



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 30 November 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 30 November 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: ICT

Matt Rodda:

[\[2989\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what is the annual cost to the public purse of her Department's expenditure on (a) IT infrastructure, (b) IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 and (c) legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is responsible for the provision and management of up-to-date IT infrastructure, applications and processes for the Attorney General's Office (AGO).

It is not possible to derive costs specific to the AGO as the IT infrastructure provided is not accounted for separately. The CPS do not hold a centralised record of AGO IT infrastructure costs. This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Marco Longhi:

[\[900387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to reduce bureaucracy for businesses.

Kemi Badenoch:

My department is leading the Smarter Regulation programme which is working cross-government to reduce burdens on business and improve outcomes for people across the UK.

As part of this programme, we have announced reforms to reduce time-consuming reporting requirements under the Working Time Regulations, which could save employers up to £1bn a year, and streamline wine labelling requirements and specifications on production methods to provide a £180m boost to our wine industry.

We are committed to removing red tape to allow UK businesses to focus on growing their business and creating jobs.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[900390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the closure of the blast furnaces in Scunthorpe on virgin steel production.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Almost all the G20 countries have operational blast furnaces, and a number of those are transitioning to electric arc furnaces as well.

We know the importance of Scunthorpe, which is a key driver of economic growth. British Steel provides a third of all domestic production supplied to the construction and rail industries.

We continue to be in negotiations to make sure that we secure the best deal, and one that is good value for taxpayers, when it comes to Scunthorpe.

Members: Correspondence**Patricia Gibson:**[\[3864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran of (a) 15 September, (b) 16 October and (c) 25 October 2023.

Greg Hands:

A response was issued to the Hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran on 27 November 2023.

Overseas Investment: Morocco**Ben Everitt:**[\[4008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to help support UK businesses to invest in Morocco.

Greg Hands:

The Department for Business and Trade supports UK businesses looking to invest in Morocco by offering advice on the market and communicating opportunities which may be of interest to UK business. In 2021, the outward stock of foreign direct investment from the UK in Morocco was £904 million.

At the UK-African Investment Summit on 23-24 April 2024, the UK will showcase investment and commercial opportunities in Morocco.

Summertime**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[3534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to end the use of daylight saving time.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government has no plans to change the daylight saving arrangements. The Government believes that the current daylight saving arrangements represent the optimal use of the available daylight across the UK.

While there is the potential for some benefits from a change in the current arrangements, there is also a real risk of negative impacts. A change to permanent

summertime or double summertime may also have significant impacts on certain sectors and businesses.

■ Trade Agreements: Africa

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[900389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking to increase trade with African countries.

Greg Hands:

The Department is actively expanding trade with Africa through 9 agreements across 18 nations, offering preferential access to UK markets. The Department's recently launched Developing Countries Trading Scheme, effective in 65 countries, including 37 in Africa, simplifies rules and lowers tariffs to boost exports and stimulate growth. In Spring, the Prime Minister will host the second UK-African Investment Summit in London, fostering modern partnerships in trade and investment. Bilaterally, the Department is also working to enhance market access across the continent, solidifying our commitment to mutually beneficial economic ties with African nations.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Technology: Foreign Investment in UK

Chi Onwurah:

[\[3816\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the GREAT Tech campaign on (a) overseas investors' perceptions of the UK's technology ecosystem and (b) the propensity of overseas investors to invest in the UK.

Alex Burghart:

The Unicorn Kingdom campaign was launched by GREAT in March 2023. The campaign's primary purpose is to improve perceptions of the UK tech ecosystem and drive inward investment.

To date the campaign has directly engaged US investors representing over \$500 billion in assets under management and several of those investors are actively engaging with HMG in relation to establishing offices in the UK.

A comprehensive evaluation will be completed in 2024 to assess the campaign's impact on international perceptions of the UK's technology ecosystem, the number of overseas investors considering investing in the UK, and the amount of overseas investment attributed to the campaign. We will continue to monitor impact from the campaign beyond this initial evaluation period.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Football: Regulation****Dan Carden:**[\[3319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent progress her Department has made on introducing an independent football regulator.

Stuart Andrew:

This Government is committed to putting fans at the heart of football and making sure our national game has a sustainable financial future.

The Government has committed to bringing forward legislation to establish an Independent Football Regulator, with the Football Governance Bill announced as part of the King's Speech in November 2023.

As we work at pace to progress the legislation, we are continuing to engage with the FA, the Leagues, and fan associations to make sure we design the best regulator possible.

■ **Music****Barbara Keeley:**[\[3755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to This Is Music 2023, published by UK Music on 7 November 2023, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on the music sector of the decline in the physical music market in 2022 cited in that report.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The way people consume music has changed significantly over the past decade, and the industry's continued success has come from embracing technology. As referenced in UK Music's This is Music report 2023, there has been a 'shift to streaming' from physical sales.

Whilst the BPI have reported that Vinyl LP purchases grew for a 15th consecutive year in 2022, This is Music reports that the physical market declined by 10.5% in 2022. However, streaming revenues grew across all fronts. Subscription revenues for premium services grew by 4.8% in 2022, ad-supported services grew by 22.3%, and video streaming such as YouTube and TikTok grew by 11.2% in 2022.

The headline figures from the UK Music report outline that in 2022, UK music exports generated £4 billion; the music industry's contribution to the UK economy was £6.7 billion (GVA); and total UK music industry employment was 210,000. Across all key commercial assets (musical composition, recorded music, live performance and brand image) revenues continued to grow in 2022.

The UK is the second biggest exporter of music globally and the Government is supporting the industry to retain this position in the international market by trebling the funding for the Music Exports Growth Scheme to £3.2m over the next two years.

■ Musicians: Pay**Barbara Keeley:**[\[3754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking steps to improve remuneration for musicians.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Government is committed to maximising the potential of the UK music industry and its musicians.

In May 2023, alongside the publication of an industry-led agreement on metadata, the Government announced it would be establishing an industry working group to explore further issues around creator remuneration.

We expect to shortly publish the terms of reference and membership, with the first working group meeting expected to take place soon thereafter.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Alison Thewliss:**[\[3862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the number of ARAP applications from former members of the (a) Afghan Territorial Force 444 and (b) Commando Force 333 units that have been approved since the scheme opened.

James Heappey:

As of 28 November 2023, we have relocated 13,300 ARAP Eligible Principals (EPs) and their family members to safety in the UK under the ARAP scheme and have approximately 6,000 eligible persons and family members remaining to relocate to the UK. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of these figures by job role or specific unit.

Not all members of the Afghan Armed Forces, including specific units such as Afghan Territorial Force 444 and Commando Force 333, will automatically be eligible for ARAP. Each application is assessed on a case-by-case basis on its own merits. However, we are prioritising finding remaining eligible applicants and relocating them as quickly as we can.

■ AWACS: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[3745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many distinguished visitors' days have been held in relation to the E-7 Wedgetail programme.

James Cartlidge:

There have been no Distinguished Visitor (DV) days held in relation to the E-7 Wedgetail Programme. It is expected that a DV day will be held in 2024.

■ Military Bases: Concrete

John Healey:

[\[3708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 25 October 2023 to Question 197745 on Military Bases: Concrete, how many buildings have (a) been identified as requiring surveys and (b) had surveys completed, by region in which those buildings are located.

James Cartlidge:

As at 28 November 2023, 12,660 buildings on the Defence Estate have been identified that are of a construction type requiring an initial survey to determine if they contain Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete.

The table below details how many initial surveys have been completed, by region, as at 28 November 2023:

REGION	BUILDINGS THAT HAVE HAD INITIAL SURVEY COMPLETED
England	9,397
Wales	356
Scotland	1,059
Northern Ireland	209
Overseas	581

In addition to the above, 1,058 buildings still require an initial survey.

■ Ministry of Defence: Apprentices

Maria Eagle:

[\[3731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many apprentices were employed at each grade in his Department in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 and (d) 2022.

Maria Eagle:

[\[3732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many apprentices were employed by his Department were resident outside (a) London and (b) South East of England in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle:

[\[3733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people applied for an apprenticeship with his Department in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 202, (d) 2022 and (e) 2023 to date.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The attached table provides the requested information.

Attachments:

1. Apprentices employed at each grade [Copy of 20231128 PQ1.xlsx]

■ **Ministry of Defence: Senior Civil Servants**

Maria Eagle: [\[3725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Senior Civil Servants within his Department were employed on a fixed term contract in each year since 2010.

Maria Eagle: [\[3727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average performance related award for a Senior Civil Servant employed on a fixed term contract was in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

It is taking time to collate the required information to answer the right hon. Member's Questions. I will write to her when the information is available, and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ **National Shipbuilding Office**

John Healey: [\[3703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what contracts relating to shipbuilding have been awarded to industry since the National Shipbuilding Office was launched; and what the total value of those contracts is.

James Cartlidge:

Since the launch of the National Shipbuilding Office in September 2021, the UK Government has awarded over £6.1 billion approximately in shipbuilding contracts.

PROGRAMME	CONTRACT TYPE	VALUE	SHIPYARD	NOTES
Maritime Electronic Warfare System Integrated Capability Increment 1	Procurement - competition	£100 million	Awarded to Babcock-led partnership with Elbit Systems UK and QinetiQ on 01 Nov 2021	To fit Radar Electronic Support Measures with an EW Command & Control system to T26 and T31 (as well as T45 & QEC).
NavyX, Ministry of Defence	Procurement - off the shelf vessel (international competition)	£7.5 million Overseas £2 million to UK companies for conversion	Awarded to Damen Shipyards (Netherlands) on 10 February 2022	Vessel not included on 30 Year Cross-Government Shipbuilding Pipeline in the National Shipbuilding

PROGRAMME	CONTRACT TYPE	VALUE	SHIPYARD	NOTES
				Strategy Refresh
Queen Elizabeth Class Docking, Ministry of Defence	Support (UK-only competition)	£34 million	Awarded to Babcock (UK) on 15 March 2022	
Type 26 Batch 2, Ministry of Defence	Build (single source)	£4.2 billion	Awarded to BAE Systems (UK) on 15 November 2022	
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Support (international competition)	£45 million	Awarded to Babcock (UK) on 10 December 2022	
Northern Lighthouse Board, General Lighthouse Authority, Department for Transport (DfT)	Build (international competition)	£51.8 million via a DfT loan which will be repaid via Light Dues, with interest and no call on the UK Exchequer	Awarded to Astilleros Gondán S.A (Spain) on 12 December 2022	Includes £2 million of contracts with UK Supply Chain
Fleet Solid Support Ships	Build (international competition)	£1.6 billion	Awarded to Team Resolute comprised of Navantia UK, Harland & Wolff and BMT on 18 Jan 2023.	
Type 31 mission systems test and integration facility	Support (UK-only competition)	£70 million	Thales UK on 9 May 2023	The contract will provide equipment and technical services into the Type 31 Mission System Shore Integration Facility

PROGRAMME	CONTRACT TYPE	VALUE	SHIPYARD	NOTES
				at Portsdown Technology Park, Portsmouth.
North Eastern Guardian III replacement, patrol and research vessel, North East Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (local government and DEFRA)	Build (international contract)	£5.54 million	Parkol Marine, Whitby, awarded on 11 August 2023.	The Northeast Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority are largely funded by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and part funded by DEFRA.

¹ The table covers central Government shipbuilding and repair contracts and those of Arms Length Bodies in line with the National Shipbuilding Office's remit, and does not include those funded solely by local councils.

■ National Shipbuilding Office: Finance

John Healey:

[\[3702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for the National Shipbuilding Office is in (a) 2021-22, (b) 2022-23, (c) 2023-24, (d) 2024-25; and how those budgets are broken down by department from which that funding is drawn.

James Cartlidge:

The annual budget for the National Shipbuilding Office (NSO) broken down by financial year (FY) and Department is set out below:

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS	FY2021-22 ¹	FY2022-23	FY2023-24	FY2024-25
Ministry of Defence	£889,680	£1,544.63	£1,430,147	£1555,013
Cabinet Office	£123,926	£315153	£292,229	£317,338
Department for Business & Trade	£158,128	£350,819	£326,925	£353,083
^{2,3} Department for Transport	£104,374	£218,771	£202,673	£220,322

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS	FY2021-22 ¹	FY2022-23	FY2023-24	FY2024-25
Department for Education	£47,511	£99,693	£92,577	£100,385
Total	£1,326,059	£2,534,175	£2,349,731	£2,552,964

¹ Part year

² Previously split between Dept for Business, Energy & Trade and Dept for International Trade

³ Does not include capitation rate for one civil servant (circa £100,000)

Funding by Departments is on the basis of their contribution to the delivery of the National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh and resourcing of the NSO.

■ National Shipbuilding Office: Staff

John Healey: [\[3701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) civilian and (b) military personnel are employed by the National Shipbuilding Office as of 27 November 2023.

John Healey: [\[3705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many secondees from industry are employed at the National Shipbuilding Office as of 27 November 2023.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I provided on 28 November 2023 to Question 2484.

Since then, one more civilian has joined the team so the National Shipbuilding Office employs 26 staff, comprising: 21 civilians, three military staff and two industry secondees.

EDUCATION

■ Childcare: Costs

Rachael Maskell: [\[1185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to assess the potential impact of the cost of childcare on parental income.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the (a) cost of childcare and (b) availability of childcare places on the economy.

David Johnston:

Childcare is a vital enabler for parents to work. That is why the department has announced a number of wide-ranging childcare measures to support parents to return and stay in work. This will be transformative for parents, children and the economy.

By 2027/28, the government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever.

The department will also be providing over £4.1 billion by 2027/28 to fund 30 hours of free childcare per week (38 weeks per year) for working parents with children aged 9 months and above in England, from the term after they reach the relevant age (£1.7 billion in 2024/25, £3.3 billion in 2025/26, £4.1 billion in 2026/27, and £4.1 billion in 2027/28). Additionally, hundreds of thousands of children aged 3 and 4 are registered for a 30-hour place, saving eligible working parents up to £6,500 per child per year, helping even more working parents and making a real difference to the lives of those families.

Taken together this will make sure the system is sustainable, and where parents do need to pay directly for childcare, it is not at an inflated rate. Parents on Universal Credit now have access to higher caps in the amount they can claim back for childcare, and payments are upfront rather than backdated. Working families can also access support with the childcare costs through Tax Free Childcare worth up to £2,000 per year for children aged up to 11 years old, or £4,000 per year for children with disabilities aged up to 17 years old.

The Office for Budget Responsibility believes that this policy will have a significant impact, estimating that 60,000 more parents will enter the workforce as a result of this policy, while many will increase their hours.

■ Childcare: Finance**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding for childcare providers; and what steps she is taking to help ensure such funding takes account of high facility costs.

David Johnston:

The department has substantially uplifted the hourly rates paid to local authorities for childcare providers to deliver existing free entitlements offers. The department is also providing £204 million of additional funding in 2023/24 financial year, and a further £288 million in 2024/25 financial year.

The additional £204 million, coming on top of local authorities' existing allocations, allows an average increase of 32% for the current 2-year-old entitlement, and an average increase of 6.3% for the 3-and 4-year-old entitlements, compared to original 2023/24 financial year rates.

For 2-year-olds, this means that the average hourly rate for local authorities has risen from the original £6 per hour in the 2023/24 financial year to an effective £7.95 per hour. The 3- and 4-year-old national average hourly rate has increased from £5.29 to an effective £5.62 from September 2023.

The Spring Budget also announced an additional £288 million for the 2024/25 financial year to allow for further uplifts next year. This will be rolled in within the early years funding streams via the dedicated schools grant as normal. Funding rates for 2024/25 will be confirmed shortly.

This funding is on top of the £4.1 billion that the government expects to provide by the 2027/28 financial year to facilitate the expansion of the new free hours.

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

The formula includes an area cost adjustment (ACA) multiplier to reflect variations in local costs. 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.

The department regularly surveys a representative sample of over 10,000 providers to gain insights into how they run their provision and the challenges they face. The department also regularly surveys over 6,000 parents to understand their usage of childcare. This data has informed departmental methodology and the uplift required to meet the pressures providers faced.

The government recently announced £100 million of capital funding for local authorities, to support the delivery of the expansion of the 30-hours early years entitlement for working families and of wraparound provision in maintained primary schools. More detail, including allocation amounts to local authorities and accompanying guidance will be published in the coming weeks.

■ **Childcare: Mid Bedfordshire**

Alistair Strathern:

[1412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help increase the availability of childcare in Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

David Johnston:

By 2027/28, the government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever.

The government is providing over £4.1 billion by the 2027/28 financial year to fund 30 hours of free childcare for children over the age of nine months. Investing £204 million next year, increasing to £288 million by 2024/25 for local authorities to

increase the hourly funding rate to providers. This will include an average of 30% increase in the national average 2-year-old hourly rate from September 2023, which means that in 2024, the average hourly 2-year-old rate will be more than £8.

As part of this, Central Bedfordshire is due to receive £1,597,036.11 to enable them to deliver additional wraparound places. This financial year, local authorities have also received £12 million of delivery support funding to support them with meeting programme and delivery costs associated with rolling out the expanded early year entitlements. Central Bedfordshire will be allocated funds from this also.

The department is ensuring a phased implementation of the expansion to the 30 hours offer to allow the market to develop the necessary capacity. The department is raising awareness of government funded childcare support available to stimulate increased take-up by eligible families. This support could make a significant financial difference to families, as well as incentivising more eligible providers to register with Ofsted, in order to give parents more choices about where they can use their government funding.

The department also continues to monitor the sufficiency of childcare places. The key measure of sufficiency is whether the supply of available places is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents and children. The department's Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey shows that the number of places available has remained broadly stable since 2019. A £100 million allocation for local areas to use to make sure childcare settings in their areas have enough physical space, anticipated to add thousands of new places across the country. More detail on the £100 million capital funding, including allocation amounts to local authorities and accompanying guidance, will be published shortly.

The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. Part B of the 'Early education and childcare' statutory guidance for local authorities highlights that local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to parents. Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, the department discusses what action the local authority is taking to address those issues and where needed support the local authority with any specific requirements through our childcare sufficiency support contract.

■ Music: Education

Barbara Keeley:

[3752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2023 to Question 1382 on Music: Education, what estimate her Department has made of

the cost to Music Education Hubs of increased employer contributions to the teachers' pension scheme.

Damian Hinds:

The department will announce further details on the increased employer contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), including the approach for centrally employed teachers, and funding rates and allocations, in due course. In the meantime, the department can confirm that the existing TPS grant to non-local authority Hub Lead Organisations will continue to the end of August 2024.

■ **Schools: Mid Bedfordshire**

Alistair Strathern:

[\[4023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the financial support available to Central Bedfordshire Council to facilitate its transition from three-tier to two-tier schools.

Damian Hinds:

Central Bedfordshire Council has decided to transition from a three-tier to a two-tier school system. In these instances, it is a local authority's responsibility to manage such a transition.

The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. While this funding is not designed to fund transitions from a three-tier to a two-tier system, it is not ringfenced (subject to published conditions), meaning local authorities are free to use this funding to best meet their local priorities. Central Bedfordshire Council will receive just under £36.1 million for places needed between May 2022 and September 2026, paid across the five financial years from 2021/22 to 2025/26. This takes their total funding allocated between 2011 and 2026 to just under £121.3 million.

It is ultimately the council's responsibility to manage the three-tier to two-tier process. The department has a support, a challenge and a decision-making role for changes made to academies.

Alistair Strathern:

[\[4024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the impact of population growth on the adequacy of school capital funding in Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

Damian Hinds:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places sits with local authorities. The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places.

Basic Need funding allocations are based on the number of additional mainstream places needed in Reception to Year 11, which the department calculates using local authorities' own pupil forecasts and data on existing school capacity. The department funds local authorities to provide at least a 2 per cent operating margin of places, to

help support parental choice, churn in the pupil population, and the general manageability of the system. The funding rate per place each local authority receives is adjusted to reflect inflation and the different cost of construction in regions across the country.

The department has announced Central Bedfordshire will receive a total of just under £36.1 million to support the provision of new school places needed between May 2022 and September 2026, paid across the five financial years from 2021/22 to 2025/26. This takes their total funding allocated between 2011 and 2026 to just under £121.3 million.

Developer contributions are also an important way of helping to meet demand for new school places when housing developments are driving pupil numbers. It is for Central Bedfordshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority, to secure developer contributions through section 106 agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy, and to decide on the local infrastructure needs that this contribution should support.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Capital Investment**

Munira Wilson: [\[515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much capital funding her Department allocated for new SEND schools in each of the last five years.

Munira Wilson: [\[516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much capital funding her Department spent on new SEND schools in each of the last five years.

David Johnston:

The department has allocated a total of £1.9 billion in high needs capital funding to local authorities in England between 2018/19 and 2022/23. The department expects local authorities to use this funding to create new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or who require Alternative Provision. Local authorities can provide these places by expanding existing mainstream schools, special schools, or other specialist settings, or through new special schools.

On top of this, the department has opened 61 centrally delivered special free schools since 2018/19. The capital spend for these schools cannot be readily broken down for the last five years.

In addition to the funding for new places, high needs revenue funding for children and young people with complex needs is increasing to over £10.5 billion in the 2024/25 financial year, an increase of over 60% from the 2019/20 allocations. This funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting children and young people with SEND, including those in special schools.

■ Special Educational Needs: Gloucestershire

Richard Graham:

[\[1525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the impact of expenditure on high and special needs educational provision on Gloucestershire County Council's 2024-25 education budget.

David Johnston:

Gloucestershire County Council has provisionally been allocated £97 million through the high needs national funding formula (NFF) in 2024-25, as published this July. This is a cumulative increase of 28% per head over the three years from 2021/22. The department will be publishing in December this year each local authority's confirmed allocations for 2024/25, updated with the latest pupil number data, in their Dedicated Schools Grant allocations. The high needs NFF includes a factor based on local authorities' historic spending, as of 2017/18. Gloucestershire is attracting £27 million in respect of that factor within its overall high needs NFF allocation for 2024/25.

■ Special Educational Needs: Schools

Dehenna Davison:

[\[1737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support more children with special education needs into mainstream schools.

David Johnston:

In the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan, the department set out its ambition for more children and young people to have their needs met effectively in mainstream settings where it is possible for this to happen. For those children and young people with SEND who do require an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and specialist provision, the department will ensure that parents do not face an adversarial system to secure this.

The department will improve mainstream education by setting standards for the early and accurate identification of need, and for timely access to the support to meet those needs.

To deliver new national SEND and AP standards across EHC, the department is starting by building on existing best practice, including on early language support, autism and mental health and wellbeing. The department will publish three advisory practitioner standards by the end of 2025. The department will also publish a significant portion of the national standards by the end of 2025.

It is crucial that Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) are identified early to enable the right support to be put in place. In partnership with NHS England, the department is funding the Early Language and Support for Every Child (ELSEC) pathfinders within its Change Programme.

Reaching over 70% of schools and further education colleges, the Universal Services Programme will help the education workforce to identify and meet the needs of

children and young people with SEND, earlier and more effectively. The department is investing a further £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists to increase capacity.

The department is introducing a leadership level new National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for SENCOs. This will replace the existing qualification and ensure that SENCOs receive consistent high-quality training. The department has also committed to funding training for up to 7,000 early years staff to gain an accredited Level 3 early years SENCO qualification.

■ Teachers: Music

Barbara Keeley:

[3753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary school music teachers there were in (a) the UK, (b) London, (c) the South East, (d) the South West, (e) the Midlands, (f) the North East, (g) the North West in the 2022-23 school year.

Damian Hinds:

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

Information on the school workforce in England, including the number of subject teachers in state-funded secondary schools, is collected each November as part of the annual school workforce census. Information is published in the 'School workforce in England' statistical publication, which is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The national number of music teachers in a typical week in state-funded secondary schools for the 2022/23 academic year is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/af5fc952-2e6a-47e2-471d-08dbea66978c>.

As of 2022/23, there were 7,184 music teachers (any teacher timetabled to teach music) in state-funded secondary schools in England.

Timetabled teaching is reported for a typical week in November, as determined by the school. It does not cover an entire year of teaching. If there are variations in timetabling across the year, this is not covered in the data available to the department.

Subject taught is only collected from secondary schools that use electronic timetabling software that can produce data in the format required. Data is then weighted to provide national totals.

Information on the number of music teachers at a regional level is not available.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Biomethane****Andrew Rosindell:****[3150]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will take steps to fund research into the use of biomethane in gas supply.

Graham Stuart:

Increasing the proportion of biomethane in the gas grid is a practical and cost-effective way of reducing carbon emissions. It can be used flexibly across different end uses with the potential to help decarbonise heating, transport, power generation and agriculture.

The Green Gas Support Scheme (GGSS) provides tariff support for biomethane produced and injected into the gas grid. The Department recently announced an extension to the scheme to 31 March 2028. The Government will consult on introducing a policy framework to follow this to facilitate continued growth of the market and is carrying out research and evaluation to support policy development.

■ Community Energy Fund**Caroline Lucas:****[3455]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when she plans to (a) publish further details of and (b) announce the launch date for the Community Energy Fund; and if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of levels of public sector investment in community energy projects.

Graham Stuart:

There is a range of funding available to the community energy sector. This includes the new £10m Community Energy Fund, as well as UK growth funding such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, worth up to £2.6bn for investment in places. Community energy groups can access these through working with local authorities.

The Government aims to open applications to the Community Energy Fund as soon as possible.

■ Electric Cables: Wales**Jonathan Edwards:****[3769]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to page 95 of the Autumn Statement 2023, whether she has had discussions with the Welsh Government on the Transmission Acceleration Action plan.

Andrew Bowie:

I met with the Welsh Government's Minister for Climate Change, to discuss the Transmission Acceleration Action Plan in advance of publication. Speeding up the deployment of electricity networks across Great Britain is a key shared objective and

the UK Government has worked with the Welsh Government to develop the Action Plan and will continue to do so as it is implemented.

■ Electricity and Natural Gas: Prices

Kenny MacAskill: [3975]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of reductions in the typical domestic consumption values for (a) gas and (b) electricity announced by Ofgem on 25 May 2023.

Amanda Solloway:

The setting of the Typical Domestic Consumption Values, for both gas and electricity, is a matter for Ofgem as independent regulator. Ofgem assesses and normally reviews the values every two years using updated figures to reflect observed energy consumption among households. The lowering of values this year reflects a long-term trend of reducing household consumption. The Government will continue to work closely with Ofgem and monitor household consumption, especially in the context of increased energy costs and wider cost of living pressures.

■ Energy: Debts

Claire Hanna: [4002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate she has made of recent trends in the number of people experiencing energy debt; and what steps her Department is taking to provide support to help people with energy debt (a) pay off their debt and (b) with new energy bills.

Amanda Solloway:

Ofgem regularly publishes data on households in debt and arrears, here:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/debt-and-arrears-indicators>

The Government understands the challenges that are posed by cost-of-living pressures that includes energy bills and the impact of debt. Energy prices have fallen significantly with the price cap more than halving from £4,279 in January 2023 to £1,834 since the start of October 2023.

This coincides with the £900 cost-of-living payment being provided by the Government across 2023/24, which has increased from the £650 provided the previous year. The Government continues to closely monitor energy prices and will keep support schemes under review.

■ Energy: Price Caps

Kenny MacAskill: [3976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make a comparative assessment of the (a) impact of the energy price cap on domestic

consumers in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2022 and (v) 2023 and (b) potential impact of the cap on domestic consumers in 2024 in the context of falling energy usage.

Amanda Solloway:

Decisions on the price cap methodology are for independent regulator Ofgem. The cap limits the amount energy suppliers can charge for each unit of gas and electricity, as well as the maximum standing charge consumers pay for access to the grid. The law requires Ofgem to ensure the cap level reflects the underlying efficient costs of supplying energy. The default tariff cap does not reduce prices below what it costs to serve customers, including the costs of purchasing wholesale gas and electricity.

■ **Energy: Prices**

Claire Hanna:

[\[4001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she plans to take steps to provide energy bill support for (a) low-income and (b) vulnerable households during winter 2023-24.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognises the challenges posed by cost-of-living pressures, including the impact of energy bills, and is already providing extensive financial support to households. This includes a package of support to assist households and individuals with rising costs of living that will total over £104 billion, or £3,700 per household on average, over 2022-2025.

Millions of vulnerable households across the UK are receiving up to £900 in further Cost of Living Payments this year.

These payments are in addition to established financial support in Great Britain, including the Warm Home Discount, Winter Fuel Payment and Cold Weather Payment. Decisions on established financial support in Northern Ireland are devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive.

■ **Energy: Private Rented Housing**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[3456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of introducing incentives for landlords in the private rented sector who (a) are and (b) are not eligible for the (i) Home Upgrade Grant and (ii) ECO scheme to improve the energy efficiency of their properties.

Graham Stuart:

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues, including how Government can support landlords to improve the energy efficiency of homes.

The Government is spending £6.6bn this Parliament and a further £6bn to 2028 on making buildings cleaner and warmer. Plus, an estimated £5bn is to be delivered

through the Energy Company Obligation and the Great British Insulation Scheme up to March 2026.

The Government has launched a brand-new eligibility tool on our 'Help for Households' GOV.UK page that will help people find the support available to them via the Home Upgrade Grant and the Great British Insulation Scheme.

■ Fuel Poverty: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna: [4003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate she has made of the number and proportion of households experiencing fuel poverty in Northern Ireland on 27 November 2023.

Amanda Solloway:

DESNZ has responsibility for the measurement of fuel poverty in England. The latest estimates of fuel poverty in England are available

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

Fuel poverty is a devolved matter and different metrics of fuel poverty are used in the Devolved Administrations. The latest fuel poverty estimates for Northern Ireland, published by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are available here: [Estimates of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland in 2020 and 2021 \(nihe.gov.uk\)](https://www.nihe.gov.uk/estimates-of-fuel-poverty-in-northern-ireland-in-2020-and-2021)

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station and Sizewell C Power Station

Ashley Dalton: [4020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent estimate her Department has made of when the (a) Hinkley and (b) Sizewell nuclear power plant will be operational.

Andrew Bowie:

EDF is the lead investor at Hinkley Point C and they have provided a target date for commercial operations for Unit Reactor 1 of June 2027, with Unit Reactor 2 following a year later in June 2028. Both units have a risk of a delay of 15 months. We expect Sizewell C to be generating power from the mid-2030s, subject to ongoing project development and the timing of a Final Investment Decision.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

Keir Mather: [3393]

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

Graham Stuart:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 September 2023 to Question UIN [198552](#).

■ Offshore Industry: North Sea

Emma Hardy:

[\[3917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the legal framework for protecting the marine environment in the context of recent progress in decommissioning oil and gas boreholes in the North Sea.

Graham Stuart:

The decommissioning of wells is important to enable the safety and integrity of the well to protect the marine environment. The relevant regulators, Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED), HSE and NSTA continue to work together to ensure well decommissioning is progressed in accordance with the relevant safety and environmental regulations and standards.

■ Oil and Natural Gas: Carbon Emissions

Dan Carden:

[\[3535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of the International Energy Agency's publication entitled The Oil and Gas Industry in Net Zero Transitions, published in November 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Government reads publications from the International Energy Agency with interest and will consider the contents of its latest report carefully. As recognised in the report, the oil and gas industry is well placed to scale up some of the key technologies needed to reach net zero such as hydrogen, carbon capture, and offshore wind.

■ Renewable Energy

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[3533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans she has to support (a) the Ants Group and (b) other renewable energy companies to help achieve the Government's net zero targets by 2030.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises the important roles that renewables developers, contractors and suppliers play in contributing to the achievement of its net zero targets.

The Government has provided significant additional funding for renewable energy projects this autumn. Provisions include support via the next Contracts for Difference Allocation Round, funding for renewables manufacturing, and investment tax measures.

Kenny MacAskill:[\[3972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether it is her Department's policy that renewable energy projects are co-located to mitigate the impact on communities.

Graham Stuart:

The Secretary of State's role is to set out the planning policy in National Policy Statements, updated versions of which were laid before Parliament and published last week, and then decide on applications on the basis of all the relevant considerations in each case. It is not the role of the Secretary of State to choose the location of a project.

Co-location is not a requirement for a planning application, but, as set out in the Government's National Policy Statements, applicants are encouraged to work collaboratively with other developers and should demonstrate good design. They should also consider opportunities to maximise co-location possibilities for their projects where this may mitigate the impact on communities or the environment.

Renewable Energy: Community Development**Damian Green:**[\[3411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what planned timetable is for consulting on barriers to developing community energy projects.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is actively working with the Community Energy Contact Group on the content and timetable for a consultation on barriers for community energy projects. Whilst the Government hopes to publish the consultation as soon as possible, until these discussions have concluded it is not possible to outline a definitive timeline.

Solar Power: Water**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[3971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what her Department's policy is on water born solar panel development.

Graham Stuart:

The UK has already seen floating solar PV projects, such as at the Queen Elizabeth II Reservoir. The Government welcomes more proposals, as large scale deployment of all solar types will be needed to achieve its 70GW target by 2035.

Floating solar is eligible for support under the Contracts for Difference scheme.

The joint Government/Industry Solar Taskforce is looking at further actions to unlock deployment across a wide range of solar types, including floating solar.

■ Wind Power: Infrastructure

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[3973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what her Department's policy is on the decommissioning of turbines and blades.

Graham Stuart:

The decommissioning of all offshore wind turbines, including blades, is a legal obligation for the owners and their plans must be approved by the Secretary of State. Full removal of all offshore renewable energy installations is the default position and installations should be designed and constructed to facilitate that.

For onshore wind turbines and blades, when a local planning authority grants planning permission this will typically include conditions for decommissioning, such as returning a site to its previous state.

In both cases, all waste should be disposed of in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Floods

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[2094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support farmers in areas recently affected by flooding.

Robbie Moore:

The Government announced a significant package of support, via the Flood Recovery Framework, to areas in England that have experienced exceptional localised flooding as a result of Storm Babet. The Framework provides funding for eligible households and businesses and includes a £2,500 Business Recovery Grant for SMEs which have suffered severe impacts from flooding that cannot be recovered from insurance, and council tax discounts. Farmers in eligible areas may also access grants up to £5,000 per property to install property flood resilience measures where they have internal flooding to homes or business premises.

Wider support includes £25 million of funding to improve flood resilience through a new natural flood management (NFM) programme which closed on 10 November, and catchment sensitive farming advice for farmers on NFM, water and air quality. We will introduce further NFM measures under our environmental land management scheme next year. Also, as set out in the Environment Agency's latest flood strategy roadmap, flood risk management authorities will be working with farmers and landowners to help them adapt their businesses and practices to be resilient to flooding and coastal change. The National Farmers Union is working with the Environment Agency to establish a rural resilience partnership focused on helping farmers and growers adapt to a changing climate.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: China**Tim Loughton:** [\[1419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether senior officials from his Department have travelled to China since January 2019.

Robbie Moore:

Yes, senior officials have travelled to China since January 2019.

■ Deposit Return Schemes**Ruth Jones:** [\[1739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to appoint an administrator for the deposit return scheme to be introduced in October 2025; and what funding will be made available to the administrator.

Robbie Moore:

A scheme administrator referred to as the Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) will be responsible for managing the overall operation of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers (DRS). Secondary legislation will provide the Secretary of State with the powers to appoint the DMO and outline the criteria which will be taken into account in making the appointment. The appointment process will be launched once the regulations are in force.

The scheme will be funded through three income streams:

- Material revenue obtained from collected DRS material sold to reprocessors for recycling.
- Unredeemed deposits from drinks containers not returned into the scheme, for which a deposit was paid by a consumer on purchase of that container.
- Remaining costs will be covered by producer fees for drinks producers.

■ Environment Agency: Contracts**Emily Thornberry:** [\[110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 116 of the Annual Report and Accounts of the Environment Agency for 2022-23 published on 26 October 2023, what the purpose of the contract that has been subject to an adjudication process was; with which contractor that contract was agreed; and what the status is of that contract as of 7 November 2023.

Robbie Moore:

The accounts disclosed that there was an adjudication, however this adjudication dealt with preliminary issues in the commercial dispute and the dispute itself remains live. As the dispute remains live it would be inappropriate to provide further comment since this could adversely affect the course of justice, and potentially prejudice the Environment Agency's position in the dispute.

■ Flood Control: Staff

Julie Elliott: [\[3818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many flood support officers his Department employed in each of the last five years.

Robbie Moore:

The Environment Agency (EA) does not have “flood support officers” as a role. The EA has numerous flood incident response roles that staff hold alongside their day jobs. Staff are regularly trained and exercised in these roles. Some of these roles are only activated during an incident and some are on standby 24/7 365 days a year.

■ Floods: Housing

Priti Patel: [\[2316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on providing support to householders who believe that actions taken by the Environment Agency have caused flooding to their properties.

Robbie Moore:

The Environment Agency (EA) take flood risk incredibly seriously and have a long-term plan to upgrade and invest in flood defences across England to benefit local communities. When building flood defences there is a legal requirement that they cannot increase the flood risk of communities either upstream or downstream.

Creating climate resilient places lies at the heart of the EA's [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#) (FCERM Strategy) and [Roadmap to 2026](#). The EA's role in flood and coastal erosion risk management is outlined [here](#). The EA is also a Category 1 responder set out by The Civil Contingency Act (2004).

The EA are in the third year of the current 6-year £5.2billion [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management \(FCERM\) investment programme](#). The funding can be spent on projects that better protect properties in England as well as the development of future projects.

At the end of March 2023, the EA estimated that approximately £1.5 billion of this funding has been invested with over 200 flood risk schemes completed.

Around 60,000 properties have benefited from better protection since the start of the current 6-year programme (between April 2021 to March 2023). This takes the total number of properties protected to 374,000 since 2015.

During Storms Babet and Ciarán around 2,400 properties sadly flooded but defences protected a further 110,000.

■ Fly-tipping: Fires**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[1828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of fires in illegal dumps on public health in (a) Havering and (b) England.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[1829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has taken steps to assist local authorities to tackle illegal dumps in (a) general and (b) Havering.

Robbie Moore:

The Government is committed to tackling waste crime, and it is an offence to dump waste on land without appropriate authorisation. The Prime Minister's Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan set out how we will support councils to take tougher action against those who fly-tip. We have raised the upper limit for fixed penalties for fly-tipping to £1,000 and taken steps to encourage councils to issue more of these penalties.

We are developing a toolkit with the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group, to help councils and others tackle fly-tipping. This includes a guide on how to present robust cases to court and a new framework on setting up and running effective local partnerships.

We have also awarded nearly £1.2m to help more than 30 councils purchase equipment to tackle fly-tipping at known hot-spots. We have recently launched another grant opportunity that could see a further £1m handed out in grants next year to help even more councils tackle the issue.

The Environment Agency (EA) investigates fly tipping if the incidents are large-scale, serious, organised illegal dumping or if it immediately threatens human health or the environment. They work in partnership with other local partners such as the police, local authorities, the fire service and United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) as needed. This includes seeking advice from UKHSA about public health risks from illegal waste activities if necessary.

As part of its partnership work the EA has provided advice and guidance to the London Borough of Havering to help deal with a specific site in Havering and will continue to do so. The council is the lead authority on regulating this particular site and for monitoring air quality. Its work will take into account any advice on public health matters that it might receive from UKHSA.

■ Food: Waste**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[2277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support charities that engage in food waste reduction programmes.

Robbie Moore:

Over £2m will be spent this year with the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP), a charity that helps business and citizens to waste less.

Included in this work is the development, provision of, and roll out of advice, best practice and guidance to help the supply chain redistribute more surplus food to the charitable sector.

Redistribution charities continue to benefit from the increased capacity and capability from the £13m that has spent since 2018 on infrastructure such as warehousing, vehicles, fridges and freezers.

■ Hunting: Animal Products**Ian Byrne:**[\[3680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it remains his policy to bring forward legislation banning the importation of hunting trophies.

Rebecca Pow:

We are disappointed that the Hunting Trophies Bill failed to progress in the House of Lords in the previous session, in spite of overwhelming support from hon. Members for our proposals. We are committed to delivering on our manifesto pledge to ban the import of hunting trophies and will continue to explore ways to bring this forward.

■ Motor Vehicles: Lead**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[1942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of lead emissions from (a) petrol use, (b) tyre and break wear and (c) other types of use of road vehicles in the last 12 months.

Robbie Moore:

Lead emissions are estimated in the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. The latest data available is for 2021. Data for 2023 will be published in February 2025.

Across the UK there were 34.5 tonnes of lead emissions from road transport in 2021, of which 34.1 tonnes were from tyre and brake wear, 0.36 tonnes were from petrol use, and 0.01 tonnes were from other sources in road transport (including diesel engines, lubricant use and natural gas).

Lead emissions from road transport have declined over the long term, largely due to a decline in emissions from the combustion of petrol (falling 99.9% since 1970).

■ National Plant Collections: Floods and Storms**Priti Patel:**[\[2314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what financial support his Department provides to National Plant Collection holders who have suffered (a) flood and (b) storm damage.

Robbie Moore:

The Government acknowledges the terrible impact Storm Babet and Storm Ciarán have had on householders and businesses and sympathises with those affected. There is no specific funding for National Plant Collection holders however, the Government has triggered the Flood Recovery Framework, to provide funding for affected households and businesses as a result of severe flooding caused by the storms.

In addition, the Government will be activating the Defra Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme for areas affected by Storm Babet. Eligible flood-hit property owners will be able to apply for up to £5,000 to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding.

■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances: Water**Dan Jarvis:**[\[2898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to review the safe levels of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances set out in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016.

Robbie Moore:

Drinking water quality in England is of an exceptionally high standard and among the best in the world. The Drinking Water Inspectorate has provided guidance on PFAS since 2007, updated in 2021, which adopts a guideline value of 0.1 mg/l for drinking water. This has been agreed as an appropriate value with the UK Health Security Agency and is in line with a guideline value the World Health Organisation has recently consulted on for PFOS and PFOA. Work continues across government to assess levels of PFAS occurring in the environment, their sources and potential risks, to inform future policy and regulatory approaches.

■ Phosphates: Christchurch**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[3081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what mitigation measures are available to developers of brownfield land who have been affected by the ban on phosphates in central Christchurch.

Robbie Moore:

There are currently two parties operating phosphate credit schemes in the River Avon catchment. These are available directly to local developers within Christchurch, which is now a part of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council (BCP) area. Natural England continues to work closely and positively with the local authorities affected and suppliers of phosphate credits.

Sir Christopher Chope:[\[3082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the target date is for the completion of works to upgrade the Stony Lane Wastewater Treatment plant in Christchurch; and whether the upgrade will require the removal of all phosphates.

Robbie Moore:

The Government has made clear that reducing phosphorus pollution must be a priority for the water industry through setting a legally binding target to reduce phosphorus pollution by 80% by 2038 against a 2020 baseline, with an interim target of a 50% reduction by 2028.

Christchurch sewage treatment works is operated by Wessex Water Services Limited. All water companies, including Wessex Water, are currently developing their business plans for the next water industry investment period, and agreeing these plans with the water industry regulators.

These plans, including all upgrades which will be undertaken as part of the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP), will be made available to the public after Ofwat's final determination in December 2024. Until then, the Government is not able to share specific information around which sewage treatment works are, or are not, included in the programme.

Public Lavatories: Men**Stephen Morgan:**[\[1965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to improve the availability of sanitary bins in male toilets.

Robbie Moore:

This is an important issue which impacts many people, including those affected by prostate cancer treatment. The Government encourages local authorities to consider such provision in public toilets to support those with this need but does not have powers to compel the provision of sanitary bins in public toilets. I would encourage the hon. Member to raise the issue locally.

River Avon: Public Footpaths**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[2462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Environment Agency is taking to ensure that the Avon Valley path between Burton and Christchurch is maintained.

Robbie Moore:

Maintenance of public rights of way, including decisions to divert or extinguish them, is a matter for the local authority.

The Environment Agency and Natural England are working with local landowners and South West Water to review future flood risks that may impact assets that cross the flood plain, including the stretch of the Avon Valley path between Burton and Christchurch.

Public access on rights of way and common land in floodplains is regularly affected by winter flooding events. The frequency and duration of such events appears to be changing as a result of climate change, and adapting towards natural flood

management needs to consider and balance this alongside rights of public access, public safety as well as land use.

■ River Thames: Sewage

Layla Moran: [1976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of sewage discharges into the River Thames on the health of (a) dogs and (b) other pets.

Robbie Moore:

The Government is clear that the volume of sewage being discharged into our waters is unacceptable. That is why our Plan for Water sets out more investment, stronger regulation, and tougher enforcement to tackle pollution and clean up our water.

Alongside this, our [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) sets clear and specific targets for water companies, regulators and the Government, to work towards the long-term ambition of eliminating ecological harm from storm overflows.

No specific assessment has been undertaken on the impact of sewage discharges on dogs and pets.

■ Sanitary Protection

Stephen Morgan: [2047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Health and Safety Executive on updating regulations to ensure that suitable means for the disposal of sanitary dressings is provided in all toilets.

Robbie Moore:

This is an important issue which impacts many people, including those affected by prostate cancer treatment. The Government encourages local authorities to consider such provision in public toilets to support those with this need but does not have powers to compel the provision of sanitary bins in public toilets. I would encourage the hon. Member to raise the issue locally. The Secretary of State has regular discussions with the Government's arm's-length bodies, including the Health and Safety Executive, on a range of issues.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Belarus: Political Prisoners

Anneliese Dodds: [3322]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with his Belarus counterparts on political prisoners.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[3323\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what estimate he has made of the number of female political prisoners in Belarus.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[3324\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with HM Ambassador to Belarus on political prisoners in that country.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government is appalled by the brutal and ongoing repression that the Lukashenko regime conducts against its own people. There are nearly 1500 political prisoners in Belarus. The regime's repression and its support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine have limited our bilateral contact. However, the UK is clear about our solidarity with all political prisoners, when possible attending trials and engaging with their families. We have also raised this issue at the UN and The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). We will continue to take every opportunity to urge the Belarusian regime to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and protect the human rights of its citizens.

■ **Colombia: Environment Protection**

Patrick Grady:

[\[3495\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in Colombia about reported criminalisation of environmental defenders in that country.

David Rutley:

UK Ministers and senior officials regularly discuss human rights, security, and environmental issues with the Colombian Government. Most recently we attended the 44th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 7 November to discuss the human rights situation in Colombia with the Colombian Government. We recommended strengthening prevention mechanisms and advancing timely, independent, and impartial criminal investigations into allegations of attacks and threats against environmental activists.

■ **Colombia: Mining**

Patrick Grady:

[\[3496\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department has had discussions with the Colombian government on the compliance of AngloGold Ashanti with the referendum rejecting mining operations in Cajamarca.

David Rutley:

During his visit to Colombia last May, the former Foreign Secretary met with President Petro and Foreign Minister Leyva to discuss shared priorities, including the environment and sustainable development. Whilst this specific company was not

discussed, Colombia is an FCDO Human Rights Priority Country and since 2020, UK funding has supported the development of guides for joint risk assessments between extractive companies, public security forces and communities to help prevent community-corporate conflicts. We expect businesses to respect local and international law wherever they operate and look to extractive companies to comply with the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights.

■ **Iceland: Volcanoes**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[3604\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department is taking steps to help support Iceland in the context of recent volcanic activity.

Leo Docherty:

We have not received a request for assistance from the Government of Iceland. There has been no volcanic eruption on the Rekjanes Peninsula and the level of seismic activity that led to the evacuation of the town of Grindavik has also decreased significantly. The British Embassy in Reykjavik is following the situation closely and remains in contact with the Icelandic authorities.

■ **Just Stop Oil: Demonstrations**

Caroline Lucas: [\[2846\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will publish his response to the letter of 15 August 2023 from the UN Special Rapporteur on climate change regarding the sentences of Morgan Trowland and Marcus Decker.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

All responses to UN Special Procedure Communications are published on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A response to the letter of 15 August 2023 from the UN Special Rapporteur on climate change will be made available in this way in due course.

■ **North Korea: Satellites**

Catherine West: [\[3878\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with regional partners on North Korea's satellite launch capabilities.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) latest satellite launch using ballistic missile technology. We have said this in our joint statement with partners on 22 November and G7 Foreign Ministers made this clear on 22 November. The Prime Minister held productive discussions with the President of the Republic of Korea during his state visit to the UK on areas of shared interest including the DPRK's provocations, which threaten peace and stability. We remain

committed to securing peace on the Korean peninsula, working closely with allies and partners to secure an end to the DPRK's illegal weapons development.

■ **Phillip Mehrrens**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[3610\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his New Zealand counterpart on the abduction of Philip Mehrrens.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

FCDO Ministers have not had discussions with their New Zealand counterparts about this specific case. The British Embassy in Jakarta is in contact with the New Zealand Embassy to support their response. We continue to monitor developments closely.

■ **Robinson Arley Mejía Alonso**

Patrick Grady:

[\[3497\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether HM Embassy Bogota has met Robinson Arley Mejia Alonso to discuss his security situation.

David Rutley:

On 12 September 2023, officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in London met Robinson Arley Mejía Alonso to discuss his security situation. Officials at our Embassy in Bogotá will look to schedule a further meeting with him in Colombia at the next available opportunity.

■ **Sierra Leone: Democracy**

Neil Coyle:

[\[3846\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment he has made of the stability of democracy in Sierra Leone; and whether his Department is taking diplomatic steps to help (a) stabilise democracy and (b) ensure legitimate institutions are restored in that country.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK has strongly condemned the unjustifiable violence which took place on Sunday 26 November. We have welcomed President Bio's call for unity and commitment to hold those responsible to account and the statements from all political parties calling out the violence. We continue to follow the situation closely and are engaged with Government, political parties and other stakeholders. The UK remains committed to supporting a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Sierra Leone and the aspirations of its people.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Misuse**

Dan Carden: [\[3538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 4.5 of the Government response to the Fifty-fourth report of Session 2022-23 from the Committee of Public Accounts on Alcohol treatment services, HC 1001, published on 21 July 2023, what her planned timetable is for publishing the joint action plan with NHS England to address co-occurring mental health and drug/alcohol-related conditions.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department is developing a Joint Action Plan with NHS England to address co-occurring mental health and drug/alcohol-related conditions. This programme of work aims to improve access to mental health services for people with drug and alcohol misuse conditions, as well as improve the links between mental health and substance misuse services.

The Department is continuing to work with NHS England on this programme, and we aim to publish the Joint Action Plan in 2024.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Dan Carden: [\[3537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.3 of the Government response to the Fifty-fourth report of Session 2022-23 from the Committee of Public Accounts on Alcohol treatment services, HC 1001, published on 21 July 2023, what progress she has made towards updating the estimated cost of alcohol to society; and what her planned timetable is for publishing that estimate.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department updated the previous 2012 estimate to reflect inflation based on the latest available data. In 2021, the cost of alcohol to society was estimated at £25 billion. The Department has also initiated a longer-term piece of work to refine this estimate, beginning with a review of existing evidence of the impact of alcohol consumption on the National Health Service and labour market productivity.

Dan Carden: [\[3539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 5.3 of the Government response to the Fifty-fourth report of Session 2022-23 from the Committee of Public Accounts on Alcohol treatment services, HC 1001, published on 21 July 2023, what progress her Department has made on its toolkit for local authorities.

Dan Carden: [\[3540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 4.3 of the Government response to the Fifty-fourth report of Session 2022-23 from the Committee of Public Accounts on Alcohol treatment services, HC 1001, published on 21

July 2023, what steps her Department has taken to identify opportunities to share best practice of alcohol treatment in local areas.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) published a toolkit for local authorities in August 2023 to help local authorities compare treatment numbers to their estimated dependent populations and identify whether specific referral pathways need strengthening. The toolkit also contains guidance on good practice to reduce the level of unmet need and target priority or underserved groups.

Alongside the toolkit, two case studies were published on how local areas have taken successful action to reduce unmet need for alcohol treatment.

The toolkit is available to local commissioners and service providers in the restricted area of the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System website and has been accessed approximately 2,000 times each month since its launch. OHID continues to develop the toolkit report by adding components, including support for local authorities to improve pathways from the criminal justice system.

Other steps taken by OHID to support system improvement and the sharing of local best-practice include regional events and working groups for commissioners and service providers.

Dan Carden:

[\[3541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 6.2 of the Government response to the Fifty-fourth report of Session 2022-23 from the Committee of Public Accounts on Alcohol treatment services, HC 1001, published on 21 July 2023, what her planned timetable is for publishing the substance misuse workforce strategic plan.

Dan Carden:

[\[3542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 6.2 of the Government response to the Fifty-fourth report of Session 2022-23 from the Committee of Public Accounts on Alcohol treatment services, HC 1001, published on 21 July 2023, when she plans to publish (a) phase 1 of the national drug and alcohol treatment and recovery capability framework and (b) a workforce calculator.

Andrea Leadsom:

The substance misuse workforce strategic plan will outline the actions needed in the next year, next three years, next five years and next 10 years to build back quality in the drug and alcohol workforce and develop a sustainable pipeline into the sector. It will be underpinned by a capability framework, which will provide new guidance on the knowledge and skills required for core roles amongst the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery workforce. It is being designed to be used alongside a newly developed workforce calculator.

There has been extensive engagement with the sector on the development of these products. The first part of the capability framework will be published by December

2023 and will be followed by the strategic plan. The workforce calculator is due to be published in spring 2024.

■ Autism and Learning Disability: Restraint Techniques

Alex Cunningham:

[3804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress she has made on implementing the recommendations of Baroness Hollins' report entitled Independent Care (Education) and Treatment Reviews: final report, published on 8 November 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

Work is underway to implement recommendations in Baroness Hollins' final report and to improve outcomes for people with a learning disability and autistic people through reducing use of restrictive practices.

The HOPE(S) training programme, which aims to embed good practice across inpatient services and reduce the use of long-term segregation and restrictive practices, is in place, currently piloted until 2024, and will be independently evaluated.

The programme of independent reviews will continue, now led by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), to preserve regulatory oversight and support people to less restrictive settings and discharge to the community. CQC are finalising their methodology, quality, and governance processes.

Progress is also being made on proposals to make changes to the CQC regulations, which would be subject to Parliamentary approval, to improve reporting and notifications by providers to CQC on use of restrictive practices.

Additionally, NHS England's Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Inpatient Quality Transformation Programme was established in 2022 and aims to make improvements in quality and safety, so that patients experience good and meaningful care. This programme is backed by £36 million investment over three years.

■ Babies: Blood Tests

Liz Twist:

[3912]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the capacity of the UK National Screening Committee to review new rare conditions for inclusion in a national newborn heel prick screening programme.

Andrew Stephenson:

The UK National Screening Committee's (UK NSC) remit was expanded last year to consider targeted, and risk stratified screening proposals, in addition to covering population screening programmes. A recruitment campaign is ongoing to expand capacity to be able to manage the increased volume of work expected. In terms of reviewing the evidence for newborn blood spot conditions the UK NSC has an annual call mechanism where proposals to screen for new topics can be submitted. The annual call for 2024 will open in July.

■ Breast Cancer

Sir John Hayes:

[3694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make a comparative estimate of breast cancer survival rates in (a) the UK and (b) other comparable nations in the latest period for which data is available.

Andrew Stephenson:

There are no such plans to make a comparative assessment. Cancer survival is measured in cohorts, so the 2010 comparison point uses the 2006-10 cohort, compared to the latest available data which reflects the 2016-20 cohort. In England, breast cancer net survival rate for the 2016-20 cohort one year after diagnosis was 96.1% compared to 94.4% for the 2006-10 cohort. The five-year survival rate was 85.9% for the 2016-20 cohort compared to 83.2% for the 2006-10 cohort.

The Department has undertaken analyses previously, especially of comparative cancer survival rates and contributors to variations between different countries. However, the different factors and methods used in such analyses are very complex and subject to interpretation of issues such as public health, risk factors, and patient pathways.

An example of this can be seen in the Department's evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee Inquiry into cancer services, submitted and published in September 2021. More information is available at the following link:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/39021/pdf/>

■ Cancer: Health Services

Sir John Hayes:

[4036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to publish a long-term cancer strategy for England.

Andrew Stephenson:

On 24 January 2023, the Government announced that it will publish a Major Conditions Strategy, spanning six major conditions including cancer. This will focus on delivering better, joined-up and holistic care to address the needs of patients, rather than focusing on one illness at a time.

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments

Daisy Cooper:

[3965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to increase awareness of minimally invasive cancer therapies among (a) healthcare professionals and (b) patients.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department recognises that for some cancer patients, minimally invasive cancer therapies have the potential to improve recovery, reduce the length of bed stays in

hospital, and produce fewer side effects from treatment. However, cancer patients will often have a range of treatment choices available to them. It is important that informed decisions are taken by each patient, in consultation with their treating clinician, following the advice of multi-disciplinary teams that are expert in the management of cancer. Promotion of one approach would not be appropriate for each patient, so awareness campaigns are not normally undertaken by the Department and the National Health Service.

The adoption of new treatments, including minimally invasive cancer treatments, into the NHS in England is generally the result of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance and/or commissioner decisions. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/published>

For treatments that form part of a prescribed specialised or highly specialised service, NHS England's specialised commissioning function is responsible for putting in place access. For treatments that are not part of a prescribed specialised service, the responsibility sits with integrated care boards (ICBs). Both NHS England and ICBs are required to put in place access for any treatment that carries a positive recommendation from the Technology Appraisal programme, operated by NICE. Pharmaceutical companies are also able to accelerate access to new treatments and technologies through schemes like the Early Access to Medicines Scheme, Project Orbis or The Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway, enabling patients to benefit from innovative treatments quickly.

Looking ahead, from April 2024, ICBs will become the responsible commissioner for several specialised services and will want to work with and through local Cancer Alliances to plan and organise access to care for their populations that meets national standards. By integrating the commissioning of specialised and non-specialised services, ICBs will be able to join-up care around patient needs and invest resources where they can have best effect on outcomes, including any decisions on minimally invasive cancer therapies.

■ Care Workers

Damian Green: [\[3075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when she plans to publish her Department's recommendations for a new care workforce pathway for adult social care.

Helen Whately:

The Department will publish the first version of the Care Workforce Pathway and response to the call for evidence as soon as is practicable.

■ Care Workers: Recruitment

Jim Shannon: [\[3222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to help improve staffing levels in the care sector.

Helen Whately:

The latest Skills for Care data (published October 2023) shows that since the fall in capacity levels in 2021/22, there have been improvements in workforce capacity, with an increase of 20,000 filled posts in 2022/23, to 1.635 million filled posts.

We are supporting increased recruitment by delivering our ongoing National Recruitment Campaign; working with the Department of Work and Pensions to promote adult social care careers to jobseekers; funding sector partners to provide support to employers and commissioners; and supporting ethical international recruitment.

The Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF), and the MSIF Workforce Fund, are designed to maximise the impact of our reform investment by further improving workforce recruitment and retention. Over two years, these two grants total almost £2 billion in additional support for the adult social care sector.

We are also investing in retention through better workforce training, recognition, and career progression.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services**John McDonnell:**[\[3685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress her Department has made on implementing the interim delivery plan on myalgic encephalomyelitis and chronic fatigue syndrome; and if she has an expected timeline on when the plan will be fully implemented.

Andrew Stephenson:

We have been consulting on 'My Full Reality', the cross-government interim delivery plan on myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), which seeks to improve the experiences and outcomes of people living with this condition.

We are analysing the results of the consultation and the views and experiences gathered through this consultation will be used to build a picture of how well the interim delivery plan identifies and meets the needs of the ME/CFS community and to highlight any significant gaps where further action may be necessary.

We will publish the final delivery plan in due course.

■ Community Diagnostic Centres**Maggie Throup:**[\[3266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which tests, checks, and scans were initially designated for provision by community diagnostic centres; where that information is published; and what assessment she has made of the extent of tests, checks and scans provided as of 22 November 2023 compared with initial planned provision.

Andrew Stephenson:

In line with the recommendations of the Richards' Review (2021), community diagnostic centres (CDCs) must offer a minimum set of diagnostic services across the following core modalities:

- imaging, for example, computerised tomography, magnetic resonance imaging;
- physiological measurement, for example, echocardiography, spirometry; and
- pathology, for example, phlebotomy, urine testing.

Large CDCs must also offer endoscopy services, for example, gastroscopy and colonoscopy, as part of their core offer.

There are no current plans to expand the core list of services required by CDCs. CDCs are however encouraged to offer other tests beyond the minimum requirement where this may be appropriate and deemed to be a priority locally. NHS England does not currently publish a breakdown of all CDC activity.

There are 135 CDCs currently operational, and the CDC programme has delivered over five million tests since reporting in July 2021, which is currently ahead of planned programme activity. The Government has also confirmed it is now on track to meet its target to open up to 160 CDCs by March 2025, and expects to achieve this a year early in March 2024.

■ Community Diagnostic Centres: Staff**Maggie Throup:**[\[3264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish a workforce strategy for the community diagnostic centre programme.

Andrew Stephenson:

NHS England is working on a plan to ensure sufficient workforce capacity, including for community diagnostic centres, to enable workforce expansion with the right skills and roles, in the right locations and at the right time. In 2022/23, this resulted in over 4,300 new starters across the training pipeline for diagnostics and cancer.

■ Cystic Fibrosis: Drugs**Margaret Greenwood:**[\[3472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the draft guidance published by NICE entitled Ivacaftor–tezacaftor–elexacaftor, tezacaftor–ivacaftor and lumacaftor–ivacaftor for treating cystic fibrosis, published on 3 November 2023, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the recommendation that modular therapies should not be provided on the NHS on the health of people with cystic fibrosis.

Andrew Stephenson:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recently consulted on its draft recommendations on the use of lumacaftor–ivacaftor (Orkambi),

tezacaftor–ivacaftor (Symkevi) and ivacaftor–tezacaftor–elexacaftor (Kaftrio) and has not yet published its final recommendations. NICE continues to work with stakeholders to address the issues highlighted by the committee in the draft guidance. Under the terms of the interim access agreement for the cystic fibrosis medicines, Orkambi, Symkevi and Kaftrio, eligible children and adults with cystic fibrosis can continue to receive ongoing treatment and be initiated onto treatment with these medicines, as clinically appropriate, while NICE concludes its evaluation.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[3473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with people with (a) cystic fibrosis and (b) representative organisations on the draft guidance on the future availability of (i) Orkambi, (ii) Symkevi and (iii) Kaftrio on the NHS.

Andrew Stephenson:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for leading engagement with interested parties in the development of its recommendations on medicines. NICE has recently consulted on its draft guidance on the use of Orkambi, Symkevi and Kaftrio for the treatment of cystic fibrosis and continues to work with stakeholders to address the issues highlighted by the committee in the draft guidance. The Department encourages stakeholders such as patients and representative organisations to continue to engage in the NICE appraisal process.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[3633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a child suffering from cystic fibrosis who is currently taking Orkambi will be able to move on to taking Kaftrio if their clinician considers it more effective once current NICE recommendations are ratified.

Andrew Stephenson:

The commercial deal NHS England reached with Vertex covers their entire portfolio of licensed cystic fibrosis treatments. NHS England's continued expectation in implementing the agreement is that Vertex will enable any patients already initiated on any of the treatments covered by the portfolio deal to have access to the full range of licensed treatments going forward, as recommended by their clinical teams.

■ Dementia: Research

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[3563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what her planned timescale is for the delivery of the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission.

Helen Whately:

The Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission, is currently developing the delivery plans for its pillars of work, which will focus on biomarkers and experimental

medicine, clinical trials, and end-to-end implementation. A timescale for delivery has not yet been finalised.

■ Dental Services: Databases

Grahame Morris:

[3184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 1862 on Dental Services: Easington, what data is held centrally on access to NHS dental care.

Andrea Leadsom:

The annual 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. NHS Dental Statistics for England, published by NHS Digital, brings together information on NHS dental activity in England, including information about patients seen.

The latest NHS Dental Statistics Annual Report published on 24 August 2023 shows that 18.1 million adults were seen by an NHS dentist in the 24 months up to 30 June 2023, an increase of 1.7 million, or 10%, when compared to the previous year; and 6.4 million children were seen by an NHS dentist in the 12 months up to 30 June 2023, an increase of 800,000, or 14%, when compared to the previous year. Dental activity, as measured by courses of treatment delivered, also increased by 23.2% compared to the previous year.

The latest GP Patient survey data is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/category/statistics/gp-dental-statistics/>

The latest NHS Dental Statistics for England is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics>

■ Dental Services: South West

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[2285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in (a) Bournemouth East constituency and (b) the South West.

Andrea Leadsom:

In July 2022 we announced a package of reforms to improve access to NHS dentistry across England, which outlined the steps we are taking to meet oral health need and increase access to dental care across England. The changes that have been implemented include improvements to ensure dentists are remunerated more fairly for more complex work and the introduction of a minimum Units of Dental Activity value. NHS dental activity as measured by Courses of Treatments delivered has increased by 23% nationally between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

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 identify areas of need and determine the priorities for investment and have access to regular data which will support them in their plans to improve access to NHS dentistry in their area.

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

But we know we need to do more, and that there are some areas where access is particularly problematic. We are working on our Dentistry 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: ICT

Matt Rodda:

[\[3653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much their Department spent on (a) current and (b) legacy IT infrastructure (i) in total and (ii) purchased in 2013 or earlier in each of the last three years.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 29 November 2023]: The following table shows the Department's total spend on its core information technology (IT) systems, services and infrastructure for the last three years up to 21 November 2023, as well as the portion of this spend on legacy IT infrastructure:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL IT SPEND	SPEND ON LEGACY INFRASTRUCTURE
2021/22	£13,060,129	£500,000
2022/23	£39,712,764	£500,000
2023/24	£12,286,521	£250,000

Notes:

1. The spend on legacy infrastructure reflects a small part of old infrastructure which was replaced in August 2023. The Department has been actively migrating to the cloud and has not purchased anything which could be categorised as Legacy in the last 5 years.

Matt Rodda:

[\[3654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the guidance by the Central Digital and Data Office entitled Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published on 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by their Department.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 29 November 2023]: As of 21 November 2023, the Department has no red-rated legacy information technology (IT) systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework. The IT systems provided by the Department are wholly in the public cloud.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Public Expenditure

Liam Byrne:

[\[3583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which spending programmes their Department devolves for administration to (a) local government in England and (b) other local spending bodies; and what the budget is of each such programme for each year for which budgets are agreed.

Andrew Stephenson:

A table is attached showing the budgets for grant schemes issued to local government in England by the Department in the form of grants under the Local Government Act 2003 for the financial years 2023/24, 2022/23 and 2021/22. This includes schemes managed by NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency.

Attachments:

1. Budgets for grant schemes [FORMATTED TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE 3583 -Grant Schemes FY Breakdown-29-11-23.docx]

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Sick Leave

Sarah Olney:

[\[1669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of officials in her Department are on long-term sick leave.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 16 November 2023]: The Department defines long-term sick leave to be four weeks or more of sickness absence. Our central data shows there were 13 members of staff on long-term sick leave on 31 July 2023, this equates to approximately 0.4% of the total number of staff in the Department at the time.

■ Endometriosis

Navendu Mishra:

[\[3991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department has taken to (a) improve (i) understanding and (ii) awareness of endometriosis in the NHS

and (b) ensure that women with endometriosis are (A) diagnosed and (B) treated efficiently.

Maria Caulfield:

The Women's Health Strategy sets out our ambitions for all healthcare professionals to be well informed about women's health and supported to provide women with the best care possible.

Women's health is a core competency for general practitioners (GPs) and is included in the Royal College of General Practitioners' (RCGP) curriculum for trainee GPs. The RCGP has developed a 'Women's Health Library', which brings together educational resources and guidelines on women's health topics.

The General Medical Council will introduce the Medical Licensing Assessment from the academic year 2024/2025. This includes women's health topics such as endometriosis, encouraging a better understanding of endometriosis for doctors starting their careers.

We are improving access to diagnosis and treatment services for women with endometriosis. We are investing £25 million in women's health hubs to improve women's access to essential services for menstrual problems and more. We are also increasing activity through dedicated and protected surgical hubs that conduct planned procedures only. Surgical hubs are focusing on providing high-volume low-complexity surgery such as laparoscopies for suspected endometriosis.

NHS England is also updating the service specification for severe endometriosis, which defines the expected standards of care. The updated service specification is expected to be published before the end of March 2024.

■ **General Practitioners**

Karin Smyth:

[\[3865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GP appointments were booked through the NHS app in each of the last 12 months.

Karin Smyth:

[\[3866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of GP practices do not allow patients to (a) order repeat prescriptions and (b) book appointments through the NHS app.

Andrea Leadsom:

The following table shows the number of appointments booked through the NHS App for each of the last twelve months:

DATE	APPOINTMENTS BOOKED
1/10/2022	204,247
1/11/2022	173,320

DATE	APPOINTMENTS BOOKED
1/12/2022	136,525
1/1/2023	199,107
1/2/2023	165,217
1/3/2023	179,331
1/4/2023	153,212
1/5/2023	175,208
1/6/2023	174,644
1/7/2023	173,079
1/8/2023	182,027
1/9/2023	208,185
1/10/2023	198,044

Practices that have enabled the functionality to order repeat prescriptions or book appointments digitally can offer this through several different systems, including the NHS App. The Department does not hold data showing which system is used by each practice.

Our Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care commits to giving patients at 90% of practices access to four key functions in the NHS App:

- to view their prospective clinical records (including test results);
- order repeat prescriptions;
- see messages from their practices as an alternative to text messaging; and
- manage routine appointments.

■ Health Services: Students

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[3952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department plans to increase the annual grant available under the Learning Support Fund for healthcare students studying (a) nursing, (b) midwifery and (c) allied healthcare professions.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government keeps the funding arrangements for all healthcare students under close review. At all times the Government must strike a balance between the level of support students receive and the need to make best use of public funds to deliver value for money.

On 1 September 2023, we announced a significant uplift to the travel and accommodation funding available through the Learning Support Fund, to ensure students are appropriately reimbursed for the costs of travelling for clinical placements. Eligible students will now be able to claim 50% more for their travel and accommodation expenses.

There are no immediate plans to make further changes to the scheme design.

■ Health Services: Training

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department plans to extend the Learning Support Fund to students studying pharmacy and cardiac physiology.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government keeps the funding arrangements for all healthcare students under close review. At all times the Government must strike a balance between the level of support students receive and the need to make best use of public funds to deliver value for money.

There are no immediate plans to make changes to the scheme design.

■ Hospices: Children

Sir John Hayes: [\[3417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help financially support children's hospices.

Helen Whately:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for the commissioning of end of life and palliative care services, including for children and young people, to meet the reasonable needs of their local populations. As part of the Health and Care Act 2022, palliative care services were specifically added to the list of services that an ICB must commission. Hospices are largely independent charitable organisations which may receive some funding from ICBs for delivering services in the National Health Service.

In June 2023, NHS England confirmed that it would be renewing the Children and Young People's Hospice Grant for 2024/25, once again allocating £25 million grant funding for children's hospices in England. NHS England will communicate further details regarding the process for the grant allocations later this year.

■ Incontinence: Health Services

Navendu Mishra: [\[3997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2023 to Question 535 on Incontinence: Health Services, when he plans that the framework to be produced by the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project will be

published; what the objectives of that Project are; who is leading that Project; with which stakeholders that Project has had discussions; and what the reasons are for the time taken by that Project.

Andrew Stephenson:

In 2019, NHS England commissioned and led on the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project. The NHS England led project has been delayed due to COVID-19, with as yet no firm date set for publishing its draft report.

The objectives of the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project are to: oversee the development of evidence-based and patient-focussed care pathways and Commissioning Framework with identified priority areas to improve outcomes for adults, children and young people, ensuring relevance to all care groups; provide leadership and direction, make decisions to steer the progress and delivery of the programme, to support delivery of the ambitions within the Long Term Plan ensuring that the aims of the programme are aligned with the purpose and policy of the health and care system; and raise the profile of bladder and bowel health nationally, ensuring links to relevant groups are maintained and that the patient experience is improved.

There have been no formal stakeholder engagement discussions at this stage.

■ **Liver Cancer**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[3759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to increase survival rates for people with liver cancer.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department is supporting the National Health Service to increase survival rates for all cancers including for liver cancer in England by taking steps to diagnosing and treating cancers at an early stage. The NHS is working towards the NHS Long Term Plan ambition of diagnosing 75% of stageable cancers at stage 1 and 2 by 2028, meaning 55,000 more people each year will survive their cancer at least five years after diagnosis. To deliver this, the Department is driving faster roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, establishing 135 community diagnostic centres, with capacity prioritised for cancer.

NHS cancer standards have been reformed with the support of clinicians to speed up diagnosis for patients which means people will receive a diagnosis or have cancer ruled out within 28 days from urgent cancer referral from their general practitioner (GP). In addition, the NHS-Galleri Trial is looking into the use of a new blood test to see if it can help the NHS to detect cancer early when used alongside existing cancer screening, including liver cancers.

The Government is working jointly with NHS England on implementing the delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlogs in elective care and plans to spend more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to help drive up and protect elective activity, including cancer diagnosis and treatment activity.

The Department has also committed support to the Less Survivable Cancers Taskforce, which targets cancers with stubbornly poor survival rates. This partnership focuses on liver, pancreas, lung, brain, oesophagus, and stomach cancers, raising awareness of these less survivable cancers so more people understand their symptoms and go to see their GP if they have concerns.

In addition to the immediate action to support cancer services, the Government announced on 24 January 2023 that it will publish a Major Conditions Strategy. The Strategy will tackle conditions that contribute most to morbidity and mortality across the population in England, including cancer.

■ **Medical Records: Databases**

Wes Streeting:

[\[2707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the number and proportion of NHS trusts with Electronic Patient Records (EPRs); and if she will publish a list of trust without EPRs.

Andrew Stephenson:

189 National Health Service trusts, or 90%, have successfully implemented an Electronic Patient Record (EPR) system, meeting the target set by the Government in the 2023 mandate for NHS England. Our ambition remains that complete coverage of all NHS trusts will be achieved by March 2026.

At present, there are 21, or 10%, NHS secondary care trusts in England that do not have an EPR system. These trusts are currently in different phases of adoption.

There are no immediate plans to publish a list of trusts without EPRs while procurement is still live.

■ **Mental Health Services: Veterans**

Owen Thompson:

[\[3519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the devolved administrations on extending the remit of Op Courage outside England.

Maria Caulfield:

Health is devolved across the four nations of the United Kingdom and the services available therefore may differ across each part of the UK. The Government has not had any discussions with devolved administrations on the potential introduction of Op COURAGE outside England.

■ **Methylphenidate: Shortages**

David Linden:

[\[3916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the National Patient Safety Alert entitled Shortage of methylphenidate prolonged-release capsules and tablets, lisdexamfetamine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets, issued on

27 September 2023, alert reference NatPSA/2023/011/DHSC, what progress she has made on tackling supply disruptions affecting Xaggitin XL 18 and 36 mg prolonged-release tablets.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are aware of disruptions to the supply of medicines used for the management of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), primarily driven by issues which have resulted in capacity constraints at key manufacturing sites.

The National Patient Safety Alert to the National Health Service advises healthcare professionals on the management of patients during this time. We have well-established processes for managing and mitigating medicine supply issues, which involve working with the pharmaceutical industry, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, NHS England, the devolved governments and others operating in the supply chain to help ensure patients have access to the treatments they need.

The Department has been working closely with the respective manufacturers and some issues have now been resolved. However, we know that there continue to be disruptions to the supply of some other medicines, including Xaggitin XL 18 and 36 milligrams, which are expected to resolve in early 2024.

■ **Motor Neurone Disease: Medical Treatments**

Andrew Lewer:

[\[3670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to tackle shortages of Riluzole; and whether she plans to issue guidance to (a) local NHS Trusts and (b) prescribers to help ensure patients are able to access treatment for motor neurone disease.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are aware that one of the suppliers of riluzole 50 milligram tablets is experiencing a supply issue. However, alternative suppliers have stock available. We are working closely with all the relevant manufacturers to expedite deliveries, where possible, to ensure supplies remain available for patients in the United Kingdom.

We have well-established processes for managing and mitigating medicine supply issues, which involve working with the pharmaceutical industry, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, NHS England, the devolved governments and others operating in the supply chain to help ensure patients have access to the treatments they need.

■ **NHS: Drugs and Medical Equipment**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[3599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to help reduce shortages of (a) medical supplies and (b) drugs in the NHS.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department works at a national level to address medical product supply issues and help prevent, manage, and mitigate shortages. We continue to see the knock-on impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Ukrainian War on global supply chains for medical supplies, and are aware of the increased pressure on global manufacturing capacity of some products.

In response to this, we utilise a range of preparedness arrangements coupled with tried-and-tested response measures. For example, our National Supply Disruption Response acts as a single point of contact when a health or care provider, supplier, or research body has exhausted all other options available to them to maintain supply of medical products to the United Kingdom. It is an end-to-end UK-wide service from investigation of shortages to arrangement of global freight solutions via the Express Freight Service that enables the user to report a critical supply issue and receive support on its management.

Medicines specifically are complex and highly regulated, and materials and processes must meet rigorous safety and quality standards. We have well-established processes for working with the pharmaceutical industry, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, NHS England, the devolved governments and others operating in the supply chain to help ensure patients have access to the medicines they need.

In the long-term, improving and maintaining supply resilience forms a key part of the Government's Medical Technology Strategy, published in February 2023, where we will work with industry and the system to ensure patients have fast and safe access to medical technology, wherever they live in the country.

Andrew Rosindell:**[3600]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to help ensure value for money in (a) medicines and (b) medical supplies in the NHS.

Andrew Stephenson:

A series of voluntary agreements between Government and the pharmaceuticals industry have existed since 1957 to control National Health Service spend on branded medicines. The current scheme came into effect at the start of 2019 and will last until the end of 2023. Agreement has been reached in principle with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry on a successor scheme, the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing, access and growth, which is set to save the NHS £14 billion over five years in medicines costs. The Department also has a broadly equivalent statutory scheme for branded medicine pricing which applies to companies that do not opt into the voluntary scheme.

For unbranded, generic medicines, the Department relies on competition to keep prices down, allowing prices to react to the market. In an international market this ensures that when demand is high and supply is low, prices in the United Kingdom can increase to help secure the availability of medicines for UK patients.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) ensures that the price that the NHS pays for medicines represents value for money and it recommends most medicines for use on the NHS. NICE decides whether medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS based on an assessment of their costs and benefits.

The Medical Technology Strategy, published in February 2023, committed to developing an environment to deliver value for money and affordability across the whole patient pathway for medical supplies. As part of this commitment, the Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Supply Chain alongside industry and patient groups to develop a consistent methodology for assessing value in terms of outcomes and not just unit cost, which will be adopted at both a national and local level. This is reflected in the new Commercial Strategic Framework launched by NHS England on 28 November 2023 in which a focus on value is recognised as a priority intervention. Further to this, as part of the wider Value Based Procurement (VBP) programme being delivered by NHS England and NHS Supply Chain has developed a toolkit and two VBP models. One model can be applied to the renewal of existing frameworks or contracts for product ranges, and the other is for the procurement of innovation. The toolkit and models are designed for internal use by NHS Supply Chain's procurement teams and Category Management Service Providers and are not available for publication.

■ NHS: Software

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[3445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to promote the new Pace Checker feature in the NHS Active 10 app.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 28 November 2023]: 'Pace Checker' is a new feature that launched in the NHS Active 10 mobile application in September 2023. The feature was developed to support individuals to measure their walking pace when using the Active 10 application, providing guidance and motivation to reach a brisk pace of over 100 steps per minute. Brisk walking contributes to reaching the Chief Medical Officer's adult physical activity guidance of at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week.

The NHS Active 10 mobile application is primarily promoted through the Better Health programme and partnership initiatives, encouraging the public to take steps to improve their physical and mental health. Most recently, the application was promoted through a World Mental Health Day campaign by Every Mind Matters to encourage individuals to take up a 'little big thing' to support their mental health. More information on the Better Health programme is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/>

■ Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Act 2019

Jackie Doyle-Price:

[\[3209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to review the impact of the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Act 2019 on family consent.

Andrew Stephenson:

NHS Blood and Transplant's evaluation of opt-out legislation in England observed a consent rate of 61% which was lower than the predicted post opt-out legislation consent rate of 78%. The study to evaluate the impact of opt-out legislation in England was designed before the COVID-19 pandemic and opt-out legislation in England was implemented on 20 May 2020 during the height of the first COVID-19 lockdown. Deceased donation numbers dropped 25% during the pandemic period and have yet to fully recover. It is acknowledged that, as the legislation coincided with COVID-19, it may never be possible to distinguish the true impact of opt-out legislation due to the impact of COVID-19 on organ donation.

■ Organs: Donors

Conor McGinn:

[\[3270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are on the organ donation waiting list in St Helens North constituency.

Andrea Leadsom:

As of 30 October 2023, the number of people on the waiting list in St Helens North is nine.

■ Palliative Care

Sir John Hayes:

[\[3683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps NHS England is taking to increase availability of palliative care services.

Helen Whately:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning palliative and end of life services that meet the needs of their population according to local prioritisation and funding. As part of the Health and Care Act 2022, palliative care services were specifically added to the list of services an ICB must commission. This will ensure a more consistent national approach and support commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care.

NHS England has published statutory guidance for ICBs to support their commissioning of high-quality, accessible palliative and end of life care for all. The guidance addresses health inequalities in palliative and end of life care by improving equity of access and reducing inequity in outcomes and experience. This includes the completion of an Equalities and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment and action plan.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Drugs

Emma Hardy: [\[3919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that people with Parkinson's receive their medication on time in hospitals.

Emma Hardy: [\[3920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing each of the recommendations in the report by Parkinson's UK entitled Every minute counts: Time critical Parkinson's medication on time, every time, published in September 2023.

Andrew Stephenson:

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

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

■ Pharmacy: Closures

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[3364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help prevent community pharmacy closures.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department is closely monitoring changes to the pharmacy network. Access to services remains good with 80% of people in England living within 20 minutes walking distance of a pharmacy and twice as many pharmacies in the most deprived areas of the country.

The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 2019-24 five-year deal commits £2.592 billion each year to these private contractors and the Government recently announced further funding to back the introduction of Pharmacy First and an expanded service offer. The Pharmacy Access Scheme also provides targeted financial support to pharmacies in areas where there are fewer pharmacies.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Emma Hardy: [\[3921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to implement the recommendations in the report Continuing to pay the price: the impact of prescription

charges on people with long-term conditions, published by the Prescription Charges Coalition in March 2023.

Andrew Stephenson:

No decision has been made on whether to make any changes to prescription charges for 2024/2025. Responsibility for prescribing, including the duration of prescriptions, rests with the doctor who has clinical responsibility for that aspect of a patient's care. The Department has no plans to give prescribers directives on this. It also has no plans to conduct such a review of the list of conditions that entitle a patient to apply for a medical exemption certificate.

This Government is committed to tackling cost of living pressures; and has decided that the prescription charge upper age exemption will remain at 60, meaning that it will not change to align to State Pension Age. The decision was published in June 2023, and more information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-prescription-age-frozen-at-60>

Information on the prescription exemptions is promoted to professionals and patients to ensure they are aware of a patient's entitlement. The NHS Business Services Authority also undertakes activities such as continuous social media promotion, paid social media advertising, provision of online resources for healthcare professionals to download and use in general practitioner surgeries and pharmacies, for example, posters and leaflets, media releases to news titles and promotion through healthcare bulletins.

■ **Prescriptions: ICT**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[3740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with the National Homecare Medicines Committee on its timetable for reporting on an electronic prescribing system.

Andrew Stephenson:

The National Homecare Medicines Committee provided evidence about an electronic prescribing system (EPS) for the Homecare Medicine Service to the House of Lords Public Services Select Committee as part of its recent inquiry into the Service. The Committee published its report on 16 November 2023 which included recommendations on Information Technology interoperability and electronic prescribing. The Government welcomed this report and will respond in due course. This report is available at the following link:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/pubserv/269/269.pdf>

NHS England and the National Homecare Medicines Committee Digital Sub-Group have been working to develop an output-based specification to support electronic prescribing and the transmission of prescriptions using the national EPS. Adoption of this is dependent on IT suppliers, as well as the development capability and priorities of the National Health Service EPS Product Team.

It is too early to give an indicative timetable for this work. NHS England has, however, set up a working group to explore the feasibility of whether the current EPS can be utilised across Homecare Medicines Services. This group is likely to report at the end of April 2024.

■ Primary health care: North Yorkshire

Keir Mather:

[\[3399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to increase the retention of (a) GPs and (b) other primary healthcare staff in North Yorkshire.

Andrea Leadsom:

We are working with NHS England to increase the general practitioner (GP) workforce in England, including North Yorkshire. This includes measures to boost recruitment, address the reasons why doctors leave the profession, and encourage them to return to practice. NHS England has made available several recruitment and retention schemes to boost the general practice workforce. This includes the GP Retention Scheme, the GP Retention Fund, the National GP Induction and Refresher, the Locum Support Scheme, and the Supporting Mentors Scheme.

Through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, Primary Care Networks and practices have recruited over 34,000 additional staff including nursing associates, pharmacists, physiotherapists, and social prescribing link workers, hitting the Government's target to recruit 26,000 a year ahead of the March 2024 target.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, published earlier this year by NHS England, sets out the steps the National Health Service and its partners need to take to deliver an NHS workforce, including GPs and other primary healthcare staff, that meets the changing needs of the population over the next 15 years. It will put the workforce on a sustainable footing for the long term.

■ Rheumatology: Consultants

Sir George Howarth:

[\[3423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of full time equivalent fully qualified grade one (a) adult rheumatology and (b) paediatric rheumatology consultant vacancies in England.

Sir George Howarth:

[\[3424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has a plan to increase the number of (a) adult and (b) paediatric full time equivalent (i) fully qualified grade one rheumatology consultants and (ii) rheumatology specialist nurses in England over the next (A) 12 months, (B) five years and (C) 15 years.

Andrew Stephenson:

No specific estimate has been made of adult or paediatric consultant rheumatologist vacancies. There are currently 1,153 full time equivalent doctors working in the

specialty of rheumatology. This is 142 or 14% more than in 2019. In 2022/23 and 2023/24, Health Education England, now part of NHS England, increased the number of specialist rheumatology training posts by 12 and five respectively.

The Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP) published on 30 June 2023 aims to double the number of medical school places in England, taking the total number of places to 10,000 by 2028/29 and 15,000 by 2031/32. The LTWP commits to an adequate growth in foundation placement capacity, as those taking up these new places begin to graduate, and a commensurate increase in specialty training places that meets the demands of the National Health Service in the future. This will substantially increase the potential pipeline for rheumatologists and other medical specialties.

The LTWP also sets out an ambition to almost double the number of adult nursing training places, taking the total number of places to nearly 28,000 by 2028/29 and nearly 38,000 by 2031/32. This will substantially increase the potential pipeline for nurses specialising in rheumatology.

■ Social Services

Damian Green:

[\[3410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations she has received on establishing a social care council.

Helen Whately:

My officials and myself enjoy strong engagement with sector representatives and experts as we develop policy and deliver for the social care sector. We receive representations on a number of issues including on ideas for forums to hear from the social care workforce and shape policy, most recently on establishing a social care council, which my officials are following up on.

We already engage workforce representatives on the creation, development, and implementation of our ambitious workforce reforms. Most recently, this includes co-developing a new career structure for care workers so that all staff can build their careers and are recognised for their skills, and one that reflects the realities of providing adult social care.

■ Veterans: Dental Services

Keir Mather:

[\[3391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to increase the availability of dental care appointments for veterans.

Andrea Leadsom:

In July 2022, we announced a package of improvements to the National Health Service dental system, detailed in Our plan for patients. This outlined how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to NHS dental care through several improvements to the 2006 contract. These changes were designed to improve access for all that need it, including veterans.

A key principle of the Armed Forces Covenant is that the Armed Forces community experiences no disadvantage in accessing healthcare. The NHS takes its responsibilities under the Covenant very seriously.

We are working on our Dentistry 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.

■ **Visas: Care Workers and Health Professions**

Matt Hancock: [\[3626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the number of non-EU nationals who received health and care worker visa on staffing levels in (a) the NHS and (b) care homes.

Andrew Stephenson:

No specific assessment has been made.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Asylum: Applications**

Claire Hanna: [\[3373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons some asylum applications take longer to be considered than others.

Robert Jenrick:

We have taken action to accelerate decision-making and rapidly speed up processing times to eliminate the backlog of legacy initial asylum decisions by the end of 2023. Separate work is ongoing to more efficiently process all other asylum claims admitted to the UK asylum system awaiting consideration.

■ **Asylum: Bibby Stockholm**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[3640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is his Department's policy that victims of (a) torture, (b) modern slavery and (c) trafficking will be housed on the Bibby Stockholm.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office assesses an individual's suitability to reside at Portland and will only accommodate single adult males who are considered suitable to reside there. Guidance on the suitability criteria used can be found here: [Allocation of accommodation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

■ Asylum: Employment

Alison Thewliss:

[\[3863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to his oral contribution in response to the question from the hon. Member for Glasgow North of 27 November 2022, Official Report, what the evidential basis is for stating that allowing asylum seekers the right to work would increase the number travelling to the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

A wide body of evidence points towards key pull factors to the UK including language, diaspora, presence of friends and family, economic opportunity, and availability of education. Any effects exerted by asylum policies and welfare systems on individual decision making around ultimate country of destination are much less well understood and difficult to isolate. That is why we have no plans to work provisions and are trebling the fines for illegal working.

■ Asylum: Finance

Alex Sobel:

[\[3544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2023 to Question 1700 on Asylum: Finance, what his Department considers to be a timely manner.

Robert Jenrick:

Decision times will vary by case, as each application is different; we aim to reach a decision as swiftly as possible.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[3845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Rwanda on the number of Home Office officials that will be sent to help Rwanda upgrade its asylum processing capabilities.

Robert Jenrick:

We have been working at pace with the Government of Rwanda to help strengthen the operation of their asylum system. We will continue to progress this, in light of the Supreme Court judgment, and a range of options for further support are being considered. Conversations between governments remain confidential.

■ Bedfordshire Police: Finance

Alistair Strathern:

[\[4027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average level of funding for Bedfordshire Police was on a per-officer basis in each of the last three years.

Chris Philp:

Core funding for police forces is set out at the annual Police Settlement. The main sources of PCC funding are the local council police precept and government grants, which are distributed on a funding formula basis.

Local resourcing decisions are the responsibility of Chief Constables and locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), including Mayors who exercise PCC or equivalent functions, to take decisions around their resourcing and estates. They are best placed to make decisions with their communities based on their local knowledge and experience, reflecting the operational independence of forces.

Bedfordshire Police funding will be up to £143.4 million in 2023/24, an increase of up to £15.2 million when compared to 2022/23. This is a continued increase in funding from the previous two financial years from £137.3 million in 2022/23 and £129.2 million in 2021/22.

Bedfordshire will also receive additional funding committed by the Home Office for the 2023-24 Pay Award of up to c£2.9 million for 2023-24.

During the Police Uplift Programme, the number of officers in Bedfordshire Police has increased from 1,351 in March 2021, to 1,411 in March 2022 and stood at 1,455 the end of March 2023.

■ Biometrics: Retail Trade**Dawn Butler:**[\[3448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has had discussions with private facial recognition surveillance suppliers on use of live facial recognition in the retail sector.

Chris Philp:

The Government supports the appropriate use of facial recognition to solve and prevent crimes, bring offenders to justice, and keep people safe.

I have been engaging with a wide range of facial recognition suppliers, including those who supply to the retail sector, where it can play an important role in tackling retail crime.

The National Retail Crime Steering Group brings together Government, trade organisation, retailers and enforcement partners to discuss to ensure the response to crimes affecting the retail sector is as robust as it can be, which has included discussions on facial recognition.

■ Commonwealth: Visas**Julian Knight:**[\[3247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has had discussions with his Commonwealth counterparts on the potential merits of waiving standard visitor visa fees for citizens across each Commonwealth member state.

Robert Jenrick:

Visas are an important part of securing the UK's border and are an effective tool for the UK in reducing illegal immigration, tackling organised crime and protecting national security.

The government has no plans to waive or reduce visit visa fees for nationals of Commonwealth member states.

Community Policing: West Midlands**Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[3365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to increase the number of community policing teams in the West Midlands.

Chris Philp:

Decisions about how neighbourhood policing is delivered, including the deployment and composition of community policing teams, are for operationally independent Chief Constables. They are best placed to use their local knowledge and experience to serve local communities. Democratically elected PCCs are responsible for holding Chief Constables to account for the running of their force.

We are ensuring that policing has the resources it needs. As a result of the Police Uplift Programme there are now almost 150,000 officers in police forces across England and Wales - the highest number on record. As at 31 March 2023, West Midlands Police had recruited 1,376 additional officers against a total three-year uplift allocation of 1,218 officers.

The number of police officers within local policing roles in England and Wales is the highest since comparable data began. As at 31 March 2023, West Midlands Police had 3,629 full time equivalent police officers employed in local policing roles, a 4.2% increase on the previous year (3,483 FTE in March 2022).

Dangerous Dogs**Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[3366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many dogs have been destroyed by police since 2019.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not collect data on the number of dogs destroyed by the police.

Drugs: Music Festivals**Tahir Ali:**[\[3548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has issued recent guidance to the organisers of festivals on the use of back-of-house drug testing licences.

Chris Philp:

There is no safe way to take illegal drugs, which devastate lives, ruin families and damage communities. The Government recognises the potential benefits of 'back-of-house' drug checking services in the night time economy, at festivals and similar events. Back-of-house services are those which test surrendered or confiscated drugs, but do not offer individuals the opportunity to submit drugs for testing, do not return any drugs to individuals or give individuals any information on the content of the drugs following testing.

Instead, they provide intelligence to law enforcement and healthcare agencies about the kinds of illicit drugs in circulation and they enable localised public alerts if toxic or otherwise dangerous drugs are detected so that anyone at risk can dispose of those drugs in amnesty bins. This type of service does not encourage drug taking, recognising that all illicit drugs are harmful and that there is no safe way to take them.

No recent guidance has been issued to festival organisers. Organisations wishing to deliver back-of-house services have always been able to apply for a Home Office controlled drug licence and we continue to encourage potential applicants to plan ahead to ensure that they apply for a licence in good time for the festival season next year.

Guidance on applying for a Home Office controlled drug licence can be found at the following link: [Controlled drugs: domestic licences - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/controlled-drugs-domestic-licences).

Hate Crime**Caroline Lucas:****[2849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 21 June 2023 to Question 189060 on Hate Crime: LGBT+ People, when he plans to publish the Government's response the Law Commission's report entitled Hate crime laws: Final report, published on 7 December 2021.

Laura Farris:

We are grateful for the detailed consideration the Law Commission has given to its review of hate crime laws. In April this year, the Government published a response to Recommendation 8 on misogyny as a hate crime and we will respond to the remaining recommendations shortly.

Home Office: Correspondence**Tahir Ali:****[3339]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's average response time to correspondence from Birmingham, Hall Green constituents.

Robert Jenrick:

We do not hold data about response times for correspondence from individual customers. The information could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

■ Immigration Controls: Bristol Airport

Julian Knight: [\[3474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at Bristol International Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at London City Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at Manchester Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at Belfast International Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at East Midlands Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at Cardiff Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at Glasgow Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at Newcastle Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was to clear Border Force security on arrival at Leeds-Bradford Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [\[3491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time has been to pass Border Force security on arrival at Liverpool John Lennon Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [3492]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time across the UK's passenger airports to pass Border Force security was on arrival in the last 12 months.

Robert Jenrick:

Border Force measures and monitors wait times at all major UK ports to ensure the flow of legitimate travel into UK.

The latest Border Force transparency data shows that 95% of arrivals to the UK were cleared within the service standard in the second quarter of this year and in July, 90% of passengers surveyed were satisfied with their experience at UK border control.

The most recent data is available on Gov.UK;

www.gov.uk/government/publications/border-force-transparency-data-q2-2023.

We do not publish port level wait times for commercial sensitivity as it may provide an unfair advantage to certain ports if others are seen to be performing more badly. The way data is captured is also different across ports so will not be a like for like comparison.

■ Immigration Controls: Heathrow Airport

Julian Knight: [3246]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department holds data on average waiting times to proceed through Border Force security on arrival at London Heathrow Airport.

Julian Knight: [3257]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time has been to pass Border Force security on arrival at London Gatwick Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [3258]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time has been to pass Border Force security on arrival at London Luton Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [3259]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time has been to pass Border Force security on arrival at London Stansted Airport in the last 12 months.

Julian Knight: [3260]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time has been to pass Border Force security on arrival at Birmingham International Airport in the last 12 months.

Robert Jenrick:

Border Force measures and monitors wait times at all major UK ports including Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, Stansted, and Birmingham to ensure the flow of legitimate travel into UK.

The latest Border Force transparency data shows that 95% of arrivals to the UK were cleared within the service standard in the second quarter of this year and in July, 90% of passengers surveyed were satisfied with their experience at UK border control. The most recent data is available on Gov.UK;

www.gov.uk/government/publications/border-force-transparency-data-q2-2023.

We do not publish port level wait times for commercial sensitivity as it may provide an unfair advantage to certain ports if others are seen to be performing more badly. The way data is captured is also different across ports so will not be a like for like comparison.

■ Immigration: Families**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[3743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been granted (a) permission to stay and (b) to join their families in the UK through the family reunion process in each year from 2018 to 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not publish information on how many people have been granted permission to stay through the family reunion process, (in-country grants of leave to remain).

The Home Office publishes data on the number of Family Reunion visas granted, in the ' [Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#) '. Data covering the period January 2010 onwards are published in table FAM_D01 (with more detailed data in the Data – FAM_D01 tab) from [Family reunion visa grants detailed datasets, year ending September 2023](#). (Downloads new file).

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[3742]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long his Department expects to keep open the second stage of Pathway 3 referrals for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The resettlement of eligible Afghans remains a top priority for this government. As of September 2023, around 24,600 vulnerable people affected by the events in Afghanistan have been brought to safety. This includes the first individuals to be relocated under Pathway 3 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

In the second stage of Pathway 3, our commitment to work with international partners and NGOs to welcome wider groups of Afghans still stands. We are not able to open

for referrals at this present time for the second stage of Pathway 3 but further information will be published in due course.

■ Right of Search

Mr David Davis: [3698]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many warrants were (a) applied for, (b) granted and (c) rejected under section 26 of the Theft Act 1968 by each police force in each of the last five calendar years.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on use of police powers, as part of the 'Police Powers and Procedures' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police powers and procedures England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales-statistics)

However, data is not collected on warrants under the Theft Act 1968.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Neil O'Brien: [3955]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2023 to Question 2433 on Undocumented Migrants: English Channel, how many and what proportion of irregular migrants who arrived in small boats since 2018 are (a) still and (b) no longer in the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes statistics on small boat arrivals to the UK in the '[Irregular migration to the UK statistics](#)' release. Data on whether arrivals are still in the UK or have left the UK is not published but some of the data in the '[Irregular Migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)' may provide an indication of these:

- Data on the number of arrivals is available in table Irr_D01.
- Data on initial decisions from asylum applications of small boat arrivals by asylum case outcome is available in table Irr_D03.
- Data on outcomes from NRM referrals of small boat arrivals by NRM case outcome is available in table Irr_D05.

The Home Office also publishes statistics on the number of returns from the UK in table Ret_D01 of the '[Returns detailed datasets](#)', as part of the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. However, this data includes all returns, not just returns of small boat arrivals.

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

■ Wholesale Trade: Crime

Vicky Foxcroft:

[3300]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will hold discussions with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors on trends in the level of crime affecting the wholesale sector.

Chris Philp:

The Government is concerned about recent increases in crime affecting the retail and wholesale sector, including organised theft. We take this very seriously and are committed to tackling it.

I recently met the Federation of Wholesale Distributors, as part of a meeting with senior policing leads and representatives of the retail sector, to discuss shoplifting and retail crime and action we have taken.. Home Office officials are also taking forward further discussions with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors about the crime affecting them specifically.

On the 23 October, the National Police Chiefs Council published a Retail Crime Action Plan, which includes a commitment to prioritise police attendance at the scene where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured and can only be done by police personnel. Additionally, where CCTV or other digital images are secured, police will run this through the Police National Database using facial recognition technology to further aid efforts to identify prolific offenders or potentially dangerous individuals.

The 23 October also saw the launch of Pegasus, a unique private-public partnership that will radically improve the way retailers are able to share intelligence with policing, to better understand the tactics used by organised retail crime gangs and identify more offenders. This will include development of a new information sharing platform and training for retailers.

JUSTICE

■ Homicide: Offenders

Julie Elliott:

[3817]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the number of offenders who were subsequently convicted of murder in each year between 2010 and 2015, broken down by the type of index sentence originally given.

Edward Argar:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave on Monday 27 November to Question 2868: [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#).

■ Marriage**Derek Thomas:** [\[3526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his Department's timetable is for publishing an interim response to the report published by the Law Commission entitled Celebrating Marriage: A New Weddings Law.

Mike Freer:

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

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

■ Prisons: Overcrowding**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[3848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times a police cell was used to house an inmate as part of Operation Safeguard in (a) October 2023 and (b) November 2023.

Edward Argar:

a) A police cell was used as part of operation safeguard 219 times in October 2023

b) A police cell was used as part of operation safeguard 1 time in November 2023 before the full deactivation of Operation Safeguard in that month.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[3849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2023 to Question 2339 on Prisons: Overcrowding, how much funding was allocated per police force for the use of police cells under Operation Safeguard between January and November 2023.

Edward Argar:

Operation Safeguard is a contingency measure that provides additional headroom for use if prisoners cannot be accepted from the courts or police custody. It is a temporary measure to provide a short-term solution. When Operation Safeguard is active, tactical and operational governance reviews take place at regular intervals, as agreed with police partners.

There are no additional costs to the taxpayer and any spend under Operation Safeguard comes from within existing departmental budgets. Every aspect of Operation Safeguard – including compensation for cells – is based on agreements between HMPPS, the police and the Home Office. Spend is recorded on a cost-recovery basis.

Operation Safeguard costs between February 2023 and November 2023 are provided below. Costs are estimated for November.

FORCE	TOTAL
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	£ 368,239
Bedfordshire Police	£ 545,788
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	£ 528,753
Cheshire Constabulary	£ 1,802,647
City Of London Police	£ 225,341
Cleveland Police	£ 876,582
Cumbria Constabulary	£ 517,537
Derbyshire Constabulary	£ 1,263,353
Devon & Cornwall Police	£ 3,558
Dorset Police	£ -
Durham Constabulary	£ -
Dyfed-Powys Police	£ 519,098
Essex Police	£ 635,564
Gloucestershire Constabulary	£ 1,461,935
Greater Manchester Police	£ 1,688,173
Gwent Police	£ 268,352
Hampshire Constabulary	£ 634,727
Hertfordshire Constabulary	£ 492,629
Humberside Police	£ 912,291
Kent Police	£ 2,200,016
Lancashire Constabulary	£ 1,086,436
Leicestershire Police	£ 524,547
Lincolnshire Police	£ 302,002
Merseyside Police	£ 577,703
Metropolitan Police Service	£ 2,742,188
Norfolk Constabulary	£ 987,331

FORCE	TOTAL
North Wales Police	£ 930,918
North Yorkshire Police	£ 1,054,348
Northamptonshire Police	£ 1,167,120
Northumbria Police	£ 2,554,921
Nottinghamshire Police	£ 2,350,567
South Wales Police	£ 1,135,853
South Yorkshire Police	£ 1,107,699
Staffordshire Police	£ 1,650,935
Suffolk Constabulary	£ -
Surrey Police	£ 894,621
Sussex Police	£ 827,290
Thames Valley Police	£ 1,610,893
Warwickshire Police	£ 1,017,467
West Mercia Police	£ 2,023,646
West Midlands Police	£ 8,453,181
West Yorkshire Police	£ 1,763,737
Wiltshire Police	£ -
Central Silver Team	£ 205,101
TOTAL	£ 49,913,088

Ruth Cadbury: [\[3850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether Operation Safeguard is active.

Edward Argar:
Operation Safeguard is not currently active.

■ **Prisons: Pigeons**

Julie Elliott: [\[3819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the number of pigeon infestations in the prison estate.

Edward Argar:

HM Prison and Probation Service takes all reasonable steps to manage waste appropriately at prison sites to reduce the likelihood of infestation. Routine planned pest control regimes are in place, facilitated by the Facilities Management providers as part of their core service. In addition to this, reactive pest control visits are undertaken as required.

■ Rape: Convictions**Jim Shannon:**[\[3225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to increase conviction rates for rape.

Laura Farris:

The Government does not seek to influence the outcome of trial processes, which are underpinned by judicial independence and the right to a fair trial. Instead, through our Rape Review Action Plan, we are delivering a programme of work to significantly increase the number of adult rape cases reaching court.

We have already exceeded each of our ambitions to return the number of adult rape cases referred by the police, charged by the CPS and reaching court to 2016 levels ahead of schedule, with the number of adult rape cases reaching court now 13% higher than in 2016. In addition, the latest data shows that prosecutions and convictions for adult rape have increased on the previous year, with prosecutions volumes now higher than they were in 2010, when we came into Government.

But we are determined to go further. We continue to deliver a range of actions that will allow us to go further in increasing the number of adult rape cases reaching court.

This includes:

- Through Operation Soteria, we are transforming the way that the police investigate an CPS prosecute adult rape, focusing on suspect behaviour over victim credibility through our new, transformative National Operating Models.
- Having recruited 20,000 new police officers, bringing the total number to a record peak, we will train over 2,000 officers to become specialist rape investigators by April 2024, making sure the police have the skills and resources to deal with these complex cases.
- We are quadrupling victims funding by 2024/25, up from £41 million in 2009/10, which will enable us to increase the number of Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Advisors by 300 to over 1,000 – a 43% increase by 2024/5.
- Our national rollout of pre-recorded cross examination for victims of sexual and modern slavery offences is being used in over 150 cases per month, sparing victims from the glare of court and ensuring they can give their best evidence.
- And to ensure we reduce victim attrition, we have made great strides in tackling the intrusive investigation process. This includes our commitment to no adult rape victim being left without a phone for more than 24 hours, as well as legislating to

ensure that police requests for Third Party Materials are only made by the police when it is necessary and proportionate to do so.

■ Theft

Mr David Davis:

[3699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of time has been between (a) an application for a warrant and (b) a hearing to decide the issuing of that warrant under section 26 of the Theft Act 1968 in each of the last five calendar years.

Mike Freer:

This information is not collected or collated. The procedure for applying for warrants is designed to provide timely access to the courts as required by applicant law enforcement agencies.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Public Expenditure

Liam Byrne:

[3574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which spending programmes their Department devolves for administration to (a) local government in England and (b) other local spending bodies; and what the budget is of each such programme for each year for which budgets are agreed.

Jacob Young:

Further to the announcement made at the [Autumn Statement](#), the Government has [confirmed](#) that trailblazer devolution deals in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands will introduce a single department-style funding settlement at the next Spending Review.

Details of major funding programmes, including those administered by local government or other local bodies, are available on Gov.uk.

■ Empty Property: North West

Sir George Howarth:

[3422]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using long-term empty properties to provide affordable homes in the North West.

Lee Rowley:

Local authorities already have powers and strong incentives to tackle empty homes. Through the New Homes Bonus, they receive the same level of reward for bringing an empty home back into use as building a new one.

■ First Time Buyers

Andrew Percy: [\[3181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help first-time home buyers with their deposits.

Andrew Percy: [\[3182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help home buyers purchase properties in areas of above average house price growth.

Lee Rowley:

This Government is committed to making homeownership a reality for as many households as possible.

We operate a range of schemes to support first-time buyers in purchasing properties, including First Homes, Shared Ownership, Right to Buy and the Mortgage Guarantee Scheme. Over 860,000 households have been helped to purchase a home since spring 2010 through Government-backed schemes. The Government also helps first-time buyers to save for a deposit through the Lifetime ISA.

We have also increased the level at which first-time buyers start paying Stamp Duty from £300,000 to £425,000. First-time buyers will be able to access the relief on property purchases up to £625,000, compared to £500,000 previously. This will apply until end March 2025.

■ Hedgehogs: Walls and Fences

Sir John Hayes: [\[3087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will have discussions with housing developers on (a) the use of hedgehog-friendly fencing with new-build housing and (b) other potential steps to support hedgehogs in the design of new-build housing.

Lee Rowley:

The Government strongly welcomes any action by individual developers who wish to provide facilities for hedgehog highways, and the benefits are set out in the Planning Practice Guidance on the Natural Environment.

■ Local Government

Tahir Ali: [\[3549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) inflation and (b) trends in the level of energy costs on services delivered by local authorities.

Simon Hoare:

The Government use a range of forecasts and indices to estimate demographic and unit cost pressures facing local government when determining the additional resource

required to fund the expenditure needs of local authorities. We ensure the assumptions underlying our modelling are robust by holding in-depth financial conversations with local authorities and regular conversations with treasurer societies.

As a demonstration of Governments recognition of the additional pressures facing councils in 2023/24, the final Local Government Finance Settlement made available up to £59.7 billion for local government in England, an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £5.1 billion or 9.4% in cash terms on 2022/23.

■ **Local Government Finance: Pilot Schemes**

Angela Rayner: [\[3844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Simplification Pathfinder Pilot: technical guidance, published on 31 July 2023, when he plans to implement the funding simplification doctrine.

Jacob Young:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

■ **Local Government: Staff**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[3842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what information his Department holds on the amount of money local authorities spent on employing political assistants in the financial years (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23.

Simon Hoare:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **MSG Sphere**

Julian Knight: [\[3254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of granting planning permission to the MSG Sphere in Stratford on economic growth in (a) east London and (b) the UK.

Lee Rowley:

Because of the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in the planning system, I cannot comment about the merits of this particular planning application.

■ **Water Supply: Standards**

Jeremy Quin: [\[3872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the mandatory national water standard of 125 litres per person per day for new homes, which local authorities have utilised the provision allowing 110 litres per person per day

for new homes in water-stressed areas; and which body's authority is required for permission to be granted for that lower level of 110 litres to be used.

Jeremy Quin:

[\[3873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's Written Statement entitled Planning Update, published on 25 March 2015, UIN HCWS488, whether it remains his Department's policy that local planning authorities should not set in their emerging Local Plans any additional technical standards or requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings.

Jeremy Quin:

[\[3874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance his Department provides on what (a) enforcement and (b) monitoring powers local authorities hold when they require target water utilisation rates to be met for properties that are retrofitted.

Lee Rowley:

Under Building Regulations, requirements for water efficiency in new dwellings set maximum consumption rates of 125 litres per person per day. A more stringent optional technical standard for new dwellings sets a maximum consumption of 110 litres per person per day, which can be set out in local plans as a policy expectation (and secured by planning condition) where there is evidence this is needed. Data on the number of authorities which have utilised the provision allowing 110 litres per person per day for new homes in water-stressed areas is not held centrally. A variation, allowing the lower ceiling of 110l/p/d to be used, could be proposed by a Local Planning Authority as part of its local plan, which would then be tested during an Inspector's examination of local plans. Local authorities can prosecute and fine a builder, installer and contractor for non-adherence to Building Regulations, at the point of delivery, including by removing the work or transferring it to the local authority.

The Government is aware of issues relating to the water efficiency standards required of new developments and the challenges posed to developers and local planning authorities. The Government has committed to a legally binding water demand target to reduce demand by 20% by 2038. Defra wrote to local authorities last year to encourage them to implement the optional technical standard of 110 litres per person per day and published 'water positive' guidance for developers that supports tighter efficiency. We are working with Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency to deliver commitments in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 which include reviewing water efficiency, water reuse and drainage standards set out in Building Regulations and which will facilitate future housing delivery. We will consider a new standard for new homes in England of 105 litres per person per day and 100 litres per person per day where there is a clear local need, such as in areas of serious water stress.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Expenditure****Liam Byrne:****[3577]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which spending programmes their Department devolves for administration to (a) local government in England and (b) other local spending bodies; and what the budget is of each such programme for each year for which budgets are agreed.

Andrew Griffith:

The government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement. At Spring Budget, the government announced the trailblazer devolution deals with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and West Midlands Combined Authorities (WMCA), which included a commitment to introduce single funding settlements at the next Spending Review for these MCAs. At Autumn Statement, the government published a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GMCA and WMCA, setting out how the single settlements will work. The government also announced an ambitious new 'level 4' of the devolution framework, including a single transport funding settlement for eligible institutions, and a 'consolidated' pot at the next multi-year SR covering two DLUHC investment themes – local growth and place, and housing and regeneration. Following successful delivery of the 'consolidated' pot, and learning from the trailblazers, Level 4 institutions will then become eligible to receive a single settlement from the subsequent multi-year Spending Review.

Details of major funding programmes, including those administered by local government or other local bodies, are available on gov.uk.

DSIT's £100 million Innovation Accelerators programme is accelerating the growth of three high-potential innovation clusters in Glasgow, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands.

The programme is pioneering a new model of R&D decision-making that empowers local leaders to harness innovation in support of regional economic growth.

Partnerships of local government, business and R&D institutions in the three city regions led on selecting 26 projects for funding, working closely with Innovate UK.

DSIT also provides grant funding to local authorities for telecoms R&D projects through its Future Networks Programme.

■ Francis Crick Institute: Finance**Chi Onwurah:****[3806]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much from the public purse the Government has provided to the Francis Crick Institute to support the institute's commercialisation office since the institute was founded.

Andrew Griffith:

The Francis Crick Institute was founded in 2015 by UK Research and Innovation's Medical Research Council (MRC), Cancer Research UK, and the Wellcome Trust, with university partners. In 2021-22 the Crick was provided with a 7 year settlement of £1 billion in core funding by its three founding members, £406 million of which (41%) came from MRC. Part of this funding is used to employ Crick staff involved in commercialisation activities.

Smart Devices: China**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[3277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the regulatory framework for Chinese-made cellular internet of things modules.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is monitoring the security threats unique to cellular internet-of-things modules. We have already taken action to ensure that emerging security threats relating to consumer IoT products can be addressed through the security regime established by the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022. We will introduce further security requirements using the powers in this Act if necessitated by the evolving threat landscape. The Integrated Review Refresh, published in March 2023, highlighted the challenge posed by China. The Government is updating the UK's approach to China to keep pace with the evolving challenge it poses to the international order.

Space**Chi Onwurah:**[\[3812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the National Space Strategy published on 27 September 2021, what progress she has made on working with the devolved administrations to partner with local (a) business, (b) industry and (c) academic organisations to grow their space sectors.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is delivering on its commitment to build a whole-UK space ecosystem by working with businesses, academia and Devolved Administrations.

The UK Space Agency has supported each nation to establish Space Clusters to grow their local space sectors, and works collaboratively with local partners to deliver its major funding programmes and events. This includes the government's Spaceflight programme, and hosting roadshows, workshops, and the regional ESA Business Support Ambassadors.

This year UKSA has funded over £10 million through the Space Clusters Infrastructure Fund to companies in Wales and Scotland, and over £1 million to strengthen the Northern Ireland Space Cluster.

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: ICT**

Matt Rodda: [\[3667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much their Department spent on (a) current and (b) legacy IT infrastructure (i) in total and (ii) purchased in 2013 or earlier in each of the last three years.

Matt Rodda: [\[3668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, with reference to the guidance by the Central Digital and Data Office entitled Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published on 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by their Department.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scotland Office uses the information technology system provided and operated by the Cabinet Office, which has responsibility for all hardware and software procurement, administration, support maintenance, security, and integrity of the system.

Queries regarding the information technology system should be directed to the Cabinet Office.

■ Scotland Office: Public Expenditure

Liam Byrne: [\[3590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, which spending programmes their Department devolves for administration to (a) local government in England and (b) other local spending bodies; and what the budget is of each such programme for each year for which budgets are agreed.

Mr Alister Jack:

None. The Scotland Office does not devolve any spending to England.

The government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement. At Spring Budget, the government announced the trailblazer devolution deals with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and West Midlands Combined Authorities (WMCA), which included a commitment to introduce single funding settlements at the next Spending Review for these MCAs. At Autumn Statement, the government published a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GMCA and WMCA, setting out how the single settlements will work. The government also announced an ambitious new 'level 4' of the devolution framework, including a single transport funding settlement for eligible institutions, and a 'consolidated' pot at the next multi-year SR covering two DLUHC investment themes – local growth and place, and housing and regeneration. Following successful delivery of the 'consolidated' pot, and

learning from the trailblazers, Level 4 institutions will then become eligible to receive a single settlement from the subsequent multi-year Spending Review. Details of major funding programmes, including those administered by local government or other local bodies, are available on gov.uk.

TRANSPORT

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Members

Julian Knight:

[\[3489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many enquiries were submitted to the DVLA by Rt hon. and hon. Members in September 2023.

Guy Opperman:

The table below shows correspondence from Rt Hon and hon Members from March to September 2023.

Direct correspondence from MPs Telephone enquiries from MPs

March 2023 440 106

April 2023 349 64

May 2023 389 89

June 2023 391 86

July 2023 317 73

August 2023 347 65

September 2023 348 58

■ Electric Vehicles

Bill Esterson:

[\[3781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the delay in the phase out of the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles from 2030 to 2035 on (a) consumer uptake of electric vehicles and (b) inward investment into the electric vehicle industry.

Anthony Browne:

The Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEV) mandate will support the delivery of the 2035 phase out dates and remains one of the most ambitious regulatory frameworks in the world. It will secure adequate supply of ZEVs to support continued consumer uptake of these vehicles.

The ZEV mandate also provides long term policy certainty to industry, generating inward investment in the automotive and chargepoint sectors. This is demonstrated in the scale of investment from the private sector. Over the last few years there has been over £6 billion private investment in the electric vehicle industry, including from

Tata, BMW, Stellantis and Nissan. In addition the UK chargepoint industry has committed £6 billion in the development and operation of chargepoints before 2030.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Bill Esterson: [\[3780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the delay in implementing the Rapid Charging Fund on (a) demand for electric vehicles and (b) inward investment into the electric vehicle industry.

Anthony Browne:

The Rapid Charging Fund (RCF) is a complex long-term project, requiring new approaches to enable substantial investments from government and industry to future-proof key locations. Testing with stakeholders, prior to opening the fund, has benefitted the design and delivery arrangements.

The RCF will help ensure that the private sector can continue to expand the charging network and future-proof electricity network capacity 10 years ahead to a minimum of 2035, with a stretch target of 2050.

■ Local Transport Plans

Rachael Maskell: [\[3867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to help ensure national oversight of new Local Transport Plans to ensure that they are meeting the (a) access and (b) environmental requirements of a more accessible integrated transport system.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Transport is considering the need for guidance to local authorities on this and other matters in the light of the Prime Minister's Network North announcement in October, which represents a significant change in the Government's funding of local transport schemes. Local authorities are already required under the Public Sector Equality Duty to consider the impacts of their plans and policies on those with protected characteristics. The Department's 'Inclusive Mobility' guidance, published on GOV.UK, provides advice and best practice to them on the development of accessible transport and pedestrian environments.

■ Motor Vehicles: Insurance

Navendu Mishra: [\[3992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to tackle levels of higher car insurance premiums in areas with a large proportion of low income households.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is determined that insurers should treat customers fairly and firms are required to do so under Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules.

Department for Transport officials regularly liaise with representatives of the motor insurance industry and discuss issues as they arise. However, it is the responsibility of individual motor insurers to set their premiums and the terms and conditions of their policies, and the Government does not intervene or seek to control the market.

■ **Public Transport: North of England**

Ashley Dalton:

[4021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria his Department plans to use when allocating the new £2.5 billion fund for local transport across all areas in the North; and what his planned timetable is for announcing those funding decisions.

Guy Opperman:

Since the Government announced Network North on 4 October, the Department has been working closely with delivery partners to establish and progress plans for delivery. Announcements on the progress of business cases and delivery will be made in due course.

The Department will announce further details on the criteria for the allocation of the new £2.5 billion fund for local transport across all areas in the North and the timetable for announcing funding decisions in due course.

■ **Roads: Cumberland**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[4009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effectiveness of Cumberland Council's road safety policies on roads on which (a) major accidents and (b) fatalities have taken place.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Transport takes road safety for all road users seriously. The Department's road safety flagship project, the Safer Roads Fund, focuses on treating the highest risk A road sections. To date £147.5m has been invested in helping local authorities, alongside the Road Safety Foundation, improve the safety of England's most high risk A roads.

Cumbria County Council was awarded £1.9m in 2018/19 and £7.4m in 2020/21 from the Safer Roads Fund for improvements to the A684 and A592. The Department assesses the plans submitted for this funding and monitors progress on implementation for those that have been allocated Safer Roads Funding. However, the Department has not otherwise made a specific assessment of the council's road safety policies because the local council has responsibility for making decisions about local roads, based on its local knowledge and taking into account local needs.

■ Roads: Midlands**Helen Morgan:** [\[4015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 20 November 2023 entitled Network North: Highways maintenance funding increase, HCWS46, how the £2.2 billion of highways maintenance funding for the Midlands will be spent in each constituency.

Guy Opperman:

On 4 October 2023, the Government announced £8.3 billion of additional highways maintenance funding over the period 2023 to 2024 and the next 10 years for local road resurfacing and wider maintenance activity on the local highway network. This consists of £2.2 billion for Local Authorities in the West Midlands and East Midlands. Local Authorities will decide where and how this money is spent.

All allocations are available online.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**Bill Esterson:** [\[3782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to allocate further funding for the repair of potholes.

Bill Esterson: [\[3783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of road conditions on motorists.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Transport works with local highway authorities and with National Highways to assess road surface condition across England annually. Local highway authorities undertake automated road condition surveys on their classified road networks, and their surveys identify road defects and provide an overall score of road condition. The latest data was published on gov.uk on 23 November.

As part of the Government's Network North plan, local highway authorities across England are set to benefit from the biggest ever increase in funding for local highway networks. The details of this £8.3 billion funding increase were set out in the Secretary of State's Written Ministerial Statement of 20 November, and in his letter to Parliamentary colleagues.

Ashley Dalton: [\[4022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to help reduce the number of potholes (a) nationally and (b) in West Lancashire constituency.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is providing Lancashire County Council with a total of over £37.5 million of highway maintenance funding this financial year. This includes a £5.1 million uplift from the additional £200 million announced at Budget 2023, and a £3.6 million uplift from the additional £150 million Network North funding announced on 4

October. Through the Network North funding, Lancashire County Council will receive a minimum additional uplift in road maintenance funding between 2023-24 and 2033-34 of £244.5 million. It is up to Lancashire County Council to determine how best to use this funding to fulfil its statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.

■ Roads: Westmorland and Furness

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[4010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effectiveness of Westmorland and Furness Council's road safety policies on roads on which (a) major accidents and (b) fatalities have taken place.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Transport takes road safety for all road users seriously. The Department's road safety flagship project, the Safer Roads Fund focuses on treating the highest risk A road sections. To date £147.5m has been invested in helping local authorities, alongside the Road Safety Foundation, improve the safety of England's most high risk 'A roads.

Cumbria County Council was awarded £1.9m in 2018/19 and £7.4m in 2020/21 from the Safer Roads Fund for improvements to the A684 and A592. The Department assesses the plans submitted for this funding and monitors progress on implementation for those that have been allocated Safer Roads Funding. However, the Department has not otherwise made a specific assessment of the council's road safety policies because the local council has responsibility for making decisions about local roads, based on its local knowledge and taking into account local needs.

TREASURY

■ Bank Services: Digital Assets

Alun Cairns:

[\[3795\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance to banks on providing access to bank accounts for (a) crypto and (b) digital asset businesses in the UK.

Bim Afolami:

The Government recognises the hardship businesses face when they experience problems with banking and takes this issue very seriously.

That is why the Chancellor asked the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to help us collect evidence to understand where account closures or refusals are happening and why.

The FCA's interim report ("UK Payment Accounts: Access and Closures") was published on 19 September 2023, and it is continuing to work with firms to explore this issue.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Cost of Living Payments**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[3419\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will expand the eligibility criteria for the £300 cost of living payments to include households in receipt of contribution-based or new style Employment Support Allowance.

Fabian Hamilton: [\[3420\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing an additional Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 to people in receipt non means-tested benefits.

Laura Trott:

Disability cost of living payments are a matter for DWP.

■ Food Banks: Grants**Rachael Maskell:** [\[3518\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing direct grants to food banks.

Laura Trott:

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Government does not have any role in their operation.

■ High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge**Martyn Day:** [\[3634\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2023 to Question 543 on High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge, how many families were impacted by the High Income Child Benefit Charge in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Martyn Day: [\[3635\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the income thresholds for payment of the High Income Child Benefit Charge.

Nigel Huddleston:

The High Income Child Benefit Charge is currently deemed to be the best mechanism to target Child Benefit expenditure. The present arrangements mean that the Government supports the majority of families, whilst helping to ensure the fiscal position remains sustainable.

The Adjusted Net Income (ANI) threshold for HICBC affects taxpayers who are generally on comparatively high incomes, and most families are unaffected. Raising the threshold would come at a significant cost to the Government at a time when support is needed for vital public services and to support the most vulnerable.

HMRC publishes statistics on the number of Child Benefit claimants, including the number impacted by HICBC. These can be accessed at the link here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-benefit-statistics-annual-release-august-2022>

Mr Gregory Campbell: **[3741]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average income was of families paying the High Income Child Benefit Charge in 2020-21.

Nigel Huddleston:

The information is only available at disproportionate cost.

■ Income Tax

Dr Matthew Offord: **[3192]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an estimate of the number of people that will be paying a higher rate of tax in the next 12 months in the context of the freezing of the basic income tax threshold.

Nigel Huddleston:

This is available in tab C3A of the Chapter 3 charts and tables as part of the OBR's November 2023 Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO):

<https://obr.uk/download/november-2023-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-charts-and-tables-chapter-3/?tmstv=1700846571>

■ Income Tax: Tax Allowances

Rachael Maskell: **[3515]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the impact of freezing the personal allowance on the average amount of income tax paid in 2023-24.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to keeping taxes low to support working people to keep more of what they earn. However, the Government must also ensure the UK's economic stability and provide confidence in the commitment to fiscal discipline. The Chancellor has made clear that the UK's public finances must be on a sustainable path into the medium term.

Because of above inflation increases to thresholds since 2010, an average worker on £35,400 in 2023-24 will pay over £1,000 less in personal taxes than they otherwise would have done if thresholds had risen by inflation since 2010.

■ Poverty

Rachael Maskell: **[3517]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what definition his Department uses of (a) relative and (b) absolute poverty.

Laura Trott:

In line with government standards, HM Treasury commonly refers to the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) definitions of poverty as outlined in the Household Below Average Income (HBAI) publications.

Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:**[\[3558\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Barnett consequential are for Northern Ireland following the announcements for additional funding for (a) housing associations through the Affordable Homes Guarantee Scheme and (b) the third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund in the Autumn Statement 2023.

Laura Trott:

As a result of announcements made at Autumn Statement 2023, the Northern Ireland Executive will receive £185 million through the Barnett formula over 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The Barnett formula determines changes to overall devolved administration block grants and Barnett-based funding is not ringfenced in line with specific programmes.

Public Sector Debt: Australia and New Zealand**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[3156\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand on strategies for reducing national debt.

Laura Trott:

The government engages regularly with international partners to discuss a wide range of issues.

The government is committed to getting debt falling and the OBR's November forecast confirmed that underlying debt begins to fall from 2027-28.

The priority to reduce debt is aligned with the approach of other advanced economies.

Treasury: Public Expenditure**Liam Byrne:**[\[3585\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which spending programmes their Department devolves for administration to (a) local government in England and (b) other local spending bodies; and what the budget is of each such programme for each year for which budgets are agreed.

Laura Trott:

The government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

Details of major funding programmes, including the Local Government Finance Settlement and those administered by local government or other local bodies, are available on gov.uk.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Disability: Employment

Marsha De Cordova:

[3938]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to ensure that companies are upholding their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 on the implementation of reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

Stuart Andrew:

The Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled people access to goods and services and access and remain in employment, so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing the Equality Act and providing guidance on reasonable adjustments. For example, the EHRC provides a range of guidance for businesses on their legal duties to assistance dog owners:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/assistance-dogs-a-guide-for-all-businesses.pdf>

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/take-the-lead-welcoming-customers-with-assistance-dogs_0.pdf

The EHRC also provide further guidance on reasonable workplace adjustments:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/business/employing-people-workplace-adjustments>

Duties and protections under the Equality Act are ultimately enforceable through the courts, and anybody who thinks that they have been discriminated against - for example for being refused a job interview or where access to an assistance dog has been refused - can take legal action to seek to resolve the issue, at an employment tribunal (employment cases) or other civil court (non-employment cases).

A person who believes that they have experienced discrimination because of disability can take their case to a tribunal or court. Before doing so, they may wish to contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS), a Government-funded helpline, is the initial point of contact for anyone with discrimination concerns. The EASS provides free bespoke advice and in-depth support to individuals with discrimination concerns. The EASS also supports individuals to resolve issues using alternative informal dispute resolution and can advise you on what are the next steps to take when you feel you have been discriminated against. The EASS can also

advise people on their options and can be contacted through their website at www.equalityadvisoryservice.com, by telephone on 0808 800 0082 or text phone on 0808 800 0084.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Age Addition

Dan Carden: [\[3926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of the age additions to the State Pension.

Paul Maynard:

No such assessment has been made.

There is a range of support for pensioners aged over 80. These include Pension Credit which can top up a pensioner's income to a minimum of £201.05 a week for single pensioners and £306.85 for couples and provides a gateway to other benefits that help with rent, council tax reduction schemes, heating costs and, for the over 75s, a free television license. Households with people aged 80 and over receive a Winter Fuel Payment of £300 instead of the standard £200 for households with pensioners below that age. Additionally, in April 2023 the basic State Pension saw its biggest ever rise of 10.1% to £156.20 per week.

The age addition is not part of the new State Pension for those who reach State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Siobhan Baillie: [\[3556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how often the Health and Safety Executive reviews and updates the UK REACH Candidate List of substances of very high concern for authorisation; and what estimate he has made of when the next update of that list will be published.

Mims Davies:

Although the Health and Safety Executive annually reviews substances for potential inclusion in the UK REACH Candidate List of substances of very high concern for authorisation, it is not anticipating an update to the list before 2025.

■ Dental Services

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[3677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 3.25 of the Autumn Statement 2023, CP 977, whether additional benefits includes NHS dental provision.

Jo Churchill:

Claimants in receipt of Universal Credit can access passported benefits, such as help to pay for NHS dental treatment and NHS prescriptions.

As part of the Autumn Statement, we announced the intention to close the claim of those who have been disengaged for 6-months or more, where they are in receipt of a nil Universal Credit award following a sanction decision. If entitlement to passported benefits is reliant solely on a Universal Credit claim to establish eligibility, that eligibility will cease if the Universal Credit claim is closed. Claimants may however still be entitled to access passported benefits through other means.

Where a claimant has failed to comply with a mandatory work-related requirement, they have the opportunity to provide good reason before a sanction decision is made. Claimants receive an automated UC journal message which: informs them of the failure, prompts them to provide a reason, and encourages them to re-engage. Additionally, there is a digital nudge at 6 weeks following the decision where the claimant remains disengaged. Where disengaged continues, the claimant will receive a further notification at month 5 informing them of the claim closure intention and prompting them to re-engage or to inform us of any new circumstances which may impact this.

We will not be closing the claims of anyone with a known vulnerability or the claim of those in receipt of other Universal Credit elements, such as the housing, child, or disability element.

■ **Disability: Telephone Services**

Mr Gregory Campbell:[\[3744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many calls were received by his Department's disability service centre's enquiry lines in each of the last two years.

Tom Pursglove:

The table below shows data for Calls Offered to Agent Queue (number of calls received) for Disability Services, for each of the last two complete reporting years, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

REPORTING YEAR	DIRECTORATE	CALLS OFFERED TO AGENT QUEUE
2021-2022	Disability Services	7,788,882
2022-2023	Disability Services	8,415,485
Total		16,204,367

Please note this information is derived from the Department's management information designed solely for the purpose of helping the Department to manage its business. As such, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks

applied to our published official statistics. As DWP holds the information internally, we have released it. However, it is possible information held by DWP may change due to operational reasons and we recommend that caution be applied when using it.

■ Employment: Offenders

Sir John Hayes:

[3088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will hold discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) HM Prison and Probation Service on steps to help increase the number of ex offenders in employment.

Mims Davies:

The proportion of prison leavers in employment six months after their release has more than doubled in the two years to March 2023.

Ministers and officials across government already work together on measures to support ex-offenders into work and reduce reoffending. A [National Partnership Agreement](#) between Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service, and Department for Work and Pensions sets out how we jointly support prisoners in custody to prepare for employment on release and ensure prison leavers continue to access support in the community to obtain work.

Prison Employment Hubs have increased in number providing a space where offenders can get much needed support into work. DWP provides around 200 Prison Work Coaches who work alongside Prison Employment Leads and other prison services to provide employment and training support before release. The New Futures Network and DWP's National Employment and Partnership Team broker relationships with employers helping them understand the advantages to their business of employing ex-offenders. The Government has also recently changed rehabilitation periods to help reduce barriers to employment for ex-offenders.

■ Employment: Pensioners

Jim Shannon:

[3227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to support people who wish to continue working over state pension age.

Jo Churchill:

Since the abolishment of the Default Retirement Age, most people can work for as long as they want and are able to. We know that age diversity within a workforce is the right thing and can bring benefits to business. Therefore, we are working across government, with employers, and with the Business Champion for Older Workers, Andy Briggs, to advocate for more diverse, inclusive and multigenerational workforces.

In addition, the DWP has signed the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, a nationwide programme run by the Centre for Ageing Better to promote age inclusive working practices. The Help to Grow site on gov.uk also provides advice and guidance to businesses on employing older workers.

The government wants to encourage people to plan more actively for later life and provide support to help them make important decisions about extending their working lives and reducing the risk of pensioner poverty. An enhanced digital Mid-life MOT offer went live on 5th July 2023 to ensure more people can access targeted online guidance regarding their finances, health and career.

At Spring Budget 2023, the Government also announced that it would make changes to the limits on tax-relieved pension savings, abolishing the lifetime allowance and increasing the annual allowance from £40,000 to £60,000. These changes will help incentivise highly skilled and highly experienced individuals at the top of their professions to remain in the labour market which will help grow the economy while increasing the knowledge and experience of the UK's labour force.

The New State Pension was introduced in April 2016 with the aim of providing a clearer, sustainable foundation for private saving. The full rate of £203.85 per week (2023/24) was set above the Standard Minimum Guarantee level of Pension Credit, removing disincentives to working beyond State Pension Age. In addition, once over State Pension Age, people are exempt from paying National Insurance contributions if they carry on working as an employee.

■ **Food Banks: Warwick and Leamington**

Matt Western: [3895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Warwick and Leamington constituency used a foodbank in October (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

Matt Western: [3909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the number of people in work in Warwick and Leamington constituency who use a foodbank once a month or more.

Mims Davies:

This government takes the issue of food security very seriously and is committed to understanding and addressing food poverty which is why we have published official estimates of foodbank use for the first time in March 2023. The latest available National statistics on both food security and food bank use covering 2021/22 are available [here](#). Statistics are not available at the constituency level.

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and HM Government does not have any role in their operation. As such, data on trends in the distribution of food parcels in the Warwick and Leamington constituency is not available.

■ **Household Support Fund**

Dan Carden: [3648]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's oral answer of 22 November 2023, Official Report column 348, when he

plans to provide details of the (a) determination and (b) grant conditions of the household support fund.

Mims Davies:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ[3412](#).

■ **Jobcentres: Staff**

Alison McGovern:

[\[2865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether incentives are included as part of work coach performance management.

Jo Churchill:

Incentives for Work Coaches are not included as part of DWP's performance management approach, but good performance and achievements are recognised.

Within the Additional Jobcentre Support pilot we did include testing of incentives across 60 jobcentres. Phase 1 of this test concluded on 31 August 2023.

■ **Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 3.25 of the Autumn Statement 2023 on supporting the long-term unemployed into work, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of removing access to free prescriptions on levels of demand for acute care.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made as we are not removing access to free prescriptions.

In England, a broad range of NHS prescription charge exemptions are in place to help those with greatest need. Eligibility for these exemptions is dependent on whether people receive certain qualifying benefits, tax credits, or a war pension, whether they are pregnant or have recently had a baby, their age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education or have a qualifying medical condition.

If entitlement to passported benefits is reliant solely on a Universal Credit claim to establish eligibility, that eligibility will cease if the claim is closed. The claim closure measure will only impact claimants who have been disengaged for 6-months or more, and who are in receipt of nil benefit award following the application of a sanction. We will not be closing the claims of anyone who is in receipt of other UC elements, such as the housing, child, or disability elements.

The claims of those with limited capability for work or limited capability for work-related activity are not subject to the conditionality and sanctions regime.

Safeguards will be put in place to ensure that any claimant vulnerabilities are taken into consideration and impacted claimants may still be able to access financial support for NHS services through other means.

■ Universal Credit

Rachael Maskell: [\[3512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 3.25 of the Autumn Statement 2023, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of removing parents' entitlement to benefits on their children.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 3.25 of the Autumn Statement 2023, whether his Department is taking steps to inform social services before a parent loses their entitlement to Universal Credit.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 3.25 of the Autumn Statement 2023, if he will take steps to ensure that the children of parents who lose their entitlement to Universal Credit will not be taken into care.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the Autumn Statement, we announced the intention to close the claim of those who have been disengaged for 6-months or more, where they are in receipt of a nil Universal Credit award following a sanction decision.

We will not be closing the claims of anyone who is in receipt of other Universal Credit elements, such as the child, housing, or disability element and no assessment has been made of the potential impact of removing a parents' entitlement to benefits on their children.

Where entitlement to passported benefits, such as help to pay for NHS prescriptions, is reliant solely on a Universal Credit claim to establish eligibility, that eligibility will cease if the Universal Credit claim is closed. Claimants may still be entitled to access passported benefits through other means.

Safeguards will be put in place to ensure that any claimant vulnerabilities are taken into consideration and impacted claimants may still be able to access financial support for NHS services through other means.

■ Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance: Employment Schemes

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy that existing claimants are not included in further potential reviews into eligibility for the (a) Limited Capability for Work and Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity categories within Universal Credit and (b) the Work-Related Activity Group and Support Group within Employment and Support Allowance.

Tom Pursglove:

As we have set out clearly in the Government response to the Work Capability Assessment: Activities and Descriptors Consultation (CP 973), through a new 'Chance to Work Guarantee', in 2025 we will effectively abolish the WCA for most

existing Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) claimants who are not expected to look for, or prepare for, work. This will remove the fear of reassessments and give people the confidence to try work, while providing continuity of service for vulnerable claimants.

For claimants in the LCWRA Group in Universal Credit (UC) and the Support Group in Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), reassessments will only take place under very limited circumstances, including:

- When a claimant reports a change of circumstances in their health condition;
- If a claimant has been awarded LCWRA for pregnancy risk, or cancer treatment where the prognosis for recovery is expected to be short-term;
- If a claimant has been declared as having LCWRA under the new risk provisions; and
- In the case of suspected fraud.

Existing LCW claimants will be called for reassessment as normal depending on their circumstances, including their prognosis period and available capacity in the system.

■ Universal Credit: Childcare

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[3311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing future childcare costs to be met in advance through Universal Credit rather than being recovered retrospectively.

Jo Churchill:

The Government recognises that high childcare costs can affect parents' decisions to take up paid work or increase their working hours which is why on June 28, 2023, the Department started providing even more help with initial upfront childcare costs when parents move into work or increase their hours.

This means that a parent who needs this additional financial help can now be provided with funding towards both their first and second set of costs (or increased costs), upfront, thereby easing them into the UC childcare costs cycle.

■ Universal Credit: Selby and Ainsty

Keir Mather:

[\[3402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims were subject to deductions in the most recent month for which data is available in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

Jo Churchill:

In August 2023, 2,200 Universal Credit households in the Selby and Ainsty constituency had one or more deductions from their award.

Notes:

1. The number of claims for Selby and Ainsty are rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. Deductions include advance repayments, third party deductions and all other deductions, but exclude sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.
3. Household level figures have been provided as deductions are applied at the household level.
4. Data for August 2023 has been provided in line with the latest available UC Household Statistics.
5. Unknown parliamentary constituency accounts for 0.4% of all UC households.
6. Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.

■ War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Social Security Benefits

Ben Lake: [\[3914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of payments from the (a) War Pensions and (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are also in receipt of (i) Universal Credit, (ii) Child Tax Support, (iii) Income Support, (iv) Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, (v) Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, (vi) Working Tax Credit and (vii) Pension Credit.

Jo Churchill:

The requested information is not held by the department.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Terminal Illnesses

Claire Hanna: [\[3552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the criteria for winter fuel payments to include people with a terminal illness.

Paul Maynard:

Winter fuel payments are a transferred matter in Northern Ireland, although the Department for Communities there maintains parity with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Winter fuel payments are made to people who have reached State Pension age and meet the relevant residence criteria in the third week of September each year. There are no plans to change these eligibility criteria. This winter, as last, the payments include the Pensioner Cost of Living Payment of £300 on top of the usual rate of £200 for a pensioner household with someone aged under 80, and £300 for households with someone aged 80 or over.

More broadly, the Department is committed to supporting people with a terminal illness. The Special Rules for End of Life enable people with a terminal illness to get faster, easier access to certain benefits without needing to attend a medical

assessment or serve waiting periods; and in most cases, receive the highest rate of benefit.

For many years, the Special Rules for End of Life have applied to people who have six months or less to live, and now they have been changed so they apply to people who have 12 months or less to live. Changes to these rules means that thousands of people nearing the end of life will be able to claim fast-tracked financial support from the benefits system six months earlier than they were able to previously.

■ Work Capability Assessment

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his Department's response to the Work Capability Assessment: Activities and Descriptors Consultation, published in November 2023, what his planned timetable is for publishing an equality impact assessment on proposals for changes to the eligibility criteria for the (a) Limited Capability for Work and Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity categories within universal credit and (b) Work-Related Activity Group and Support Group within Employment Support Allowance.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will hold a new 12 week consultation on proposed changes to the Work Capability Assessment that (a) clearly set outs the potential impact of those changes on groups affected by those proposals and (b) is provided in a format that is accessible to those groups.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[3946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish his Department's (a) research and (b) analysis that informed the production of the Work Capability Assessment consultation paper.

Tom Pursglove:

We published our response to the consultation on changes to the Work Capability Assessment criteria on 22 November, having carefully considered feedback from disabled people, and people with health conditions, as well as the organisations that represent and support them.

The consultation was open from 5 September to 30 October 2023. This gave ample time for people to share their views. We undertook extensive engagement during the consultation period and received over 1,300 responses. We listened carefully to what people told us and took their views into account when deciding about which changes to take forward.

We also did a lot of work to make sure disabled people could share their views. We provided the consultation document in a range of accessible formats, including large print, Easy Read, Braille, Audio, BSL and hard copy versions. We ran a programme of in-person and virtual public events, so that people could share their views verbally

and offered a range of methods to enable people to respond in writing, including online, by email or by post.

We will publish an Impact Assessment in due course.

The OBR have said that they expect these changes to mean that 371,000 fewer people will be declared as having Limited Capability for Work Related Activity by 2028/29 than otherwise would be the case. HMT have published the impacts in their policy costing note that accompanies the Autumn Statement.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Online Advertising Taskforce Action Plan

Minister for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries (Sir John Whittingdale):
[\[HCWS81\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House that today 30 November we are publishing the Online Advertising Taskforce's Action Plan.

The Online Advertising Taskforce brings together representatives from Government and the online advertising sector to work in collaboration to address illegal harms and the protection of children in relation to online advertising. Its creation was announced in the Government's response to the Online Advertising Programme consultation, published in July, and the Taskforce held its first meeting later that month. It committed to agreeing upon and delivering a programme of work to help address illegal advertising and minimise children being served advertising for products and services illegal to sell to them ('in-scope harms'), in anticipation of regulation being introduced in due course.

The Action Plan we are publishing today brings together commitments from Government and industry that seek to drive progress against two objectives: improving the evidence about the in-scope harms, and expanding voluntary industry initiatives that seek or have the capacity to address them. This has been a collaborative and ambitious piece of work and we are grateful for the invaluable contribution of Taskforce members since the summer.

The Government has also been working with technology companies as part of its Online Fraud Charter, which will further drive action against fraud, including that which is perpetuated through online advertising, and which is also being published today. Through both programmes of work the government and online advertising companies will implement significant protections from fraud for everyone engaging in business and recreation online.

The Action Plan will be published on the Online Advertising Taskforce [GOV.UK page](#).

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ UK Priorities for COP28

Minister of State (Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero) (Graham Stuart):
[\[HCWS80\]](#)

The UK is committed to tackling climate change and restoring nature. We have reduced our emissions by more than any other major economy since 1990 and, going forward, have one of the most ambitious target for 2030. Our emissions are down 48% per cent compared to 1990 and we've grown the economy by 70% over the same period.

We brought the world together at the COP26 Glasgow Summit to speed up the global net zero transition, as well as brokering a historic deal to end deforestation and kickstart new green finance markets. However, limiting global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees will only be possible if countries around the world commit to join the UK on a net zero pathway. The science is clear that global emissions need to peak by 2025 and must be reduced by 43% in 2030 compared to 2019 in order to achieve this.

The upcoming 28th Conference of the Parties under the UNFCCC (COP28), to be hosted by the UAE in Dubai (30 November – 12 December), will mark an important moment to get to net zero. Amid record global temperatures, the first Global Stocktake of progress against the Paris Agreement will show that the world is currently off track and urgent action is needed to keep the 1.5 degree goal within reach. The world needs to take a hard look at what is working and where we are failing to deliver, focusing our resources on practical, deliverable solutions. This COP must deliver the framework and targets already agreed, including in Glasgow, and set out the long-term decisions that are needed to bring everyone with us, from rural communities to the countries most impacted by climate change.

The context is challenging, given the current geopolitical tension, conflict and macroeconomic environment where countries are battling inflation and debt. At the same time, the widespread impacts from increasing global temperatures have never been felt more, underscoring the need to deliver on our climate commitments and reduce emissions.

His Majesty The King will attend the Opening Ceremony of the World Climate Action Summit at COP28 at the invitation of the UAE and at the request of HMG, and will deliver an opening address. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Environment Secretary and other Ministers will attend the summit. I will lead the negotiations for the UK .

The Prime Minister's focus will be on forests, finance and net zero transitions. These are areas where the UK can lead global progress, building on our track record, and working with the UAE Presidency, other countries, business and civil society.

Overall at COP28 the UK wants to see progress in five priority areas:

1. New commitments and action to keep 1.5 alive. Coming out of the Global Stocktake, we need renewed leader-level political consensus and increased ambition to keep 1.5 in reach. We need commitment to peak global emissions by 2025 and clear guidance for the next round of NDCs. And we need a clear, forward-looking roadmap with global targets in key sectors and commitment to action including through the Breakthrough Agenda, on forests, and through the phasing out of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). Since 2010 the UK has seen nearly £200bn of public and private finance investment in low carbon energy sectors. We will use this domestic experience to spearhead efforts to accelerate decarbonisation of key sectors of the global economy.
1. A clean energy package with clear commitments to transition away from fossil fuels. This includes commitments to triple global renewables and double energy efficiency

by 2030, to phase out unabated fossil fuels - in line with the G7 commitment the UK helped to deliver earlier this year – and to end new unabated coal power and phase out coal power globally.

1. An outcome on finance that helps deliver the trillions needed to accelerate the transition. This includes reform of international financial institutions, delivery this year of the collective goal of \$100bn climate finance per year for developing economies, and progress on the post-2025 climate finance goal with contributions from a broader range of donors. Based on preliminary data, the OECD has stated that it is likely that the \$100bn goal was met in 2022. The UK will play its part. We are fully committed to delivering on our £11.6bn of international climate finance and we are a world leader in green finance. We will work with partners to realign financial flows with the Paris Agreement and Global Biodiversity Framework.
1. Progress on building resilience to climate impacts - demonstrating progress on the Glasgow commitment to double adaptation finance by 2025 and establishing an effective loss and damage fund to support countries that are particularly vulnerable. We are pleased that the loss and damage transitional committee, mandated by COP27, has put forward a recommendation on the fund. The UK was instrumental in securing that recommendation and we hope it will be agreed at COP28. We will continue to advocate for the priorities of the most vulnerable. I co-chaired a third Climate and Development Ministerial (C&DM) alongside the UAE, Malawi and Vanuatu at Pre-COP last month. This focussed on enhancing access and delivery of adaptation finance, the equitable delivery of high-quality grant-based finance and concessional finance.
1. Real progress towards protecting, restoring and sustainably managing nature, on land and in the ocean which is crucial to delivering on net zero and building resilience. We need COP28 to maintain momentum on the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at CBD COP15 last year, to make concrete progress on the historic agreement to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. We want to see forests prioritised in the Global Stocktake and to use the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership as the vehicle to drive accelerated delivery of the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on forests and land use. To date UK International Climate Finance has avoided over 410,000 hectares of ecosystem loss.

We will continue to deliver ambitious reductions, embracing innovation and green finance opportunities. The UK will go into COP28 with a strong record at home and internationally. We recently committed \$2bn to the Green Climate Fund second replenishment, the biggest single international funding commitment the UK has made to help tackle climate change, **and making us the top contributor cumulatively to the world's most prominent international climate fund.**

In his recent net zero speech, the Prime Minister set out the long-term decisions to enable a just transition to net zero, while maintaining public support. We are absolutely clear, net zero is the right thing to do for our long-term national security, economic prosperity and the future of our children.

All countries around the world need to do more to keep 1.5 alive. The UK is delivering significant progress, and following the clear framework and targets agreed at Glasgow COP, we saw 90% of global GDP committed to net zero. We must now drive progress and support other nations constituting 99% of emissions to grasp the benefits of green growth.

We will update the house in the usual way once negotiations have concluded.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Sudan update

Minister of State for Development and Africa (Mr Andrew Mitchell): [\[HCWS84\]](#)

I would like to update the House on the situation in Sudan since the outbreak of conflict on 15 April this year between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and the UK's efforts in support of the Sudanese people.

Violence continues across the country. The lack of humanitarian access and a disregard for civilian life is resulting in terrible suffering. The conflict has caused destruction on a massive scale as a result of the indiscriminate use of force by both sides, including shelling and air strikes in urban areas. Since 15 April, more than 6.3 million people have been displaced, including over 1.3 million people who have fled to neighbouring countries, seeking safety, protection and assistance. Twenty-five million people are in urgent need but constraints on humanitarian access mean insufficient aid is reaching them.

There is mounting evidence of abhorrent atrocities against civilians, in particular in Darfur. Women and girls are subject to rape and sexual violence. Houses are being burnt to the ground. People's livelihoods are being destroyed. These attacks have all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing and may amount to crimes against humanity.

Following the conclusion of the first round of Jeddah Talks that resumed on 26 October, the UK is continuing to support the mediation efforts of the US, Saudi Arabia, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union. I urge both warring parties to engage constructively with these talks to secure short-term ceasefires and improvements in humanitarian access.

But in the meantime, the suffering of the Sudanese people continues. There have been increasing reports from El Geneina and Ardamata in West Darfur of potentially ethnically-targeted violence against men and boys and alleged executions, including the murder of Masalit community leader, Al-Farsha Muhamed Arbab. These atrocities must end immediately, and those responsible must be held to account.

We are supporting the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR). CIR work to monitor atrocities in Sudan using satellite imagery to investigate attacks against civilians and infrastructure, and also to monitor hate speech and incitement of violence. This financial year, the UK has provided £600,000 to CIR for this project. Our partnership on this

innovative work is vital in documenting the ongoing atrocities, and preserving and sharing evidence, so that those committing these heinous crimes can be brought to justice.

In July, I announced a package of sanctions freezing the assets of three commercial entities linked to both SAF and RSF. We stand ready to take additional measures.

In the UN Security Council (UNSC), UN General Assembly and at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), we have consistently condemned the violence across Sudan. On 11 October, the HRC adopted the UK-led 'Sudan Core Group' (US, Germany, Norway, UK) resolution which creates an independent and international Fact-Finding Mission to investigate atrocities in Sudan and support future accountability efforts.

As part of our commitment to humanitarian assistance, I announced £21.7 million in humanitarian funding in May for those in need in Sudan, in addition to £5 million to help meet the urgent needs of refugees and returnees in South Sudan and Chad. UKAid is providing nutrition, safe drinking water, medical care and shelter, as well as supporting protection services including for those affected by gender-based violence. In November, the UK confirmed a further £14.3 million in humanitarian aid, bringing the total to £36 million for 2023-2024.

The UK, alongside Norway, jointly funded the Sudan Humanitarian Conference that took place in Cairo on 18 – 20 November; an event that brought together Sudanese grassroots organisations, NGOs and the international humanitarian system to develop coordination mechanisms to give a greater voice to Sudanese organisations in the humanitarian response.

We have also established a new British Office Sudan in Addis Ababa, until a British Embassy can be re-established in Sudan. This makes us the first western nation to set up an operational Office for Sudan in the region. The staff of the British Office Sudan in Ethiopia will continue to work to support our diplomatic and humanitarian aims to bring peace and stability to the people of Sudan, as well as continuing to assist in providing limited remote consular support to British nationals in Sudan. I would like to put on record my thanks to the Government of Ethiopia for enabling the setup of this Office.

The UK remains committed to supporting Sudanese civilians to chart their own future for their country. Neither of the warring parties should have any future role in power in a future democratic Sudan. I therefore warmly welcome the gathering of Sudanese civilian actors and stakeholders in Addis Ababa on 23 October as an important step towards the formation of an inclusive and representative pro-democracy civilian front.

The UK will continue to advocate for a ceasefire, safe and unfettered humanitarian access, an end to atrocities and a return to a civilian-led government that can deliver the peace and stability the Sudanese people deserve.

HOME OFFICE**■ Online Fraud Charter**

The Minister of State for Security (Tom Tugendhat):

[[HCWS82](#)]

Today, I am pleased to inform the House that we are publishing the Online Fraud Charter.

A key deliverable in the [Government's Fraud Strategy](#), the Online Fraud Charter contains a series of ambitious commitments from several of the largest tech companies in the world. These commitments reflect a landmark moment in our fight against fraud and will target some of the most harmful and pervasive frauds that occur online. This includes stronger action to make sure people are who they say they are, on marketplaces and on dating apps. It will ensure that signatory companies make fraud easier to report online. When content or users are found to be fraudulent, immediate and decisive enforcement action will be taken.

Further detail will be published online but the Charter will contain actions focussing on:

- Blocking frauds from occurring in the first place
- Improved reporting structures and faster takedowns of harmful content and users
- Making sure advertisers are who they say they are
- Greater collaboration with law enforcement and other partners to drive further intelligence sharing, transparency, public communications and horizon scanning.

Tech companies have made strong progress in the last several years in combatting fraud and, with the Online Safety Act in the process of coming fully into operation, change will be a statutory responsibility. However, those that have signed this charter have shown their willingness to work faster and in a more targeted fashion than regulation will require. I commend their constructive engagement and their ambition in agreeing to these commitments. I am pleased to see them taking responsibility to protect their users from fraud.

We are taking the fight to the fraudsters, targeting the criminals that try to exploit us when we are online. Today, my honourable friend the Minister for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries, has also announced the publication of the Online Advertising Taskforce Action Plan, which brings together initiatives from industry and government to tackle illegal online advertising and increase protections for children. Through both of today's announcements, the Government and industry will implement significant steps to make sure that the British public are protected online.

The Online Fraud Charter will be published on the [Joint Fraud Taskforce GOV.UK page](#).

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Elections Update****Minister for Local Government (Simon Hoare):**[\[HCWS83\]](#)**Evaluation of the Elections Act 2022**

The Government is committed to ensuring UK elections remain secure, fair, modern, and transparent. As part of this commitment, the Elections Act 2022 introduced new measures designed to increase the security and integrity of UK elections. Two of these measures, voter identification in Great Britain and enhanced support for disabled voters in polling stations, were delivered for the first time in polling stations at the May 2023 local council elections.

The Government is pleased with the introduction of voter identification in Great Britain, with data gathered in polling stations showing that 99.75% of voters were able to cast their vote successfully under the new measures. This smooth rollout is a testament to the skill and careful planning of local authorities and electoral administrators, without whom the realisation of these measures would not be possible. We thank them.

However, the Government is committed to understanding fully the impact of the Elections Act and to improve its implementation where necessary. It is committed in legislation to undertake an evaluation of the voter identification policy after its first implementation. To this end, the Government appointed external research agency IFF Research to evaluate the implementation of the Act, examining the impact of the voter identification and accessibility measures at the May 2023 local elections. The Government is also committed in legislation to conducting further evaluations at the next two UK Parliamentary general elections.

Today, I am pleased to share IFF Research's first evaluation report. This independent evaluation has used data gathered at polling stations, supplemented by public opinion survey results, the Electoral Commission's data and report on the May elections, surveys with the electoral sector and qualitative research to provide a full picture of the impact and implementation of the voter identification and accessibility measures. While providing further evidence of successful delivery, the report also makes a number of recommendations for both the Government and others including the Electoral Commission for ongoing improvements.

In addition to the government's evaluation, I have today published the government's response to the Electoral Commission's report on the May 23 polls. The government welcome the views of the Commission and has considered its recommendations carefully.

Implementing the Elections Act requires close partnership working between the Government, the Commission, the electoral sector, and their representative bodies. We look forward to continuing close engagement with all our partners as we implement the remaining measures from the Act and take forward any necessary adjustments in response to this evaluation.

Responding to the evaluation

The IFF evaluation makes an assessment of where adjustments may be made to delivery of the voter identification and accessibility measures that would improve the experience of both voters and electoral administrators. The Government is keen to support the diligent work of the Electoral Commission and other partners and we look forward to discussing these recommendations further.

These recommendations include: action that may be taken on training and guidance for polling station staff and electoral administrators on the reasoning behind which photographic identification documents are accepted in the polling station; how to apply the Electoral Commission's guidance for Returning Officers on supporting disabled voters to enable or make it easier for them to vote in polling stations; activity and communications to address any gaps in awareness or understanding across the whole electorate of the voter identification requirements; the availability of the Voter Authority Certificate; and the additional support and equipment available to disabled voters and more specifically to address this amongst groups where awareness is low; supporting electors who may struggle with the online application process to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate; and increasing the time available for processing Voter Authority Certificates ahead of a UK Parliamentary general election.

Many of these recommendations are, of course, in areas where the Government recognise it should and does not have a direct role, but in these and other aspects of delivery we remain keen to support the brilliant work of Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, their electoral services teams, the Electoral Commission, and all our other partners.

Other recommendations in the report are specific to supporting and strengthening future evaluations, for example by gathering more evidence from specific groups of interest, and these will be taken forward in future plans.

Ongoing evaluation

The Government is committed to maintaining the integrity of the ballot and ensuring that UK elections remain accessible to all. While the evaluation published today demonstrates the significant steps we are taking in achieving these aims, the Government will continue to learn from this and future evaluations and other sources of data. We look forward to further assessments which will be published in the future and the ongoing successful implementation of the Elections Act, ensuring the integrity and accessibility of our democracy now and into the future.

Copies of the *Electoral Integrity Programme Evaluation Report: Year 1* and the *Government's response to the Electoral Commission's Report on the May 2023 polls* will be placed in the House libraries.

Implementation of the Boundary Review

The Government's 2019 manifesto committed to ensuring updated and more equal parliamentary boundaries. These help to make sure that votes carry more equal weight in Parliament, across the whole United Kingdom. To this end, Parliament passed the

Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020, which provided for the number of constituencies in the UK to remain at 650 and for a boundary review to take place on the basis of this number of constituencies and to report before 1 July 2023.

The 2020 Act also provides for regular boundary reviews, which will ensure that the boundaries remain up to date and involve less change at each cycle by not having such a long period between reviews. The Boundary Commissions will likely commence their next review in 2029 and complete it by October 2031.

The four independent Boundary Commissions commenced their review shortly after the Act came into force. Having completed the review, the Boundary Commissions submitted their final reports to the Speaker of the House of Commons on 27 June 2023. The Speaker laid the reports before Parliament on 28 June 2023. We thank the Boundary Commission for its work.

At the Privy Council meeting on 15 November 2023, His Majesty the King made the Order in Council to enact the changes recommended by the Boundary Commissions. The Order came into force on 29 November 2023 and the new Parliamentary constituencies and boundaries will take effect at the next UK Parliamentary general election. Until that time, any UK Parliamentary by-elections will continue to use the pre-existing constituencies and boundaries.