, not all of which will relate to building or refurbishment works. In addition, most building and refurbishment works within schools and colleges do not involve RAAC and will not require the involvement of the Department. The Department does not therefore hold information on the number of schools using temporary classrooms.

Where schools need to vacate buildings due to RAAC, they use a range of different types of accommodation including accommodation on and off site. On site accommodation can include semi rigid structures and temporary classrooms. Where this is the case, the Department is working with three contractors to accelerate the installation of temporary units in particular. The Department has not, therefore, produced central estimates of the number of temporary classrooms required, however, we can confirm that we have secured significant capacity to meet current needs, and can increase this if necessary. Our focus is on working closely with individual settings to make sure they have workable plans for their individual circumstances and context. Based on the experience where RAAC assessed as critical was found, the Department expects the vast majority will be able to continue to provide face to face teaching with either minimal or no disruption.

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[197396]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish a breakdown of the number and proportion of students eligible for (a) free school meals and (b) Education, Health and Care plans at schools at which reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is believed to be present; and if she will publish a breakdown of the (i) ethnicity and (ii) year-groups of students at those schools.

**David Johnston:**

This information is available through existing published datasets.

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. The Government published lists of schools and colleges confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates. The published lists are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>.

School level information on Education, Health and Care plans in schools is published in the annual Special educational needs in England national statistic, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. School level information on free school meals, ethnicity and year group is published in the annual Schools, pupils and their characteristics national statistic, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[197445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many caseworkers her Department has employed in total in terms of (a) headcount and (b) full-time equivalent staffing to support school impacted by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) as of 4 September 2023.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[197446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools impacted by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) had been allocated a caseworker as of 4 September 2023.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[197448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has provided information to local fire and rescue services of schools in their area that have reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete material present.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[197449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will set out the timelines for (a) mitigation and (b) remediation of issues relating to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in each school that is affected.

**David Johnston:**

This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK. The Department has assigned a dedicated caseworker to each school and college where the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) has been confirmed. Caseworkers work with the responsible body to assess the site's particular needs and implement individually designed remediation plans. This could include using other on-site buildings, local spaces, securing the affected area and, in some cases, erecting temporary buildings. There are 80 caseworkers in place and trained supported by Project Directors and their teams across the country. In addition, they are supported by 10 Regional Directors.

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. The Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates. The list is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>.

The priority is supporting responsible bodies to remove any immediate risks and to minimise any disruption to education provision. Mitigation measures will vary site by site and are determined on a case-by-case basis to reflect local factors. Exact timescales for mitigations and remediation will depend on the circumstances in each school, where the RAAC-affected areas are, and the specific site.

Regarding matters of fire safety, it is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, local authorities and voluntary-aided school bodies – to manage the

safety and maintenance of their estates. Notwithstanding the Department's commitment to supporting these responsible bodies to respond to the presence of confirmed RAAC on their estates, they remain responsible for these arrangements, and for ensuring the continued safety of building users.

The Department will always put the safety and wellbeing of children and staff in education settings at the heart of its policy decisions. The Government has taken proactive action to identify and mitigate RAAC in education settings. We are leading the way in identifying RAAC in education buildings to ensure that students and staff stay safe.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) for the transport of pupils to temporary buildings.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to schools affected by the use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) for the cost of (a) hiring and (b) fitting temporary accommodation that is not on a school site.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number and proportion of schools that will teach classes in portacabin units in the 2023-24 academic year.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools have taught classes in portacabin units in each year since 2019.

**David Johnston:**

Nothing is more important than the safety of children and staff. It has always been the case that where we are made aware of a building that may pose an immediate risk, the Department takes immediate action. This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK.

The Department will fund emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall or office, the Department will provide that support for all reasonable requests. Longer-term refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects will also be funded where these are needed, to rectify the RAAC issue in the long term.

It is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary aided school bodies – who work with their schools on a day to day basis, to manage the maintenance of their schools. These responsible bodies may



deploy temporary buildings for a wide range of reasons, not all of which will relate to building or refurbishment works. In addition, most building and refurbishment works within education settings do not involve RAAC and will not require the involvement of the Department. The Department does not therefore hold information on the number of schools using temporary classrooms.

Where schools need to vacate buildings due to RAAC, they use a range of different types of accommodation including accommodation on and off site. On site accommodation can include semi rigid structures and temporary classrooms. Where temporary units and structures are required as a result of buildings having been vacated due to the confirmed presence of RAAC, the Department has increased the supply of these, working with three contractors to accelerate the installation of temporary units in particular. The Department has not, therefore, produced central estimates of the number of temporary classrooms required, however, we can confirm that we have secured significant capacity to meet current needs, and can increase this if necessary. Our focus is on working closely with individual settings to make sure they have workable plans for their individual circumstances and context. Based on the experience where RAAC assessed as critical was found, the Department expects the vast majority will be able to continue to provide face to face teaching without any disruption.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support schools that have been affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for fixing all school buildings affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in what year each school affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was built.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[197648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made how many schools in addition to those already identified are affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**David Johnston:**

This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK. Nothing is more important than the safety of children and staff. It has always been the case that where we are made aware of a building that may pose an immediate risk, the Department takes immediate action. It is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary aided school bodies – who work with their schools on a day to day basis, to manage the

safety and maintenance of their schools and to alert us if there is a concern with a building.

The Department is providing responsible bodies with a range of support to identify RAAC within their estates and ensure that the associated risks are mitigated.

The Department has issued repeated guidance since 2018 to all responsible bodies highlighting the potential risks associated with RAAC and supporting them to identify this within their buildings, as well as to take appropriate steps in meeting their obligations to keep buildings safe. Our most recent guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-estates-guidance>.

There are over 22,000 schools and colleges in England, and the vast majority are unaffected. A significant proportion of the estate was built outside the period where RAAC was used, with around one third of the estate being built since 2001, therefore, the Department has focused efforts on buildings built in the post-war decades.

The Department issued a questionnaire in March 2022, asking responsible bodies to inform the Department of any suspected RAAC identified in their estates.

Responsible bodies have submitted questionnaires for over 98% of schools with blocks built in the target era, of which there are 14,900. The Department is pressing all remaining schools to get checks completed, to determine which schools require surveys.

The Department has also published updated guidance to support settings where the presence of RAAC is confirmed. All schools where RAAC is confirmed are provided with a dedicated caseworker to support them and help implement a mitigation plan and minimise the disruption to children's learning. This guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-guidance-for-responsible-bodies-and-education-settings-with-confirmed-raac>.

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. The Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates. The published list is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>.

On the question of timescales, our focus is on supporting schools and colleges to put in place suitable mitigations to minimise disruption to learning. The Department will fund emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. The Department will also fund longer term refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, to rectify the RAAC issue in the long term. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall or office, the Department will provide that support for all reasonable requests. Longer-term refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects will also be funded where these are needed, to rectify the RAAC issue in the long term.

All previously confirmed School Rebuilding Programme projects announced in 2021 and 2022 will continue to go ahead. A full list of confirmed projects can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme>.

**Munira Wilson:** [197595]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of state-funded schools have buildings that were constructed between 1935 and 1995.

**David Johnston:**

The Condition Data Collection (CDC1), which ran from 2017 to 2019, included an estimated decade of construction for all school buildings visited. 63,970 blocks across 22,031 schools were visited.

Of the 22,031 schools visited, 15,286 had at least one block where the date of construction was estimated to be between 1931 and 1990.

Of the 63,970 blocks visited, 29,521 had a date of construction estimated to be between 1931 and 1990. This represents 46% of the blocks that were visited.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [198504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of managing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in schools on timelines for (a) the School Rebuilding Programme and (b) other capital projects.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [198505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of managing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in schools on the personnel available for (a) the School Rebuilding Programme and (b) other Departmental capital projects.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [198506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many departmental (a) officials and (b) consultants she plans to direct to (i) work on the management of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools and (ii) divert from other capital projects for this purpose.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [198507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Departmental personnel working on (a) the School Rebuilding Programme, (b) the Condition Improvement Fund and (c) other capital projects are being diverted to work on managing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools.

**David Johnston:**

Nothing is more important than the safety of children and staff. The Department's focus is on supporting schools and colleges to put in place suitable mitigations to minimise disruption to learning. All schools where RAAC is confirmed are provided with a dedicated caseworker to support them and help implement a mitigation plan

and minimise the disruption to teaching. The Department redeployed officials to ensure there is resource to focus on supporting schools as required.

Eight survey firms are contracted to deliver surveys to all suspected cases. Schools and colleges that have advised the Department they suspect they might have RAAC will be surveyed within a matter of weeks.

Project delivery, property, and technical experts will be on hand to support schools to put face to face education measures in place.

The Department will fund emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. The Department will also fund longer term refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, to rectify the RAAC issue in the long term.

The School Rebuilding Programme will transform buildings at 500 schools and colleges over the next decade. It prioritises rebuilding or refurbishing poor condition buildings, providing modern designs, with new buildings being net zero carbon in operation. The first 400 schools have already been selected, 12 of which have confirmed RAAC. All previously confirmed School Rebuilding Programme projects announced in 2021 and 2022 will continue to go ahead. A full list of confirmed projects is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme>.

In addition to the School Rebuilding Programme, the Department announced £1.8 billion in both 2022/23 and 2023/24 to improve the condition of the school estate.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [199335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the (a) number of schools that have commissioned invasive buildings surveys and (b) cost of those surveys since 2017.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [199336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of how many school (a) classrooms, (b) dinner halls and (c) sports halls are out of use because of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in each constituency.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [199337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish the (a) portacabin and (b) other temporary accommodation (i) requirements and (ii) schedules for each school affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Bridget Phillipson:** [199374]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children in primary schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete who are now being taught in nearby secondary schools.

**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[199380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her oral statement of 4 September 2023 on Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in education settings, Official Report column 56, when she first asked officials to draw up plans to source (a) portacabins and (b) alternative sites for schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**David Johnston:**

This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK. We have acted decisively and proactively to tackle this issue. It is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary aided school bodies – who work with their schools on a day to day basis, to manage the safety and maintenance of their schools and to alert the Department if there is a concern with a building.

As part of their responsibilities to keep buildings safe, responsible bodies may commission surveys on issues they have concerns about. The Department issued a questionnaire in March 2022, asking responsible bodies to inform the Department of any suspected RAAC identified in their estates. Responsible bodies have submitted questionnaires for over 98% of schools with blocks built in the target era, of which there are 14,900. The Department is pressing all remaining schools to get checks completed, to determine which schools require surveys.

The Department is contacting responsible bodies to help them respond to this request and to advise on what needs to be done, so that they can establish whether they believe they have RAAC. This work will continue until the Department has a response for all target schools.

There are over 22,000 schools and colleges in England, and the vast majority are unaffected.

All schools where RAAC is confirmed are provided with a dedicated caseworker to support them and help implement a mitigation plan and minimise the disruption to teaching. While some short term disruption is inevitable, all available measures will be taken to minimise disruption to teaching and ensure that pupils continue to receive face to face teaching. Where there is any disturbance to face to face education, schools will prioritise attendance for vulnerable pupils and children of key workers.

Where schools need to vacate buildings due to RAAC, they use a range of different types of accommodation including accommodation on and off-site. On site accommodation can include semi rigid structures and temporary classrooms. Where temporary units and structures are required as a result of buildings having been vacated due to the confirmed presence of RAAC, the Department has increased the supply of these, working with three contractors to accelerate the installation of temporary units in particular. The Department has not, therefore, produced central estimates of the number of temporary classrooms required, however, we can confirm that we have secured significant capacity to meet current needs, and can increase this if necessary. Our focus is on working closely with individual settings to make sure

they have workable plans for their individual circumstances and context. Based on the experience where RAAC assessed as critical was found, the Department expects the vast majority will be able to continue to provide face to face teaching without any disruption.

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. The Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September and committed to providing further updates. The published list is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [199576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number of marquee-style temporary buildings her department has procured for schools where a gym or an assembly hall has had to close because of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [199577]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Offsite the Constructions Agreement (Framework Agreement RM6184), whether her Department plans publish the tender notice for portacabins for schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [199578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of how long it will take to install temporary modular classrooms in all schools affected by RAAC.

**David Johnston:**

This Government has taken more proactive action on RAAC than any other in the UK. It is the responsibility of those who run schools – academy trusts, Local Authorities, and voluntary aided school bodies – who work with their schools on a day to day basis, to manage the maintenance of their schools. These responsible bodies may deploy temporary buildings for a wide range of reasons, not all of which will relate to building or refurbishment works. In addition, most building and refurbishment works within education settings do not involve RAAC and will not require the involvement of the Department. The Department does not therefore hold information on the number of schools using temporary classrooms.

Where schools need to vacate buildings due to RAAC, they use a range of different types of accommodation including accommodation on and off site. On site accommodation can include semi rigid structures and temporary classrooms. Where temporary units and structures are required as a result of buildings having been vacated due to the confirmed presence of RAAC, the Department is working with three contractors to accelerate the installation of temporary units in particular. The Department has not, therefore, produced central estimates of the number of temporary classrooms required, however, we can confirm that we have secured

significant capacity to meet current needs, and can increase this if necessary. Our focus is on working closely with individual settings to make sure they have workable plans for their individual circumstances and context. Based on the experience where RAAC assessed as critical was found, the Department expects the vast majority will be able to continue to provide face to face teaching without any disruption.

The Department publishes all contracts awarded through Contracts Finder, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>. Contracts for temporary accommodation will be published within 30 days of awarding the contracts.

## ■ Schools: Closures

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[198723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children who are learning remotely as a result of school closures due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[198725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of schools closed due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, as of 11 September 2023.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[198732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when (a) the Secretary of State and (b) Ministers in her Department received (i) ministerial submissions and (ii) other documents requiring a decision from civil servants that included reference to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete since 1 May 2018; and if she will place this information in the House of Commons Library.

**David Johnston:**

Nothing is more important than the safety of children and staff, and it has always been the case that where the Department is made aware of a building that poses an immediate risk, immediate action is taken. The Department knows how important it is for pupils to be in classrooms with their friends and teachers, but their safety must come first.

All schools where RAAC is confirmed are provided with a dedicated caseworker to support them and help implement a mitigation plan and minimise the disruption to teaching. Schools and colleges will have different amounts of space affected by RAAC, and different options available to use their space.

Departments have been asked to report on the current picture of suspected and confirmed RAAC in their estates as soon as possible. The Government published lists of education settings confirmed as having RAAC on Wednesday 6 September, and committed to providing further update. At that time, 104 schools and colleges were providing face to face teaching for all pupils. 20 settings had put in place hybrid arrangements with some pupils being taught off site. 19 settings had delayed the start

of term by a few days, and 4 had needed to move to remote teaching for a short period of time.

Education is devolved and this Government has acted more decisively and proactively than any other administration in the UK.

The Office of Government Property wrote to all Government Property Leaders in 2019, and again in September 2022, highlighting safety alerts on RAAC and signposting guidance on identification and remediation. The Government also created a cross-Government working group on RAAC this year to collectively address the issue. Since then, Departments have been surveying properties and depending on the assessment of the RAAC, decided to either continue or monitor the structure, reinforce it, or replace it. This is in line with the approach recommended by the Institute of Structural Engineers.

The Department began a programme working with the sector to identify and manage RAAC in March 2022, extended to colleges in December. Critical cases were advised to close and supported to implement mitigations.

Following recent evidence cases, the Department decided to take a more cautious approach for schools and colleges, so that all spaces with confirmed RAAC should close until mitigations are put in place. As for all areas of Departmental responsibilities, advice is provided on an ongoing basis.

## ■ Schools: North of England

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will provide additional funding to schools in the North to help them reach the attainment levels of children in London and the South.

**Nick Gibb:**

Closing the attainment gap has been a departmental priority underpinning all our education reforms since 2010. Nevertheless, some regional disparities remain. The most recent Key Stage 2 data shows that in London, 65% of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. All other regions scored between 57% and 60%, with the North East being the second highest region after London. Similarly, in last year's Key Stage 4 results, 57.5% of pupils in London achieved a 5 or above in English and Mathematics (2022). All other regions scored between 46% and 52%.

The Department's mission to level up education across England, grounded in high standards and expectations for all children, no matter where they live, as set out in the 2022 Schools White Paper.

This year's school funding for all regions across England will total over £57.7 billion. Factoring in the additional funding for teachers' pay, as well as funding for both mainstream schools and high needs, this will be £1.8 billion higher in 2024/25



compared with 2023/24. The overall Core School Budget will total over £59.6 billion in 2024/25.

To address regional disparities, the Department has identified 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) with the lowest attainment outcomes, 27 of which are in the North. In these areas, we are providing £86 million for Trust Capacity funding, up to £150 million for Connect the Classroom, as well as extra funding for Levelling Up Premium retention payments and to support schools with two or more Requires Improvement inspection reports.

Furthermore, 24 EIAs have been identified as Priority Education Investment Areas, 13 of which are in the North. These areas face low attainment at Key Stage 2 and entrenched disadvantage. They receive additional investment including £42 million of Local Needs Funding, £86 million for Connect the Classroom, and over £2 million for attendance mentoring pilots.

### ■ Schools: Processed Food

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[198875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to prevent ultra-processed foods from being served in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

Diets high in calories and saturated fat, salt, and sugar are associated with an increased risk of obesity and chronic diseases.

The standards for school food are set out in the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014, accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-standards-practical-guide>. These standards were implemented by the Department to ensure that schools provide pupils with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that pupils have the energy and nutrition they need throughout the school day.

The standards set out that a pupil's healthy, balanced diet should consist of:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables
- plenty of unrefined starchy foods
- some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- some milk and dairy foods
- a small amount of food and drink high in fat, sugar and salt.

The standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, as well as low quality reformed or reconstituted foods. The standards also specify which types of food should be served at school and how often. For example, one or more portions of vegetables or salad should be served as an accompaniment, and one or more portions of fruit must be provided every day. There must also be at least three different fruits and three different vegetables each week. These standards ensure that pupils always have healthy options available for their school lunch.

The Department keeps these standards under review.

### ■ Schools: Standards

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools were rated as outstanding by Ofsted in (a) Romford, (b) Havering and (c) Essex in academic year 2023-23.

**Nick Gibb:**

This is a matter for His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to my hon. Friend, the Member for Romford directly and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### ■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to assess the adequacy of funding for SEND provision (a) nationally and (b) in York.

**David Johnston:**

The department continues to assess and monitor financial performance in York through regular meetings with officials, departmental special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) advisors, and through the Safety Valve programme.

High needs funding for supporting children and young people with complex SEND in England is increasing by a further £440 million, or 4.3%, in the next 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 and City of York Council's allocation is £27 million, which is £0.7 million more than the council will receive this year, an increase of 3.0% per head, and 27% per head over the three years from 2021/22.

The department has also published over £1.5 billion of high needs provision capital allocations for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. This funding is allocated to local authorities to support them deliver new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision. This funding forms part of the department's transformational investment of £2.6 billion in new high needs provision between 2022 and 2025 and is on top of our ongoing delivery of new special and alternative provision free schools.

Of the £1.5 billion announced, City of York Council received over £8.2 million.

## ■ Students: Loans

**Dawn Butler:** [\[199025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of accrued interest on student loans on the ability of women to pay off student loan debts.

**Dawn Butler:** [\[199026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure there is no adverse financial impact on women of student loan interest accrued while they are on maternity leave.

**Robert Halfon:**

The Government wants a sustainable student finance system that is fair to students and taxpayers, and which continues to enable anyone with the ability and the ambition to benefit from higher education to do so. The student finance system will continue to protect borrowers, including women on maternity leave, or any person on any form of parental leave, if they see a reduction in their income. Student loan repayments are made based on a borrower's monthly or weekly income, not the interest rate or amount borrowed, and no repayments are made for earnings below the relevant repayment threshold.

The recent student loan, Plan 5 reforms, will make the student loan system fairer for taxpayers and fairer for students, helping to keep the system sustainable in the long term. The new loan plan asks graduates to repay for longer and from an income threshold of £25,000 per year, but also increases certainty for borrowers by reducing interest rates to match inflation only. This change ensures that borrowers on the new Plan 5 terms will not repay, under those terms, more than they originally borrowed over the lifetime of their loans, when adjusted for inflation.

Lower earners will still be protected. If a borrower's income is below the repayment threshold of, currently, £25,000 per year, they won't be required to make any repayments at all. Any outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is written off at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower. No commercial loans offer this level of borrower protection.

A comprehensive equality impact assessment of how the student loan reforms may affect graduates, including detail on changes to average lifetime repayments under Plan 5, was produced and published in February 2022. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reform-equality-impact-assessment>.

## ■ Teachers: Art and Design

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[198655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department has allocated to subject-specific professional development training for art and design teachers in each of the (a) last and (b) next five years.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [198656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the reasons for which there has been a decline in the number of people training to become art and design teachers.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [198658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to increase funding for (a) career development and (b) recruitment pathways for art and design teachers.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [198660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of (a) recruitment and (b) retention levels of art and design teachers.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [198665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on (a) recruitment and (b) retention rates for art and design teachers.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department monitors and reviews teacher recruitment and retention regularly through the annual School Workforce Census (SWC) and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Census. As at November 2022, the latest data available, there were over 468,000 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state funded schools in England – an increase of 27,000 (6%) since 2010. There were 12,589 FTE art and design teachers in state funded secondary schools. From 2018/19 to 2022/23 inclusive, between 96.3 and 96.5% of all hours taught in art and design were taught by a teacher with a relevant post A level qualification, an increase from 89.0% in 2014/15. The school workforce statistical publication is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The latest information on art and design ITT recruitment reported against Postgraduate Initial Teacher Training (PGITT) targets, is published in the ITT Census statistical publication, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census/2022-23>. This shows that 478 postgraduate trainees were recruited in 2022/23 (provisional), where 90% of the target (530 trainees) was achieved. This compares to 780 trainees recruited in 2021/22 (revised), where 134% of the target (580 trainees) was achieved.

The Teacher Workforce Model is used by the Department to calculate PGITT targets for individual subjects. The model considers a broad range of factors, including, but not limited to projected pupil numbers, all forms of teacher recruitment (not just ITT), and the expected level of teacher retention. The model also increases (via an adjustment) targets, where relevant, to build in the impacts of recruitment being below target in the previous two ITT recruitment rounds.

The 2023/24 PGITT recruitment target for art and design is 825, an increase of 295 on the 2022/23 target of 530. This increase was driven by the need to make an

adjustment to the 2023/24 target relating to recruitment being below target, when no such adjustment was required for 2022/23. The latest published set of targets are available on GOV.UK: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/postgraduate-initial-teacher-training-targets>.

As expected, the unprecedented increase in new entrants to ITT in 2020/21 because of the COVID-19 pandemic has since declined. The graduate and general labour markets became more competitive and pay has risen in competing sectors. The best graduates have more choice, and we are competing for graduates who are in high demand in the graduate labour market.

The Department recently announced that the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendations for the 2023/24 pay award for teachers and head teachers have been accepted in full. This means that teachers and head teachers in maintained schools will receive a pay award of 6.5%. This is the highest pay award for teachers in over thirty years. The award also delivers the manifesto commitment of a minimum £30,000 starting salary for school teachers in all regions in England, with a pay award of up to 7.1% for new teachers outside London.

The Secretary of State speaks regularly to her Cabinet colleagues on a broad range of issues, including the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. While there are no specific ongoing discussions between them on teacher recruitment and retention, it remains one of this Department's top priorities, and Department's reforms will support teachers across all subjects.

In terms of the funding offered for recruitment, the Department reviews funding for ITT before the start of each annual recruitment cycle, which includes taking into account bursaries in each subject, historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need. This ensures the Department provides funding where it is needed the most.

The Department does not fund subject specific continuing professional development for art and design. Decisions relating to teachers' professional development rightly rest with schools, headteachers, and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements. Teaching School Hubs promote and deliver other high quality evidence based professional development, including subject specific CPD, to teachers and head teachers across all subjects.

More generally, the Department has put in place a number of initiatives that support all teachers' career development pathways. The Department has created an entitlement to at least three years of structured training, support, and professional development for all new teachers, underpinned by the ITT Core Content Framework and the Early Career Framework. The Department has also launched new National Professional Qualifications for teachers and school leaders at all levels. Since autumn 2021, eligible teachers and head teachers have been able to access scholarships to undertake fully funded NPQs, with £184 million of new additional funding to be spent over the course of this parliament. Further information is available

on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-npqs>.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[198657]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help art and design teachers with the potential impact of the covid-19 pandemic on staff workloads.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department's focus on reducing workload and promoting the wellbeing of school and college staff builds on the Recruitment and Retention Strategy, launched in January 2019. The Department continues to support schools to act and remove unhelpful practice that creates unnecessary workload through guidance and advice such as the School Workload Reduction Toolkit and the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-workload-reduction-toolkit> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>. More information on the Recruitment and Retention Strategy can also be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-strategy>.

The new curriculum body, Oak National Academy, seeks to provide teachers with a high quality foundation for their lesson planning across the entire school curriculum, giving teachers more time to focus on teaching.

The Department announced in July that it would convene a taskforce made up of union representatives, experts and experienced practitioners to explore ways to go further to support trust and head teachers to minimise workload for teachers and head teachers.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[198659]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to take steps to reintroduce subject-specific teacher training bursaries for art and design teachers.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department reviews bursaries for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) before the start of each annual recruitment cycle. As part of this, the Department takes account of several factors when considering the offer in each subject, including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject. This ensures the Department provides funding where it is needed the most.

In academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22 the Department exceeded the postgraduate ITT recruitment targets in art and design, recruiting 132% and 134% of the respective targets.

The Department recognises that ITT recruitment has become more challenging since then, due to the highly competitive graduate labour market. As a result, art and design recruitment fell slightly below the postgraduate ITT target in academic year 2022/23 (90%).

The Department will review the need for ITT bursaries across all subjects, informed by latest recruitment for academic year 2023/24 and our detailed workforce modelling, prior to announcing the bursaries available for ITT applicants this autumn.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[198661]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of diversity in the art and design teaching profession.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department wants teaching to be a profession where teachers and head teachers from all backgrounds have the same opportunities to progress in their career. The Department actively monitors diversity data on the teaching population through the School Workforce Census and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Census. Results show increasing diversity over time for some groups. For example, the ethnic diversity of the teacher workforce continues to increase, with 15.6% of teachers identifying as belonging to an ethnic minority group, up from 11.2% in 2010/11.

It is not possible to provide a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of subject teachers due to the way data is collected from a sample of secondary schools. A national level headcount of teachers by subjects taught is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

With regard to trainee teachers, in 2022/23, there were 477 new postgraduate trainee art and design teachers with known sex. Of these, 87% were female, 12% were male, and 1% reported their sex as 'Other', compared to 72%, 28%, and 0% respectively for postgraduate ITT trainees overall. There were 458 art and design trainees with known nationality, of which 92% were UK nationals, 6% were European Economic Area nationals, and 2% were of other nationality, compared to 92%, 5% and 2% respectively for all ITT postgraduate trainees.

It is not possible to provide breakdowns of other ITT trainee characteristics by subject. Full data can be found in the ITT Census here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census>.

## ■ Unit for Future Skills

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[199348]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of funding for the Unit for Future Skills since May 2022.

**Robert Halfon:**

The total cost for the Unit for Future Skills (UFS) from May 2022 to August 2023 is £2,569,794. The main UFS costs are its staff. There are around 20 people in the team, the majority analysts. The team also commissions external work by researchers and data experts to support the aims of the unit.

## ■ Universities: Student Wastage

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[198712]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what percentage of students who started their university course (a) under and (b) over 25 years of age did not complete their university course in each of the last five years.

**Robert Halfon:**

The Office for Students (OfS) 'student characteristics: outcomes data dashboard' shows data broken down by student characteristics across all OfS-registered English Higher Education providers. A link to the dashboard can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/outcomes-data-dashboard/>.

Upon selecting the student characteristic 'Age (detailed)', the table shows the completion rate breakdown of full-time undergraduate entrants from the 2010/11 to 2017/18 academic years by age on entry.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Alternative Fuel Payments

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[198937]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of eligible households that did not receive an Alternative Fuel Payment.

**Amanda Solloway:**

In Great Britain, an estimated 85% of eligible households received the Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) automatically via their electricity supplier during February.

In Northern Ireland, payment started in January and it is estimated that a higher proportion of households received the AFP automatically there, because it was a universal payment to all households.

More data on the AFP main scheme will be published in due course.

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>.

As the data shows, as of 29 June 2023 fewer than 1.5% of applicants to AFP AF Great Britain that had been approved for payment had not been paid.



## ■ Aviation: Fuels

**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[199496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether She has made an estimate of the quantity of aviation fuel used by aircraft registered in the UK in each of the last five years.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department publishes monthly estimates of aviation fuel in Energy Trends, Table 3.13: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/oil-and-oil-products-section-3-energy-trends>

However, fuel supply by registration status of the aircraft is not available.

## ■ Biofuels

**Andrew Percy:** [\[199325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of a bridging mechanism to support generators in the transition from unabated biomass to power bioenergy with carbon capture and storage.

**Graham Stuart:**

Government is assessing whether transitional support, such as a bridging mechanism, may be appropriate for facilitating the transition from unabated biomass generation to power Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage.

## ■ Biofuels: Vegetable Oils

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:** [\[199302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what her Department's timescale is for publishing its planned consultation on the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil for domestic fuel use.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government will issue a consultation on the potential use of renewable liquid heating fuels within twelve months.

## ■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Finance

**John Redwood:** [\[198584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made an estimate of the government's budget for carbon capture and storage expenditure over the next five years.

**Graham Stuart:**

In the 2023 Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced an unprecedented £20 billion investment in the early development of carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS). The quantum of spend within a given period will depend on the outcome of

commercial negotiations and will be subject to confirmation at the next and subsequent spending reviews.

### ■ Carbon Emissions: Innovation

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what is the expected cost to the public purse of Government-funded net-zero innovation projects in financial year 2024-25.

**Graham Stuart:**

The UK Net Zero Research and Innovation Delivery Plan sets out that, across Government, an investment of close to £4.2 billion is expected on net zero research and innovation over the period 2022-25. Of this total, spending in financial year 2024/25 is currently estimated to be approximately £1.5 billion.

### ■ Climate Change

**Dan Carden:**

[\[198896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she plans to appoint a climate envoy.

**Graham Stuart:**

There are no plans to appoint a climate envoy. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, leads on international climate change for the UK. I will represent the UK at the COP28 negotiations as Ministerial Head of Delegation.

### ■ Climate Change and Temperature

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[199019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made a comparative assessment of (a) climate change and (b) long-overdue summer sun as potential causes of the heatwave in early September 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

A detailed assessment of the September heatwave has not yet been made. The heatwave occurred when a high-pressure system led to clear skies and warm air to be drawn north from continental Europe. Climate change has increased air and sea surface temperatures across the UK and Europe meaning that, while a specific attribution analysis has not yet been conducted for this heatwave, existing scientific evidence suggests that it is very likely temperatures were higher than they might otherwise have been under the same weather pattern in a world without human-induced climate change.

**■ Climate Change Convention: United Arab Emirates****Dan Carden:**[\[198897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions she has had with the Prime Minister on his attendance at COP28.

**Graham Stuart:**

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has confirmed he will attend COP28 with other world leaders to achieve a step change in ambition and action.

**■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: National Security****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether their Department has a Chief Risk Officer for national security risks relating to the work of their Department.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department does not have a formally designated Chief Risk Officer for national security risks. The responsibility for risk management and reporting sits with the Departmental Risk Team in the Implementation and Delivery Directorate.

The Department's national security risks are covered by risks on the Departmental Register, each of which is owned by a Director General. The risks and their mitigations are updated monthly by their owners, and reviewed by the central team. National security risks are then considered by the Department's Permanent Secretaries and Directors General at Executive Committee, and are reviewed by our Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[199118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether their Department has a Chief Risk Officer responsible for national security risks relating to the work of their Department.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department does not have a formally designated Chief Risk Officer for national security risks. The responsibility for risk management and reporting sits with the Departmental Risk Team in the Implementation and Delivery Directorate.

The Department's national security risks are covered by risks on the Departmental Register, each of which is owned by a Director General. The risks and their mitigations are updated monthly by their owners, and reviewed by the central team. National security risks are then considered by the Department's Permanent Secretaries and Directors General at Executive Committee, and are reviewed by our Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

## ■ Electricity and Natural Gas: Standing Charges

**James Wild:**

[\[199252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will discuss with Ofgem the potential merits of reviewing variations in energy providers' (a) gas and (b) electricity standing charges.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The setting of standing charge is a commercial matter for suppliers. Standing charges are capped under the energy price cap which is set by Ofgem to protect customers on default tariffs.

## ■ Electricity: Prices

**John Redwood:**

[\[198579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made a comparative assessment of UK electricity prices compared to those charged in the United States.

**Graham Stuart:**

Domestic and industrial electricity prices for countries that are members of the International Energy Agency (IEA) are published in Quarterly Energy Prices tables 5.5.1 and 5.3.1 respectively.

Table 5.5.1: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/international-domestic-energy-prices> and Table 5.3.1: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/international-industrial-energy-prices>

Average electricity prices in the United States are among the lowest in the IEA, below those in the UK, and they have been one of the 5 countries with the lowest prices across the IEA since the mid-2000s. Electricity prices vary by locality in the United States based on the availability of power plants and fuels, local fuel costs, and pricing regulations.

## ■ Energy and Heating: Buildings

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[199546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answers of 11 September 2023 to Question 197707 on Energy and Heating: Buildings and of 4 September to Question 194693 on Environment Protection: Industry, for what reasons there have been changes in the levels of funding for energy efficiency and clean heat in buildings since the Spending Review.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has committed an additional £6 billion of funding for energy efficiency and clean heat from 2025 to 2028. This provides long-term funding certainty, supports the growth of supply chains, and ensures delivery can scale up over time.

Where there have been insufficient bids for funding allocated to current schemes, the remaining amounts have been reallocated to support wider energy security policy.

## ■ Energy Bills Discount Scheme

**Mr Jonathan Lord:**

[\[199356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the Energy Bill Support Scheme on businesses (a) in Woking constituency and (b) across the country.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Businesses, including those within the Woking constituency and across the UK, have already benefitted from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which ended on 31 March and provided over £7.4 billion of support.

Businesses experiencing high energy costs will continue to get a discount on gas and electricity bills under the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) until 31 March 2024, including the higher level of support for eligible Energy and Trade Intensive Industries (ETII) and domestic heat network customers on commercial contracts.

## ■ Energy: Disability

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[199318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to support disabled people with their energy costs.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is continually reviewing the financial support it provides for the differing energy needs within its communities and prioritising support for the most vulnerable.

The Help for Households campaign includes numerous cost-of-living support schemes in 2023/2024, such as the Winter Fuel Payment, Warm Home Discount, Disability Cost of Living Payment and the Cost-of-Living Payment for those on means tested benefits which has increased from £650 in 2022/2023 up to £900 in 2023/2024. From 1 October, the Ofgem energy price cap will be £1,923 for a typical household energy bill per year. A typical household will see their annual energy bills come down by around £580 since their peak.

As the Government explores possible approaches to consumer protection from 2024, it is working with disability organisations, considering the costs for disabled people and assessing the need for specific support for disabled people using medical equipment in the home.

## ■ Energy: Housing

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[199241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Northern Ireland.

**Graham Stuart:**

Energy Efficiency of homes in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter and the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive Committee.

■ **Energy: Meters**

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[199484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofgem on making the Code of Practice for the involuntary installation of pre-payment meters mandatory.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[199486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) devolved administrations, (b) fuel poverty organisations, (c) energy supply companies and (d) other relevant stakeholders on making the Ofgem Code of Practice for the involuntary installation of pre-payment meters mandatory.

**Amanda Solloway:**

On 13 September Ofgem published its decision on new rules for suppliers in relation to involuntary prepayment meter installations.

These rules will be implemented into supplier licence conditions on 8th November and therefore become mandatory.

The Code of Practice and current pause on involuntary prepayment meter installations that all suppliers have agreed to remain in place in the meantime.

■ **Energy: Planning**

**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[199517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department is taking steps to support local authorities (a) to (i) create and (ii) deliver local area energy plans and (b) to work with local communities as part of that process.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is considering the role of local-level energy planning in delivering net zero. It has supported the development of local area energy planning through the Prospering from the Energy Revolution (PFER) programme, by committing £104 million in funding.

The PFER programme included co-funding for the development of local area energy planning guidance, and the production of plans for Peterborough, Pembrokeshire, Stafford, Cannock Chase and Lichfield.

**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[199518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the recommendation in the report by Citizen's Advice entitled Close to Home, published in June 2023, on the potential merits

of introducing a national framework to support local authorities to develop local area energy plans.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government acknowledges that local-level energy planning can help bring together key stakeholders – including local authorities and network operators – to explore routes to decarbonisation in local areas. It is, however, important to be clear on the value of local-level energy planning before taking decisions on how better to coordinate delivery.

Officials will consider the recommendations set out in Citizens Advice's report as they do other external publications on the subject.

**Wera Hobhouse:**

[\[199519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of funding arrangements for local authorities to develop local area energy plans; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of amending the funding arrangements on (a) planning and (b) levels of participation in the process.

**Graham Stuart:**

Local government has significant discretion about how best to use its funding, including economic growth funding, and will need to consider how best to add value to its planning and strategic work.

Numerous local authorities have adopted or are developing Local Area Energy Plans to explore routes to decarbonisation in their area.

■ **Energy: Storage**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps she is taking to increase energy storage capacity for the purposes of (a) mitigating against price volatility and (b) providing resilience to the UK's energy supply.

**Graham Stuart:**

In autumn, the Government will publish an update on the role that flexible supplies of gas - including gas storage - play in gas security. GB storage capacity is now c. 3.1bcm, having doubled in the past year.

The Government is facilitating the deployment of electricity storage at all scales through the joint Government and Ofgem Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan. Its approach centres on creating a best-in-class regulatory framework, ensuring that markets reflect the value of flexibility to the system, and investing in innovation.

The last Capacity Market auction secured 1.2 GW of de-rated new build battery storage for the 2026/27 delivery year.

## ■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps the Government is taking to support the active removal of greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere.

**Graham Stuart:**

In the Net Zero Strategy, the Government committed to develop and deploy Greenhouse Gas Removal (GGR) technologies at scale, including an ambition to deploy at least 5MtCO<sub>2</sub>/yr of engineered removals by 2030.

The Government has committed over £100m under the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio to fund direct air capture innovation programmes.

In June, the government response to the GGR business model consultation confirmed that the Government is minded to progress based on a 'contract for difference' structure.

The Government is minded to enable GGRs to apply to CCS Track-1 expansion and Track-2, subject to criteria under development.

## ■ Hartlepool Power Station: Outages

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[199038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will list the (a) number and (b) length of (i) planned and (ii) unplanned outages at Hartlepool nuclear power station in each year between 2015 and 2022.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[199039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will list the (a) number and (b) length of (i) planned and (ii) unplanned outages at Heysham 1 nuclear power station in each year between 2015 and 2022.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[199040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will list the (a) number and (b) length of (i) planned and (ii) unplanned outages at Heysham 2 nuclear power station in each year between 2015 and 2022.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[199041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will list the (a) number and (b) length of (i) planned and (ii) unplanned outages at Sizewell B nuclear power station in each year between 2015 and 2022.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[199042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will list the (a) number and (b) length of (i) planned and (ii) unplanned outages at Torness nuclear power station in each year between 2015 and 2022.



**Andrew Bowie:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 July 2023 to Question [192704](#), which provided information on the annual number of outages and non-operational days at UK nuclear power stations from 2010 to June 2023. Information on the classification of the outages is not held by the Department as outage periods are often a mixture of planned and unplanned activity.

**India: Visits Abroad****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[199563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the transparency data entitled DESNZ ministerial travel, January to March 2023, published on 20 July 2023, what meetings took place during the visit to India by the then Secretary of State from 9 to 23 March 2023; and how much was spent on (a) overnight accommodation, (b) plane tickets and (c) other expenses.

**Graham Stuart:**

The then Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero visited Mumbai and New Delhi from 19-22 March 2023. During the visit, he opened the new British International Investment office in Mumbai and met India's Minister for Power and New and Renewable Energy, Raj Kumar Singh. He also met India's G20 Sherpa, Amitabh Kant. He held engagements with a range of representatives from businesses and the third sector, including green investors. The total cost of the Secretary of State's flights and accommodation was £9,346.

**Industrial Energy Transformation Fund****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[199543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the differences are between the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund rules for (a) Northern Ireland and (b) England and Wales.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) runs in accordance with the relevant subsidy control scheme for each country. The same IETF rules apply to companies in all countries, with the exception of the aid thresholds for decarbonisation deployment projects. For companies in England and Wales, the maximum aid intensity that a company can claim is 50%, 60% and 70% for small, medium and large companies respectively. To comply with the General Block Exemption Regulations (GBER), applicable under the Northern Ireland Protocol, the maximum aid intensity that companies in Northern Ireland can claim is 40%, 50% and 60%, dependent on their size, plus a further 5% to reflect the region's Tier 2 status under the EU subsidy control regime.

**■ Lighting: Public Consultation**

**Justin Madders:** [\[198720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when her Department plans to respond to the consultation entitled New ecodesign requirements for lighting products, published on 10 January 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is analysing the responses to the consultation for new ecodesign requirements for lighting products and a response will be published in due course.

**■ Nuclear Power**

**Mr Jonathan Lord:** [\[199351\]](#)

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

**Andrew Bowie:**

I refer my hon Friend to the answer I gave to my hon Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Matthew Offord) on 15 September to Question UIN [198081](#).

**■ Offshore Industry: Marine Protected Areas**

**Dan Carden:** [\[198898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of oil and gas developments on Marine Protected Areas.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning (OPRED) is responsible for regulating the environmental impact of offshore oil and gas operations in the UK. As part of its regulatory process, OPRED carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment, consulting with Statutory Nature Consultation Bodies, and will take into account the impact any project may have on the environment within marine protected areas.

**■ Petrol: Excise Duties**

**John Redwood:** [\[198580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much and what proportion of the average retail pump price for a litre of petrol is tax as of 11 September 2023.

**Amanda Solloway:**

As off 11 September 2023, average retail pump price for petrol was 153.1 pence/litre the total tax for this was 78.47 pence/litre or 51.3% of the pump price. This is comprised of fuel duty, currently held at the reduced rate of 52.95 pence and VAT amounting to 25.52 pence.

At Spring Budget 2023 the government announced continued support for households and businesses by maintaining the rates of fuel duty at the same levels for an additional 12 months, by extending the temporary 5p fuel duty cut and cancelling the planned inflation increase for 2023-24. That represents a saving for drivers this year of overall around £5bn and for the average car driver around £100 and around £200 since the 5p cut was introduced.

## ■ Public Houses: Energy

**Matt Western:**

[\[199629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to support public houses to pay their energy bills.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Businesses, including public houses, have already benefitted from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which ended on 31 March and provided £7.4 billion of support. Eligible businesses will continue to get a baseline discount on energy bills under the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024.

We are also helping the industry by cutting their business rates by 75%, as well as increasing the Draught Relief duty differential from 5% to 9.2% to ensure the duty on a draught pint served in a pub did not increase from August.

## ■ Renewable Energy

**Dan Carden:**

[\[198895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps she is taking to help support the (a) oil and (b) gas workforce's transition to renewable energy.

**Graham Stuart:**

As part of the North Sea Transition Deal, the offshore oil and gas sector is developing a passport to make it easier for workers to move between oil and gas and offshore renewables. To this end, the skills body OPITO has completed the mapping of technical qualifications between the oil and gas and offshore wind sectors. Work is also underway with representatives from other energy sectors to explore the potential for mutual recognition of training to support the transition of oil and gas workers.

## ■ Sizewell C Power Station: Construction

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[199094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2023 to Question 195847 on Sizewell C Power Station: Construction, what the expected value was of the Government's shareholding in Sizewell C in the 2022-23 financial year.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The expected value of the Government's shareholding in Sizewell C in financial year 2022-2023 (as at 31 March 2023) was a total of £363mn, made up of £11.5mn of ordinary shares and £351.8mn of shareholder loans.

**■ Solar Power: Manufacturing Industries**

**John Redwood:** [\[198576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many jobs have been created in the UK to manufacture solar panels in the last 12 months.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Office for National Statistics publishes estimates on the [low carbon and renewable energy economy](#). This data does not provide a breakdown of jobs created to manufacture solar panels specifically, but the latest report (for 2021) estimates around 200 jobs were created in manufacturing for the solar sector.

**■ Wind Power: Manufacturing Industries**

**John Redwood:** [\[198577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many jobs have been created in the UK to manufacture wind turbine (a) motors and (b) blades in the last 12 months.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government does not hold this data.

The Office for National Statistics estimate that the offshore wind sector employed around 10,600 people across the UK in 2021.

**■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**

**John Redwood:** [\[198578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has an estimate of how much CO2 was produced in the (a) manufacture and (b) installation of one gigawatt of offshore wind power within the UK in the last 12 months.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department does not publish information related to this request directly, however, the IPCC and UNECE have published estimates related to this request here:

[https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc\\_wg3\\_ar5\\_annex-iii.pdf#page=7](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_annex-iii.pdf#page=7)

<https://unece.org/sed/documents/2021/10/reports/life-cycle-assessment-electricity-generation-options>

Both estimates demonstrate that the lifecycle CO2 impact of generating electricity from offshore wind is significantly lower than fossil fuels.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Agriculture****Julian Sturdy:****[197735]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to (a) improve the sustainability of and (b) increase the use of regenerative farming practices.

**Mark Spencer:**

Environmental land management is the foundation of our new approach to farming. Our new schemes will pay for sustainable farming practices (such as reducing carbon emissions, creating, and preserving habitat, and making landscape-scale environmental changes) and improvements to animal health and welfare.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) pays farmers for actions that support food production and can help improve farm productivity and resilience, while protecting and improving the environment. On 21 June 2023, we announced the new and improved SFI 2023 offer – containing 23 actions which will offer farmers additional actions and more flexibility to choose the actions they want to get paid for. When adopted at scale, these actions will support sustainable food production and contribute towards the environmental targets set out in the government's Environmental Improvement Plan. Farmers were invited to register their interest in SFI 2023 from 30 August, and can sign up from 18 September.

The Landscape Recovery scheme supports a regenerative approach to agriculture. It focusses on restoring nature across a wider landscape, bringing together landowners and managers who want to take a more large-scale, long-term approach to producing environmental and climate goods on their land. Projects involving elements of regenerative farming can apply - with round two LR pilot applications closing on 21 September 2023.

Our Countryside Stewardship scheme includes actions that can form part of a regenerative or restorative farming approach; to improve soil quality, enhance biodiversity, decrease water pollution, and restore, create, and manage habitats. We are expanding the scheme to make around 30 additional actions available to farmers by the end of 2024, as well as targeting our funding towards actions in places where they can have the biggest impacts, in ways that are joined up across larger areas.

We are also offering farmers and land managers, including those who take a regenerative approach, funding for equipment, technology, and infrastructure that improves farm productivity and benefits the environment through the Farming Investment Fund. This offers funding for equipment, technology, and infrastructure that improves farm productivity and benefits the environment.

The Farming Innovation Programme encourages groups of farmers, growers, businesses, and researchers to get involved in collaborative research and development. Farmers testing out regenerative approaches to agriculture will be able to apply for these grants, and we believe that by working together, they will be able to

solve challenges and exploit opportunities for increasing productivity and environmental sustainability in the agricultural and horticultural sectors in England.

## ■ Air Pollution

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[198361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she has taken to align the air quality strategy for England, published on 28 April 2023, with the Government's net zero strategy.

**Trudy Harrison:**

During development of the Air Quality Strategy, Defra engaged extensively with teams across Government including those working on the Government's Net Zero Strategy. The Strategy notes the need to identify tensions that can sometimes occur between measures designed to reduce greenhouse gases and improve air quality. These interactions must be carefully considered, and steps should be taken to manage them proactively.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[198362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on the air quality strategy for England, published on 28 April 2023.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Since publication of the Air Quality Strategy in April 2023, Defra have been in regular contact with local authorities. On the 13 September 2023, Defra hosted a Local Air Quality Symposium with local authorities across England including a workshop on the Air Quality Strategy.

## ■ Air Quality Grant Scheme

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[198357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many local authorities applied for funding through the air quality grant scheme in 2022.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The total number of local authorities who applied for the Defra Air Quality Grant scheme in 2022 was 68.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[198364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many local authorities applied for the air quality grant scheme in 2022.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The total number of local authorities who applied for the Defra Air Quality Grant scheme in 2022 was 68.

## ■ Animal Welfare

**Miriam Cates:**

[\[199676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2023 to Question 197914, whether she plans to extend eligibility for the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway in the future beyond the species currently included.

**Mark Spencer:**

We will continue to work in partnership with industry to develop the Pathway offer, including looking at the potential to extend the Pathway's reach to other species.

## ■ Climate Change: Weather

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to help local authorities to develop financial risk assessments for climate change related weather events.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The UK Climate Projections, developed by the Met Office and Defra, provide climate information that can support local decision making to address climate risks, including on hazards such as heatwaves and short-term localised heavy rainfall.

In addition, we are carrying out a one year pilot (Local Authority Climate Service) for the provision of more specific projections to local areas. This Met Office tool will give councils access to critical climate data to inform adaptation decision making in local areas. And the fourth Climate Change Risk Assessment, to be published in 2027, will include data on climate risks that can also be used to support local decision-making.

## ■ Concrete: Recycling

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[199408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to increase the recycling of concrete materials.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Construction is one of the key sectors identified for action in 'Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste', the new Waste Prevention Programme for England, published in July 2023. It sets out our priorities for action to manage goods and materials in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

As part of this we have committed to:

- Work with the industry through the Green Construction Board to promote the adoption of strategies aligned with the Routemap to Net Zero Avoidable Waste in Construction. This includes key targets to eliminate all but hazardous construction and demolition waste to landfill, and work towards zero avoidable construction and demolition waste by 2050. For information, in 2020, the UK generated 59.1 million

tonnes of non-hazardous C&D waste, of which 54.8 million tonnes was recovered. This represents a recovery rate of 92.6%.

- Continue to support the Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centre for Mineral-based Construction Materials, which includes concrete, as part of a four-year £30 million National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research (NICER) Programme. This will deliver research, innovation, and the evidence base to move towards a resilient UK circular economy.
- Work with the industry to explore policy interventions to support the design of construction products to encourage greater reuse and use of recycled materials.

## ■ Dairy Farming

**Rosie Duffield:**

[\[197883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support the farming industry with changes in the level of milk price payments to primary producers.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government recognises that dairy farmers have faced a range of challenges in recent years including the impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. As a result, output prices reached record highs in 2022 and early 2023 due to the exceptional increase in input costs, although these have since fallen back to more historic levels. We have provided a range of support to the dairy sector during this period. This has included the advance of Basic Payment Scheme payments, a delay to the implementation of an industry-led scheme relating to the use of urea fertiliser, cuts to fuel duty and VAT, the Energy Relief Scheme, an increase in the Employment Allowance, and action on business rates to reduce bills. At the recent No 10 Food Summit, we also announced a £1m bespoke export support fund for the dairy sector, with a particular focus on support for SMEs.

We continue to monitor the dairy market and to work closely with producers, processors, and retailers across the sector to encourage recognition that the burden of rising costs can often fall heavily on farmers, and that these costs should be shared fairly across supply chains. We want all farmers to get a fair price for their products and following our supply chain fairness review of the dairy sector we have brought forward plans for contractual regulation in the sector to strengthen fairness and transparency, ensuring farmers are treated fairly. It remains our intention to introduce the regulations to Parliament later this year.

## ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Buildings

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[197947\]](#)

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



**Mark Spencer:**

For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property.

Survey work is underway.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Domestic Visits****Steve Reed:**[\[199144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will publish the (a) dates and (b) locations of each visit (i) the Secretary of State and (ii) other ministers in her Department have made outside of London in their formal ministerial capacity since January 2022, by (A) each individual minister and (B) region.

**Mark Spencer:**

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

**■ Electronic Cigarettes: Recycling****Catherine West:**[\[198888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to increase public awareness of the correct way to recycle disposable vapes.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is very concerned about the environmental impacts of disposable vapes and will shortly publish a response to its call for evidence on vaping which close in June. All electrical waste should be properly disposed and recycled to protect our environment. This includes disposable vapes.

Retailers that sell over £100,000 of electrical equipment per year are obliged to provide in-store takeback of electrical items, including vapes, under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations. Smaller businesses can choose to contribute funds to the distributor takeback scheme instead to ensure vapes are recycled correctly. All vapes that are deposited at household waste and recycling centres will be collected and treated and the costs of doing this will be met by vape producers.

Consumers that wish to dispose of their old vapes should either take them to their local authority household waste recycling centre or to a retailer who sells vapes, if they offer in-store take-back, for onward treatment.

Material Focus is running a UK-wide campaign to make it easier for everyone recycle their unwanted electricals, including vapes. They provide an electricals recycling locator, which shows the nearest location for consumers to recycle their unwanted electricals.

Our Environmental Improvement Plan sets out our plan to review rules for waste electricals this year. As part of this, we will consider what changes in legislation are needed to make it simpler for householders to recycle their unwanted electricals, including vapes.

### ■ Firewood: Regulation

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[198367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the (a) powers and (b) funding available to local authorities for regulating domestic wood burning.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Our Environmental Improvement Plan and Air Quality Strategy, both published this year, sets out our plan to reduce emissions from domestic combustion and the key role that local authorities play. Through our landmark Environment Act 2021, we have already enabled local authorities to enforce Smoke Control Areas more effectively. We have also introduced legislation to phase out the most polluting fuels, including banning the sale of wet wood in small volumes.

These changes have been matched with new funding to local authorities to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively, including a non-competitive grant. We also fund local authorities through the Air Quality Grant, which has provided more than £53 million across over 600 projects since 2010.

### ■ Flood Control

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[198369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department are taking to collaborate with (a) local authorities and (b) water companies on flood mitigation measures.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government's record £5.2 billion flood and coastal erosion risk management investment programme requires risk management authorities, including the Environment Agency, local authorities and water companies, to work closely together to better protect hundreds of thousands of properties in England by 2027.

Around half of the schemes funded by the programme will be delivered by the Environment Agency, with the other half being delivered by other risk management authorities. The Environment Agency provide support to the risk management authorities, including the latest techniques to build good partnerships and secure contributions. They also provide expert advice on specific projects and will simplify business case development and approval for smaller projects and make it easier to access funding. The changes being made are part of our ongoing programme of improvements to strengthen delivery of flood and coastal resilience projects and help achieve the ambitions from the [FCERM Strategy](#).

An additional £200 million (£153.5m for 25 areas, £8m for adaptive pathways, £36m for Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP), and £2.5m for evaluation projects) is being invested in the Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme. This includes helping 25 local areas over six years to take forward wider innovative actions that improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion.

The Government also sets its expectations for Ofwat and water companies via its Strategic Policy Statement. These priorities include a resilient water sector that meets long-term water resource needs, delivers resilient drainage and wastewater services and greater resilience to flooding.

## ■ Floods: Mortgages

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[199446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of coastal flood risk on the availability of mortgage offers.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Flood Re scheme enables insurers to offer affordable insurance for households at risk of flooding, including coastal flooding. This includes buildings insurance which is a condition of most mortgage offers.

In 2022/23, Flood Re provided cover for over 265,000 household policies. More than 500,000 properties have benefitted since the scheme's launch. Flood Re is available via more than 85 insurance brands representing 94% of the home insurance market.

## ■ Forests: Commodities

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[199663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of UK's contribution to illegal deforestation through the importation (a) cocoa, (b) coffee, (c) soy and (d) other forest-based commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The UK plays a leading role in supporting global efforts to protect and restore forest landscapes, driving international action to tackle deforestation and ensure forests are sustainably managed. This effort is underpinned by a commitment of £1.5 billion to international forests between 2021-26.

The UK Government works with businesses and smallholder farmers to support the development of sustainable agriculture and forest management models through the Investments in Forests and Sustainable Land Use programme, providing jobs and livelihoods while protecting and restoring forests. The UK is also a co-funder of the Tropical Forest Alliance, a public-private initiative hosted by the World Economic Forum which mobilises over 170 companies, governments, and NGOs to tackle commodity-driven deforestation. The UK Government is working with developing countries to help them strengthen regulation and governance of forests to curb illegal

logging through the long-standing Forest Governance Markets and Climate programme.

This package of work also includes new due diligence legislation through the Environment Act 2021 to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. While a wide number of commodities have played and continue to play a role in driving global deforestation, we identified seven key commodities in our 2021-22 consultation that are responsible between them for driving the majority of recent and ongoing deforestation. These commodities include: cattle (beef and leather), cocoa, coffee, maize, rubber, palm oil, and soy. The consultation also sought evidence on other commodities driving deforestation. We published an impact assessment alongside consultation, available here: [https://consult.defra.gov.uk/international-biodiversity-and-climate/implementing-due-diligence-forest-risk-commodities/consult\\_view/](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/international-biodiversity-and-climate/implementing-due-diligence-forest-risk-commodities/consult_view/)

## ■ Forests: Environment Protection

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[199661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of providing regulatory protection to wooded land.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Forestry is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only. All trees in England are currently protected by the Forestry Act which requires that anyone wishing to fell trees, except where exemptions apply, must obtain a licence before doing so. When carrying out felling landowners must comply with the terms of their felling licence including any restocking conditions. Failure to do so is an offence. The Government strengthened the penalties for illegal felling in the Environment Act 2021.

Individual trees and groups of trees can also be protected by Tree Protection Orders which require written consent from the local authority to be sought prior to the tree being felled, damaged or destroyed. Where deforestation is planned, the landowner may be required to undertake a deforestation Environmental Impact Assessment and gain consent from the Forestry Commission prior to any works being carried out.

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[199662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to introduce secondary legislation to implement the due diligence provisions for illegal deforestation of the Environment Act 2021.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The UK Government has introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act to help tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. We ran a consultation from 3 December 2021 to 11 March 2022 to seek views on the details of regulations that will implement the Environment Act provisions, to ensure that these are designed effectively. The Government published a summary of responses to this

consultation on 1 June 2022 and is committed to implementing due diligence provisions at the earliest opportunity through secondary legislation.

## ■ Hornets

**Rosie Duffield:**

**[198930]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure councils have the necessary funding to tackle the presence of Asian hornets.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Asian hornet is a Non-Native Invasive Species which could have a significant impact on honey bees and wild pollinators if it were to become established in the UK.

For this reason Defra and Welsh Government developed the [Asian hornet contingency plan](#) which outlines the government response and what actions will be taken when incursions of Asian hornet occur.

The response to Asian hornet is delivered by the National Bee Unit (NBU) - part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

We have taken contingency action against all credible sightings of Asian hornet that have been reported in the UK since the first occurred in 2016. As of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the NBU have located 43 Asian hornet nests this year.

So currently there is no requirement for local councils to take action against Asian hornets. Nevertheless raising awareness is a key aspect of the response so if local councils are made aware of Asian hornets in their area we would ask them to report it through the Asian hornet app or online. By ensuring we are alerted to possible sightings as early as possible, we can take swift and effective action to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets.

## ■ Horses: Animal Welfare

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[199791]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure former race horses are not slaughtered for meat.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government is committed to the highest standards of animal welfare, including at slaughter. Ensuring the welfare needs of racehorses are well met, both during their racing lives and afterwards, is a priority.

Slaughter in an approved abattoir is a humane option for some horses, provided the animal is fit to transport and the journey time is not excessive. Legislation sets out strict requirements to protect the welfare of horses when slaughtered and official veterinarians of the Food Standards Agency are present in all approved slaughterhouses to monitor and enforce animal welfare requirements.

## ■ Hunting

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[196485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information she collects on the prevalence of trail hunting on her Department's land.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[196486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information she holds on the number of trail hunts on land owned by Departments that have resulted in the (a) hunting and (b) killing of an animal in the last 12 months.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Defra does not hold this data. The enforcement of the Hunting Act is an operational matter for the police.

## ■ Landfill

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support local authorities to reduce the amount of municipal waste sent to landfill.

**Rebecca Pow:**

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

To reduce this further, in line with the commitment in the Net Zero Strategy, we are exploring options for the near elimination of biodegradable waste to landfill from 2028 – we issued a call for evidence on this in May and will publish our Government response and more information in due course. We are also working towards eliminating all food waste being sent to landfill by 2030.

To support this, through powers in the Environment Act 2021 we will require all local authorities in England to arrange for the separate collection of food waste from households and provide them with the new burdens funding to do so.

Our plans for Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging will also play a key part in making it easier for householders to recycle and reduce the amount of waste sent for landfill, moving the full cost of dealing with packaging waste from households, including collection and disposal, away from local taxpayers and councils to the packaging producers under the 'polluter pays principle'. This will encourage producers to reduce their use of packaging and use packaging which is easier to recycle.

The Waste Infrastructure Delivery Programme was established in 2006 to support local authorities to accelerate the building of infrastructure needed to treat residual

waste, minimise municipal waste going to landfill, and increase recycling. This is a £3 billion programme of 25-year grants for 27 local authorities (now 23: two completed and two where the grant has been withdrawn) ending in 2042 when the last grant payment will be made. This continued support provided to local authorities has provided modern, efficient waste management facilities, enabling England to meet its 2020 landfill diversion targets. The long-term waste PFI grants were a major contributing factor to our delivery against these landfill targets, acting as a catalyst to invigorate the waste infrastructure market.

### ■ Local Adaptation Advisory Panel

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[195379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date she last met the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel for England Steering Group.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Secretary of State is yet to meet with the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel Steering Group. However, Defra provides the secretariat for the group and senior officials meet with them regularly.

### ■ Meat: Antibiotics

**Tony Lloyd:**

[\[199295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department has taken to safeguard public health in connection with the supply of antibiotic-dosed meat to supermarkets.

**Mark Spencer:**

Responsible use of antibiotics is an essential part of veterinary medicine: these medicines are needed to treat bacterial disease in animals. The UK Government is committed to reducing unnecessary use of antibiotics in animals whilst safeguarding animal health and welfare and antibiotic use in animals has reduced by 55% since 2014.

In the UK, antibiotics for animal use must be prescribed by a veterinary surgeon and we have strict maximum residue limits for food-producing animals. There is a comprehensive programme of statutory sampling and testing in place in the UK to look for residues of veterinary medicines, prohibited substances and contaminants in foodstuffs – this programme includes testing for a range of antibiotics, ensuring that they are being used in UK livestock in accordance with their authorisation. This activity is coordinated by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in GB, and the results of testing and investigations are published on GOV.UK ( [link](#) ) on a quarterly and annual basis.

**■ Peatlands****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[199608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding her Department provided to peat restoration projects in the latest period for which data is available.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Since 2020, the Government has funded over £19million to peatland restoration projects through the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant scheme. On 26 August 2023 the government announced a further £16m of government funding for an additional twelve peatland restoration projects as part of the scheme.

In addition to this, there are 10 projects in Round 1 of the Landscape Recovery scheme which will include elements of peatland restoration works. The funding for these projects has not yet been finalised as projects are still in the development phase of the scheme. Countryside Stewardship has provided approximately £7m and Environmental Stewardship approximately £200,000 of funding for peatland restoration activities over the last 12 months.

**■ Sewage: Sunderland****Julie Elliott:** [\[199149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many sewage releases there have been in (a) Sunderland and (b) the Sunderland Central constituency in (i) 2023 and (ii) 2022.

**Feryal Clark:** [\[199478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many sewage releases there have been in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London in (i) 2023 and (ii) 2022.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) provides information on when and for how long sewage discharges have occurred. All EDM data is published [online \(opens in a new tab\)](#) annually since 2020. The 2022 data was published in [March 2023 \(opens in a new tab\)](#). The full EDM data set for 2023 will be published by the Environment Agency in March 2024.

**■ Sewage: Waste Disposal****Rosie Duffield:** [\[198171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that enforcement action is taken against water companies that discharge sewage on dry days.



**Rebecca Pow:**

Last year the Government launched the most ambitious plan to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows in water company history, driving £56 billion capital investment over 25 years. Water companies will have to achieve targets which mean that, by 2050, no storm overflows will be permitted to operate outside of unusually heavy rainfall or to cause any adverse ecological harm.

The Environment Agency (EA) carries out investigations to determine when a dry spill has occurred. Storm Overflows, in general, should not spill on dry days. There is then a process of further investigation on a site-by-site basis to determine, for example, that the accuracy of certain rainfall monitors and drain down times are correct, as well as other factors. After this thorough process has been conducted, it can be determined if a breach has occurred with sufficient evidence for compliance and enforcement.

If overflows operate outside of permit conditions, the Agency will not hesitate to use all options for robust enforcement action. This can include criminal prosecution by the Environment Agency for which there can be unlimited fines. On 12 July we began legislating to introduce unlimited civil penalties.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[198370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to ensure that action is taken by the Environment Agency against water companies when illegal sewage discharges occur.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is clear that the volume of sewage being discharged into our waters is unacceptable. That is why we are tackling every source of pollution. Our Plan for Water sets out increased investment, tougher enforcement and tighter regulation.

If illegal sewage discharges occur, the Environment Agency (EA) will not hesitate to use all options for robust enforcement action. This can include criminal prosecution by the EA for which there can be unlimited fines.

We have boosted funding for the Environment Agency with £2.2 million per year specifically for water company enforcement activity. The Environment Agency is improving how the sector is regulated including expanding the number of officers focused on regulation, increasing compliance checks, and recruiting more data specialists able to translate storm overflows monitoring data into stronger regulatory intelligence.

Since 2015, the Environment Agency has concluded 59 prosecutions against water and sewerage companies, securing fines of over £150m.

■ **Water Companies: Fines**

**Steve Reed:** [\[198378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of fines issued to water companies by the Environment Agency in each year since 2010.

**Steve Reed:** [\[198379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the total sums collected in fines to water companies by the Environment Agency in each year since 2010.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency collects data of the number and total amount fines issued to Water Companies following prosecution. Since 2010, the totals and amounts are follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF FINES	TOTAL SUM OF FINES
2010	43	£368,500.00
2011	85	£924,820.38
2012	78	£806,100.00
2013	41	£802,000.00
2014	29	£1,674,000.00
2015	16	£2,334,500.00
2016	13	£6,560,000.00
2017	18	£21,589,334.00
2018	5	£427,000.00
2019	5	£3,097,000.00
2020	4	£844,000.00
2021	9	£102,490,000.00
2022	11	£4,198,750.00
2023 (to date)	11	£9,227,333.33

**Steve Reed:** [\[198381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total (a) value and (b) number of fines issued to water companies was in each region since 2010.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Water company fines are collected by water company, rather than by region. However, water companies are semi-regional.

<b>WATER COMPANY</b>	<b>NUMBER OF FINES 2010-AUG 2023</b>	<b>TOTAL AMOUNT PAID IN FINES 2010 TO AUG 2023</b>
Anglian Water	26	£5,745,000
Northumbrian Water	12	£871,500
Severn Trent	25	£4,269,500
Southern Water	40	£96,084,500
South West Water	108	£4,014,067
Thames Water	64	£38,412,988
United Utilities	73	£4,149,500
Wessex Water	1	£6,000
Yorkshire Water	22	£4,790,285

**Steve Reed:**[\[198382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of fines issued to water companies went uncollected in each year since 2010.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra does not hold this information. Information on fines is collected by HM Courts and Tribunals Service, which has responsibility for collecting fines through the Magistrates Courts.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ **Afghanistan: Women's Rights****Dan Carden:**[\[198894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support grassroots women-led organisations in Afghanistan to protect the rights of women and girls.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government condemns the restrictions the Taliban have imposed on Afghan women and girls. Without the full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, Afghanistan will not achieve sustainable economic and political development. Ministers and officials engage regularly with Afghan women from civil

society organisations. Through our Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, we help civil society groups monitor human rights, raise awareness and promote women's inclusion in dialogue initiatives.

### ■ Africa: Military Coups

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[199107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help support UK nationals in African countries experiencing coups d'état.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The safety of British nationals overseas is a priority for the FCDO. Our Embassies, High Commissions and Offices throughout Africa have supported British nationals following recent coup d'états and unconstitutional military takeovers and continue to stand ready to provide support to those who request assistance. British nationals in Africa who need consular support should contact us on +44 20 7008 5000 and sign up for alerts on the relevant foreign travel advice page [<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>].

### ■ China: Official Visits

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[199607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he had discussions with his Chinese counterpart on the visiting restrictions that have been placed upon some hon. Members during his visit to China in August 2023.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign Secretary has made clear consistently that Chinese sanctions against British MPs are unacceptable and unjustifiable. During his visit to Beijing last month the Foreign Secretary pressed for the immediate lifting of these sanctions.

### ■ China: Ukraine

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he had with his Chinese counterpart on Russia's invasion of Ukraine during his recent visit to China.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

During his recent visit to China, the Foreign Secretary made clear in his meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi the UK position on key geopolitical issues including the conflict in Ukraine. He urged China to act as a responsible global power in helping to end Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

**■ Climate Change: Finance****Ruth Jones:** [\[199164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to increase funding for tackling climate change.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We are working with international partners to ensure donors meet the collective international finance commitments and to press for reforms to the international financial system that will help increase the scale, quality, and accessibility of available climate finance. For our part, The UK is delivering our commitment to spend £11.6 billion International Climate Finance and within this to triple our funding for adaptation. At the G20 the Prime Minister announced that the UK will increase our contribution to the Green Climate Fund with a pledge of \$2 billion (>£1.6 billion) for the second replenishment of the fund.

**■ Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda: Floods****Justin Madders:** [\[198721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what step his Department is taking to deliver aid to people impacted by recent flooding in (a) the Democratic Republic of the Congo and (b) Rwanda.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We are saddened by the loss of life in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda which was caused by the devastating floods and landslides. The NGO consortium START, which the UK part funds, has committed £300,000 to the Rwanda flood response which will be implemented by Trócaire. START have also given £400,000 to the DRC flood response, to provide those who have lost their homes and livelihoods with cash to buy food and other basics for survival. In DRC the Red Cross, funded by the UK, are supporting with the recovery of bodies, and reuniting unaccompanied children with their families. I [Minister Mitchell] sent WhatsApp messages to DRC Foreign Minister Lutundula and Rwandan Foreign Minister offering UK support and condolences.

**■ Development Aid: Climate Change****Richard Thomson:** [\[198954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made on meeting its commitment to deliver £11.6 billion in climate finance to vulnerable countries by 2026.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK spent over £1.4 billion on international climate finance in 2021/22 and will publish figures for 2022/23 in due course.

**■ Development Aid: Water****Ian Paisley:**[\[198727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the Official Development Assistance budget is spent on improving in water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure in refugee camps (a) in sub-Saharan Africa and (b) globally.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK remains committed to protecting the lives and dignity of those in need of humanitarian assistance, including refugees, through providing safe and sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Our total Official Development Assistance spending on WASH in 2021 was £78 million through bilateral delivery and an estimated £63 million through multilateral delivery. The latest published and finalised data is available on GOV.UK in Statistics on International Development: final UK aid spend 2021 [<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-final-uk-aid-spend-2021>]. We will continue to provide life-saving food and emergency health services, shelter, water, and hygiene services to refugee camps and vulnerable host communities.

**■ Diplomatic Service: Debts****Emily Thornberry:**[\[199560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Written Statement of 14 September 2023 on Debts owed by Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations in the UK: 2022, for what reason he is unable to provide the amount of debt owed for (a) national non-domestic rates and (b) parking fines as of 31 December 2022, and on what date his Department plans to release those figures.

**David Rutley:**

Details of outstanding debts and fines owed by Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations in the UK for National Non-Domestic Rates and parking fines has been delayed owing to the impact of Coronavirus restrictions on the work of the Valuation Office Agency and Local Authorities in gathering accurate and complete debt data. The intention is to collate and verify this information for release in mid-2024, prior to the Parliamentary summer recess, and thereafter return to releasing this information on an annual basis along with details of London Congestion Charge debt.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Travel****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[199562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's data on Ministerial travel, January to March 2023, last updated on 13 July 2023, how much was spent on (a) flights and (b) accommodation for the visit by the then Minister of State for Overseas Territories, Commonwealth, Energy,

Climate, and Environment to attend the World Economic Forum in Davos from 18 to 19 January 2023.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The total cost of flights for the visit was £576.35. The FCDO did not incur any accommodation costs for the visit.

■ **Gabon: British Nationals Abroad**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to British nationals in Gabon.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The British High Commission in Yaoundé, Cameroon provides remote consular support to British Nationals in Gabon. British Nationals in Gabon in need of assistance should contact the FCDO on +44 20 7008 5000 (24/7) or via our online contact form

[<https://www.contactembassy.service.gov.uk/country=United%20Kingdom&post=Global%20Consular%20Enquiry%20Team>]. They should also sign up for email notifications when travel advice is updated on the FCDO travel advice page for Gabon [<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/gabon/email-signup>].

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many British nationals have requested consular assistance in Gabon in the last three months.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

A number of British nationals have requested assistance in Gabon over the last three months. However, as the numbers are low, we do not publish them to avoid the risk of identifying the individuals involved.

■ **Gabon: Military Coups**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[199056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives of (a) the African Union and (b) the Commonwealth in relation to the coup in Gabon on 30 August 2023.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK echoes the African Union's condemnation of the unconstitutional military takeover of power in Gabon and calls for the restoration of constitutional government, in line with the Commonwealth Charter.

I [Minister Mitchell] have held discussions with African counterparts on recent political events in Gabon during my recent visit to Rwanda and Kenya. I have also spoken with the Commonwealth Secretary-General about the situation. UK officials are

closely monitoring the situation and working closely with Commonwealth partners on next steps.

#### ■ **India: Development Aid**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[198701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's priorities are for international development in India.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The British Government stopped providing traditional development aid to India in 2015.

Most UK funding to India is now in the form of business investments which prioritise helping India to reduce carbon emissions, address climate change, and make progress towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These investments have the dual aims of supporting development and backing private enterprises with the potential to be commercially viable so that we get our money back and can then reinvest, in India or elsewhere.

Our approach is guided by the 2030 Roadmap for India-UK future relations, in which development is a key theme.

#### ■ **India: Visits Abroad**

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[198905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) diplomats and (b) other officials accompanied the Prime Minister on his recent visit to India.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

A total of 43 officials travelled to India in support of the Prime Minister's visit for the 2023 G20 Summit.

#### ■ **Iran: Detainees**

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[199434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has held with his counterparts in Iran on the (a) incarceration of (i) Mahvash Sabet, (ii) Fariba Kamalabadi and (iii) Afif Naeimi and (b) medical reports about the health of (A) Mahvash Sabet and (B) Afif Naeimi; and if he will make a statement.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The continued restrictions on freedoms of religion and belief in Iran are deeply worrying, as is Iran's discrimination against religious minorities. In June, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) publicly condemned the sentencing of Baha'i leaders in Iran, in particular the continuing imprisonment of Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will continue to monitor the cases of



Mahvash Sabet, Fariba Kamalabadi and Afif Naeimi and to challenge Iran on its human rights record.

### ■ Kenya: Cholera

**Ian Paisley:** [\[198726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his counterpart in the Kenya Government on ways to support the rollout of the oral cholera vaccine programme in informal settlements.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK does not directly support cholera programmes in Kenya. The UK funds the Global Fund, Global Financing Facility (GFF), Gavi and UNITAID to help strengthen health systems. WHO and UNICEF support the Ministry of Health to counter cholera. An oral vaccination campaign commenced in February 2023 and to date has vaccinated 2.3 million Kenyans against cholera.

### ■ Kenya: Economic Cooperation

**Ruth Jones:** [\[199182\]](#)

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

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

Mutual Prosperity is one of the five pillars of the UK-Kenya Strategic Partnership. Bilateral trade, currently standing at £1.2 billion annually, should be boosted by the UK - Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement. The UK is one of Kenya's largest foreign investors, particularly in the climate sector. In 2021, the outward stock of foreign direct investment from the UK in Kenya was £489 million. The Prime Minister met President Ruto at COP27 where they agreed a major package of UK green investments and to fast track six green projects worth £3.4 billion. The UK-African Investment Summit 2024 is also a significant opportunity to further increase our trade and investment collaboration.

### ■ Libya: Floods

**Lisa Nandy:** [\[199567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Libyan Government on the September 2023 flooding in Derna.

**Lisa Nandy:** [\[199568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) bilateral and (b) multilateral aid has been offered to Libya following the September 2023 flooding in Derna.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office are closely monitoring and assessing the impact of Storm Daniel on Eastern Libya. On 15 September, the UK increased its support in response to both the floods in Libya and the earthquake in Morocco, allocating a package worth up to £10 million. This additional support builds upon the initial package worth up to £1 million (announced on 13 September), which is already being mobilised with a flight arriving in Benghazi on 18 September to provide vital provisions including emergency shelter items, portable solar lanterns, and water filters. An Emergency Medical Team has also deployed. In addition, the UN has announced \$10 million in response to the flooding from its Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to which the UK is one of the largest donors. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, spoke with Chairman of Libya's Presidential Council Mohamed al-Mnefi on 13 September to convey his condolences and the UK's commitment to supporting Libya in the aftermath of this tragedy.

**■ Madagascar: Food Aid****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[198652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's publication entitled MADAGASCAR [GRAND SUD AND GRAND SUD-EST]: Food Security and Nutrition Snapshot, published on 22 August 2023, whether he plans to take steps to support (a) children, (b) pregnant women and (c) lactating women with acute malnutrition over the next eight months in southern Madagascar.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

As the 2023 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report indicated, the past year has seen a significant improvement in food security in southern Madagascar, in part because of a concerted humanitarian response and better rains. The UK has contributed to this progress, including through £2 million support to the World Food Programme as well as through funding to post-cyclone recovery in south-eastern Madagascar.

The UK is also a major contributor to the World Bank and the UN, both central players in addressing remaining malnutrition in southern Madagascar. Alongside likeminded partners, the British Embassy continues to monitor the situation closely and lobby the Government of Madagascar for increased attention and funding to the affected areas.

**■ Mahmoud Abbas****Bob Blackman:**[\[R\] \[198646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of comments made by the President of the Palestinian National Authority on the Holocaust on 24 August 2023 with the UK's memorandum of understanding with the Palestinian Authority.

**Bob Blackman:**

[R] [\[198647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Palestinian National Authority on the comments made by the President of the Palestinian National Authority on the Holocaust on 24 August 2023.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As the FCDO stated publicly on 8 September, the UK condemns the recent antisemitic remarks made by President Abbas. The UK stands firmly against all attempts to distort the Holocaust. Such statements do not advance efforts towards reconciliation. Officials at the British Consulate General in Jerusalem have raised this matter with the Palestinian Authority and the Foreign Secretary intends to do the same during his visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. President Abbas' comments are completely unacceptable and can only serve to exacerbate tensions and undermine efforts to achieve the negotiated two-state solution.

## ■ **Mohammad Ghobadloo**

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[198692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 September 2023 to Question 194685, what response he received to his summonses of Iran's Chargé d'Affaires.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

In response to the Foreign Secretary's summonses of the Iranian Chargé d'Affaires on 8 December 2022 and 9 January 2023, in each case the Chargé d'Affaires attended the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office where our opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances was made clear. The UK remains opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances in Iran.

## ■ **Morocco: Earthquakes**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[198949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the delivery of humanitarian aid to Morocco following the earthquake on 9 September 2023.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign Secretary and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon have contacted Foreign Minister Bourita, and the UK remains in close contact with the Moroccan authorities. With their agreement, the UK has deployed a team of 62 search and rescue specialists, supported by British Council volunteer interpreters, as well as a four-person UKMED medical assessment team. We continue to liaise with the Moroccan authorities, and with local and international partners, including NGOs, on the best way to support Moroccan-led humanitarian efforts.

**■ Nepal: Religious Freedom****Catherine West:**[\[199636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of levels of religious freedom in Nepal.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Constitution of Nepal declares Nepal a secular state and affirms the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). However, laws that criminalise proselytization and blasphemy can be used to discriminate against religious minorities. Attacks on minorities and places of worship have also been reported, but are relatively rare. We raise concerns with the Government of Nepal and engage with faith groups to demonstrate support for religious freedoms. British Embassy Kathmandu also chairs a Human Rights Core Group of likeminded partners to discuss issues such as freedom of religion, and actions to promote tolerance.

**■ Russia: Sanctions****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of its sanctions on Russia.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We have imposed the biggest package of economic pressure on a major economy in recent memory, which has starved Russia of key Western goods and technology, degrading Russia's military and restricting its capacity to fight a 21st century war. UK exports of machinery and transport equipment have decreased by 98 per cent.

Sanctions are limiting Russia's financial resources. The UK has sanctioned 29 Russian banks accounting for over 90 per cent of the Russian banking sector. We have frozen over £18 billion worth of Russian assets in the UK. Without sanctions, we estimate Russia would have over \$400 billion more to fund its war machine.

**■ Sierra Leone: Elections****Tony Lloyd:**[\[199296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of democratic standards at the June 2023 elections in Sierra Leone; and what representations the Government made on democratic standards to (a) President Bio and (b) electoral authorities in Sierra Leone (i) before and (ii) after those elections.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We noted a number of discrepancies in the election process. These have been communicated to the Government of Sierra Leone and elections management bodies. It remains vital that political leaders engage with efforts to support Sierra Leone's democratic process.

We have engaged stakeholders including the government, opposition, election bodies and the international community, in the months leading up to, during and after the elections. We have given consistent messaging on good governance, the rule of law and the importance of free, fair and peaceful elections. The Foreign Secretary raised these issues during his visit to Sierra Leone in March and in a telephone call with President Bio on 7 August.

## ■ Sri Lanka

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[199064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Ministers in his Department have had recent discussions with the Sri Lankan Government on long-term economic (a) support and (b) reform in that country.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign Secretary met with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Ali Sabry on 14 July where he reaffirmed the UK's commitment to support economic recovery and International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme reforms in Sri Lanka. Minister for the Indo Pacific, discussed next steps for UK economic support with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister on the 17 March. The UK supports economic reform as an active and engaged member of Sri Lanka's official creditor committee through the Paris Club. We will continue to work with other creditors and the Sri Lankan Government to restore debt sustainability and support economic recovery.

## ■ Uganda: LGBT+ People

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[199068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 July 2023 to Question 193086 on Uganda: Homosexuality, how much of the £13.5 million was spent in Uganda; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of further investment in LGBT+ support in Uganda.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK works closely with a range of LGBT+ organisations and Human Rights Defenders, including local leaders in Uganda, to support their efforts to protect the community from violence and persecution. The UK keeps all options for support to defenders of LGBT+ rights under review while ensuring that our support does no harm. We therefore do not publish specific detail of LGBT+ programming which could undermine the safety or effectiveness of beneficiary organisations.

## ■ Ukraine: Cereals

**Mark Logan:**

[\[199505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the free transit of ships carrying Ukrainian grain from Black Sea ports.

**Leo Docherty:**

We strongly condemn Russia's decision to withdraw from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and call on Russia to re-join immediately. We also strongly condemn Russia's egregious attacks on Ukraine's ports. Ukraine has the right to export its goods through international waters. Russia's actions are clearly intended to prevent Ukraine doing so. The United Kingdom is working with Ukraine and other partners to enable Ukraine to continue exporting its grain via all routes, including overland through Europe.

**West Africa: Peacekeeping Operations****Jim Shannon:**[\[198705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his international counterparts on taking steps to de-escalate tensions in (a) west Africa and (b) Niger.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK condemns in the strongest possible terms attempts to undermine democracy, peace and stability in Niger. We are using our diplomatic presence to engage with ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), its member states and other key African partners in support of a regionally-led, peaceful outcome to the crisis. On 1 August the Foreign Secretary visited Nigeria and met with President Tinubu, ECOWAS Chair, and emphasised the UK's firm support for ECOWAS' strong leadership in response to the crisis. I [Minister for Africa], have spoken to several African leaders and other international partners, including President Bazoum, former President Mahamadou Issoufou, and African Union Political Commissioner, Bankole Adeoye. Lord Ahmad also spoke to Foreign Minister Attaf of Algeria in early September. We will continue our engagement in support of ECOWAS' leadership to secure a return to democracy in Niger.

**Zimbabwe: Development Aid****Lisa Nandy:**[\[199061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on the supply of official development assistance to Zimbabwe, in the context of the recent election in that country.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK is committed to supporting Zimbabwe and its people on a path to long-term, inclusive, and resilient development, democracy, and prosperity. The UK's development assistance addresses the priorities in the UK's International Development Strategy and is aligned with the Government of Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy. In particular it is focused on empowering women and girls, promoting global health, responding to humanitarian needs whilst building resilience to climate change, protecting biodiversity and delivering honest reliable investment. No UK ODA is channelled directly through Government of Zimbabwe systems.

Instead, we work primarily through multilateral organisations, notably United Nations agencies, as well as international NGOs and the private sector.

## ■ **Zimbabwe: Economic Cooperation**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[199181\]](#)

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

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK is working to increase trade and investment with Zimbabwe to help drive economic growth, create jobs and reduce poverty. Through our Economic Partnership Agreement, Zimbabwean companies have duty-free and quota-free access to the UK market, and we are particularly focused on supporting Zimbabwean exports of horticulture produce like blueberries and peas, increasing choices for UK consumers. We are also working to reduce barriers to UK investment in renewable energy and our technical assistance to strengthen the policy environment is unlocking new investment into independent solar power projects.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[199097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timescale is for making Wegovy available on the NHS for people with heart disease.

**Will Quince:**

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

Wegovy is not licensed for heart disease and has therefore not been appraised by NICE for the condition. If Wegovy were to be licensed for heart disease in the future, it would then be considered for appraisal by NICE.

NICE has, however, published guidance which recommends Wegovy as an option for treating people who are overweight or obese and who have at least 1 weight-related comorbidity, which may include heart disease, and meet the other criteria specified in the guidance.

**Jim Shannon:** [\[199100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of blood sugar levels on heart disease risk.

**Neil O'Brien:**

No assessment has been made.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[199330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to update public health guidance on alcohol consumption.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There are no current plans to do so. The existing United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-consumption-advice-on-low-risk-drinking>

■ **Alcoholism**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of people who drink more than the recommended level of alcohol.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The information requested is not held centrally by the Department.

However, this data is available from the Health Survey for England and is published by NHS England. The latest available estimate is for 2021 and shows that 21.3% of the adult population in England drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week on a regular basis, which is above the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers' lower risk guideline. Full data is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2021/health-survey-for-england-2021-data-tables>

■ **Alcoholism: Rehabilitation**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of trends in the level of problematic alcohol use on (a) domestic and (b) community violence; and what steps he is taking to help tackle problematic alcohol use through the health system.

**Neil O'Brien:**

No recent assessment has been made. Data from the Crime Survey for England for the year ending March 2020 shows that despite a reduction in alcohol-related violence over the last decade, approximately four out of ten violent incidents in England and Wales are still alcohol-related. Approximately a third of domestic violence incidents are also alcohol-related. The survey is available at the following link:



<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/natureofcrimetablesviolence>

The Department is taking action to tackle problematic alcohol use and associated harms through the landmark cross-Government drug strategy, as well as provision of Alcohol Care Teams in 25% of acute hospitals in local areas with the highest need.

## ■ Breast Cancer: Screening

**Caroline Lucas:** **[198695]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Integrated Care Systems have used the NHS England Core20PLUS5 framework and associated resources for initiatives to improve uptake of routine breast cancer screening from communities less likely to attend breast cancer screening; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England have advised that a national plan has been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders to improve uptake within the breast screening programme in 2023 and beyond, noting the 2028 Cancer Early Detection targets. The plan sets out the priorities, interventions and monitoring of impact and outcomes to improve uptake. Using the Core20PLUS5 principles, the plan outlines the use of evidence-based and evaluated interventions to address inequalities and barriers to accessing breast screening.

**Caroline Lucas:** **[198697]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to deliver an online and NHS app booking system for breast cancer screening appointments as part of the Digital Transformation of Screening programme; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The Government has approved an investment of £68 million in the digital transformation of screening (DToS) programme. The main focus of DToS, which is being led by NHS England, will be to develop digital products to support the invitation of and communication with the public.

The first two national screening programmes to receive these products will be the National Health Service breast screening programme and the diabetic eye screening programme. Subsequently the product will be adapted for use by other existing and new national screening programmes.

The products are planned to support online and app booking as well as call centre booking for those who do not wish to use digital products. DToS will also explore the extent to which the app can be used for other communications with individual members of the public related to their screening requirements.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[199175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that women are able to access breast screening.

**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.

#### ■ **Cancer: Drugs**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[198709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's planned timescale is for the (a) approval and (b) rollout of the AOH1996 drug through the NHS.

**Will Quince:**

There is currently no planned timescale for the approval and rollout of the AOH1996 drug through the National Health Service as the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has not granted a marketing authorisation for AOH1996. Should an application be received, the MHRA has a number of licensing pathways available, with the aim of ensuring the products can be made available for patients in the United Kingdom in the shortest time possible and to support and protect public health.

#### ■ **Cancer: Medical Treatments**

**Ed Davey:**

[\[198591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are receiving cancer treatment on the NHS.

**Will Quince:**

The latest published data shows that the total number of patients who received their first or subsequent treatment in June 2023 was 54,112.

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[198713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to regularly (a) monitor and (b) review progress towards meeting the target for increasing cancer treatment capacity set out in the NHS England 2023/24 priorities and operational planning guidance, published on 27 January 2023; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The Department continues to support NHS England in increasing cancer treatment capacity, and it is the responsibility of NHS England to work with integrated care boards (ICBs) and providers to ensure targets are being met.

NHS England has instructed ICBs to increase and prioritise diagnostic and treatment capacity for cancer. This includes by ensuring new diagnostic capacity, particularly via community diagnostic centres (CDCs), as set out in the 2023/24 priorities and operational planning guidance.

As at August 2023, 93 surgical hubs are currently operational across England providing additional elective surgical capacity, including for cancer treatment. As at September 2023, there are 119 CDCs currently operational that have delivered over four million additional tests since July 2021 (including large, standard and hub models).

**■ Care Homes and Hospitals: Concrete****Emily Thornberry:****[197410]**

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

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2023]:* As part of the usual fiscal processes, the Department submitted Spending Review bids to His Majesty's Treasury in the autumn of 2020 and 2021, and each noted a requirement to address reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in the National Health Service estate.

The Department received £4.2 billion through the 2020 Spending Review settlement for NHS Operational Capital to maintain the NHS estate and address safety issues, of which £110 million was allocated to mitigate the risks posed by RAAC in the NHS estate.

At the 2021 Spending Review, the Department received £12.6 billion for NHS Operational Capital for the current spending review period. Of this, £698 million is allocated for RAAC mitigation and eradication in affected trusts up to 2024/25.

Additionally, in May we announced that the seven NHS hospitals most affected by RAAC will be replaced by 2030 through the New Hospital Programme, and that we remain committed to eradicating RAAC from the NHS estate by 2035.

## ■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services

**Jim Shannon:**

**[198702]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that NHS care for illnesses related to ME and chronic fatigue is delivered sensitively.

**Will Quince:**

The Government published 'My Full Reality', the cross-Government Interim Delivery Plan on myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) on 9 August 2023. The Plan aims to improve experiences and outcomes for people with ME/CFS by setting out agreed actions, which include improvements in attitudes towards the condition by health, care and other professionals.

Alongside the Plan, we published an eight-week consultation to build a picture of how well the Plan meets the needs of the ME/CFS community, and to highlight any significant gaps where further action may be necessary. The Plan and consultation are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-the-experiences-of-people-with-mecfs-interim-delivery-plan/my-full-reality-the-interim-delivery-plan-on-mecfs>

We will publish the final Plan in due course.

## ■ Dementia: Research

**Julian Knight:**

**[198734]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated for dementia research in the last three years.

**Will Quince:**

Government responsibility for delivering dementia research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), mainly by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Between 2019/2020 and 2021/22 (the last three years of available data), the Government has spent around £236 million on dementia research. Spend for dementia research is calculated retrospectively and is usually finalised around eight months after the end of the financial year, therefore 2021/22 is the most recent year we have full data for.

The Government is strongly committed to supporting research into dementia. We will double funding for dementia research to £160 million per year by 2024/25.

**■ Dementia: Solihull**

**Julian Knight:** [\[198733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of the early signs of dementia.

**Julian Knight:** [\[198749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to promote (a) early detection and (b) prevention of dementia in Solihull constituency.

**Julian Knight:** [\[198751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce targeted awareness campaigns about dementia planned for Solihull constituency in the next twelve months.

**Helen Whately:**

Since 2018, dementia risk reduction messaging has been incorporated into the NHS Health Check, which is offered once every five years to all eligible adults in England aged 40-74. This means that in addition to receiving advice on reducing their risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and referral for clinical management where appropriate, attendees of the NHS Health Check are made aware of the risk factors that influence their chance of developing dementia and are signposted to dementia services.

To improve access to the program, we are investing in new delivery models for the NHS Health Check, including nearly £17 million for the development and roll-out of an innovative new national digital NHS Health Check that will give people greater choice over where and when to have a check.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities currently has no plans for an awareness campaign about dementia for the Solihull constituency in the next 12 months.

**Julian Knight:** [\[198740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dementia-trained nurses are employed in Solihull constituency.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department does not hold the information requested.

**Julian Knight:** [\[198741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that dementia patients in Solihull constituency receive (a) holistic and (b) person-centred care.

**Helen Whately:**

The 2023-2028 Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board Dementia Strategy aims to support those affected by dementia by enabling support services to provide early intervention and preventative support with timely information, and advice

throughout the journey with dementia. More information about the strategy is available at the following link:

[https://www.birminghamsolihull.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/6816/7951/4782/BSICS\\_Dementia\\_Strategy\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2023-2028\\_FINAL\\_MAR23.pdf](https://www.birminghamsolihull.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/6816/7951/4782/BSICS_Dementia_Strategy_Action_Plan_2023-2028_FINAL_MAR23.pdf)

The Strategy includes a focus on holistic and personalised care under the sections 'Supporting well' and 'Dying well'. The Strategy's priorities include improving the quality of personalised care and support planning for people with dementia, including planning for the end of life, and improving post-diagnostic support and support for carers.

**Julian Knight:**

**[198750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the mental health needs of dementia patients in Solihull constituency are being addressed.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care Board has advised that its local dementia strategy aims to address the mental health needs of people in Solihull living with dementia, aiming to provide support for carers and people with dementia and their families so they have clear, accessible information and support on how to live well with dementia. The strategy is available at the following link:

[https://www.birminghamsolihull.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/6816/7951/4782/BSICS\\_Dementia\\_Strategy\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2023-2028\\_FINAL\\_MAR23.pdf](https://www.birminghamsolihull.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/6816/7951/4782/BSICS_Dementia_Strategy_Action_Plan_2023-2028_FINAL_MAR23.pdf)

Additionally, there are two units available to Solihull patients with dementia that are uniquely skilled in being able to assist both patients and their family to manage and navigate the post diagnostic pathway.

## ■ Dental Services

**James Wild:**

**[199258]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there are minimum notice period requirements for dentists to stop providing NHS dental services.

**Neil O'Brien:**

In accordance with the National Health Service (General Dental Services Contracts) Regulations 2005, the Contractor must provide three months' notice if they wish to terminate their contract with the National Health Service.

## ■ Dental Services: Integrated Care Boards

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[199137]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to monitor trends in the number of NHS dental appointments available within each Integrated Care Board area.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We have no plans to do so.

The GP Patient Survey includes questions on whether patients have tried to obtain an appointment with a National Health Service dentist and, if so, whether they had been successful. Where appropriate, the GP Patient Survey also captures the reasons why patients haven't tried to obtain an appointment in the previous two years. This is available at the regional level and the latest survey data is available from the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/category/statistics/gp-dental-statistics/>

Dental practices have a contractual responsibility to ensure their NHS.UK profiles are kept up to date. This requires updating their NHS.UK profiles at least once every 90 days, including details on whether they are accepting new patients. We have made a dashboard available to commissioners that shows which practices are non-compliant and this data has been monitored since the end of March 2023.

**■ Dental Services: Waiting Lists****Rachael Maskell:**[\[199136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce NHS dental waiting lists.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Patients do not routinely join National Health Service dental waiting lists and are only registered with a dental practice for a course of treatment.

In July 2022, we announced a package of reforms to improve access to NHS dentistry. This included changes to banding of courses of treatments and the introduction of a minimum Units of Dental Activity value.

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

We will shortly announce our Dental Recovery Plan, which will address how we continue to improve access, particularly for new patients, and how we make NHS work more attractive to ensure NHS dentists are incentivised to deliver more NHS care.

**■ Department of Health and Social Care: Concrete****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[197952\]](#)

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

**Will Quince:**

No reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) has been found within the Department's estate.

**■ Department of Health and Social Care: National Security****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether their Department has a Chief Risk Officer for national security risks relating to the work of their Department.

**Will Quince:**

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, then they are managed through the departments risk management processes. This includes oversight from a Chief Risk Officer.

**■ Diabetes: Drugs****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[199596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of people with type 2 diabetes who will be affected by the shortage of GLP1-RA medications.

**Will Quince:**

The information requested is currently not held centrally. The Department is monitoring demand for GLP1-RA medication using prescriptions data from the NHS Business Services Authority.

**Paula Barker:**[\[199678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase stocks of diabetes medication.

**Paula Barker:**[\[199679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to restrict off-label prescription of diabetes medication.

**Will Quince:**

We are aware of a supply issue with Ozempic. We have issued guidance in the form of Medicine Supply Notifications and, on 18 July 2023, issued a National Patient Safety Alert with advice for healthcare professionals on how to manage patients requiring this medicine. Our guidance is clear that glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor agonist medicines, such as Ozempic, that are solely licensed to treat Type 2 diabetes



should only be used for that purpose and should not be routinely prescribed for weight loss.

The General Pharmaceutical Council, General Medical Council, Health and Care Professions Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland have also issued a joint statement stressing the importance of health and care professionals meeting regulatory standards in relation to these medicines. We have also added some of these products to the list of medicines that cannot be exported from, or hoarded in, the United Kingdom.

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

#### ■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Young People**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[199542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the potential health implications of increases in the number of young people using vapes.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We are concerned about the rise in the number of young people using vapes. There is well established concern about the addictive harms and risks from vaping, specifically associated with children and young people. Nicotine is highly addictive and there are unanswered questions on the effects of longer-term use.

That is why the Government ran a call for evidence on youth vaping which closed on 6 June 2023. This will identify opportunities to reduce the number of children accessing and using vaping products and explore where the government can go further to protect children from the harms of vaping.

We will respond to the call for evidence in due course.

#### ■ **Epilepsy: Health Services**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[198883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is planning to take to help improve epilepsy care.

**Will Quince:**

The majority of health services for people with epilepsy are commissioned locally by integrated care boards (ICBs). ICBs are best placed to make decisions regarding the provision of health services to their local population, including for the treatment of epilepsy, subject to local prioritisation and funding.

At a national level, there are a number of initiatives supporting service improvement for those with epilepsy, including NHS England's Neuroscience Service Transformation Programme and RightCare Epilepsy Toolkit.

### ■ **Gambling: Rehabilitation**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[198812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to ensure that people who have a problematic relationship with gambling have access to an NHS gambling treatment clinic.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The NHS Long Term Plan, published in 2019, announced the creation of 15 specialist gambling treatment clinics by 2023/24. There are currently 12 clinics in operation, across all regions of England. In July, the National Health Service announced the location of the remaining clinics, all of which are expected to open by the end of 2023. Through these clinics, the NHS will be able to treat up to 3,000 people experiencing gambling-related harms each year.

### ■ **General Practitioners and Primary Health Care: Concrete**

**Wes Streeting:**

[\[197903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many buildings used to provide GP and primary care services for the NHS contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 12 September 2023]:* Privately owned primary care estate is not part of the national reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) remediation programme. NHS England has issued RAAC guidance to providers of National Health Service services operating from private premises to advise them to engage with the private landlords who hold the responsibility for surveying and maintaining their own property. In many cases in primary care the general practitioners are the owners.

The Department and NHS England have engaged with Community Health Partnerships (CHP) and NHS Property Services (NHSPS) who own the proportion of the primary and community estate in public ownership to understand their RAAC risk and the associated programmes. CHP has not identified any RAAC in its estate. NHSPS has identified three sites that are part of the national programme.

### ■ **General Practitioners: Enfield North**

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[199250\]](#)

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

**Neil O'Brien:**

There are four general practice surgeries in the Enfield North constituency, and all four (100%) are rated as Good by the Care Quality Commission.

**Feryal Clark:**[\[199477\]](#)

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 Enfield North constituency for (a) non-emergency 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.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The data is not held in the format requested.

**Health Services****Caroline Lucas:**[\[198651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 June 2023 to Question 186779 on Health Services, what proportion of additional NHS funding (a) in 2023/24 and (b) 2024/25 will be spent on delivery of the Major Conditions Strategy.

**Will Quince:**

Funding for the development of the Major Conditions Strategy will come out of Department's existing funding allocation. This funding is not separately identified.

The funding provided at the Autumn Statement comes on top of the Spending Review 2021 settlement, which provided a 33% total cash increase of £43.9 billion when compared to 2019/20, when our budget outturn was £133.5 billion.

As part of the Strategy, we will be identifying innovative actions to help alleviate pressure on the National Health Service, such as maximising use of new technologies to screen individuals for conditions.

**Healthy Start Scheme****Alison McGovern:**[\[199201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of families were (a) eligible for and (b) claimed Healthy Start Scheme vouchers by 12 September 2023.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The NHS Business Services Authority operates the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department. Monthly uptake figures for the Healthy Start scheme are published on the NHS Healthy Start website, which is available at the following link:

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

The latest uptake figures were published on 31 August 2023. In August 2023, uptake for the NHS Healthy Start scheme was 66.0%, with 557,460 eligible beneficiaries.

**Andrew Western:** [\[199521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many application forms for Healthy Start payments have been sent out to families with no recourse to public funds with British children.

**Andrew Western:** [\[199522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications for the Healthy Start payments have been made from applicants with no recourse to public funds with British children.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department has sent out over 1,300 application forms to those who have requested them. The Department does not hold information on the recipients of the application forms.

As of 18 August 2023, the Department has received 110 fully completed applications that have demonstrated that the applicant met the eligibility criteria. The Department does not collect and therefore hold data on all applications made, as some applicants do not meet all the eligibility criteria, and these applications are not stored.

#### ■ **Healthy Start Scheme: Social Security Benefits**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[199111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to expand the eligibility of the Healthy Start scheme to all families on Universal Credit and equivalent benefits with children under five years old.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Healthy Start scheme is kept under continuous review. There are no plans to expand the eligibility of the Healthy Start scheme to all families on Universal Credit, and equivalent benefits, with children aged under five years old.

#### ■ **Hospitals: Buildings**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[197137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the cost of removing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete from all hospitals.

**Will Quince:**

Extensive building survey works have been conducted by National Health Service trusts to identify the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in their fabric, using technology to record potential issues and visually identify and log potential risks. So far 27 sites with confirmed RAAC plank construction have been identified and RAAC has already been removed completely from three of these.

There is ongoing engagement with trusts on a national and regional level to ensure RAAC is being fully identified across the NHS estate.

We have allocated a total of £698 million for mitigation works, which involves putting in place necessary remediation and failsafe measures, in all the affected trusts up to 2025. Funding is being allocated annually, based on NHS trust plans and delivery progress. Further, the seven worst affected hospitals are being rebuilt by 2030 through the New Hospital Programme.

We have committed to eradicating RAAC from the publicly owned NHS estate by 2035, protecting patient and staff safety in the interim period, with NHS approaching this on a 'risk basis' and prioritising NHS trusts of concern. The estimated cost of full eradication through to 2035 will change over time due to several factors and will be considered at each spending review.

**Wes Streeting:**

**[197538]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS trusts in England have sites containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) that are deemed to pose a risk that could cause the loss of life or serious harm to staff or patients.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 11 September 2023]:* The National Health Service has been surveying sites and undertaking reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) mitigation work since 2019 and has had an active national remediation programme since 2021 to mitigate and monitor the risks posed by RAAC across the NHS estate.

Through this remediation programme, RAAC has been completely eradicated in three sites across three trusts. In 24 sites where RAAC remains present, risk is mitigated through failsafe measures such as propping. This includes significant failsafe intervention in the seven hospitals that have RAAC throughout and will be replaced through the New Hospital Programme before 2030.

A further modest number of trusts have indicated since May 2023 that they have possible RAAC. Visual inspection has ruled RAAC out in four. The remaining have had RAAC visually confirmed and structural surveys are now taking place for technical classification of this RAAC. As new areas with RAAC are identified, monitoring and mitigations will be put in place where needed and panels will be removed over time.

We have allocated a total of £698 million for mitigation works, putting in place necessary remediation and failsafe measures, in all the affected trusts up to 2025. Funding is being allocated annually, based on NHS trust plans and delivery progress. There is ongoing engagement with trusts on a national and regional level to ensure RAAC is being fully identified across the NHS estate to protect patient and staff safety. To date there have been no injuries caused by RAAC incidents in the NHS acute estate.

We have committed to eradicating RAAC from the publicly owned NHS estate by 2035, protecting patient and staff safety in the interim period, with NHS approaching this on a 'risk basis' and prioritising NHS trusts of concern.

**Julian Knight:**[\[197868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how patients and staff in hospitals are being informed of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) where it occurs.

**Will Quince:**

The National Health Service has been surveying sites and undertaking reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) mitigation work since 2019 and has had an active national remediation programme since 2021 to mitigate and monitor the risks posed by RAAC across the NHS estate.

Where RAAC is identified, individual trusts share the information appropriately with staff and patients in line with the trust's health and safety responsibilities. To date there have been no injuries caused by RAAC incidents in the NHS acute estate.

The NHS already has a comprehensive mitigation plan in place for hospital buildings with RAAC, including significant additional funding worth £698m from 2021 to 2025, for trusts to put in place necessary remediation and failsafe measures, such as propping, as well as to eradicate RAAC in non-whole hospital sites.

**■ Hospitals: Concrete****Rachael Maskell:**[\[197566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to complete an survey of the NHS estate for the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Will Quince:**

The National Health Service has been surveying sites and undertaking reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) mitigation work since 2019 and has had an active national remediation programme since 2021 to mitigate and monitor the risks posed by RAAC across the NHS estate. NHS England has issued guidance for trusts nationally on how to establish the presence of RAAC in their estate, and there is ongoing engagement with trusts on a national and regional level to ensure RAAC is identified across the NHS estate.

**Feryal Clark:**[\[197605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many assessments of buildings on the NHS estate for reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) have occurred in each of the last five years.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2023]:* The National Health Service has been surveying sites and undertaking reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) mitigation work since 2019 and has had an active national remediation programme since 2021 to mitigate and monitor the risks posed by RAAC in the NHS estate.

NHS England has provided guidance for trusts nationally on how to establish the presence of RAAC in their estate. There is ongoing engagement with trusts on a

national and regional level to ensure RAAC is identified across the NHS estate. Trusts are conducting surveys and assessments, including ongoing monitoring based on the guidance issued and so no central data of the number of assessments is held.

**Feryal Clark:** [\[197606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any hospitals will need to close due to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2023]:* The National Health Service has been surveying sites and undertaking reinforce autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) mitigation work since 2019 and already has a comprehensive mitigation plan in place for hospital buildings with RAAC. This includes significant additional funding, £698 million from 2021 to 2025. Additionally, in May 2023 we announced that the seven NHS hospitals most affected by RAAC will be replaced by 2030 through the New Hospital Programme, and that we remain committed to eradicating RAAC from the NHS estate entirely by 2035.

The nature of hospital sites, typically with a large estate footprint and a range of ongoing maintenance programmes, means mitigation works can be carried out with relatively minimal service disruption, including relocating wards where necessary. Reducing the availability of advanced clinical settings could cause potential harm to patients. Keeping capacity open but being scrupulous about RAAC monitoring and mitigation until the RAAC can be removed is fully in line with the current evidence and recommendations of the Institute of Structural Engineers.

There is ongoing engagement with trusts on a national and regional level to ensure RAAC is being fully identified across the NHS estate, and the NHS has plans in place to manage any change in position with RAAC as part of the ongoing work every trust undertakes to plan for a wide range of scenarios.

**Wes Streeting:** [\[197898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the plans for any buildings that are part of New Hospitals Programme include the use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 12 September 2023]:* No known National Health Service buildings built since 2010 contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), and the Government is committed to eradicating RAAC from the entire NHS estate by 2035. Plans for New Hospital Programme (NHP) schemes will continue to align with recommendations by the Institution of Structural Engineers.

The NHS has been surveying sites and undertaking RAAC mitigation work since 2019 and has had an active national remediation programme since 2021 to mitigate and monitor the risks posed by RAAC across the NHS estate. The seven most affected NHS hospitals have been prioritised and are to be rebuilt by 2030 through the NHP.

## ■ Hospitals: Construction

### Wes Streeting:

[197546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the likely completion date of the seven NHS hospitals most affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete as part of the New Hospitals Programme.

### Will Quince:

In May 2023, the Government announced that five hospitals constructed mostly using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) are to be rebuilt by 2030 as part of the New Hospital Programme (NHP), along with two already in the Programme. These RAAC hospitals have been prioritised for delivery.

The programme is committed to all schemes that have been announced as part of the NHP. All seven RAAC hospitals are to be rebuilt by 2030.

This will be achieved through the way NHP is approaching the building of new hospitals in the National Health Service estate. Hospital 2.0 is a standardised design for hospitals which will benefit patients and staff through digital solutions and optimised hospital layout.

By developing and using standardised designs to streamline approvals and speed up construction, NHP will work with trusts to deliver improvements for patients and staff across the country whilst driving cost reduction and decreasing overall development timescales.

## ■ Hospitals: Food

### Matt Vickers:

[198874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure the adequacy of the (a) quality and (b) nutritional content of food in hospitals.

### Will Quince:

We know the importance of quality, nutritious hospital food to aid a patient's recovery. All National Health Service trusts should ensure should healthy, nutritious food is on offer for patients and staff.

Following the publication of the Independent Review on Hospital Food in October 2020, NHS England are leading a three-year plan 'Great Food, Good Health' to implement the recommendations from the Review with the aim to improve hospital food.

In November 2022, NHS England published updated NHS Food and Drink Standards. These include eight mandatory standards that trusts are expected to implement, including a requirement to have a designated board director responsible for food (nutrition and safety). NHS England are considering the best way to measure the effectiveness of improvements as a result of those standards.



## ■ Hospitals: Safety

### Wes Streeting:

[197536]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the risk of a hospital building collapse resulting from structural safety issues.

#### Will Quince:

*[Holding answer 11 September 2023]:* The National Health Service conducts regular surveys of its estate to assess the state of the building fabric. These surveys cover a wide range of structural assessments. With reference to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), the NHS has been surveying sites and undertaking RAAC mitigation work since 2019 and has had an active national remediation programme since 2021 to mitigate and monitor the risks posed by RAAC across the NHS estate.

The NHS has a capital budget of £4.2bn this year for trusts and integrated care systems to use to address capital priorities in response to these surveys. The NHS already has a comprehensive mitigation plan in place for hospital buildings with RAAC, including significant additional funding worth £698m from 2021 to 2025 for trusts to put in place necessary remediation and failsafe measures, such as propping, as well as to eradicate RAAC in non-whole hospital sites.

NHS England has issued guidance for trusts nationally on how to establish the presence of RAAC in their estate. There is ongoing engagement with trusts on a national and regional level to ensure RAAC is identified across the NHS estate. Where structural surveys identify RAAC in their estate, trusts are inducted into the national remediation programme.

## ■ Integrated Care Systems: Patients

### Sir George Howarth:

[198637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of giving the Care Quality Commission more freedom to scrutinise the level of patient involvement of (a) Integrated Care Systems and (b) Integrated Care Boards.

#### Maria Caulfield:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has a new duty to review and assess integrated care systems (ICSs), in which integrated care boards (ICBs) are in scope, as a statutory body within an ICS. As part of these assessments, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has asked the CQC to consider whether each ICS is adequately considering the voices of people who use health and care services and their families, carers and representatives.

The CQC's approach is driven by people's needs and their experiences of health and care services. It will focus on what matters to the public and to local communities when they access, use and move between services.

It is the role of NHS England to assess an ICB's performance against its statutory duties (such as the duty to promote the involvement of each patient).

## ■ Kidney Diseases: Screening

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[198711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of people offered tests for kidney disease.

**Will Quince:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance, 'Chronic kidney disease: Assessment and management [NG203]', updated in November 2021, sets out best practice for clinicians in the diagnosis and management of chronic kidney disease (CKD). The guidance covers monitoring for those patients at risk, pharmacological management and referral where appropriate. The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng203>

In addition to evidence-based guidance to support clinicians to diagnose problems of the kidney, we are also working to detect people at risk of kidney disease through the NHS Health Check Programme. The Programme, which is available for everyone between the ages of 40 and 74 years who are not already on a chronic disease register, assesses people's health and risk of developing certain health problems. Using this information, patients are supported to make behavioural changes and access treatment which helps to prevent and detect kidney disease earlier.

We are investing in new delivery models for the NHS Health Check, including nearly £17 million for the development and roll-out of an innovative new national digital NHS Health Check that will give people choice about where and when to have a check.

The NHS England Renal Services Transformation Programme has recently launched a toolkit which identifies principles and actions that the health care system can take to improve the identification of kidney disease. The principles will encourage integrated care systems to focus on early identification and management of kidney disease, and they also outline actions developed in collaboration with clinical and operational colleagues that could help them achieve better patient outcomes and experience.

NHS England is also reviewing renal service specifications. Historically, these specifications have focused on advanced disease. However, future versions will support early diagnosis and intervention.

The UK National Screening Committee does not currently recommend screening for glomerulonephritis, or damage to the filters inside the kidneys. There is no evidence that screening would be effective at improving outcomes for those with a positive result.

## ■ Maternity Services

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons some NHS hospitals do not permit birthing partners to remain overnight; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of those policies on (a) mothers and (b) families.

**Maria Caulfield:**

National Health Service maternity providers will make local policies around partners being able to stay overnight based on the availability of appropriate accommodation and the need to preserve the privacy and dignity of all inpatients. NHS England expects providers to work with local Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnerships to ensure the involvement of women and their families in decision-making.

## ■ Medical Treatments: Children

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[199656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the potential cost of providing (a) anti-inflammatory and (b) immunomodulatory treatment to young people where the potential merits of doing so outweigh the potential harms.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We have no plans to make such an estimate.

## ■ Neurodiversity: Children

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[198808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make a comparative estimate of the number children who have received (a) a diagnosis and (b) support for neurodivergence in (a) the North, (b) London and (c) the south of England in the last 12 months.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Data on the number of children who have received a diagnosis and support for neurodivergence is not held centrally but may be held locally by individual National Health Service trusts or commissioners.

## ■ NHS Learning Support Fund

**Stella Creasy:** [\[199572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department spent on Parental Support from the NHS Learning Support Fund in each of the last five years; and how many people have (a) made a claim and (b) been eligible for support under that scheme in each of the last five years.

**Will Quince:**

The following table shows for the years 2018/19 to 2022/23 the number of students who received an element of funding from the NHS Learning Support Fund, together

with the number of students who received available childcare component and its corresponding expenditure:

FINANCIAL YEAR	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Students who Received an Element of Funding	14,067	26,382	110,923	130,213	133,658
Students in Receipt of Child Dependants Allowance (CDA) or Parental Support (PS)	8,014	14,013	36,192	34,034	35,649
CDA and PS Expenditure (£)	5,908,671	11,700,520	35,068,824	49,751,801	52,565,170

Source: NHS Business Services Authority

### ■ NHS: Buildings

#### **Wes Streeting:**

[\[197547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were relocated by NHS trusts due to building closures caused by the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in each of the last 12 months.

#### **Wes Streeting:**

[\[197548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were affected by closures to sites as a result of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in each of the last five years.

#### **Will Quince:**

No whole hospital sites have been closed due to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). The National Health Service has been surveying sites and undertaking RAAC mitigation work since 2019 and has had an active national remediation programme since 2021 to mitigate and monitor the risks posed by RAAC in the NHS estate.

The nature of hospital sites, typically with a large estate footprint and a range of ongoing maintenance programmes, means mitigation works can be carried out with relatively minimal service disruption, including relocating wards where necessary.

Reducing the availability of advanced clinical settings could cause potential harm to patients. Keeping capacity open but being scrupulous about RAAC monitoring and mitigation until the RAAC can be removed is fully in line with the current evidence and recommendations of the Institute of Structural Engineers.

## ■ NHS: Complaints

**Justin Madders:** [\[198714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the contract for Capita to deliver complaints services for NHS is due to conclude.

**Justin Madders:** [\[198715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Capita's delivery of complaints services for the NHS.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Capita has not been specifically contracted to operate a complaints service for the National Health Service. Capita is under contract to NHS England until August 2025 to provide a range of support services for primary care in England. This includes operating a customer support centre for service users which would handle any complaints solely relating to the delivery of primary care support services.

As part of its primary care support service Capita will consider and respond to feedback and complaints from service users. NHS England monitors these through its contract assurance and governance mechanisms.

## ■ NHS: Concrete

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[197367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what safety checks his Department is recommending that the NHS carry out in Barnet on reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2023]:* NHS England has provided guidance for trusts nationally on how to establish the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in their estate. There is ongoing engagement with trusts on a national and regional level to ensure RAAC is identified across the National Health Service estate. Where structural surveys identify RAAC in their estate, trusts are inducted into the national remediation programme.

The NHS already has a comprehensive mitigation plan in place for hospital buildings with RAAC, including significant additional funding totalling £698 million from 2021 to 2025 for trusts to put in place necessary remediation and failsafe measures, such as propping, as well as to eradicate RAAC in non-whole hospital sites.

**Wes Streeting:** [\[197900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of buildings in the NHS estate that were built in (a) the last five years and (b) since 2010 contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 12 September 2023]:* Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was used in public sector buildings in the United Kingdom from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s. There are no known buildings in the National Health Service estate built since 2010 containing RAAC.

NHS England has issued guidance for trusts nationally on how to establish the presence of RAAC in their estate. There is ongoing engagement with trusts on a national and regional level to ensure RAAC is identified across the NHS estate.

**■ NHS: Pensions****Justin Madders:** [\[198716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many complaints have been lodged about the delivery of NHS Pensions in the last year.

**Will Quince:**

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) administers the NHS Pension Scheme and operates a complaints process as well as a two-step Internal Dispute Resolution (IDR) procedure. If a complainant has exhausted the IDR process and is not satisfied with the outcome, they may also be able to approach the Pensions Ombudsman.

In the 12 months to the end of August 2023, the NHSBSA received 813 complaints, 1,201 IDRs at Stage One, 295 IDRs at Stage Two and 55 cases referred from the Pensions Ombudsman. Some of the complaints the NHSBSA receive may progress to an IDR at Stage One. However, not all IDRs at Stage One originate as complaints as some complainants embark straight onto the IDR process.

These complaints need to be seen in the context of the number of members in the NHS Pension Scheme. As of 31 March 2023, there were 1,815,310 active members, 772,560 deferred members and 1,098,388 pensioner members.

**■ Podiatry: Finance****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for podiatric care.

**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 funding they are allocated, including in respect of podiatry services.

## ■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[198694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2023 to Question 196282 on Prescriptions: Fees and Charges, what figures his Department used to determine that prescription charge revenue offsets for the costs of administering and enforcing the system.

**Will Quince:**

The Prescription Exemption Checking Service (PECS) is delivered by NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA); the role of the scheme administrator is to run and operate the service as commissioned by NHS England. Included within PECS is an enforcement service. NHSBSA investigate a random sample of prescription forms from patients who have claimed exemption from payment to verify the accuracy of the exemption declared. For 2022/23, the administration cost of the PECS at the NHSBSA was £8,918,498. For the same period, the charges recovered by the service totalled £10,354,816.

The total cost of prescription services includes funding through different routes, some services are shared with other NHSBSA functions, and some costs are incurred by other organisations. It is not therefore possible to provide total costs. Revenue from prescription charges and pre-payment certificates was £651,964,000 in 2021/22.

## ■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[199658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to prepare for a winter increase in cases of respiratory syncytial virus..

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department, through its arm's length bodies, prepares for Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) through a combination of surveillance, public health communications, and a targeted immunisation programme.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) monitors weekly levels of RSV and bronchiolitis, a condition associated with RSV in young children. UKHSA also leads public health messaging on social, national, and regional media, highlighting the signs and symptoms of RSV and the steps that can be taken to reduce infections, including reducing risks to babies. In addition, the existing, targeted RSV immunisation programme protects infants who are at high risk of complications if infected.

Work has also been done to ensure high-impact interventions for those with RSV who require medical care, such as expanding the use of Acute Respiratory Infection Hubs across every part of England, where patients can get urgent, same-day, face-to-face assessment for RSV, amongst other respiratory illnesses.

**■ School Milk: Christchurch****Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[198979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which nurseries are registered for the nursery milk scheme in Christchurch constituency.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Details of individual childcare settings cannot be provided as this may contain personal identifiable data.

**■ Suicide****Stephen Morgan:** [\[198946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department plans to allocate to the roll out of the national cross-government strategy on preventing suicide.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We recently launched our Suicide Prevention Grant Fund, which makes £10 million available over the next two years to support suicide prevention activities delivered in England by voluntary, community or social enterprise organisations.

The fund will help non-profit organisations in meeting the increased demand seen in recent years and assist a range of diverse and innovative activity that can prevent suicides, both at a national and community level. It will especially support those organisations working with groups of concern identified in the new suicide prevention strategy for England.

Wider investment includes £57 million being spent on suicide prevention and suicide bereavement services in all local areas to March 2024 via the NHS Long Term Plan and the £150 million capital investment being made available to improve mental health urgent and emergency care pathways.

**■ Thyroid Diseases: Drugs****Jim Shannon:** [\[198703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to help support people affected by the increase in price of thyroid drugs to seek compensation from Advanz Pharma.

**Will Quince:**

The Department takes excessive drug pricing very seriously. It is for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate concerns about abuses of competition law. Where companies are found by the CMA to be in breach of the legislation, the Department considers seeking damages. The Department is unable to confirm or deny bringing claims for damages regarding the increase in price of thyroid drugs by Advanz Pharma. People with myxoedema (that is, hypothyroidism requiring thyroid hormone replacement) can apply for a medical exemption certificate which provides all their prescriptions free of charge.



**■ UK Health Security Agency: Finance****Chi Onwurah:** [\[199593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the R&D budget is of the UK Health Security Agency Vaccine Development and Evaluation Centre.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The information is not held in the format requested as the research & development budget is not separated from the wider budget of the Vaccine Development and Evaluation Centre.

**■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme****Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[199535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many claims under the Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme have been received between October 2021 and September 2023; how many of these claims relate to vaccines for (a) Covid-19 and (b) other illnesses; and how many claims are still awaiting a final decision per vaccine.

**Maria Caulfield:**

From 1 October 2021 to 1 September 2023, the NHS Business Services Authority has received 6,809 claims relating to COVID-19 vaccinations, and 251 claims relating to vaccines for other illnesses.

Of these claims, 3,933 are currently awaiting a final decision; of which, 3,796 are related to vaccines for COVID-19 and 137 are related to vaccines for other illnesses. These 137 are broken down per vaccine as follows:

- 35 are adult flu
- 33 are unidentified/unclear due to multiple types of vaccinations
- 17 are diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and haemophilus influenzae type b (DTaP/IPV/Hib)
- 15 are measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)
- 9 are human papillomavirus (HPV)

The following vaccines have received fewer than five claims and the exact amount cannot be disclosed as this information may make individuals personally identifiable in the public domain:

- Influenza
- Swine flu (Pandemic influenza A (H1N1) 2009)
- Polio (Poliomyelitis - orally administered)
- Unidentified/unclear
- Haemophilus influenzae type b, meningococcal group C (Hib/Men C)
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)

- Meningococcal group C (Men C, Men ACWY)
- Pneumococcal (PCV)
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Tetanus
- Mumps
- Meningococcal group B (Men B)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio (DTaP/IPV)
- Rubella (German measles)

### ■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[199534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September to Question 197988 on Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus, how many and what proportion of the 221 claims rejected due to not meeting the 60% disability threshold would have met a disability threshold of (a) 50%, b) 40%, c) 30% and (d) 20%.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Of the 221 COVID-19 related claims rejected due to not meeting the 60% disability threshold, as of 1 September 2023, only nine, or 4%, potentially would have met a disability threshold of 50%; 34, or 15%, potentially would have met a disability threshold of 40%; 73, or 33%, potentially would have met a disability threshold of 30%; and 116, or 53%, potentially would have met a disability threshold of 20%. The data for lower thresholds is cumulative and includes claims that would meet a higher threshold.

### ■ Walking

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[199329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to update health guidelines on daily step counts.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Government encourages adults to focus on walking briskly rather than just counting steps to improve their health.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' (OHID) 'Better Health' programme offers a number of free, accessible and evidence-based resources to support adults and young people to be more active. This includes the NHS Active 10 app, which encourages adults to incorporate brisk walking into their days to improve their general health and wellbeing without the need for gyms or expensive fitness programmes. The app supports and motivates users to increase and monitor the intensity of their walking, rather than just focus on the distance or number of steps throughout the day.

Just 10 minutes of brisk walking a day is an easy way for adults to introduce more moderate intensity physical activity into their day.

To support more individuals to reach a brisk walking pace and to achieve moderate intensity activity, OHID have just launched a new feature within the NHS Active 10 app, called 'Pace Checker'. The feature helps walkers to find their brisk walking pace of 100 or more steps per minute, and motivates them to complete more Active 10s every day.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ **Agricultural Machinery: Theft**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[198605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the theft of farm (a) equipment and (b) machinery.

**Chris Philp:**

This Government is committed to driving down rural crime. We are working closely with the police, industry and others to ensure we are collectively doing everything we can to drive down acquisitive crime, including the theft of agricultural machinery and vehicles.

The Government supported the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, which gained Royal Assent on 20 July. The Act will require immobilisers and forensic marking to be fitted as standard to new agricultural equipment such as All-Terrain Vehicles and quad bikes.

The Home Office committed to provide one-off funding of £200,000 to the National Rural Crime Unit 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.

### ■ **Asylum: Greater London**

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[199539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 13 September to Question 197940 on Asylum: Greater London, for what reasons the information requested is not reportable.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The information requested in relation to Question 197940 could only be obtained at disproportionate cost as it would require a manual trawl of case records to retrieve.

**■ Drugs: Scotland****Alison Thewliss:**[\[199457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Secretary of State for Scotland at Scotland Questions, Official Report on 13 September 2023, whether it is her policy not to intervene should a pilot supervised drug consumption facility go ahead in Scotland.

**Chris Philp:**

I refer the Hon Lady to my comments earlier today in the Chamber.

We look forward to seeing details including proposals for the individual consideration of cases and links to treatment which may be relevant.

**■ Fires: Green Belt****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[198672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to help the London Fire Brigade with tackle future wild fires on Green Belt land.

**Chris Philp:**

London Fire Brigade, like all Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to plan for the foreseeable risks in their area, through their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). These need to incorporate the top local and national risks such as wildfire, and have regard to other key local responders and the communities which they serve.

Fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.6 billion in 2023/24. Standalone fire and rescue authorities will see an increase in core spending power of 8.1 per cent in cash terms compared to 2022/23. The Greater London Authority has a core spending power of £2.8bn in 2023/24 which is an increase of £319m (12.7%) compared with 2022/23. Decisions on how their resources are best deployed to meet their core functions are a matter for each fire and rescue authority.

More widely, the Government working closely with NFCC Wildfire Lead, and The England and Wales Wildfire Forum has developed a “Wildfire Framework”; supporting a multiagency approach to mitigate the risks and impacts of wildfire to people, property, habitats and wildlife and to provide an effective response to wildfire incidents. [ [Wildfire Framework for England – December 2021 \(fireengland.uk\)](#) ]. Furthermore, the Home Office are currently scoping a wildfire strategy and action plan, as outlined in the [third National Adaptation Plan](#).

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have surveyed and collated feedback from all UK Fire and Rescue Services on the 2022 wildfire season. The Home office are working closely with the NFCC to implement relevant policy recommendations.

**■ Home Office: Social Media****Emily Thornberry:** [\[199032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the reasons for which each post from Minister for Security's X social media account and not from his (a) Instagram and (b) Facebook social media accounts was deleted between 6 September 2022 and 15 December 2022.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

Ministers are not required to provide reasons for the deletion of posts from their social media accounts. As such, the Home Office holds no relevant information.

**■ Iran****Nicola Richards:** [\[199227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of potential ties between Iran and the activities of malicious agents in the UK since the escape of Daniel Khalife from HMP Wandsworth.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

We do not routinely comment on operational or intelligence matters.

The Government continually assesses potential threats in the UK, and takes the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK very seriously.

**■ Missing Persons****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been reported missing for more than (a) one, (b) six and (c) twelve months.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The United Kingdom Missing Persons Unit collates annual data from police forces and produces an Annual Missing Persons Data (AMPD) report which includes the most accurate figures held nationally on missing persons.

The latest AMPD report includes the following figures for England and Wales for the financial year 2021/22.

- Number of people still missing after 28 days: 1051
- Number of people still missing after 11 months: 937

Number of long term missing persons: 4521

**■ Offenders: Deportation****Mark Logan:** [\[199504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to deport foreign nationals engaged in terrorist-related activity.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The safety and security of the UK is the Government's highest priority. We take robust action to remove foreign nationals engaged in terrorist-related activity from the UK wherever possible. This requires careful consideration on the specific circumstances of each case, and complex and often sensitive engagement with our international partners. We are also frequently required to vigorously defend our immigration decision-making through the Courts process.

Where we cannot remove such individuals, the Government and operational partners have a range of powers at their disposal, amongst them criminal prosecution and where criminal prosecution is not possible Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs), to manage the terrorist threat and protect our national security.

**Police: Disciplinary Proceedings****Matt Vickers:**[\[198863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to strengthen disciplinary procedures in police forces.

**Chris Philp:**

This Government is committed to providing the police with the powers they need to protect the public. On 31 August 2023, this Government announced a raft of changes to strengthen the police disciplinary system, which will see corrupt police officers swiftly identified and robustly dealt with.

That includes handing responsibility for chairing misconduct hearings back to senior police officers, introducing a presumption of dismissal for gross misconduct and clarifying a route to remove officers who are unable to maintain vetting. Details of these changes can be found here: [Government to make it easier to sack rogue police officers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-make-it-easier-to-sack-rogue-police-officers).

The majority of these reforms will require changes to secondary legislation and the Government is committed to delivering these as soon as practicable

**Police: Medals****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[198922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of the introduction of a recognition of service medal for police officers injured on duty and unable to continue service.

**Chris Philp:**

We owe a tremendous gratitude to dedicated police officers for their continued hard work and sacrifice. There is no doubt that police officers who have their service cut short through injury have made, and in many cases will continue to make, an invaluable contribution to the emergency services.

It is right that there are provisions to support police officers who are injured in the line of duty, through the provision of paid leave, the injury benefit scheme and medical

retirement where appropriate. Alongside the existing Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, and the King's Police Medal, work is continuing on an appropriate way to mark the contribution of emergency workers and other public servants who are killed while serving the public. If they are injured or killed while attempting to save the life of another, they may be eligible for a gallantry award.

The Government has no plans currently to introduce a medal specifically for police officers who are injured on duty.

## ■ Public Houses: Licensing

**Matt Vickers:** [\[198870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislation to enable pubs to serve take away pints permanently.

**Chris Philp:**

In order to continue to support the hospitality sector, the Government recently announced the extension of the temporary off-sales regulatory easement - set out in the Business and Planning Act 2020 - until 31 March 2025. This extension enables holders of licences that only cover 'on sales' to continue to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises, including 'takeaway pints', for a further 18 months.

The Government is considering next steps and continues to keep the Licensing Act 2003 under review.

## ■ Retail Trade: Crime

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of retail crime reports result in a visit from a (a) police officer, (b) Community Safety Patrol Officer in (i) England and (ii) York.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of retail crime reports that result in the police collecting (a) CCTV and (b) bodycam evidence.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of reports of a retail security guard apprehending a perpetrator of retail crime that result in a visit from a police officer.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the average time taken by police to attend a report of retail crime when a suspect has been detained.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will have discussions with representatives of the retail sector on providing retail workers with access to (a) body camera and (b) other safety equipment.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has conducted research on the causes of retail crime.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps with industry stakeholders to help ensure that there is an effective programme of self-protection training for staff working in retail.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the reasons for trends in the level of prosecutions for retail crimes.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a retail crime strategy.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number and proportion of retail crimes that involve physical assaults on staff.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of cases of physical assault against (a) retail staff and (b) members of the public in a retail outlet were attended to by the police in the last 12 months.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of cases of physical assault against (a) retail staff and (b) members of the public in a retail outlet led to a prosecution in the last 12 months.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[199653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers on (a) the level of crime and (b) safety of staff in the retail industry.

**Chris Philp:**

Retail crime of any form, including violence and abuse, is not acceptable, and the Government takes this issue very seriously.

The Government has legislated to introduce a statutory aggravating factor for assault against any public facing worker via section 156 of the Police Crime Sentencing and



Courts Act 2022. The statutory aggravating factor applies in cases of assault where an offence is committed against those performing a public duty or providing a service to the public and ensures the courts treat the public-facing nature of a victim's role as an aggravating factor when considering the sentence for an offence.

The Home Office works closely with retailers and trade organisations, including USDAW, and police partners via the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) to ensure that the response to crimes affecting the retail sector is as robust as it can be.

On a national level, the Home Office works closely with the police-led National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) to understand the crimes affecting businesses and help ensure businesses and police are working effectively together. The Home Office is committed to working closely with the NBCC on all aspects of business crime and has provided funding to assist with their online retail crime hub which holds vital resource assets for the retail sector, including training packages. [Shopworker Videos \(nbcc.police.uk\)](https://nbcc.police.uk)

Further training is available on the British Retail Consortium website, which hosts a dedicated resource page on behalf of the NRCSG and includes valuable links to training to help retail workers de-escalate threatening situations. [DE-ESCALATION TRAINING \(brc.org.uk\)](https://brc.org.uk)

The Home Office collects and publishes data on crime affecting commercial premises as part of the Commercial Victimization 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>

This includes data on the proportion of premises which experienced a physical assault on their staff, and the responses of the police to reports of crime from commercial premises.

These data provide us with a good understanding of the prevalence to crime against retail premises. The Home Office does not hold data on the number of incidents of retail crime and as such it is not possible to calculate a proportion of retail crime incidents that were attended by the police. The Home Office also holds no information on the number of cases where CCTV or body cam evidence were collected.

Police forces across England and Wales have recently committed to pursuing any available evidence where there is a reasonable chance it could lead them to catching a perpetrator and solving a crime. For retail crime this could include reviewing CCTV evidence to identify suspects or using the Police National Database for facial searches where appropriate to do so.

I encourage the innovative use of new technology including facial recognition, where legal and appropriate. It is for individual retailers to decide what tools to use to prevent retail crime.

Operational decisions will always be a matter for individual police chiefs and their force. This Government has given the police more resources to deal with crimes, including retail crime, and, thanks to our successful uplift programme through which we recruited over 20,000 additional officers, we now have a record number of officers across forces in England and Wales. The specific data requested is not held centrally.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[199645]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of retail crime were reported in each of the last 10 years ;and how many of these led to a prosecution.

**Chris Philp:**

Retail crime of any form, including violence and abuse, is not acceptable, and the Government takes this issue very seriously.

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

The Home Office works closely with retailers and trade organisations, including USDAW, and police partners via the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) to ensure that the response to crimes affecting the retail sector is as robust as it can be.

On a national level, the Home Office works closely with the police-led National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) to understand the crimes affecting businesses and help ensure businesses and police are working effectively together. The Home Office is committed to working closely with the NBCC on all aspects of business crime and has provided funding to assist with their online retail crime hub which holds vital resource assets for the retail sector, including training packages. [Shopworker Videos \(nbcc.police.uk\)](https://shopworker.videos.nbcc.police.uk)

Further training is available on the British Retail Consortium website, which hosts a dedicated resource page on behalf of the NRCSG and includes valuable links to training to help retail workers de-escalate threatening situations. [DE-ESCALATION TRAINING \(brc.org.uk\)](https://de-escalation.training.brc.org.uk)

The Home Office collects and publishes data on crime affecting commercial premises as part of the Commercial Victimization 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>

This includes data on the proportion of premises which experienced a physical assault on their staff, and the responses of the police to reports of crime from commercial premises.

These data provide us with a good understanding of the prevalence to crime against retail premises. The Home Office does not hold data on the number of incidents of retail crime and as such it is not possible to calculate a proportion of retail crime incidents that were attended by the police. The Home Office also holds no information on the number of cases where CCTV or body cam evidence were collected.

Police forces across England and Wales have recently committed to pursuing any available evidence where there is a reasonable chance it could lead them to catching a perpetrator and solving a crime. For retail crime this could include reviewing CCTV evidence to identify suspects or using the Police National Database for facial searches where appropriate to do so.

I encourage the innovative use of new technology including facial recognition, where legal and appropriate. It is for individual retailers to decide what tools to use to prevent retail crime.

Operational decisions will always be a matter for individual police chiefs and their force. This Government has given the police more resources to deal with crimes, including retail crime, and, thanks to our successful uplift programme through which we recruited over 20,000 additional officers, we now have a record number of officers across forces in England and Wales. The specific data requested is not held centrally.

## ■ **Sports: Unmanned Air Vehicles**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[198706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the (a) effectiveness and (b) applicability for high-profile sporting events in the UK of the anti-drone technology used by French authorities during the Rugby World Cup.

**Chris Philp:**

Following publication of the Government's Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Strategy in 2019, the Home Office supported the development of a police national counter-drone capability, with the specialist National Police Chief's Council Counter-Drone team implementing this across the UK. It comprises a range of specialist equipment, vehicles, and personnel to provide a flexible counter-drone capability to detect, track, identify and effect drones.

Counter-drone equipment has been successfully deployed at major events, including sporting events, such as: COP26, the Commonwealth Games, The Coronation of His Majesty The King, and Eurovision. The equipment has a proven track record, and the Home Office continues to support further capability development. The Home Office does not routinely comment on police operations.

The Government works closely with international partners around the world to develop a common approach to addressing shared threats and challenges associated with the misuse of drones.

**■ Visas: EU Countries****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[198923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to regulate the prices and standards of companies providing Schengen visas.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Schengen Visa Fees are a matter for the European Union.

**JUSTICE****■ Crimes of Violence: Convictions****Emily Thornberry:**[\[199558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many individuals were convicted of aggravated assault under section 156 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 between 28 June 2022 and 14 September 2023.

**Edward Argar:**

Section 156 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 created a statutory aggravating factor for certain assault offences where they are committed against a person providing a public service, performing a public duty or providing services to the public. It did not create an aggravated assault offence.

Aggravating factors are taken into account by the courts during sentencing. Once the court has reached a provisional sentence based on the harm caused and the culpability of the offender, the court should then take into account aggravating factors which make the offence more serious, and mitigating factors which may reduce the seriousness. The sentence will then be adjusted upwards or downwards accordingly, within the maximum prescribed by Parliament.

The Ministry of Justice does not collect or publish data on the use of aggravating factors.

**■ Crown Court: Harrow****Gareth Thomas:**[\[197334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department was first informed of potential safety concerns at Harrow Crown Court; and if he will make a statement.

**Mike Freer:**

On 18 August 2023, following routine maintenance, reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was identified at Harrow Crown Court, a court built in the 1990s. HMCTS took the decision to close the site on the same day and work is underway at Harrow Crown Court for the removal of RAAC from the building. We are now carrying out surveys at all courts built during 1990s.

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[197335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of (a) the scale of the work and (b) the time needed to bring Harrow Crown Court back into full use; and if he will make a statement.

**Mike Freer:**

On 18 August 2023, following routine maintenance, reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was identified at Harrow Crown Court, a court built in the 1990s. HMCTS took the decision to close the site and work is underway at Harrow Crown Court for the removal of RAAC from the building. We are now carrying out surveys at all courts built during 1990s.

The current estimate is that this work will take between six and nine months to complete. HMCTS have taken steps to minimise disruption to operational services. Cases have been moved to other courts within London.

## ■ Homicide: Children

**Matt Vickers:** [\[198868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislation to make whole-life orders mandatory when sentencing people found guilty of the murder of a child.

**Edward Argar:**

Whole life orders are already the starting point for the murder of a child where such a murder is premeditated or involves the abduction of the child or sexual or sadistic motivation. On 26 August, the Prime Minister announced plans to make whole life orders the default for those who commit murders in these, and other particularly heinous, circumstances.

The Government also plans to make the murder of an individual, whether an adult or a child, subject to a mandatory whole life order if the murder involves sexual or sadistic conduct.

These reforms will ensure that those who murder the most vulnerable members of our society in the worst possible ways will face the most severe punishment available.

## ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Disability

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[198951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much was spent on legal aid for people with disabilities in disability discrimination cases in each of the last five years.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[198952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much was spent on legal aid for people with disabilities in each of the last five years.

**Mike Freer:**

For the first question on legal aid expenditure for people with disabilities in discrimination cases, the information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

For the second question, the information can be found in the table below:

**Legal aid expenditure for clients who have declared that they are disabled in the last five years.**

FINANCIAL YEAR	COSTS
2018-2019	£203,708,380
2019-2020	£211,911,448
2020-2021	£179,375,193
2021-2022	£209,120,094
2022-2023	£221,430,405

■ **Ministry of Justice: Buildings**

**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[199344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2023 to Question 198222 on Ministry of Justice: Buildings, how many surveys for reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) are scheduled.

**Damian Hinds:**

Survey work is underway. For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property.

**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[199345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2023 to Question 198222 on Ministry of Justice: Buildings, whether any prisons are being surveyed for reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

**Damian Hinds:**

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

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[199346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department has spent on surveys investigating whether there is reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in (a) prisons, (b) courts and (c) all other Ministry of Justice buildings as of 13 September 2023.

**Damian Hinds:**

Survey work is underway. For now, the focus is on bringing together the information we hold about the Government estate into one place. This work is being coordinated by the Office for Government Property.

## ■ **Offenders: Sentencing**

**Matt Vickers:** [\[198871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has considered the potential merits of making it compulsory for convicted offenders to attend court for sentencing.

**Edward Argar:**

Offenders should be brought before the court to face the consequences of their crimes. That is why, on 30 August 2023, the Government announced its intention to introduce two new measures with the aim of compelling offenders to attend their sentencing hearings.

First, a new power for courts to order an offender to attend their sentencing hearing. Where an offender refuses to attend without a just excuse, they will be in breach of this order and will face a maximum of 24 months' custody in addition to their sentence for the original offence. The measure will apply to all offenders convicted of an offence which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Second, an express power in legislation for judges to require production of offenders for specific sentencing hearings. Alongside this we will make it clear in legislation that force can be used in appropriate circumstances by prison staff and prisoner escort and custody services (PECS) staff where they consider it necessary, reasonable, and proportionate to bring offenders to hearings.

We recognise that there will be circumstances where an offender's presence may be distressing to victims and their families. Courts must have the discretion to do what is right in each case, and we anticipate that judges will consider victims' and families' wishes in making their decision.

## ■ **Prison and Probation Service: Staff**

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[199159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of service of prison staff at (a) HMP Wandsworth and (b) across the wider HM Prison and Probation Service is.

**Damian Hinds:**

On 30 June 2023, the average length of service of prison staff at HMP Wandsworth was 8.6 years and the average length of service of all prison staff across HMPPS was 10.0 years

**Prison Officers****Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[198884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Written Statement of 13 July 2023 entitled Justice system update, HCWS941, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of and (b) cost to the public purse of closed-grade prison officers leaving employment since 1 April 2023.

**Damian Hinds:**

From 1 April to 30 June 2023, 94 closed-grade prison officers left the prison service. The Department does not make a specific assessment of the cost to the public purse of closed-grade prison officers leaving the prison service.

**Prison Sentences****James Wild:**[\[199260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many referrals he has made to the Parole Board for eligible Imprisonment for Public Protection offenders; and how many such offenders have been released in the last 12 months.

**Damian Hinds:**

In the period between 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023, which is the latest 12 months period with published information, the Secretary of State for Justice has made 1550 referrals to the Parole Board for offenders serving indeterminate sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP). In that same period, a total of 610 IPP offenders were released (including those being re-released) from custody in accordance with a direction by the Parole Board.

**Prisoner Escorts: Safety****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[198544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to protect prison and custody staff from potential assault in plans to compel people to attend their sentencing.

**Edward Argar:**

Violence against our dedicated staff will never be tolerated. We are working closely with the Police and the CPS to ensure the successful prosecutions of prisoners who assault staff along with the strongest possible punishment being imposed. In the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Government doubled the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker, including prison officers and officers exercising custody functions, to 2 years' imprisonment. We have rolled out a next generation Body Worn Video Camera solution which has increased the availability across public sector prisons from 6,000 to over 13,000 cameras, with



every band 3-5 officer on shift being provided with a camera. The cameras will provide high-quality evidence to support prosecutions against prisoners who commit assaults. Additionally, we have invested £100 million to bolster prison security to clamp down on violence, self-harm and crime behind bars.

Our plans to compel attendance at sentencing hearings will set in legislation the power of custody officers to use reasonable force to make criminal appear in the dock. The decision on whether to use force would remain with custody officers and continue to be decided on a case-by-case basis where it is necessary, reasonable, and proportionate.

Courts will continue to be mindful of the impact that violent and disorderly defendants have on the safety of custody officers and the disruption and stress they can cause to victims and their families. An offender who refuses to attend their sentencing hearing where ordered to do so, including by disorderly conduct, will face up to an additional 2 years in custody.

## ■ Prisoners' Release: Rehabilitation

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[199086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much of the Shared Outcomes Fund allocated to the Prison Leavers Project has been distributed to the (a) cross-sector teams project strand, (b) Local Leadership and Integration Fund and (c) Prison Leavers Innovation Challenge as of 12 September 2023.

**Damian Hinds:**

The Prison Leavers Project (PLP) was established to work across sectors to pilot new ways to break the cycle of crime. The project has been evaluating a wide range of interventions to build robust evidence on what works to reduce reoffending.

The funding was distributed:

- c.£615,000 to the cross-sector teams;
- c.£5.3 million to the Local Leadership and Integration Fund; and
- c.£1 million to the Prison Leavers Innovation challenge.

PLP funding also includes independent evaluation and staff costs to support the projects.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[199087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled Prison Leavers Project: innovating to tackle the complex causes of reoffending, published 8 February 2021, if he will publish a list of all schemes launched by the cross-sector teams project strand and the amount of funding allocated per scheme since 1 January 2020.

**Damian Hinds:**

The Prison Levers Project was established in January 2020 and was made up of three strands including three cross-sector interventions designed to test new ways to

reduce reoffending, known as Service Communities. These were made up of civil servants, members from the third sector and people with experience of prison. The projects were:

1. The Community & Relationships Service Community. This implemented 'Talking Relationships' where trained practitioners facilitate pre-release group sessions to prepare relational skills for release. This intervention was allocated c.£340,000.
1. The Day of Release Service Community implemented the 'InsideOut Hub' which coordinated multi-agency day of release services to better support prison leavers on the day of release and was allocated c.£85,000.
1. The Employability & Skills Service Community implemented 'Grow into Employment' which provided group sessions for men in prison to learn about the realities of gaining employment after prison through facilitated discussions with people who have lived experience and was allocated c.£460,000.

## ■ Prisons: Education

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[199290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he plans to take to improve the (a) education and (b) literacy of adults in prison; and if he will make a statement.

**Damian Hinds:**

We are delivering a new Prisoner Education Service to improve the literacy, numeracy and vocational skills of prisoners. This will support positive employment outcomes and reduce reoffending.

This year we have appointed new Heads of Education Skills and Work and Neurodiversity Support Managers to more than 100 prisons, introducing senior educational expertise and knowledge to improve support for prisoners with additional learning needs; developed a new reading assessment tool and rolled out whole prison reading strategies in all prisons; and committed £1.8m to charities to pilot new reading initiatives. We have also enabled prisoners released on temporary licence to undertake apprenticeships.

This week, we have opened a major competition for new Core Education contracts. These will go live from 2025 and be focussed on improving outcomes and delivering value for money.

## ■ Wandsworth Prison: Security and Staff

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[199161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what correspondence his Department has received from HMPPS on the adequacy of (i) staffing levels and (ii) prison security at HMP Wandsworth in the last 12 months.

**Mike Freer:**

Obtaining the requested information would involve disproportionate cost. It would require checking all communications made by HMPPS staff in the last 12 months to

anywhere in the Ministry of Justice (including HMPPS, which is an agency of the Department) that related to the adequacy of HMP Wandsworth.

#### ■ **Wandsworth Prison: Staff**

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[198731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff (a) were recruited and (b) resigned from (i) HM Prison Service and (ii) HMP Wandsworth in the last 12 months.

**Damian Hinds:**

The quarterly HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) workforce statistics publication covers staffing information, including joiners and leavers. The latest publication covers data up to the period 30 June 2023.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2023, there have been a total 12,122 staff recruited into HMPPS overall. Of these, 7,566 were recruited within Public Sector Prisons and 123 were recruited at HMP Wandsworth.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2023, there have been a total 4,888 staff who have resigned from HMPPS overall. Of these, 3,349 staff have resigned from Public Sector Prisons and 77 have resigned from HMP Wandsworth.

### LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

#### ■ **Antisocial Behaviour**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to support local authorities with tackling anti-social behaviour.

**Felicity Buchan:**

In March 2023, the Government launched the Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Action plan backed by around £160 million of funding to crack down on ASB, restoring people's confidence that these crimes will be quickly and visibly punished.

#### ■ **Buildings: Concrete**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of community buildings affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in (a) Romford and (b) Havering.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon. Member to my answer to Question UIN [197493](#) on 11 September 2023.

## ■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[198683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that property management companies repair building facilities required for (a) public safety and (b) mobility without delay.

**Jacob Young:**

Everyone has the right to a safe and secure home, and this Government is taking steps to increase quality and regulation across all housing stock. This includes reviewing the Decent Homes Standard, improving the way social housing is regulated through The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and delivering a better deal for renters through the Renters (Reform) Bill.

## ■ Buildings: Safety

**Mohammad Yasin:**

[\[196404\]](#)

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 different limits under the Building Safety Act 2022 relating to historical safety remediation on the number of properties owned by (a) a company and (b) an individual.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Department has a range of guidance on the subject of fire remediation; guidance on the obligations on building owners under the Building Safety Act 2022 can be found [here](#).

Where developers or building owners are not currently funding cladding remediation, the Government has accepted funding applications for the remediation of ACM and non-ACM cladding on high-rise residential buildings (buildings over 18 metres) from responsible entities. Should a company also qualify as a responsible entity, their application would be treated in the same way as other responsible entities.

Guidance on how to apply to the Social Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund for the remediation of ACM cladding can be found [here](#).

Guidance on how to apply to the Private Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund for the remediation of ACM cladding can be found [here](#).

Guidance on how to apply for the remediation of non-ACM cladding via the Building Safety Fund can be found [here](#).

## ■ Community Ownership Fund

**Tony Lloyd:**

[\[199278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made on the current round of the Community Ownership Fund; and when he plans to announce the successful applications.

**Jacob Young:**

The £150 million Community Ownership Fund helps communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets at risk of closure.

Announcements will be made in the usual way.

**■ Empty Property: Business Rates****James Murray:**[\[199675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the monetary value of empty property relief for (a) retail premises (b) industrial premises and (c) all other premises was in each of the last 10 financial years for which data is available.

**Lee Rowley:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

**■ Hostels: Young People****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[198925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking to steps to ensure affordable hostel accommodation for young people.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government published its cross-government strategy, 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good', backed by £2 billion, last year. The strategy recognises young people face particular challenges and that mainstream service offers or accommodation may not always be appropriate for those needing higher levels of support.

The £200 million Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme aims to deliver up to 2,400 homes by March 2025, including tailored accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping, alongside allocating 3 years' funding for support to meet individual needs.

Through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, we are investing over £530 million in funding to local authorities across 2022-2025 for interventions focused on tackling and preventing rough sleeping. £2.5 million of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25 is going towards funding youth-specific services in local areas.

**■ Housing Estates: Repairs and Maintenance****Matt Western:**[\[198881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will make an assessment of the economic and potential merits of repair, refurbishment and retrofit of council-owned estates in contrast to demolition of such buildings.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The merits and economic case for how to approach a regeneration of an estate will vary in different places. The local authority, relevant housing association, together

with partners and residents are best placed to carry out an assessment based on the local context.

### ■ Housing: Construction

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[198693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he held discussions with the Prime Minister in August and September 2023 on the potential impact of changing the rules on nutrient neutrality and home building on the nutrient mitigation credit scheme; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers and officials have regular discussions with colleagues in 10 Downing Street on a range of issues.

### ■ Housing: Standards

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[198649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the oral contribution of the Deputy Leader of the House of Lords of 4 September 2023 on the Lords Report stage of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, Official Report, column 280 HL, when his Department plans to publish its consultation on the technical specification for the future homes standard; if he will make it his policy for that consultation to include a requirement for solar to be equipped as mandatory on all suitable homes; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We intend to consult this year on the technical specification for the Future Homes Standard. The Building Regulations on energy efficiency will continue to set a performance-based standard rather than mandating the use of any specific technologies. Under the current performance standards, most new homes are likely to be built with solar panels.

### ■ Recreation Spaces

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:** [\[198635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking steps to help to ensure that green space design is included in (a) local and (b) national planning policy guidelines.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The National Planning Policy Framework states that strategic policies in local plans should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale, and design quality of places. This includes making sufficient provision for green infrastructure.

The Framework is clear that local planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from these assessments should be used to determine

what open space is needed and local planning authorities, through their local plans, should then seek to accommodate this. Communities can designate land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans, ensuring green areas of particular importance to them are identified and protected.

Building on what the Framework sets out, the supporting National Design Guide demonstrates how well-designed new development can provide a network of high quality, green open spaces, taking into account how they are to be managed and maintained. In addition, the National Model Design Code provides guidance to local councils on preparing local design codes, which can consider the provision of new and enhanced green space as part of new development, building on existing open space strategies and standards in their local plans.

### ■ **Sleeping Rough**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[199001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made on the Ending Rough Sleeping for Good strategy, published September 2022.

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[199185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to page 29 of his Department's publication entitled Ending Rough Sleeping for Good, published on 3 September 2022, what progress his Department has made on ending rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament.

**Felicity Buchan:**

Since publishing the rough sleeping strategy last September, Government is making good progress on core commitments: for instance, we have extended our flagship Rough Sleeping Initiative to 2025, with over £530 million funding so that local areas can provide the tailored support needed to tackle rough sleeping in their areas. On the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme, we have now delivered over 5,000 units of accommodation out of a programme target of 6,000 and have launched the new £200 million Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme which will provide much needed homes for young people and rough sleepers with complex needs.

Rough sleeping levels are 35% lower in 2022 compared to the peak in 2017 and 28% lower than they were in 2019 before the pandemic. We will continue to work with local authorities and partners, the voluntary and community sector and private sector.

As the Hon. Member will be aware, rough sleeping and homelessness policy is devolved.

## ■ Social Rented Housing: Evictions

**Matt Vickers:** [\[198878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to amend the process for eviction of social housing tenants found to have taken part in (a) criminal and (b) antisocial behaviour.

**Jacob Young:**

The Renters (Reform) Bill will make it easier for landlords to evict anti-social tenants under the assured tenancy system. The Bill was introduced to parliament on 17 May 2023.

The Department has also committed to explore a '3 strikes and you're out' eviction expectation for all social landlords in the recently published [Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan](#). Updates on this work will be provided in due course.

## ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[199630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish the (a) allocated budget and (b) outturn expenditure for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022-23.

**Jacob Young:**

Funding allocations for all years, including 2022-23 are published on Gov.uk. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is delegated to lead local authorities who manage expenditure locally.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Higher Education: Northern Ireland

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[199020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent assessment he has made of the prevalence of Irish republican sectarianism in higher education institutions in Northern Ireland.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The Government has made no such assessment.

Higher Education policy in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter, under the responsibility of the Department for the Economy.

### ■ Infrastructure: Northern Ireland

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[199022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of implications for his policies of trends in the level of Republic of Ireland funding in Northern Ireland infrastructure.



**Mr Steve Baker:**

Funding decisions concerning infrastructure in Northern Ireland are devolved. In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Ministers, it is for the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure to decide on infrastructure spending decisions flowing from their 2023-24 budget allocation.

The UK Government and the Irish Government have a shared interest in ensuring excellent infrastructure is in place to support the growth of the Northern Ireland economy. As set out in the *New Decade, New Approach* agreement, the UK Government committed to a £1 billion Barnett guarantee for capital infrastructure investment.

It is essential that the Executive forms so that ministers elected by the people of Northern Ireland can take decisions on infrastructure investment and deliver for the people of Northern Ireland.

**■ Investment: Northern Ireland****Ruth Jones:**[\[196392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the agenda for the Northern Ireland investment conference in September 2023.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

My officials worked closely with the Department of Business and Trade, the department leading on delivery of the event alongside Invest Northern Ireland. There was Ministerial direction and oversight throughout. A number of UK Government ministers from different departments played an active role in the Summit, which successfully showcased Northern Ireland's innovation and technological strengths across its internationally renowned sectors to more than 100 global investors.

**■ Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill****Colum Eastwood:**[\[199232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make an estimate of the potential costs for implementing the (a) Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill and (b) Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

£250 million has been allocated to the implementation of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill and the non-legislative memorialisation measures announced alongside it. This includes costs for the establishment of the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, and its work. These funds were set aside for legacy mechanisms under the Stormont House Agreement and the New Decade, New Approach agreement. Work to design and implement the body, including how funds will be deployed, continues.

**TRANSPORT**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Jim Shannon:**[\[199099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with UK airport operators on (a) airport parking charges, (b) advertising of airport parking charges and (c) increases in airport parking charges for passengers who do not book in advance.

**Jesse Norman:**

It is for airport operators as commercial businesses to manage and justify their parking charges and advertising of parking charges. Parking arrangements are subject to contractual agreements between airport operators and car parking companies and covered by consumer laws. The Department for Transport expects car parking at airports to be managed appropriately and consumers treated fairly.

■ **Bus Services: North East****Julie Elliott:**[\[199150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of trends in the number of bus services in (a) Sunderland and (b) the North East since 2019.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Government provided over £2 billion in emergency and recovery funding from March 2020 to June 2023 to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and help protect services. Due to this funding, bus service provision in England outside London has remained above 85% of pre-COVID levels during 2021/22, despite patronage dropping to 10% of pre-pandemic levels during the height of the pandemic.

We recently announced a long-term approach to protect and improve bus services backed by an additional £300 million from July 2023 until April 2025. This funding is in addition to the £163 million the Government is providing to the North East to help local areas level up their bus services and deliver their Bus Service Improvement Plan. Local transport authorities and bus operators in the North East receive funding under the Bus Service Operator Grant to keep fares down and run services that might otherwise be unprofitable and could lead to cancellation. To support this, the Government provides up to £259 million annually for the national scheme.

■ **Cycling and Walking: Finance****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[199541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the policy paper entitled Cycling and walking investment strategy report to Parliament 2022, published on 6 July 2022, when he plans to publish the next cycling and walking investment strategy report.

**Jesse Norman:**

The next report to Parliament is likely to be published alongside the third statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy in 2025.

**■ Cycling: Accidents****Sir John Hayes:**[\[199277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on how many (a) fatal and (b) non-fatal incidents involved delivery drivers driving using electric bicycles in the last three years.

**Jesse Norman:**

The department's road casualty statistics are based on data collected from police forces via the STATS19 system.

STATS19 does not identify electric bicycles as a separate category, and therefore the department does not hold the information requested.

**■ Cycling: Clothing****Justin Madders:**[\[198718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Highway Code's clothing recommendations for cyclists at (a) ensuring visibility and (b) keeping road users safe.

**Jesse Norman:**

The safety of vulnerable road users is a priority for the Government, and the Department is determined to make the roads safer for everyone.

Rule 59 of The Highway Code recommends that cyclists should wear light-coloured or fluorescent clothing to help other road users to see them in daylight and poor light, with reflective clothing and/or accessories in the dark. This advice was strengthened in the updated version of The Highway Code that was published in January 2022, and the Department ran communication campaigns in both 2022 and 2023 to highlight some of the key changes.

The percentage of road users reporting to know either a little or a lot about the Highway Code changes increased from 36% in January 2022 to 58% in August 2022, with 83% of road users having heard of the changes by August.

**■ Dartford-Thurrock Crossing: Tolls****Gareth Johnson:**[\[199308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will review the adequacy of processes for the changeover of the Dartford Crossing payment system providers.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Yes. Whilst the service is working well now, a number of users experienced unsatisfactory delays. National Highways will consider carefully similar processes in future.

**■ Department for Transport: National Security****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[198836\]](#)

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

**Jesse Norman:**

Within the Department for Transport, national security risks are identified, assessed, and managed by subject matter experts working with science and analytical functions and reported up to the National Security Board, the Risk Committee and the Executive Committee.

**■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists****Richard Foord:** [\[198918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time is for a driver's test in (a) England and (b) the South West as of 12 September 2023.

**Richard Foord:** [\[198919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help people book a driving test close to where they live.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

As of 18 September 2023, there were 561,275 car practical driving tests booked, and 64,817 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

The average waiting time during August 2023 for a car practical driving test in England was 20.7 weeks, and in the South West it was 18.9 weeks.

A full driving licence allows a driver to use any roads, not just those they are familiar with. To be safe and competent, learner drivers need a broad range of driving experience in different areas and on different roads. Candidates do not, therefore, need to take their driving test at the nearest test centre to where they live.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[198680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help improve access to public car charge points in the London Borough of Havering.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Department is supporting local authorities, such as Havering, through its £381 million Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund. London was awarded £35.7 million in capital funding to cover the costs associated with the installation of EV chargepoints. Havering will also benefit from London's £3 million capability (resource) funding, which will secure dedicated in-house expertise to help support boroughs to plan, procure and tender the delivery of local chargepoints. In addition, the Borough has been awarded £346,490 for 114 chargepoints through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme.

**■ Elizabeth Line: Standards****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[198613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with Transport for London on the number of train cancellations on the Elizabeth Line.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Department has not held any recent discussions with Transport for London regarding cancellations on the Elizabeth Line.

We are aware of recent infrastructure failures in the Thames Valley area between London – Reading that have affected Elizabeth Line reliability.

The Rail Minister regularly meets Network Rail senior leadership and raises performance issues.

**■ Govia Thameslink Railway: Timetables****Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[199602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with Govia Thameslink Railway on the reduction of its (a) Southern and (b) London Bridge to East Croydon railway lines.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The department has regular discussions with Operators to assess the level of service provision and ensure that the timetable meets passenger demand. The timetable will remain under regular review however there are no significant changes currently planned to services between East Croydon and London Bridge

**■ Jet Skis****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[198927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to introduce a minimum age limit for jet ski use.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Department for Transport (DfT) does not have any current plans to introduce a minimum age limit for jet skis or other personal watercraft (PWC).

However, in January 2023, the Government introduced statutory controls to the use of PWCs with the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023, so that any individual using a PWC in a dangerous manner is essentially held to the same laws as ships and fishing vessels.

**■ Luton Airport: Construction****Daisy Cooper:** [\[199520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Answer of 13 September 2023 to Oral Question 906407 from the Member for St Albans, whether the

Government plans to accept the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee that there should be no further airport expansion until a capacity management framework is in place.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government's existing policy frameworks for airport planning – the Airports National Policy Statement and Making Best Use of existing runways policy – provide a robust and balanced framework for airports to grow sustainably.

Any planning application submitted by an airport will be judged by the relevant planning authority, taking careful account of all relevant considerations, including environmental impacts and proposed mitigations.

The Government is considering the CCC recommendations carefully and will be responding in due course.

■ **Manchester Airport: Freight**

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[198900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of cargo infrastructure at Manchester Airport.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK aviation market operates predominantly in the private sector.

■ **Manchester Airport: Passengers**

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[198901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on passenger numbers through Manchester Airport in each of the last five years.

**Jesse Norman:**

Information on the number of air passengers at UK airports is collected and published by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Table 9 of the UK airport data publications provides information on the number of passengers at Manchester Airport in each of the last five years:

<https://www.caa.co.uk/data-and-analysis/uk-aviation-market/airports/uk-airport-data/>

■ **Motor Vehicles: Noise**

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

[\[198589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has taken steps to pilot the use of acoustic cameras to identify vehicles that breach noise limits.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The results of the Department's initial research into the use of a prototype noise camera for the detection of excessively noisy vehicles was published in August 2021. This research showed that the technology demonstrated some potential, but required further development to be suitable for enforcement.

Further trials were commissioned in 2022, which included the assessment of the latest noise camera technology on a test track and at the roadside. Roadside trials commenced on 18 October 2022 and finished on 1 February 2023. The Department is awaiting a final report of the trial outcomes before considering next steps.

### ■ Union Connectivity Review

**Pete Wishart:** [\[198633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's planned timescale is for publishing its response to the Union connectivity review: final report, published on 26 November 2021.

**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

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Duncan Baker:** [\[199225\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of calculating national insurance contributions using the combined income from multiple employers.

**Victoria Atkins:**

National Insurance Contributions (NICs) are assessed on a pay-period basis per each employment. Requiring the aggregation of earnings for NICs of people doing more than one job with multiple employers would be administratively complex, increasing the burden on employers.

However, the Government keeps all taxes, including NICs, under review.

### ■ Air Passenger Duty

**Dan Carden:** [\[198903\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of levying a higher rate of Air Passenger Duty on private jet flights.

**Gareth Davies:**

As with all taxes, the Government keeps APD under review and any changes are announced by the Chancellor at fiscal events.

## ■ Alternative Fuels: Tax Allowances

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**

[\[199548\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a zero-rate tax for renewable hydrotreated vegetable oil for domestic heating.

**Gareth Davies:**

Hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) is a relatively new fuel, and has limited availability in the UK. When used for domestic heating, HVO benefits from the rebated duty rate of 10.18p per litre, in contrast to the full duty rate of 52.95p per litre.

The Government's Biomass Strategy, which was published on 10 August, reviews the amount of sustainable biomass available to the UK, including liquid biofuels such as HVO. It is important to ensure that biomass is prioritised within the economy where it offers the greatest opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in 'hard to abate' sectors where there are fewer options to decarbonise through alternative low carbon technologies. Biomass has a role in decarbonising certain properties, such as off gas grid homes that are not readily suitable for heat pumps. Further evidence is needed to consider what role biofuels could play.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps the taxation of HVO under review, and any changes are announced by the Chancellor at fiscal events.

## ■ Aviation: Taxation

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[199021\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to take steps to reduce aviation taxation on domestic flights.

**Gareth Davies:**

In April 2023, the Government halved the rate of APD on domestic flights in order to support UK-wide connectivity. The new domestic rate applies to all flights between airports in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and is set at £6.50 for economy passengers, half of the current short haul rate. This will benefit more than 10 million passengers in 2023/24.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps APD under review and any changes are announced by the Chancellor at fiscal events.

## ■ Beer: Excise Duties

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[198848\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2023 to Question 197611 on Beer: Excise Duties, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to provide an exemption to paying full duty on containers for on-trade premises whose takeaway sales are ancillary to the sale for consumption on the premises.



**Gareth Davies:**

The core objective of Draught Relief is to recognise the cultural importance of pubs and other on-trade venues as community hubs and to encourage responsible drinking in supervised settings.

Draught Relief does not prevent pubs and other on-trade venues from selling takeaway pints. Businesses have the ability to purchase full duty paid containers should they wish to decant from the container and sell beverages for their customers to consume off-site.

The Government believes it is right that beverages that are sold to be consumed off-site should pay the full rate of duty like their equivalents sold in off-trade venues. We remain open to considering any additional suggestions the industry may have which would result in the full duty being paid for beverages consumed off premises.

The Government will evaluate the impact of the new rates and structures three years after the changes take effect on 1 August 2023. This will allow time to understand the impacts in the alcohol market and for HMRC to gather useful and accurate data with which to evaluate.

**■ Dental Services****Rachael Maskell:**[\[199138\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the delivery of the NHS Dental Plan.

**John Glen:**

The Government is committed to ensuring people can access the health services they need.

In September 2022, Government announced 'Our plan for patients' which sets out how we will increase access to NHS dental care in England, whilst making the NHS dental contract more attractive to dental practices to support the delivery. These changes have now been implemented.

The Chancellor and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care have regular discussions on a range of health and social care services.

**■ Development Banks****Ruth Jones:**[\[199165\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations of the G20 Independent Review of Multilateral Development Banks' Capital Adequacy Frameworks.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government is highly supportive of the recommendations of the G20 Independent Review of Multilateral Development Banks' (MDBs) Capital Adequacy

Frameworks, which is expected to unlock hundreds of billions of dollars of additional financing for developing countries, vital in helping to deliver against the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change objectives. Alongside FCDO ministerial colleagues, the Chancellor has been working closely with G20 counterparts to ensure that MDBs begin to analyse and agree reforms. In July, the Chancellor was pleased to endorse the G20 Roadmap for implementing these reforms, drawing attention to the initial \$200bn of additional lending headroom which could be unlocked over the next 10 years from reforms agreed or being considered this year, whilst encouraging further ambitious implementation beyond this. We have seen some excellent progress, but more must be done to achieve the significant potential of this review and the Government will continue to pursue this.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Taxation

**John Redwood:**

[\[198583\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to introduce new taxes on the (a) purchase and (b) running costs of electric vehicles.

**Gareth Davies:**

In his 2022 Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced that from April 2025 electric cars, vans and motorcycles will begin to pay Vehicle Excise Duty in the same way as petrol and diesel vehicles. Electric cars with a list price of £40,000 or more will also be liable to pay the Expensive Car Supplement.

As with all taxes, VED is kept under review and any changes are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

## ■ Financial Services

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[199540\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by the Financial Conduct Authority entitled Financial Lives 2022 survey, published on 26 July 2023, if he will hold discussions with the Financial Conduct Authority on the findings of that survey on the number of people who unsuccessfully attempted to contact their financial services providers in the last 12 months.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government wants to ensure that everyone can access useful support from their financial service providers and understands that for many customers, getting through to their provider is often the starting point for receiving help.

The Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) Financial Lives Survey provides a nationally representative view of UK adults' financial behavior and experience of the UK financial services industry. While in the 12 months to May 2022, the Survey shows that 84% of those who used customer support services in the last 12 months agreed that it helped them achieve what they wanted to, in the same period, 14% of adults who held one or more financial products unsuccessfully attempted to contact one or more of their financial services providers.

Already, Ministers and officials regularly engage with the FCA on the key issues affecting customers, including access to support.

The Consumer Duty, introduced on 31 July this year, builds on the FCAs work to ensure that firms act to deliver good outcomes and seeks to set a higher and clearer standard of care that firms owe their customers. Under the duty, firms will have to provide helpful and responsive customer service and equip their customers to make good decisions through communications people can understand, provided at the right time. This means it should be as easy to complain about or switch and cancel products or services as it is to buy them.

To improve access to digital services, the government is continuing to invest in digital infrastructure as well as essential skills. For example, the Digital Entitlement allows for adults with no or low digital skills to study for a new Essential Digital Skills Qualification for free.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: ICT and Security

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[198978]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) major IT failures and (b) security breaches there have been at HMRC in each quarter since Q1 of 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

(a) HMRC do not publish major IT failures in the public domain. Previously, HMRC have made announcements using online platforms such as GOV.UK and Twitter to update customers on services that have been impacted by an outage or an IT failure. Customers can also find out about downtime and technical issues with HMRC services via the GOV.UK platform - HMRC Service and Availability and Issues.

Please see link here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-revenue-and-customs-service-availability-and-issues>

(b) Information related to security breaches are published and can be found in the HMRC Annual Report and Accounts 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Links to both reports can be found below:

- 2021/2022 report - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022/hmrc-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022--2>
- 2022/2023 report - [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023?utm\\_source=intranet&utm\\_medium=internal&utm\\_campaign=ara](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023?utm_source=intranet&utm_medium=internal&utm_campaign=ara)

## ■ Self-employed: Fines

**Caroline Lucas:**

[199052]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many self-employed people that did not file their tax returns on time were issued fines worth more than they originally owed in tax in the 2021-22 financial year; if he will (a) take steps to support self-employed people filing

their tax returns and (b) make an assessment of the proportionality of fines issued to self-employed people for late filing of a tax return when there is no tax owing; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Atkins:**

HMRC cannot provide this information because data transfer and assurance processes between the live SA system and those used for analytical purposes are not yet complete for the year requested. In addition the penalty life cycle is not yet complete for 2021-22 and many late returns, which will inform Self Employment status and income, have not yet been submitted.

HMRC issues SA tax returns to customers when the information they hold suggests that the customer meets the published criteria for completing one. HMRC often cannot determine someone's tax liability until they have sent in a tax return, therefore they need the return to establish whether there is tax due or not.

HMRC charges late final penalties to encourage customers to file on time but they can cancel a customer's late filing penalty if they have a reasonable excuse. Customers can also ask HMRC to remove them from the SA process for future years if they no longer meet the criteria.

HMRC is currently reforming late payment and late filing penalties. Their aim is to encourage those who persistently default to comply with their tax obligations rather than penalise those who make occasional errors.

■ **Taxis: VAT**

**Ben Bradley:**

[\[199203\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies on VAT in the private hire sector of the High Court verdict in Uber vs. Sefton Council.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Uber Britannia Limited v. Sefton Borough Council High Court case is not a tax case and does not have a direct bearing on the tax treatment of private hire vehicle services. Indeed, the VAT rules, which apply to all businesses, have not changed.

The Government recognises, however, that this ruling may have VAT implications for the private hire vehicle sector and is currently assessing what the impact of these may be, as the Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ **Treasury: National Security**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[198852\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether their Department has a Chief Risk Officer for national security risks relating to the work of their Department.

**Gareth Davies:**

HM Treasury has a board member with specific responsibility for oversight of security who is responsible for national security risks relating to the work of the department in line with the department's risk management framework.

**Treasury: Public Appointments****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[199611\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many public appointments are sponsored by his Department.

**Gareth Davies:**

During 2021-22 HM Treasury had 6 bodies regulated by the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA).

Details of public appointments made by HM Treasury is reported in the Cabinet Office Public Appointments Data report the latest of these is for 2021-2022 year and this is published on Gov.uk. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-appointments-data-report-202122/public-appointments-data-report-202122-html>

Data for the appointments made in 2022-23 are not yet available in this format.

All public appointments are made in line with the process and principles set out in the Governance Code on Public Appointments and regulated by an independent Commissioner.

**Unemployment: Young People****Mike Amesbury:**[\[199212\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of potential tax revenue not received due to (a) economic inactivity and (b) unemployment of young people in the last 12 months.

**John Glen:**

The Government does not have a single recognised definition of young people for these purposes, with Office for National Statistics (ONS) labour market statistics published for 16 to 17, 18 to 24, and 25 to 34 year old age groups. Many young people in these groups are economically inactive by choice, as they dedicate their time to study and gain the knowledge they need to get the jobs they want. This will pay off later – for example, a Level 4/5 apprenticeship has a wage premium of 22% for those aged 19 and over in England. Meanwhile, the current unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds is low by historical standards and below the EU average.

More broadly, our employment rate is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the G7 – higher than the US, Italy and France. Furthermore, the Government announced a £7 billion package of support to target labour supply at the Spring Budget, which led the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to increase its estimate of employment by 110,000 by 2027-28.

**WOMEN AND EQUALITIES****■ Public Lavatories: Incontinence**

**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[198759\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on providing incontinence bins in male public toilets.

**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[198760\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make it her policy to require incontinence bins to be made available in all male public toilets.

**Stuart Andrew:**

I refer the Hon member to my previous answer UIN 196323 provided on 11th September 2023.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Carer's Allowance**

**Dan Carden:** [\[199443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to (a) review and (b) amend the carer's allowance.

**Dan Carden:** [\[199444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that full-time carers receive adequate financial support, in the context of rises in the cost of living.

**Dan Carden:** [\[199463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of changing the eligibility criteria of the carer's allowance to allow carers to claim the allowance for caring for more than one individual.

**Tom Pursglove:**

This Government recognises and values the vital contribution made by carers in supporting some of the most vulnerable in society, including pensioners and those with disabilities.

The benefit system supports unpaid carers primarily through Universal Credit, Pension Credit and Carer's Allowance. The first two are payable to carers on low incomes who are respectively below or above State Pension age. They are means-tested and can be paid at a higher rate than to those without caring responsibilities through the Universal Credit carer element (currently £185.86 per monthly assessment period in addition to the standard allowance) or the additional amount for carers in Pension Credit (currently £42.75 a week in addition to the standard minimum guarantee).

Carer's Allowance is not means-tested and is not based on National Insurance contributions. Its principal purpose is to provide a measure of financial support and recognition for people who give up the opportunity of full-time work in order to provide regular care for a severely disabled person. The main qualifying condition is that the carer is providing at least 35 hours of care to somebody in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit, and that no-one else is providing such care to that person. This has been the approach of successive governments and reflects wider social policy aims, as well as issues of affordability.

Nearly 60% of carers on low incomes who are of working age and on Carer's Allowance claim an income-related means-tested benefit. More than 8 million households on means-tested benefits received Cost of Living Payments of up to £650 in 2022, and more than 8 million households will receive up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments in 2023/24. All pensioner households will also receive the £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment. Carers who are themselves disabled may also receive the £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment, as will the people for whom they provide care. Overall, the Government is providing total support of over £94bn over 2022-23 and 2023-24 to help households and individuals with the rising cost of bills. For people who require additional support, the Household Support Fund will continue until March 2024. This year-long extension allows local authorities in England to continue to provide discretionary support with the significantly rising cost of living to those most in need. The devolved administrations will receive consequential funding.

The Government keeps the qualifying conditions for Carer's Allowance under review, but has no plans to amend them at this time.

## ■ Carers: Finance

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[199587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to improve financial support for people caring full-time for multiple individuals with disabilities and (b) other full-time carers.

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[199589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to provide additional Carer's Allowance for people caring for more than one person.

**Tom Pursglove:**

This Government recognises and values the vital contribution made by carers in supporting some of the most vulnerable in society, including pensioners and those with disabilities.

Carer's Allowance is not means-tested and is not based on National Insurance contributions. Its principal purpose is to provide a measure of financial support and recognition for people who give up the opportunity of full-time work in order to provide regular care for a severely disabled person. The main qualifying condition is that the carer is providing at least 35 hours of care to somebody in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit, and that no-one else is providing such care to that person.

Carer's Allowance is therefore not a payment for providing a care service, so only one payment is made even if a carer is caring for more than one severely disabled person.

In addition to Carer's Allowance, carers on low incomes can claim income-related benefits, such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit. These benefits can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the carer element and the additional amount for carers respectively. Currently, the Universal Credit carer element is £185.86 per monthly assessment period. The additional amount for carers in Pension Credit is £42.75 a week.

Around 550,000 (May 2023 data) carer households on Universal Credit can receive around an additional £2,230 a year through the carer element. The Government has chosen to focus extra support on those carers who need it most.

The Government keeps the qualifying conditions for Carer's Allowance under review, but has no plans to amend them at this time.

#### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Freedom of Information

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[198800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his Department's publication entitled DWP statistical FOI releases, published on 16 November 2017, whether he plans to publish new figures for his Department's FOI releases.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department has an established programme of publication and publishes a large amount of data per year. Overall, the Department complies with the FOI Act and the Cabinet Office Code of Practice and will keep under consideration its approach to process and publication of information. However, it is not a requirement to publish all FOI responses.

You may be interested to know that all FOI requests that are submitted by the 'WhatDoTheyKnow.com' website are automatically published on that website .

The Departments figures for FOI releases are published by the Cabinet Office on a quarterly and annual basis and they can be accessed [here](#).

#### ■ Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment: Internet

**Liz Twist:**

[\[199184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling applicants for Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments who are unable to complete application forms by hand to complete them online.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We recognise it is essential to consider the impacts which disabilities and health conditions can have on a person's ability to apply for support.



For the vast majority of people who claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP), their claim begins with a phone call to start their application. To complete the claim, applicants are either signposted to an online form to provide further information, or sent forms in the post if they prefer. Both options are available to everyone who applies and are not dependent on having any specific accessibility needs.

The Health Transformation Programme is going further and transforming the entire PIP service. A key element of this transformation will be the option for people to apply for PIP entirely online should they wish to.

On 27 July we launched a service for limited numbers of people to make their claim for PIP entirely online, 24/7, without needing to call the department. The service is currently available on a limited basis while it is being tested. It is currently open to those living in selected postcodes in England, claiming PIP for the first time, who do not have a third party acting on their behalf and are not claiming under the Special Rules for End of Life criteria.

Over 3000 claimants have so far applied fully online; we will gradually and carefully expand the scope of the service in the months ahead. We intend to make online PIP applications an option for everyone who needs to apply in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2024. Offering telephony, postal and now online applications will increase the choice available for those who need to claim PIP and allow them to apply for support in whichever way best suits their needs and circumstances.

As DLA has been replaced for adults by PIP and Attendance Allowance, new applications are no longer accepted. For child DLA, a digital form can be completed online provided it can then be printed and posted in. A home visit can also be arranged to facilitate a new claim in exceptional circumstances. We are reviewing the processes of applying for child DLA as part of the department's service modernisation strategy.

## ■ **Disability: Cost of Living**

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[199319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps his Department has taken to support disabled people with the cost of living.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Government understands the pressures people, including disabled people, are facing with the cost of living. Disabled people may be entitled to an extra costs benefit such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which is a contribution towards the extra costs associated with being disabled. PIP is paid tax free and can be worth up to £8,983 a year. Recipients are free to choose how they spend their PIP and there is no requirement for them to use it for any particular purpose. Entitlement to PIP depends on the effects that a disability or health condition has on a disabled person's life and not on a particular disability or diagnosis.

PIP can passport to a range of additional support including:

- Disability additions paid within income related benefits;
- Carer's Allowance for an informal carer;
- The Motability vehicle scheme; and
- The Blue Badge Scheme.

PIP also exempts the eligible household from the Benefit Cap.

In April, we uprated benefit rates and State Pensions by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions, the benefit cap levels also increased by the same amount.

In addition, for 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments. This will be split into three payments across the 2023/24 financial year, with the first payment of £300 having already been made. A separate £150 payment was made to individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits, including PIP, from 20 June. In addition, more than eight million pensioner households across the UK will receive a £300 Cost of Living Payment during winter 2023-24.

The Household Support Fund will continue until March 2024. This year long extension allows local authorities in England to continue to provide discretionary support to those most in need with the significantly rising cost of living. The devolved administrations will receive consequential funding as usual to spend at their discretion.

## ■ Economic Situation: Health

**Martyn Day:**

[\[199192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to tackle the potential impact of poor health outcomes on economic activity.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Long-term sickness is now the most common reason for economic inactivity among the working age population. To step up our focus on tackling rising economic inactivity due to long-term sickness, we announced a further wide-reaching package at the Spring Budget to support disabled people and people with health conditions to work.

New investment includes:

o Expanding additional work coach support, an existing programme to provide disabled people and people with health conditions with increased one-to-one personalised support from their work coach to help them move towards, and into, work.

o Introducing Universal Support, a new supported employment programme for eligible inactive people (disabled people and people with health conditions and additional barriers to employment), matching participants with open market jobs and funding support and training.

o Piloting the WorkWell Partnerships Programme to provide integrated work and health support for disabled people and people with health conditions who want help to remain in, return to, or take up, work. The programme will be locally led, bringing together the NHS, local authorities and other partners, in collaboration with jobcentres.

o Launching two Occupational Health consultations – one focused on occupational health tax incentives and one on ways to boost UK occupational health coverage.

o Introducing employment advisors in Musculoskeletal Conditions (MSK) services in England, helping individuals with MSK conditions to return to, or remain in, employment.

These initiatives build on wider announcements at the 2023 Spring Budget, including the publication of the Health and Disability White Paper and greater investment in mental health and musculoskeletal condition services which are the two leading causes of economic inactivity due to long term sickness.

The Government already has a range of initiatives to support disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay, and succeed in, work. These include increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres; Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres; the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support; Access to Work grants; Disability Confident; the Support with Employee Health and Disability Service; and work to further join up employment and health systems, including Employment Advice in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care.

## ■ Housing Benefit

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[199215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to review the 65p Housing Benefit taper rate; and if will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing that rate in line with the Universal Credit taper rate in incentivising young people into work.

**Mims Davies:**

There are no plans to bring the Housing Benefit taper in line with that of Universal Credit. The two benefits have different treatment of earnings rules, both include tapers that ensure that all claimants are better off working than wholly reliant on benefits.

At present, there is a broad spectrum of claimants receiving their rent support through Housing Benefit; those resident in supported housing or temporary accommodations as well as those claimants who have not yet migrated to Universal Credit. Any amendment to the Housing Benefit taper rate would apply to all of these groups and could result in Housing Benefit outstripping the provision provided by Universal Credit in some circumstances.

The Department acknowledges the challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those working and living in supported housing and temporary accommodation. This issue is a complex one, and eradicating the financial cliff edge some individuals face as they incrementally increase their earnings could not be achieved by simply aligning the taper rates within the two benefits. Officials are working to explore this issue further considering the impact including impact on different groups and consider policy options.

It remains the department's priority to ensure that those who can work are supported to enter the labour market and to sustain employment.

### ■ **Housing Benefit: Supported Housing**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[199214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of benefits rules on levels of employment of residents of supported housing who have their housing costs supported through the housing benefit system.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department acknowledges the challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those working and living in supported housing as the two systems were never intended to run alongside one another.

People in receipt of Housing Benefit are always better off in work. The income taper in Housing Benefit ensures people in work are better off than someone wholly reliant on benefits. In addition to any financial advantage, there are important non-financial benefits of working. These benefits include learning new skills, improved confidence and independence as well as a positive effect on an individual's mental and physical health.

We are working to gain a broader understanding of the impact of benefit rules in Housing Benefit on residents of supported housing who are in employment including the impact on different claimant groups.

After a successful bid to the Labour Market Evaluations and Pilot Fund, we are designing a proof of concept in conjunction with West Midlands Combined Authority. The voluntary PoC will test financial support for eligible 18–24-year-olds living in commissioned supported housing who move into work or increase their working hours and cease receiving Universal Credit. They will receive a top-up payment for 6 months. We are hopeful that this will provide new insight to inform future policy.

Alongside the pilot, officials will continue to work to build our understanding of this topic and to impact future policy options.

### ■ **Jobcentres: Closures**

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[199092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when his Department plans to close temporary jobcentres in the North West.

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[199093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to deploy work coaches at temporary job centres to established job centres.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department is committed to reducing its Jobcentre estate back to pre-pandemic levels by decommissioning Temporary Jobcentres (or the additional space in established Jobcentres) in a phased approach, where the increased capacity is no longer needed.

Phase 4 of this decommissioning was announced in a Written Statement on Wednesday 13 September. Subsequent phases of decommissioning will continue to follow throughout 2023 and 2024, including Temporary Jobcentres in the North West.

MPs will be contacted when a decision regarding the Jobcentre estate is made that could affect their constituents.

All Work Coaches deployed to a Temporary Jobcentre will return to an established local Jobcentre and there will be no reduction in the number of Work Coaches supporting customers as a result of the decommissioning of temporary sites.

#### ■ Jobcentres: Pay

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[199376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the starting salary for a work coach in a job centre was in December 2020.

**Mims Davies:**

The starting salary for an Executive Officer Work Coach would vary dependant on the location of their place of work. DWP has different pay scales that apply in different locations or pay zones.

For employees based within DWP's National pay zone, the starting salary of an Executive officer Work Coach in December 2020 was £27,565, per annum full time equivalent.

For employees based within DWP's Outer London pay zone, the starting salary of an Executive officer Work Coach in December 2020 was £29,285, per annum full time equivalent.

For employees based within DWP's Inner London pay zone, the starting salary of an Executive officer Work Coach in December 2020 was £31,061, per annum full time equivalent.

#### ■ Jobcentres: Staff

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[199202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help work coaches manage the workload from temporary job centres after they have closed.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department is committed to reducing its Jobcentre estate back to pre-pandemic levels. Following any decision to close a temporary Jobcentre, local Jobcentre managers work closely with their teams to ensure that the workload is distributed appropriately, and our Work Coach caseloads continue to remain manageable.

The size of a Work Coach caseload will vary as it is dependent on several factors, including the level of customer support required, the needs of the local labour market and the experience and working pattern of each Work Coach.

**Jobcentres: Training****Alison McGovern:**[\[199377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many hours the training programme for a work coach took as of September 2023.

**Guy Opperman:**

New entrant work coaches into DWP undergo learning which starts with 59 hours of induction, onboarding and operational fundamental learning before moving into their official work coach specific technical learning.

Following transformation of our learning approach, the specific technical learning programme now comprises 94 hours and 15 minutes of classroom learning and includes 6 hours 45 minutes of Mental Health training. We provide an additional 45 hours of supported consolidation of the learning in a live environment. In total this is 139 hours and 15 minutes.

As part of our learning transformation, the initial technical learning programme is followed by bespoke individual learning paths. In partnership with their line manager an individual will continue to grow their skills and confidence through a variety of opportunities including self-serve and facilitator led refresher learning sessions.

**Alison McGovern:**[\[199378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many hours the training programme for a work coach was in September 2020.

**Guy Opperman:**

New entrant work coaches into DWP undergo learning which starts with 59 hours of induction, onboarding and operational fundamental learning before moving into their official work coach specific technical learning.

In September 2020 the specific technical learning programme comprised 134 hours and 15 minutes of classroom learning, including Mental Health training. We provided an additional 112 hours and 30 minutes of supported consolidation of the learning in a live environment. In total this was 246 hours and 45 minutes.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Epilepsy

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[199456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance his Department produces for Personal Independent Payment assessors on how to process cases where an applicant has epilepsy.

**Tom Pursglove:**

All claimants, including those with epilepsy, are assessed in accordance with the [Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\) Assessment Guide](#) available on GOV.UK. All PIP Health Professionals (HPs) complete training on neurological conditions, including epilepsy.

HPs can access a wide range of clinical resources, including e-learning modules and case studies, to research any conditions presented. Both PIP providers also have a Condition Insight Report on epilepsy for use by their HPs. In addition, HPs are also expected to keep their knowledge up to date through Continuous Professional Development.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[199145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many assessments for personal independence payments were carried out by his Department by (a) phone, (b) video and (c) paper-based assessment in each month of 2023 as of 12 September.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments carried out by (a) phone, (b) video and (c) paper-based assessment in each month, from January 2023, are shown in the table below:

PIP ASSESSMENT CHANNEL	(A) TELEPHONE	(B) VIDEO	(C) PAPER-BASED REVIEW
Jan-23	61,890	8,610	17,750
Feb-23	55,990	7,600	17,420
Mar-23	67,080	8,570	20,200
Apr-23	51,490	6,110	16,260
May-23	59,450	6,670	18,600
Jun-23	64,640	6,920	19,800
Jul-23	62,680	6,230	18,270
Aug-23	62,250	6,170	20,440

**Please note**

- All volumes have been rounded to the nearest 10.
- All the above data is derived from management information produced by the assessment providers.
- The above data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics Publication standards

**■ Social Security Benefits: Working Hours****Alison McGovern:**[\[199381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how his Department takes into account the need to work fewer hours of (a) parents, (b) carers, (c) disabled people and (d) others when imposing conditionality.

**Guy Opperman:**

The requirements any claimant is asked to meet will be clearly set out in their Claimant Commitment. All requirements are set in discussion with the claimant, tailored to their capability and circumstances, making them realistic and achievable.

For lead carers of children, individual circumstances are taken into account when tailoring work-related activity in the claimant commitment. This includes the age of the child, availability of childcare, any health conditions and travel time to and from work.

A part time carer on Universal Credit can receive individualised employment support through their Jobcentre Plus (JCP) work coach who can tailor work related requirements, such as searching for work, to fit their caring responsibilities.

For disabled claimants or claimants with health conditions who are required to look for and/or prepare for work, work coaches must consider the impact of the claimant's health condition or disability and can limit the number of hours the claimant is required to be available for work, search for work and undertake other work-related requirements. Work coaches can also tailor type and location of work.

**■ Universal Credit: Fraud****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[199483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length was of investigations undertaken by his Department's serious fraud team into cases relating to Universal Credit in each of the last three years.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[199503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length was of investigations undertaken by his Department's serious fraud team into cases relating to Personal Independence Payment in each of the last three years.



**Tom Pursglove:**

We cannot break down the average length of investigations as this information is not recorded by our Economic Serious Organised Crime team (ESOC).

DWP investigators seek to expedite all investigations as quickly as possible whilst ensuring they meet prosecution standards.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme Update

**Minister of State (Ms Nusrat Ghani):**

[\[HCWS1055\]](#)

I am making a statement to correct the record in relation to the Supplementary Estimate for UK Export Finance.

The final paragraph of the statement I made on 13 September 2023 should have read as follows:

*“Parliamentary approval for additional resource of £51,000 for this new service will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for UK Export Finance. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £51,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.”*

### DEFENCE

#### ■ New Accommodation Offer

**Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families (Dr Andrew Murrison)  
(Dr Andrew Murrison):**

[\[HCWS1053\]](#)

Today I am pleased to announce the Ministry of Defence’s New Accommodation Offer which, from 11 March 2024, will deliver greater access to subsidised accommodation for our Service personnel.

As the Defence Command Paper Refresh made clear, our people are our greatest strength, and the provision of Service accommodation is essential to their operational effectiveness. To support this our New Accommodation Offer recognises the different ways our people and their families live, modernises the way we use our estate, and provides an enhanced offer based on each Service person’s needs. We recognised the importance of improving fairness and inclusivity for all our people in the 2022 Defence Accommodation Strategy, and through the New Accommodation Offer, we will deliver this for our people. Defence will also invest a further four hundred million pounds over the next two years to ensure that we provide the modern accommodation that our Service personnel, their families and partners deserve.

The New Accommodation Offer widens entitlement to family accommodation subsidised by the MOD. This will be delivered through Service Family Accommodation, or a subsidy provided to Service personnel to rent from the Private Rental Sector.

From March, Service personnel who want to live with their partner but are not married or in a civil partnership, and parents with children who stay with them for 80 nights or more per year, will be entitled to subsidised family accommodation for the first time.

Widening entitlement to subsidised accommodation is the right thing to do. Inevitably, this will lead to increased demand across the Defence estate for accommodation. To ensure availability of subsidised accommodation for those entitled to it, we will make greater use of the Private Rental Sector. Service personnel allocated to live in the Private Rental Sector will receive a monthly rental subsidy to support them in renting a property that is suitable for their needs, within a daily commute of their assigned location.

Defence will no longer take rank into account when allocating accommodation as using our estate this way increases cost and is inequitable. Through the New Accommodation Offer, accommodation entitlements will be simplified. Service personnel of all ranks will receive an entitlement to accommodation based on their need, which for most will be linked to family size. We will, however, give Service personnel more flexibility to choose the size, type, and location of their accommodation where availability allows.

Many of those who currently receive an entitlement based on rank will continue to be able to occupy a property with the same number of bedrooms under the New Accommodation Offer. However, where personnel do experience a reduction in their entitlement, they will be entitled to Transitional Protection until three years after the launch of the new offer.

As well as widening entitlement to family accommodation, the New Accommodation Offer will address the current disparity between how Single Living Accommodation is charged to Service personnel when it is not their main home. All personnel who cannot commute daily from their home will be supported irrespective of their marital status.

Home ownership will be made more achievable by giving first time buyers the opportunity to have up to £1,500 of their legal expenses refunded alongside the support of Forces Help to Buy.

As of 11 March 2024, Service personnel who are newly entitled will have the opportunity to apply for accommodation under the New Accommodation Offer. For those who already have entitlement, they will have the opportunity to move to the New Accommodation Offer on their next assignment. After three years, any Service personnel who have not yet transitioned to the new offer will do-so in a programmed manner.

The New Accommodation Offer demonstrates our commitment to improving the offer for our Service personnel, delivering the vision set out in the Defence Accommodation Strategy, and working towards improving our accommodation noting the recommendations of the Haythornthwaite Review. We will go as far as we can to improve the offer under existing policy by widening entitlement to Service Family Accommodation for Service personnel in long-term relationships at eight sites covering approximately 10,000 people. This will apply to Service personnel assigned to these sites from 31 October 2023.

Further guidance is being published today, with a final Joint Service Publication expected later this year.

As well as ensuring our Service People have the choice in homes they deserve, they must remain affordable. We are committed to protecting our Service personnel from cost-of-living challenges. We have done this by freezing daily food charges, ensuring the

Council Tax Rebate reaches those in military accommodation, increasing the availability of free wrap-around Childcare and, this year, delivering a freeze in Service Family Accommodation rents funded principally through the penalties applied to maintenance contractors for their poor performance over the winter months.

Our strategic advantage is derived foremost from our first-class people – our real battle-winning capability. Today's announcement builds on accommodation rent freezes, and an additional £400 million injection over the next two years to ensure that we provide the modern accommodation that our Service families deserve.

## ■ Revised Terms of Reference for the Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan

**Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps):** [\[HCWS1043\]](#)

Further to the statement by the Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP dated 5 July 2023, I can confirm that the Terms of Reference of the Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan have been amended by agreement with the Chair the Rt Hon Lord Justice Haddon-Cave.

I have placed a copy of the revised Terms of Reference in the Library of the House.

The amendments reflect the Written Ministerial Statement, which avowed the involvement of Special Forces in alleged unlawful activity in Afghanistan in the period mid-2010 to mid-2013.

In my new capacity as Secretary of State for Defence, I would like to reiterate my strong support for this Inquiry commissioned by the Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP.

### Attachments:

1. Afghanistan TORs [2023090\_TORs\_Update.docx]

## EDUCATION

### ■ Schools and Colleges Update

**Secretary of State for Education (Gillian Keegan):** [\[HCWS1045\]](#)

This update follows from my oral statement to the House on 4 September.

On 6 September we published the list of 147 education settings known to be affected by RAAC. Thanks to the hard work of school and college leaders, all of these settings are offering face-to-face education, with 126 settings offering full time face-to-face education for all pupils.

An updated list of schools and colleges with confirmed cases of RAAC has been published today. As of 14 September, a further 27 settings have confirmed RAAC in some of their buildings. Of the 174 confirmed cases, 148 settings are providing full time face-to-face education for all pupils.

Last year, we issued a questionnaire to responsible bodies for all 22,000 schools and colleges in England to ask them to identify whether they suspected they had RAAC. Since 4 September we have been working with responsible bodies to confirm the remaining responses to this questionnaire. Responsible bodies have, as of today,

submitted responses to the questionnaire for 98.6% of schools with blocks built in the target era. We are now working through all of these responses, and I continue to encourage all responsible bodies with outstanding responses to send these to the department as soon as possible.

In my 4 September statement I also committed to complete outstanding surveys among schools within a matter of weeks. Due in part to additional surveying capacity we have procured, I can confirm that every school that was awaiting a survey on 4 September has now been visited or will be visited this week.

Every school or college with confirmed RAAC is assigned dedicated support from our team of 80 caseworkers who work with them to assess what support is needed and implement mitigation plans that are right for them. Mitigation plans could include other spaces on the school site, or in nearby schools or elsewhere in the local area, until structural works are carried out or temporary buildings are installed. A bespoke plan is put in place to ensure that each school and college receives the support that suits their circumstances.

Project delivery teams are on site to support schools and colleges, whether that is finding short-term accommodation options or designing and putting in place structural solutions for affected spaces.

The government will fund the emergency mitigation work needed to make buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, like transport to locations or temporarily renting a local hall, this should be discussed with their caseworker and we expect all reasonable requests will be approved.

The government will fund longer-term refurbishment or rebuilding projects to rectify the RAAC issue. Schools and colleges will either be offered capital grants to fund refurbishment work to permanently remove RAAC, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, including through the School Rebuilding Programme. We will set out further details in due course. We will work closely with responsible bodies to understand and assess what the right solution is for each case.

I want to reassure pupils, parents and staff that this government will do whatever it takes to support our schools and colleges in responding to RAAC and minimise disruption to education.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Energy Consumers and Affordability) (Amanda Solloway):**

[\[HCWS1044\]](#)

My noble friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Lord Callanan) has today made the following statement:

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by Sunnica Energy Farm for the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic energy generation farm, situated across West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The current statutory deadline for the decision on the Sunnica Energy Farm application is 28 September 2023.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than **7 December 2023** for deciding this application.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Hong Kong Six-monthly Report

**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):**

[\[HCWS1049\]](#)

The latest Six-monthly Report on the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong was published today, and is attached. It covers the period from 1 July – 31 December 2022. The report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. A copy is also available on the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/six-monthly-reports-on-hong-kong>. I commend the report to the House.

**Attachments:**

1. Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong [Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong 1 January to 30 June 2023.pdf]

### ■ Membership of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA)

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Europe (Leo Docherty):**

[\[HCWS1047\]](#)

The Rt. Hon. Member for Wallasey (Dame Angela Eagle MP) has been appointed as a full representative and Vice-Chair of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Rt Hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn MP).

The Hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones MP).

## ■ NATO Parliamentary Assembly

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Europe (Leo Docherty):**

[\[HCWS1048\]](#)

The Rt. Hon. Lord Dodds of Duncairn has replaced the Rt. Hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey Donaldson) as a Member of the United Kingdom delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Minimum Service Levels – Hospital Settings

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):**

[\[HCWS1046\]](#)

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 allows the Secretary of State to make regulations to establish minimum service levels for relevant services in the event of strike action. They must consult with such persons as they consider appropriate before making regulations. Minimum service levels aim to limit the impacts of strike action on the lives and livelihoods of the public and to strike a balance between the right of unions and their members to strike with the need for the wider public to be able to access key services during strikes.

A key priority for this Government is to ensure that our health services can continue to deliver vital services to treat and support patients at their time of need, particularly during challenging times. On Tuesday the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched a consultation seeking views to inform decisions on the introduction of regulations on minimum service levels in England, Scotland and Wales, to protect patient safety in key hospital-based services during strike action.

Our proposal is that most essential and time-critical hospital services should be covered by minimum service levels regulations. This consultation will help to inform decisions on whether hospital services should be covered and, if so, which services, and the appropriate minimum service levels required. The consultation will also seek views on whether any health services outside ambulance services and hospital services should be included in minimum service levels.

The consultation will run for eight weeks and will close on 14 November 2023.

Copies of the consultation will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Publication of the Report of the Inquiry into Brook House Immigration Removal Centre**

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):**  
[\[HCWS1052\]](#)

Today the independent Inquiry into the mistreatment of individuals who were detained at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) between 1 April 2017 and 31 August 2017, as shown in the BBC Panorama programme “Under-Cover: Britain’s Immigration Secrets” has published its report.

The report can be found on the Brook House Inquiry website from noon today.

The Report sets out failings in both oversight and governance to protect the welfare of detained individuals within Brook House IRC during this period.

The Government takes the welfare and safety of those we detain very seriously and has made significant improvements to immigration detention since the dates covered by the Inquiry.

I would like to thank Kate Eves and the Inquiry Team for their work to establish the facts of what happened at Brook House IRC, to identify learning and to make recommendations that will help to prevent a recurrence of such events.

We will carefully consider the findings of this Inquiry in its detailed report, including the recommendations in relation to the management of the immigration detention estate and the welfare of detained individuals.

I have today laid the Inquiry’s report before the House, and it will also be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ UK Artificial Intelligence Policy Update**

**Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology (Michelle Donelan):**  
[\[HCWS1054\]](#)

I am pleased to be providing the House with an update on developments in the UK’s Government’s Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy in recent months.

AI promises to revolutionise our economy, society and everyday lives, bringing with it enormous opportunities but also significant new risks. Led by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), the UK has established itself as a world-leader in driving responsible, safe AI innovation and has committed to host the first major international summit of its kind on the safe use of AI, to be held at Bletchley Park on 1 and 2 November 2023.

AI Safety Summit



The AI Safety Summit will bring together key countries, as well as leading technology organisations, academia and civil society to inform rapid national and international action at the frontier of AI development. The Summit will focus on risks created or significantly exacerbated by the most powerful AI systems. For example, the proliferation of access to information which could undermine biosecurity. In turn, the Summit will also consider how safe frontier AI can be used for public good and to improve people's lives – from lifesaving medical technology to safer transport. It will build on important initiatives already being taken forward in other international fora, including at the UN, OECD, G7 and G20, by agreeing practical next steps to address risks from frontier AI

On 4 September, the Government launched the start of formal pre-Summit engagement with countries and a number of frontier AI organisations. As part of an iterative and consultative process, the Government published the five objectives that will be progressed. These build upon initial stakeholder consultation and evidence-gathering and will frame the discussion up to and at the Summit:

- i. a shared understanding of the risks posed by frontier AI and the need for action
- ii. a forward process for international collaboration on frontier AI safety, including how best to support national and international frameworks
- iii. appropriate measures which individual organisations should take to increase frontier AI safety
- iv. areas for potential collaboration on AI safety research, including evaluating model capabilities and the development of new standards to support governance
- v. showcase how ensuring the safe development of AI will enable AI to be used for good globally

I look forward to keeping Parliament updated as plans for the Summit progress.

#### Frontier AI Taskforce

Frontier AI models hold enormous potential to power economic growth, drive scientific progress and wider public benefits, while also posing potential safety risks if not developed responsibly. Earlier this year, the Government announced £100m to set up an expert taskforce to help the UK adopt the next generation of safe AI – the first of its kind.

On 7 September, we renamed the Taskforce – formerly the Foundation Model Taskforce – to the [Frontier AI Taskforce](#), explicitly acknowledging its role in evaluating risk at the frontier of AI, and systems which could pose significant risks to public safety and global security.

Since the Taskforce Chair, Ian Hogarth was appointed 12 weeks ago, the Taskforce has made rapid progress, recruiting its External Advisory Board, research teams and developing partnerships with leading frontier AI organisations, to help develop innovative approaches to addressing the risks of AI and harnessing its benefits. I am pleased to be welcoming seven leading advisors to guide and shape the Taskforce's work through its External Advisory Board. This includes: Turing Prize Laureate Yoshua Bengio; GCHQ Director Anne Keast-Butler; the Deputy National Security Adviser Matt Collins; Chief

Scientific Adviser for National Security Alex Van Someren; former Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard; Alignment Research Centre researcher Paul Christiano; and the Prime Minister's Representative for the AI Safety Summit, Matt Clifford, who will join as Vice-Chair to unite the Taskforce's work with preparations for the Summit - all of whom will turbo charge the Taskforce's work by offering expert insight.

We are also drawing on experts to build a world-leading research team. Oxford researcher Yarin Gal has been confirmed as the first Taskforce Research Director. Cambridge researcher David Kreuger will also be working with the Taskforce as it scopes its research programme in the run up to the Summit. The research team will sit alongside a dedicated team of civil servants (overseen by a Senior Responsible Officer in my Department, reporting into the DSIT Permanent Secretary as Accounting Officer). Together these teams will work to develop sophisticated safety research capabilities for the UK, strengthen UK AI capability and deliver public sector use cases in Frontier AI models.

Industry collaboration, including internationally, forms the backbone of UK's approach to shared AI safety and the work of the Taskforce will be no different. The Taskforce is harnessing established industry expertise through partnerships with leading AI companies and non-profits, a number of which were outlined in our recent announcement. These partnerships will unlock advice on the national security implications of frontier AI, as well as broader support in assessing the major societal risks posed by AI systems.

#### AI Regulation

We are moving quickly to establish the right guardrails for AI to drive responsible, safe innovation. In March, we published the [AI Regulation White Paper](#) which set out our first steps towards establishing a regulatory framework for AI. We proposed five principles to govern AI, and committed to establishing mechanisms to monitor AI risk, and coordinate, evaluate and adapt the regulatory framework as this technology evolves. We received responses from over 400 individuals and organisations across regulators, industry, academia, and civil society. We will be publishing our response to the consultation later this year, to ensure we can take into account the outcomes of the AI Safety Summit in November.

Since publishing the White Paper, we have taken rapid steps to implement our regulatory approach. I'm pleased to confirm that my Department has now established a central AI risk function which will identify, measure and monitor existing and emerging AI risks using expertise from across government, industry, and academia, including the Taskforce. It will allow us to monitor risks holistically as well as to identify any potential gaps in our approach.

We committed to an iterative approach that will evolve as new risks or regulatory gaps emerge. We note the growing concern around the risks to safety posed by our increasing use of AI, particularly the advanced capabilities of frontier AI and foundation models. Our work through the Taskforce offers vital insights into the issue and we will be convening

nations to examine these particular risks at the international level. We will be providing a wider update on our regulatory approach through our response to the AI Regulation White Paper later this year.

Alongside this, we are working closely with regulators. Many have started to proactively and independently take action in line with our proposed AI framework, including the Competition and Markets Authority, which yesterday published a [report on their initial review of AI Foundation Models](#); the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, which has published a [roadmap for software and AI as a medical device](#) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation which is piloting an [independent sandbox for the use of AI in the nuclear sector](#), with support from the Regulators' Pioneer Fund. This demonstrates how our expert UK regulators are taking innovative, world-leading approaches to ensuring AI safety and effectiveness.

We are also examining ways to improve coordination and clarity across the regulatory landscape. This includes our work with the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (DRCF) to pilot a multi-regulator advisory service for AI and digital innovators, which will be known as the DRCF AI and Digital Hub. This will provide tailored support to innovators to navigate the AI and wider digital regulatory landscape and capture important insights to support the design and delivery of our AI regulatory framework.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Rail Update

**Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Mark Harper):**

[\[HCWS1041\]](#)

I am updating the House that the Department for Transport has negotiated a National Rail Contract for the West Coast Partnership rail operator.

In March 2023, the Department extended the contract with First Trenitalia to operate passenger rail services on the West Coast Partnership. Under this contract, which ends on 15 October 2023, First Trenitalia – as Avanti West Coast – operates express services on the West Coast Main Line.

Today we have awarded a National Rail Contract to First Trenitalia to continue operating the West Coast Partnership, providing West Coast train services as Avanti West Coast. This contract, starting on 15 October 2023, will have a core term of three years and a maximum possible term of nine years. After three years, the contract can be terminated at any point with three months' notice at my discretion.

Previously, I stated that the decision to award a contract to First Trenitalia was contingent on the operator continuing to win back the confidence of passengers, with a particular focus on more reliable weekend services, continued reductions in cancellations, and improvements in passenger information during planned and unplanned disruption. The Department has worked closely with Avanti to restore reliability and punctuality to levels that passengers expect.

Avanti's performance has improved significantly, with Avanti caused cancellations consistently below 3% since March 2023, and as low as 1.1% in July 2023, down from 13% in January 2023. Over 90% of trains now arrive within 15 minutes of their scheduled time, improved from 75% in December 2022. Over 100 additional drivers have been trained and brought on since April 2022, and improvements to passenger facilities on trains include better seats, lighting, and charging points.

The NRC will support the introduction of a brand new fleet of electric and bi-mode Hitachi trains later this year to replace its current diesel fleet which forms a key part of Avanti's goal to run more sustainably and will result in a 61% cut in carbon emissions, as well as offering more space and a quieter journey for passengers. The new trains support DfT's strategic aims of reducing environmental impact and improving transport for the user.

The transformation of Avanti's performance over the past year demonstrates how, through working closely with Government, setting out clear set goals and being incentivised to succeed, the private sector can deliver on our railways. My Department will stay in close contact with the operator and local stakeholders to monitor Avanti's performance as it continues its progress to a sustained recovery and increase services over time.

I am also updating the House that the Department for Transport has negotiated a National Rail Contract for the Cross Country rail operator.

In October 2020 at the height of the pandemic, the Department entered into a unique Operating Cost Franchise Agreement with Arriva UK Trains Ltd to operate passenger rail services on Cross Country. The core term of this contract ends on 15 October 2023.

Today we have awarded a National Rail Contract to Arriva UK Trains Ltd to continue operating the Cross Country rail services. This contract, starting on 15 October 2023, will have a core term of four years and a maximum possible term of eight years. After four years, the contract can be terminated at any point with three months' notice at my discretion.

The National Rail Contract with Arriva UK Trains Ltd includes the addition of capacity to replace the remaining High Speed Trains which are being retired, the refurbishment of both the existing Cross Country train fleets and the introduction from December 2024 of direct daily services between Cardiff and Yorkshire, the North East and Edinburgh.

## TREASURY

### ■ Quadrennial valuations of the public service pension schemes

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):**

[\[HCWS1051\]](#)

There are currently more than 6 million active members of the public service pensions schemes, which cover the NHS, teachers, the armed forces, the police, firefighters, local government workers, the judiciary and civil servants. Valuations of the public service pension schemes are undertaken every four years. The valuations are important as they ensure that the full costs of each scheme are understood and fully recognised by

government, and that there is a fair balance of risk between members and taxpayers with regard to the cost of providing the schemes.

This valuation is the first time that a reformed cost control mechanism will be used. Following a review by the Government Actuary and a public consultation, the cost control mechanism has been reformed to address concerns around it not meeting its original objectives. The objectives are to protect the Exchequer, and by extension taxpayers, from unforeseen costs; to maintain the value of public service pension schemes to members; and to provide stability and certainty on member benefit and contribution levels. The reforms mean that the mechanism now only assesses costs associated with the post-2015 reformed schemes, increases the margin by which costs need to vary from the target in order for benefit, or member contribution, changes to be required from 2% to 3% of pensionable pay, and includes an 'economic check' such that changes will only happen if the costs would still be outside the same margin had the impact of changes in long-term economic assumptions been included. The Public Service Pension Act 2013, when taken together with regulations made under it and the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022, provides for the introduction of these reforms.

On 31 August 2023, HM Treasury published a document that sets out how the valuations are to be conducted for this valuation cycle[1]. The document sets a range of assumptions that departments and the Scottish and Welsh governments must use in finalising their valuations of public service pension schemes. The document allows public service employers, departments and scheme administrators to complete their valuations and prepare for the implementation of new employer contribution rates and take any necessary steps with respect to cost control mechanism results. The publication of this document follows a statutory consultation with the Government Actuary, which concluded in August 2023. Copies of this document, the 2023 Directions, have been placed in the Houses of Parliament libraries.

A key factor which influences the valuation results of all unfunded schemes is a reduction in the SCAPE (superannuation contributions adjusted for past experience) discount rate which is used to express schemes' future pension payments as a present-day cost, based on the Office for Budget Responsibility's forecast of long-term GDP growth. The updated SCAPE discount rate was announced in March 2023 and is expected to cause increases to employer contribution rates. This is because pension payments paid in the future will be discounted at a lower rate and therefore have a higher value in today's terms. HM Treasury has committed to provide funding, for all centrally funded employers, for increases in employer contribution rates resulting from the 2020 valuations as a consequence of changes to the SCAPE discount rate.

The outcome of the valuations are expected to be confirmed later this year via the publication of each scheme's valuation report. Changes to employer contribution rates will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2024, and any changes to benefits required to bring a scheme back to target cost would apply retrospectively from 1 April 2023. An additional process operates in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) (England and Wales) run by the LGPS England and Wales Scheme Advisory Board.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-service-pensions-2020-valuations>

## ■ War Widow(er)s Recognition Payment tax treatment

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Victoria Atkins):** [\[HCWS1050\]](#)

The Government announced in May that payments of £87,500 will be made to those who forfeited their entitlement to a pension for a service attributable death prior to 2015 and have not had this pension restored through divorce or subsequent bereavement. This payment is not intended to put a value on the widow(er)'s loss, but instead be an amount that clearly recognises that remarriage or cohabiting with a new partner does not erase the bereavement, as the Government is deeply conscious of the sacrifice these bereaved people have made.

The Government is today announcing that these payments will be exempt from income tax and National Insurance contributions. This will ease the administrative burden on recipients who are a specially designated group who benefit from a key principle of the Armed Forces Covenant, which recognises that special consideration should be made by the nation to those, such as the bereaved, who have given most in the service of our country.

We reiterate our sincere condolences and gratitude to the widows and widowers who lost beloved partners in service.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Additional Jobcentre Support Pilot - Phase 2 rollout

**Minister of State for Employment (Guy Opperman):** [\[HCWS1042\]](#)

I wish to update the House on the Written Statement tabled on 27 February 2023.

Earlier this month the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) started testing a second phase of the Additional Jobcentre Support pilot. The first phase went live on 27/02/23, following a proof of concept. It tested how enhanced daily work-focused support, across two weeks, can further help eligible Universal Credit claimants in the Intensive Work Search regime into employment.

Evidence shows that the longer a person is out of work the harder it is for them to return. A claimant's likelihood of securing employment declines after 13 weeks, so we are focussing this support on those who remain unemployed or with low earnings after 13 and 26-weeks of claiming Universal Credit.

The second phase will provide an additional week of daily support after the claimant's first assessment period. This new earlier intervention will test the impact of a week of skills and employability focused support.

This builds on the first phase of the pilot which, in addition to this extra week of support, continues to test how enhanced daily work-focused support, across a two-week period, can further support eligible Universal Credit claimants into employment.

As with phase one, phase two of the pilot continues to provide additional one to one work search conversations with work coaches and work search support sessions to help

claimants. The Claimant Commitment, which sets out each claimant's agreed work-related activities, will be regularly reviewed and activity will be focused on specific steps to support people to move into work.

Claimants will receive prior notice of the requirements they will be expected to fulfil. Eligibility remains unchanged and those with reduced requirements remain out of scope, including those:

- Awaiting a Work Capability Assessment;
- Required to undertake less than 20 hours a week of work search activity;
- Who are Gainfully Self-Employed;
- Who have no work related requirements;
- With an easement in place; and
- On a full-time provision offer.

The second phase will be tested in the existing 60 pilot sites across Central Scotland, Surrey & Sussex, West Yorkshire, Leicestershire, and Northamptonshire. Over the coming months, the pilot will expand further into more jobcentres.

DWP remains committed to providing tailored work-focused support to help move claimants into appropriate and sustainable work, where they can then experience the many benefits of employment.