



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 1 December 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:29 P.M., 01 December 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

## CONTENTS

<b>ANSWERS</b>	<b>4</b>	■ Army Foundation College: Sexual Offences	13
<b>BUSINESS AND TRADE</b>	<b>4</b>	■ France: Warships	13
■ Department for Business and Trade: Public Expenditure	4	■ Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation	14
■ Exports: Morocco	4	■ Israel: RAF Akrotiri	14
■ Small Businesses: Rural Areas	4	■ Ministry of Defence: Allowances	14
■ Trade Agreements: Israel	5	■ Ministry of Defence: Cost of Living	15
■ Zero Hours Contracts: North West	5	■ Ministry of Defence: Finance	15
<b>CABINET OFFICE</b>	<b>6</b>	■ Ministry of Defence: Fraud	16
■ Overseas Trade: Pacific Ocean Islands	6	■ Ministry of Defence: Skilled Workers	17
<b>CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>	<b>6</b>	■ Ministry of Defence: Staff	18
■ Gambling: Advertising	6	■ Ministry of Defence: Training	18
<b>DEFENCE</b>	<b>7</b>	■ Veterans: Health Services	19
■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions: Pain	7	■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure	19
■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Pain	9	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>20</b>
■ Armed Forces: Health Services	9	■ Department for Education: Consultants	20
■ Armed Forces: Pain	10	■ Higher Education	20
■ Armed Forces: Sexual Offences	11	■ Higher Education: Antisemitism	21
■ Armed Forces: Solihull	11	■ Lifelong Education	21
■ Armed Forces: STEM Subjects	12	■ Natural History: GCSE	23

■ Plagiarism: Artificial Intelligence	23	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	38
■ Pupils: Long Covid	24	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	38
■ Schools: Repairs and Maintenance	25	■ Diabetes and Obesity: Drugs	38
■ Special Educational Needs	26	■ Donors: Health Education	39
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	27	■ General Practitioners: Bradford East	39
■ Flood Control: Finance	27	■ Health Services and Social Services: Disability	41
■ Floods: Urban Areas	27	■ Long Covid: Medical Treatments	41
■ Plastics: Research	28	■ Mental Health Services	42
■ River Parrett: Flood Control	28	■ Mental Health Services: Men	42
■ Water: Standards	29	■ Mental Health Services: Selby and Ainsty	43
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	30	■ Mental Health Services: Warwick and Leamington	43
■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Abduction	30	■ Midazolam	44
■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Humanitarian Aid	30	■ Pharmacy	45
■ Development Aid: Belt and Road Initiative	31	■ Primary Health Care: Mid Bedfordshire	45
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: South Sudan	31	■ Respiratory Diseases: China	46
■ Gaza: Fuels	31	■ Special Educational Needs: Neurodiversity	46
■ Gaza: Hamas	32	■ Suicide Prevention Fund	46
■ Gaza: Hospitals	32	■ Suicide: Health Services	47
■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid	32	■ Surrogacy	47
■ Israel: Hamas	34	■ Tobacco: Sales	47
■ Israel: Palestinians	35	■ Vaccination	48
■ Israel: Tunisia	35	HOME OFFICE	48
■ Middle East: Hamas	36	■ Hate Crime: Research	48
■ Nigeria: Abduction	36	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	49
■ South Sudan: Poverty	36	■ Agriculture: Land Use	49
■ Wang Yi	37	■ Business Premises: Change of Use	49
■ Yemen: Peace and Security	37	■ Levelling Up Fund	50

NORTHERN IRELAND 51 ■ Lough Neagh: Ownership 51

**Notes:**

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.  
Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Department for Business and Trade: Public Expenditure

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[3575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, 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.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department publishes its support to local government and other bodies as part of the annual report of the application of the [Industrial Development Act 1982](#). This includes details of support to Local Enterprise Partnerships (and relevant Mayoral Combined Authorities) for the delivery of Growth Hubs under sections 11 and 12 of the Act. The budget for 2023/24 is £11.9 million. Future years' budgets are subject to confirmation under the Department's normal business planning processes.

#### ■ Exports: Morocco

**Ben Everitt:**

[\[4007\]](#)

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

**Greg Hands:**

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is committed to supporting UK businesses to export to Morocco. The UK-Morocco Association Agreement, which entered into force in January 2021, facilitates our trading relationship. Bilateral trade was worth £3.4 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2023, up £661 million in current prices on the same period the previous year.

In February 2023, the 2nd Association Council was held where Ministers discussed commercial opportunities and collaboration to increase bilateral trade and investment. DBT continues to provide export support to companies through a network of trade advisers, sector specialists, Export Support Service, Export Academy, International Markets network as well as through UK Export Finance, where £4.5bn of credit is available for Morocco.

#### ■ Small Businesses: Rural Areas

**Ashley Dalton:**

[\[2971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to support small businesses in rural areas.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Many businesses benefitted from the £13.6 billion support package provided at Autumn Budget 2022, including those in rural communities. The government has gone further at this year's Autumn Statement, announcing a business rates support package worth £4.3 billion. This includes protection for businesses who lose eligibility for Small Business or Rural Rate Relief through a generous Supporting Small Business scheme worth over £500 million.

The government provides extensive support to businesses, through Help to Grow Management, Business Support Helpline and a network of Growth Hubs. The Government has also increased the British Business Bank's regional financing programmes by £1.6 billion.

**■ Trade Agreements: Israel****Marsha De Cordova:**[\[3953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what progress her Department has made negotiating a free trade agreement with Israel.

**Greg Hands:**

The third round of negotiations between the UK and Israel for an upgraded, innovation-focused Free Trade Agreement (FTA) took place in Israel in July this year.

Both sides remain committed to strengthening our £6.6bn trading relationship, and we are engaging regularly with our Israeli counterparts to progress our FTA negotiations.

We look forward to holding the fourth round of negotiations with Israel in due course.

**■ Zero Hours Contracts: North West****Conor McGinn:**[\[3272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many people are on zero hour contracts in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) the North West.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Individuals on zero-hours contracts represent a very small proportion of the workforce – around 3.6% for the period April – June 2023, according to the ONS. The share of the workforce in the North West on a zero-hours contract is 3.5%. For this small group, a zero-hours contract may be the type of contract which works best for them. Zero hours contracts are an important part of the UK's flexible labour market, for both employers where there is not a constant demand for staff and for individuals who may need to balance work around other commitments such as childcare and study.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Overseas Trade: Pacific Ocean Islands****Andrew Rosindell:****[3153]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value of trade was between the UK and (a) Vanuatu, (b) Solomon Islands and (c) Tuvalu in the latest period for which data is available.

**John Glen:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

**A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 22 November is attached.**6pAttachments:

1. UK Statistics Authority  
[241123\_Sir\_Ian\_Diamond\_UKSA\_Andrew\_RosindellIMP\_3153.pdf]

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Gambling: Advertising****Carolyn Harris:****[3409]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the University of Bristol research paper entitled, The prevalence of gambling adverts during the opening weekend of the English Premier League 2023-23, published 2024; and if she will take legislative steps to reduce the number of gambling adverts shown during football matches.

**Stuart Andrew:**

His Majesty's Government recognises that, while millions of people gamble online without experiencing problems, for some it becomes an addiction with serious consequences. In our approach to gambling advertising, we have struck a balanced and evidence-led approach which tackles aggressive advertising that is most likely to appeal to children, while still allowing sports bodies and others to benefit commercially from deals with responsible gambling firms. There are robust rules in place to ensure that gambling advertising is socially responsible and cannot be targeted at or strongly appeal to children. The Government welcomed the voluntary whistle-to-whistle ban on TV betting ads during live sports programmes, agreed by industry. According to figures from the Betting and Gaming Council, the ban reduced gambling advertisement views by children (age 4-17) by 70% over the full duration of live sporting programmes. We also welcomed the Premier League's announcement that it will ban gambling sponsors from the front of shirts, and are working with a wider group of sports governing bodies to introduce a Code of Conduct on responsible gambling sponsorship.

We continue to monitor research, and have carefully considered the findings in the study by the University of Bristol. Furthermore, we are introducing a statutory levy charged to gambling operators which will raise trusted, long-term funding for

gambling research. We are clear that we will continue to look carefully at any further research that results from that and take action if necessary.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions: Pain

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[3439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications were received under the (a) War Pensions and (b) Armed Forces Compensation scheme for (i) primary and (ii) secondary chronic pain conditions attributable to service in the last three years; and how many such applications were (A) granted, (B) refused and (C) outstanding.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:  
War Pension Scheme**

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2023, a total of 1,403 people had a disablement claim for at least one chronic pain condition under the War Pension Scheme, as detailed in the tables below:

War Pension Scheme claims for at least one chronic primary pain condition, 1 Apr 2020 – 31 Mar 2023

RECEIVED AN AWARD FOR THEIR CONDITION AT A DISABLEMENT PERCENTAGE OF 1-100%	656
Received an award for their condition at a disablement percentage of 0%	18
Received an award for their condition at an unknown disablement percentage	188
<b>Total accepted</b>	<b>862</b>
<b>Total rejected</b>	<b>509</b>
<b>Total cleared</b>	<b>1,371</b>

War Pension Scheme claims for at least one chronic secondary pain condition, 1 Apr 2020 – 31 Mar 2023

RECEIVED AN AWARD FOR THEIR CONDITION AT A DISABLEMENT PERCENTAGE OF 1-100%	6
Received an award for their condition at a disablement percentage of 0%	0
Received an award for their condition at an unknown disablement percentage	3

RECEIVED AN AWARD FOR THEIR CONDITION AT A DISABLEMENT PERCENTAGE OF 1-100%	6
--	---

---

<b>Total accepted</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Total rejected</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Total cleared</b>	<b>32</b>

### Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2023, a total of 536 people registered an injury/illness claim for at least one chronic pain condition under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), as detailed in the tables below:

AFCS claims for at least one chronic primary pain condition, 1 Apr 2020 – 31 Mar 2023

CLAIM ACCEPTED AND AWARD RECEIVED FOR THEIR CLAIM	320
--	-----

---

Condition accepted, however no award received	20
<b>Total accepted</b>	<b>340</b>
<b>Total rejected</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Total cleared</b>	<b>523</b>

AFCS claims for at least one chronic secondary pain condition, 1 Apr 2020 – 31 Mar 2023

CLAIM ACCEPTED AND AWARD RECEIVED FOR THEIR CLAIM	6
--	---

---

Condition accepted, however no award received	0
<b>Total accepted</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Total rejected</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Total cleared</b>	<b>13</b>

It is not possible to obtain condition information on outstanding claims under the WPS and AFCS. This is because the accepted/rejected medical condition information is only available to search once a claim has been cleared.



Due to how the data is held and processed, the following should be noted:

**WPS and AFCS**

1. The information presented on WPS and AFCS relates to the number of people who have claimed for chronic pain.
1. Claimants identified with both a chronic primary and secondary pain condition have only been counted towards a primary condition to manage the risk of double counting.
1. Claimants who have multiple chronic pain related conditions within either primary or secondary have an outcome of 'accepted' if any of the conditions have been accepted; otherwise, they are recorded as an outcome of 'rejected'.

**■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Pain****Maria Eagle:****[3438]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to amend the compensation tariffs within the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to include chronic pain as a separate condition.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme makes awards for injuries and illnesses due to service. The Scheme tariff has nine tables of payable categories including Physical Disorders in table four. Conditions in this table are listed generically, not by specific diagnosis, with corresponding award based on the severity and duration of the functional restriction or limitation. Compensation for chronic pain may be paid under the existing tariff, both where treatment of the underlying condition adequately addresses the pain and its impact, and where pain breaks through despite appropriate treatment, and is claimed as a separate condition.

**■ Armed Forces: Health Services****Owen Thompson:****[3520]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending post-service transition support services for people medically discharged from the armed forces from six months to two years.

**Owen Thompson:****[3522]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the (a) First Sea Lord, (b) Chief of the General Staff and (c) Chief of the Air Staff on tackling gaps in transition services for people who are medically discharged from the armed forces.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) provides post-transition support services beyond six months for those medically discharged from the Armed Forces. The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) provides resettlement and career transition services to all Regular Armed Forces Service leavers as part of their resettlement process, helping to make

the transition from military to civilian life as smooth and successful as possible. The Core Resettlement Programme is afforded to all medically discharged Service leavers irrespective of time served.

A bespoke service called CTP Assist is provided for the most vulnerable leavers, and delivers an individualised, needs-based service to those Service personnel who face the greatest barriers to employment because of their medical condition. This comprehensive employment support is made available to all those subject to medical discharge to maximise their successful transition to civilian life. Employment support is available through the CTP two years prior to discharge and for two years afterwards.

Welfare support from the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) is also available to all Regular and Reserve Service personnel and their families via the Defence Transition Referral Protocol. All those who are medically discharged are contacted by VWS, on behalf of MOD, to provide contact details should they experience need after discharge and want to re-engage with VWS at a subsequent point in time. VWS supports service leavers, veterans, and their families by providing ongoing support, guidance and information with issues that will endure beyond discharge. VWS clients are supported according to their needs and preferences, with support remaining in place for as long as required.

As the Minister responsible for Defence People and Families, I regularly meet with The First Sea Lord, Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Air Staff to discuss topics that fall within my portfolio and tackle prevalent issues.

## ■ Armed Forces: Pain

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[3440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel were medically discharged due to a (a) primary or (b) secondary chronic pain condition in the last three years.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2023, **461** UK Regular Armed Forces personnel were medically discharged with a Read Code for a primary chronic pain condition cited as the principal or contributory cause.

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2023, **10** UK Regular Armed Forces personnel were medically discharged with a Read Code for a secondary chronic pain condition cited as the principal or contributory cause.

Both principal and contributory causes have been included as it is possible for personnel to be medically discharged for multiple medical reasons.

**■ Armed Forces: Sexual Offences****Luke Pollard:****[3333]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will (a) include and (b) publish data on personnel under the age of 18 in the armed forces' periodic sexual harassment surveys.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated in Defence, and anyone failing to meet our values and standards will be dealt with robustly. There is no place in the Armed Forces for unacceptable sexual behaviour; the Armed Forces have a 'zero tolerance' policy with a presumption of discharge for any Service Person who engages in unacceptable sexual behaviour.

Defence is working to prevent and tackle all forms of unacceptable behaviour, including sexual harassment. The importance of tackling this type of behaviour is recognised at the highest levels of Defence; the leadership of Defence are fully committed to taking the actions required to tackle this type of behaviour. To do this, we need more people to report sexual harassment when it happens. Reports of sexual harassment will be treated seriously, sensitively, promptly and in confidence.

Sexual harassment can be reported through informal or formal complaints processes, and an **y formal complaint of sexual harassment will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate action taken. If the harassment is judged to amount to unlawful conduct, individuals are encouraged to** contact the Service, civilian or Ministry of Defence police.

Where a Service Complaint has been raised for sexual harassment by a member of the Armed Forces, it is dealt with entirely outside the individual's chain of command; it is investigated by the Outsourced Investigation Service and an Independent Member oversees the Decision and Appeal Bodies, to ensure the case is dealt with fairly.

The results of the single Service sexual harassment surveys 2021 (published in March 2022) can be found at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sexual-harassment-surveys-2021> Results for under-18s will be included in the aggregated published results. If the sample size is large enough for under-18s, we will consider publishing results for under-18s as a group as well. It must be noted that this age demographic is very small, and we cannot confirm that we will have enough responses for publication.

**■ Armed Forces: Solihull****Julian Knight:****[3248]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the effect of spending and investment by his Department and the armed forces on the local economy in Solihull constituency since 2015.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not hold spending data at constituency level. Since 2015-16, MOD expenditure with UK Industry in the West Midlands has

increased from £575 million to £802 million in 2021-22. The total number of direct jobs supported in the region as a result of this MOD spending is 5,000, creating huge economic benefits across the West Midlands, including to the constituency of Solihull.

## ■ Armed Forces: STEM Subjects

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[3335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing accredited STEM education for new armed forces recruits under the age of 18.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Defence makes significant investment in STEM-accredited opportunities for our people, including to the under-18 cohort, because we believe that this will enable us to create high-performing and technologically astute personnel with the skills and agility required for a modernised Armed Forces. We also recognise that by investing wholeheartedly in our recruits and apprentices, who come from all walks of life, the Armed Forces are an engine for social mobility and productivity for the nation.

### **Royal Navy**

The Royal Navy offers a well-developed STEM route for 16- to 18-year-olds which, irrespective of their prior qualifications, can lead to a fully funded degree within their career. All engineer pathways start with a Level 2 or 3 apprenticeship aligned to the future role and will include maths and English teaching as required. Alongside the nationally accredited engineering opportunities, which also count toward chartered status with the Institute of Engineering and Technology, they will be able to achieve broadening qualifications in areas such as leadership and management.

### **Army**

The Army invests significantly in skills, education and training, including skills-enhancing learning and development pathways for all, including our under-18 cohort. The Army's Foundation College at Harrogate offers opportunity for under-18s to study for STEM accredited education through study towards maths Level 2 qualifications and up to Level 3 qualification in Information and Communication Technology. As the UK's top apprenticeship employer for the third year running, and the largest employer of apprenticeships in England, the Army provides further opportunity for under-18s on entry to their Initial Trade Training – including STEM. The Army has over 15,500 soldier-apprentices on programme at any one time and opportunities in most trade sectors including engineering, manufacturing, logistics and construction.

### **Royal Air Force (RAF)**

The RAF has only a very small number of under-18 recruits who undergo Phase 1 training (conducted at RAF Halton). The Aviator Training Academy (AvTA) at RAF Halton does not deliver any bespoke STEM training to under-18s on the Basic Recruit Training Course as there are no training objectives related directly to STEM. The AvTA does, however, deliver Level 1 and Level 2 maths after basic recruit

training to those that need it. Those recruits who are under 18 and progress onto Phase 2 training within the RAF Engineering Profession, will by its very nature receive significant exposure to STEM. The RAF recognises this and awards all recruits that successfully complete their profession training with a Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship.

## ■ Army Foundation College: Sexual Offences

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[3334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of (a) staff and (b) recruits at the Army Foundation College have been reprimanded under the zero tolerance policy on unwanted sexual behaviours in each of the last five years.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Since the Zero Tolerance (Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour) policy was launched on 19 November 2022, no staff (zero percent) and less than five recruits (less than one percent) serving at the Army Foundation College (Harrogate) have been reprimanded.

These figures include all cases which were dealt with under either the formal Unacceptable Sexual Behaviours process, or informal resolution under this policy, which have reached a conclusion by 30 September 2023 and where any form of sanction under the policy has been awarded.

Army Foundation College (Harrogate) provides significant opportunities and enhanced prospects. It attracts recruits from across the UK, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds where levels of sexual violence and criminal offending are high. A rapid re-education process is required to embed foundation values, standards and expectations of behaviour. An introduction to the Army's values and standards now takes place before recruits arrive in training and training is specially designed to realign individual traits and behavioural patterns.

## ■ France: Warships

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[3332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the removal by the French navy of pennant numbers and names from some of its vessels to anonymise those vessels.

**James Heappey:**

The UK continues to ensure that its warships satisfy the criteria as set out at Article 29 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

**■ Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation****Maria Eagle:** [\[3119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of the recommendations from the Haythornthwaite Review, published in June 2023, have been (a) accepted and (b) implemented as of 22 November 2023.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Haythornthwaite Review is a generational independent review. Its recommendations relate to policies and processes across a complex system of incentivisation and support. The Department committed in June, within the Defence Command Paper Refresh, to taking forward the recommendations. A formal Government Response, which will provide more detail on our approach to tackling each recommendation, will be published in early 2024. This will confirm which recommendations have been - or are in the process of being - delivered.

Priorities for the coming months include designing the first elements of a trial to explore a 'Total Reward Approach', exploring flexible terms and conditions of service through the development of a 'Spectrum of Service' and the optimisation of the myriad of policies and processes that support our people.

**■ Israel: RAF Akrotiri****Kenny MacAskill:** [\[3359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the US military is using RAF Akrotiri to send (a) weapons and (b) other military equipment to Israel.

**James Heapey:**

The Ministry of Defence does not offer comment on Allies' operations.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Allowances****Maria Eagle:** [\[3429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many duplicate expense claims were submitted within his Department in each year from 2019 to 2023 as at 23 November 2023.

**Maria Eagle:** [\[3430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 79 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, how much has been recovered from the overpayment of expenses in each year from 2019 to 2023 as at 23 November 2023.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The information requested is not held centrally through standard reporting and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Cost of Living****Maria Eagle:**[\[3120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to support his Department's workforce with the rising cost of living.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Defence recognises that nobody is immune from the recent rises in inflation and the cost of living. We are committed to doing what we can to assist Armed Forces personnel and Ministry of Defence (MOD) civil servants where possible.

**Armed Forces**

In July the Government accepted the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body's (AFPRB's) and Senior Salaries Review Body's recommendations in full for the 2023/24 Pay Round, backdated to 1 April 2023 and paid in August salaries. The AFPRB's headline recommendation, for all Service Personnel up to and including one-star level, was a 5% plus £1,000 consolidated increase in pay. This provided total pay increases of between 9.7% for the most junior ranks and 5.8% for officers at one-star rank, the biggest uplift in 21 years for the Armed Forces.

Regular Service Personnel now have an average salary of £41,000, up from £38,100 last year. Reservists who are paid on an attendance basis also saw their pay increased by the same proportion.

**Civil Servants:**

In line with Cabinet Office Civil Service Pay remit guidance, the headline pay award for MOD civilians in 2023 was 4.5% plus 0.5% to address the lowest paid. An additional £1,500 cost of living payment has been made to eligible staff across the Civil Service. The MOD has also produced a Financial Wellbeing Support Guide which signposts a number of internal and external resources, guidance, information and support available to MOD personnel, including the Government's Moneyhelper website which gives financial guidance in all areas from budgeting to credit cards, to reducing energy bills and pensions.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Finance****Maria Eagle:**[\[3425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 165 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022–23, published on 20 July 2023, what steps he is taking to improve the (a) production and (b) distribution of management information to enable better oversight of compliance with core controls.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

To clarify that the wording referenced is on page 76 not page 165 of the Annual Report and Accounts.

The Department is making strenuous and tangible efforts to improve oversight and compliance with core controls across the organisation and including functions. A

number of these actions are summarised in the Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 on page 76. These include updating the structure and scope of annual assurance assessment and reporting procedures, refreshing risk management and strengthening and widening coverage of the lines of defence model to clarify the accountabilities and governance requirements for each function.

These improvements are being made in a way to ensure coherence, specifically that the level and scale of compliance assurance and reporting on core controls is proportionate to the risk appetite of the Department. These improvements will be supported, where appropriate, by improved reporting and management information.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Fraud

**Maria Eagle:** [\[3428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to retrieve the £149 million lost through fraud in 2020-21.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The £149 million referred to on page 79 of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 relates to detected fraud through reports to the Defence Confidential Hotline. All incidents of detected fraud are thoroughly investigated, and where possible and proportionate, recovery action is undertaken, either through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) or through civil recovery methods.

**Maria Eagle:** [\[3431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 79 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts, whether he has amended his Department's (a) working practices and (b) policies in response to participation in the National Fraud Initiative 2022-23.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence has an active lessons-learned programme in response to detected fraud which allows business areas and policy owners to undertake process and policy change to mitigate further loss. No changes in working practices or policy have been identified yet as a result of participation in the National Fraud Initiative 2022/23. The data provided is currently being validated by the Department and any irregularities identified will be investigated where policy or process weakness is identified this will be addressed through the established lessons learned process.

**Maria Eagle:** [\[3432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 79 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, how many people participated in the fraud, bribery and corruption training package in each year from 2019 to 2023 as of 23 November 2023.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

A Defence version of the Fraud Bribery & Corruption online training package was launched in 2021 for civil servants with the single Service specific versions launched



in May 2022. The participation data for these courses is only available from May 2022 for all 4 combined variants as set out below:

2022	2023
55,401	69,139

In addition to these figures, a proportion of Defence workers have continued to undertake the standard Civil Service version of the course hosted on the Civil Service Learning (CSL) platform. Defence continues to signpost its people to the MOD versions of the courses and has taken steps to remove the automatic reminders on CSL. Data for CSL is only available from 2021:

2021	2022	2023
49,000	44,000	22,013

Prior to May 2022, the training was only formally mandated for civil servants and service personnel who line managed civilian or contractors where their employer did not provide equivalent training.

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[3436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of staff were employed in Fraud Defence on average in each year from 2019 to 2023 as of 23 November 2023.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Fraud Defence is the central function team for Counter Fraud within the Ministry of Defence. In order to meet the counter fraud Functional Standard for Government (GovS013), Fraud Defence staff specialise in different professional disciplines including: fraud risk assessment, analytics, training & awareness, investigations and intelligence. The average FTE employed in Fraud Defence from financial year (FY) 2019-20 to present is:

FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
14	18	21	23	27

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Skilled Workers

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[3118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 33 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, what his planned timetable is for publishing the pan-Defence Skills Framework.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 September 2023 to Question 195686 to the hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-01/195686>

■ **Ministry of Defence: Staff**

**Maria Eagle:****[3114]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed to his Department's Defence Resilience Team in each from 2019 to 2023 to date.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence is committed to developing and promoting resilience within Defence to mitigate against acute disruptive events, enhance our operational efficiency and deliver our Defence outputs.

Defence has a central policy team that sets the minimum resilience standards that should be met across Defence as well as undertaking resilience risk assessments and resilience planning. Defence resilience policy mandates that all Top Level Budget holders and Enabling Organisation Chief Executives appoint a Resilience Focal Point whose primary duties are Resilience and Business Continuity focused. In addition, there are also a large number of personnel who carry out Resilience and Business Continuity work as a secondary duty to their main job role. These figures do not include the dedicated crisis team that was put in place to execute the Defence Resilience and Business Continuity response to COVID.

The table below shows the number of people employed in Defence's central resilience policy team and as Resilience Focal Points between 2019 and 2023.

YEAR	CENTRAL POLICY TEAM	RESILIENCE FOCAL POINTS
2019	4	14
2020	4	16
2021	3	19.4
2022	7	20.4
2023	9	21.4

■ **Ministry of Defence: Training**

**Maria Eagle:****[3117]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many learning and development programmes his Department has introduced in each year since 2010.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The requested information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ **Veterans: Health Services****Owen Thompson:**[\[3521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress he has made on implementation of Project Cortisone; and when he plans that it will be fully operational.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Programme CORTISONE has now provided the ability to access archived healthcare records and users are able to interrogate operational healthcare data in a faster, more accurate and timely manner. New digital triage and remote video consultation capabilities have been prioritised for delivery in addition to e-rostering and caseload management systems by the end of 2025.

The current estimate for the Full Operating Capability is December 2027.

■ **Veterans: Radiation Exposure****John Healey:**[\[3097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many nuclear test veterans have received their nuclear test veterans medal.

**John Healey:**[\[3098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many nuclear test veterans eligible for a nuclear test veterans medal have yet to receive it.

**John Healey:**[\[3099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many next of kin of nuclear test veterans have received their nuclear test veterans medal.

**John Healey:**[\[3100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many next of kin of nuclear test veterans eligible for a nuclear test veterans medal have yet to receive their medal.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

As at 22 November 2023:

2,283 applications have been received from veterans, and 1,473 from next of kin, totalling 3,756.

1,756 Nuclear Test Medals had been dispatched to veterans, and 137 to next of kin, totalling 1,893.

A further 333 cases for veterans have been assessed as eligible and 1,050 for next of kin, totalling 1,383; these are awaiting finalising and despatch.

There remain 194 veteran and 286 next of kin cases under assessment, totalling 480.

**EDUCATION****■ Department for Education: Consultants**

**Julian Knight:** [3493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much her Department has spent on external consultancy fees in the 2022-23 financial year.

**Damian Hinds:**

The department's expenditure, including consultancy fees, is published each year in the Annual Report and Accounts and can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-reports-and-accounts-for-central-government-departments>.

**■ Higher Education**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [3368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Crackdown on rip-off university degrees, published on 17 July 2023, on which degree courses she plans to increase controls.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department wants to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, benefit from high quality, world-leading higher education (HE) that leads to excellent outcomes.

The Office for Students (OfS) has responsibility for monitoring quality and standards and acting where there is a breach of its conditions of registration. The OfS registration condition B3 sets minimum requirements for student outcomes, including course continuation, completion and progression onto graduate employment or further study.

Where courses perform below these thresholds, the providers could face investigation, enabling the OfS to understand the reasons for their performance. If a HE provider is found to be in breach of regulatory requirements, the OfS has the power to intervene and impose sanctions.

To date, the OfS has undertaken 18 investigations in relation to student outcomes (B3) performance. The OfS will publish the outcomes of those investigations in due course and will make decisions about whether regulatory action is appropriate. The department expects the OfS to take decisive action where there has been a clear breach of B3, including, where appropriate, through the use of recruitment limits. Recruitment limits will prevent the growth of courses that do not meet minimum expectations for student outcomes, where there is no justifiable explanation for them failing to do so.

**Other sanctions available to the OfS include issuing a specific ongoing condition of registration requiring an improvement in performance, financial penalties and**

**ultimately the suspension or removal of the HE provider from the register (and with it, access to student finance).6p ■ Higher Education: Antisemitism**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[3190]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to tackle antisemitism in higher education.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department is deeply concerned about the increase in antisemitic incidents on campuses since the horrific 7 October 2023 terrorist attacks against Israel. This government takes antisemitism extremely seriously. That is why on 22 November, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his Autumn 2023 Statement an additional £7 million over 3 years to tackle antisemitism in education.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I wrote to all schools, colleges and universities on 11 October, urging them to respond swiftly to hate-related incidents and actively reassure Jewish students that they can study without fear of harassment or intimidation. I wrote again to Vice Chancellors on 16 November, further emphasising the use of disciplinary measures against perpetrators and the importance of police engagement, as well as the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national. This was one of the key actions I set out in the five-point plan for tackling antisemitism in higher education, which was published on 5 November. Details of the plan can be found here:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/05/how-were-protecting-jewish-students-on-university-campuses/>.

On 21 November, the Secretary of State and I attended a round table hosted by the Union of Jewish Students, at University College London, where we heard directly about the impact of antisemitism on campus.

The department continues to remind providers of their obligations under the Prevent duty, where they should be working to prevent people from being drawn into or supporting terrorism. Departmental officials have assessed evidence of antisemitism and racial hatred linked to incidents at English universities. There is an online 'Reporting Extremism' form where members of the public can raise concerns to the department directly. Where concerns have arisen, officials have reached out to the relevant universities to understand what actions they have taken, including reporting issues to the police where appropriate.

## ■ Lifelong Education

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[3191]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to (a) promote and (b) improve lifelong learning.

**Robert Halfon:**

The government understands the importance of lifelong learning, adult education and the need for adults to be able to train, re-train and upskill throughout their lives.

The department recognises that clear information and guidance is essential for learners, education providers and employers alike to navigate the government's skills and adult education offer.

The department has launched the Skills for Life strategy and website, which is designed to support people to access the education and training they need and signposts them to the appropriate programmes. It targets adult learners in priority sectors to help them to access the skills they need to get the job they want, whatever their stage in life. The site showcases hundreds of government-funded skills opportunities to raise awareness and boost understanding among adults and help maximise uptake across the country.

The National Careers Service provides free, up-to-date, impartial information, advice and guidance on careers, skills, and the labour market in England. It offers intensive support for low-skilled adults without a qualification at Level 3, as one of six priority groups for the service. Professionally qualified careers advisers can support customers to explore the range of learning routes to determine the best route for them and to develop a careers action plan.

The government is committed to investing £2.5 billion across the financial years from 2022 to 2025 (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) as a part of the department's skills reforms to help adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future.

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) provides £1.34 billion in the 2022/23 financial year to fund skills provision for adults to help them gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. The department's 'essential skills' legal entitlements, funded through the AEB, provide the opportunity of free study for adults who do not have essential literacy and numeracy skills up to and including Level 2 and digital skills up to and including Level 1.

Community Learning plays a vital role within AEB provision of supporting those furthest from the workplace, and in improving the health and well-being of learners. It is an important stepping-stone for learners who are not ready for formal accredited learning, or who would benefit from learning in a more informal way, particularly for (post-19) disadvantaged learners. It is a flexible and wide-ranging offer, responding to local needs and is delivered in nearly every local authority area across England through adult education services, further education colleges, Institutes of Adult Learning and Community Learning.

The Free Courses for Jobs offer gives eligible adults the chance to access high value Level 3 qualification for free, which can support them to gain higher wages or a better job. There has been strong uptake of over 45,000 cumulative enrolments between April 2021 and April 2023.

Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills with a job interview upon completion. The department delivered 40,040 Skills Bootcamps starts in the 2022/23 financial year and has invested £550 million across the financial years from 2022 to 2025 to

significantly expand Skills Bootcamps further with a target of 64,000 learner starts a year in the 2024/25 financial year so that more adults can get the skills they need for good jobs.

Apprenticeships are available for everyone over the age of 16 and provide a unique opportunity for people to develop the knowledge and skills needed to start, enhance, or change careers. There are high-quality apprenticeship routes into more than 680 occupations and the department is providing £2.7 billion of funding by the 2024/25 financial year to support employers to take up these opportunities. The Autumn 2023 Statement also announced a £50 million investment in a two-year apprenticeships pilot to explore ways to increase apprenticeship opportunities in growth sectors, and address barriers to entry in high-value apprenticeships.

From the 2025/26 academic year, the department will introduce the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE). This is a transformation of the student finance system which will provide individuals with a loan entitlement equivalent to four years of post-18 education to use over their working lives (£37,000 in today's fees). The LLE will be available for both full years of study at Levels 4-6 as well as, for the first time, modules of high-value courses, regardless of whether they are provided in colleges or universities. Under this flexible system, people will be able to space out their studies and learn at a pace that is right for them, including choosing to build up their qualifications over time, within both further education and higher education providers.

#### ■ **Natural History: GCSE**

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[3175]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress she has made on the implementation of plans for students to be offered a Natural History GCSE by September 2025; and when she plans to publish details of the proposed consultation on subject content for that GCSE.

**Damian Hinds:**

The department is working closely with exam boards and subject experts to develop draft subject content for the natural history GCSE. We expect to launch the consultation in early 2024, ensuring it is of the highest quality and can meet regulatory standards.

#### ■ **Plagiarism: Artificial Intelligence**

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

**[3441]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of generative AI on (a) methods of learning and (b) levels of plagiarism.

**Damian Hinds:**

Deterring, detecting and addressing academic cheating and misconduct remains a high priority for the government.

There are strict rules in place, set by exam boards, to ensure pupils' work is their own. Sanctions for cheating are serious, including being disqualified from a

qualification. Schools and teachers know their pupils best and are experienced in identifying their individual pupils' work.

Ofqual communicates regularly with exam boards about risks, including malpractice risks, and expects regulated awarding organisations to carefully consider the potential impacts artificial intelligence (AI) may have on their qualifications and where necessary make changes to the way in which their qualifications are designed or delivered in response.

The Joint Council for Qualifications published guidance earlier this year which reminds teachers and assessors of best practice in preventing and identifying potential malpractice, applying it in the context of AI use.

The department is building the evidence base for how generative AI is best used in education from the experience and expertise of the sector. The department will publish the response to the Call for Evidence on Generative AI in Education shortly. The department is conducting ongoing wider research to gather insight on how generative AI is being used in early year's settings, schools, colleges, and universities, and how it could be used to support the sector in the future.

The department has endowed the Education Endowment Foundation with a further £137 million to encourage innovative and effective evidence-based teaching, including using technology such as Computer Adaptive Learning or AI. Their trials will explore teaching approaches using Education Technology and which features of the technology, and how they are used, may support academic attainment.

## ■ Pupils: Long Covid

**Keir Mather:**

**[3395]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support young people unable to attend school as a result of having long covid.

**Damian Hinds:**

Regular attendance at school is vital for children's education, wellbeing, and long-term development. School attendance is mandatory, and parents have a duty, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child of compulsory age receives an efficient full-time education between ages five and sixteen.

The department recognises that some children may face barriers to attendance due to diagnosed medical conditions, such as long COVID. Long COVID is an umbrella term for symptoms that persist or develop after someone recovers from COVID-19. The severity of these symptoms can vary significantly and the support for pupils should recognise this.

The department's new attendance guidance makes it clear that children with long term medical conditions may require additional support and that schools should provide this support where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This should include having sensitive conversations with pupils and parents, making reasonable adjustments where necessary, and considering additional support from



external partners (including the local authority or health services). The department expects schools to work with families to develop specific support approaches for attendance and ensuring effective pastoral support is in place.

In some circumstances, pupils' symptoms may be so severe that they are unable to attend mainstream education. The guidance entitled 'Ensuring a Good Education for Children who cannot attend school because of health needs' sets out that a local authority must arrange suitable full-time education (or as much education as the child's health condition allows) for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would otherwise not receive suitable education. A link to the guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>.

## ■ Schools: Repairs and Maintenance

**Jim Shannon:**

**[3226]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that schools are able to carry out high quality repairs on their buildings.

**Damian Hinds:**

Well-maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the department in order that they support a high-quality education for all children.

Responsibility for keeping buildings safe and well-maintained lies with schools and their responsible bodies, such as local authorities, academy trusts and voluntary-aided bodies. The department supports them by providing access to annual capital funding, delivering major rebuilding programmes, and offering guidance and support.

The department has allocated over £15 billion since 2015 for keeping schools in England safe and operational, including £1.8 billion in 2023/24. This funding is informed by consistent data on the condition of the school estate. Devolved administrations received funding for education through the Barnett formula at the Spending Review 2021.

Responsible bodies in England, depending on their size and type, are either eligible to receive annual school condition allocation (SCA) funding to use on improving the condition of their schools, or are instead able to bid into the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) each year for specific capital projects. Schools in England also receive funding to spend on their capital priorities or contribute to larger projects through an annual devolved formula capital allocation (DFC). Details on SCA, DFC and CIF can be found on GOV.UK.

CIF eligible schools can apply for urgent capital support at any time in the year, if they have urgent building issues that need to be addressed. Details on how to apply for urgent capital support are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund>.

The department provides extensive guidance for responsible bodies to help them make effective spending decisions and manage their estates strategically and safely

through resources such as the 'Good estate management for schools' guidance. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools>.

In addition to condition capital funding, the school rebuilding programme (SRP) will transform buildings at 500 schools in England over the next decade, prioritising schools in poor condition and with evidence of potential safety issues. The department has announced 400 schools to date, including 239 in December 2022.

The department is providing targeted support for RAAC and will fund emergency mitigation work needed to make school and college buildings safe, including installing alternative classroom space where necessary. Where schools and colleges need additional help with revenue costs, the department expects all reasonable requests will be approved. The department will also fund refurbishment projects, or rebuilding projects where these are needed, to remove RAAC from the school estate, including through the SRP.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Tom Hunt:**

**[3358]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had recent discussions with Ofsted on the steps it takes to collect data on the (a) skills training, (b) further education, (c) apprenticeships, (d) work and (e) other activities taken up by post-17 school leavers with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Robert Halfon:**

Since data collection is not part of Ofsted's role, there have been no recent discussions on the steps Ofsted takes to collect data. Ofsted is a separate government department responsible for inspecting and reporting on the quality of post-16 education and training provided by further education colleges and training providers. As set out in Ofsted's Further Education and Skills Handbook, the quality of provision for learners with high needs and with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is always considered during the provision of any type of inspection. The handbook is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-eif/further-education-and-skills-handbook-for-september-2022>. Before making any final judgement on overall effectiveness, inspectors must evaluate the extent to which the education and training provided meets the needs of all learners, including learners with SEND and those who have high needs.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Flood Control: Finance****Rachael Maskell:****[3288]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will undertake a review of the Government funding provided to catchment flood management plans.

**Robbie Moore:**

Lead Local Flood Authorities are required to have a local flood risk management strategy. This must include an assessment of local flood risk and objectives for managing risk. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023-24 makes 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.

The Government has committed to reform the current approach to local flood risk planning by 2026. Every area of England will have a more strategic and comprehensive plan that drives long-term local action and investment and supports a catchment-based approach. The Plan for Water also commits to greater join up and better integration between flood and water planning.

As part of the Government's six-year £200 million innovation fund, £8 million was allocated to develop adaptation pathway plans in four locations across England. Adaptation pathways will look ahead, at least 50 years, to work out what flood defences are necessary in the long-term and when they should be built to avoid unnecessary investment costs in future and missed opportunities.

**■ Floods: Urban Areas****Tahir Ali:****[3340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what research his Department has undertaken on the causes of trends in the instances of flooding in cities.

**Robbie Moore:**

Defra and the Environment Agency use research to help policy makers and practitioners develop options to better manage flood and coastal erosion risk management.

The [Joint Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Research and Development Programme](#) undertakes research on flooding. The Programme is overseen by the Environment Agency, Defra, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government on behalf of all risk management authorities in England and Wales. The Joint Programme has funded [new projections for sea level rise to the year 2300](#) - which are critical for our long-term planning, including in coastal cities. It has also funded [new projections of how climate change will affect river flooding](#), and in 2020 we published [a synthesis of current knowledge on sources of river and coastal flooding in the UK](#). More information can be found on Gov.uk.

Defra has previously commissioned research to review the causes of flooding events that Lead Local Flood Authorities have assessed under Section 19 of the Floods and Water Management Act 2010. This research provided an understanding of the principal factors contributing to flooding from surface water in England and Wales since 2010.

Finally, the Environment Agency is developing a new National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) to provide a wide range of more accurate data, covering risk from rivers, the sea and surface water. The new Assessment will be published in 2024 and will provide a refreshed evidence base to better inform our management of risk.

### ■ **Plastics: Research**

**Andrew Rosindell:** **[3149]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to fund research into bioplastics.

**Robbie Moore:**

Defra prefers to use the term 'bio-based plastic' instead of 'bioplastic' to avoid confusion with, for example, biodegradable plastics.

The Government is not currently looking to fund bio-based plastic research. Defra has previously funded research in this area as part of UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) £60m Smart Sustainable Plastic Packaging programme, which supported a portfolio of 70+ projects with academia and industry. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is undertaking research on potential resource efficiency measures in the plastic sector, this includes bio-based plastics.

### ■ **River Parrett: Flood Control**

**Emma Hardy:** **[3315]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress has been made on the construction of the River Parrett tidal barrier.

**Robbie Moore:**

The Environment Agency has made significant progress with the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier scheme. The detailed design for the barrier and downstream banks is nearly complete. Environment Agency contractors are on site carrying out enabling works (constructing site compounds and access tracks and undertaking vegetation clearance). This will allow the construction of the bypass channel, barrier structure, control building and downstream banks over the next four years.

The Bridgwater Tidal Barrier is a flagship scheme delivering protection to 12,800 properties, along with £2 billion benefits for the local area. The scheme is expected to achieve £7.50 of benefits for every £1 spent.

Like many other major capital schemes, the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier project has seen cost increases due to inflationary pressures in construction, not least on concrete,

steel, energy and labour costs, all of which are major elements of the scheme's cost. The project is exploring options for funding as well as for efficiencies and savings to ensure that an operational barrier can be delivered as planned by early 2027. Identifying the optimum construction sequence will also enable us to achieve best value.

## ■ Water: Standards

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[1709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many bathing waters have been de-designated in each region since 2010.

**Robbie Moore:**

Since 2010, there have been de-designations of bathing waters in the following Environment Agency (EA) areas in England:

AREA	DE-DESIGNATED BATHING WATERS SINCE 2010
Cumbria and Lancashire	8
Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	3
East Anglia	1
Solent and South Downs	1
Wessex	3
Yorkshire	3

Several bathing waters were also de-designated before 2010 in the following EA areas: Alnmouth in the North East; Flamborough North Landing and Earls Dyke in Yorkshire; Lowestoft Gunton Denes in East Anglia; Poole Harbour Sandbanks in Wessex; Redgate and Gunwalloe Cove in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Most of these sites were de-designated due to low numbers of bathers and following an application to Defra, usually by the local authority. In some cases, sites were de-designated because the bathing water quality was classified as 'Poor' for five consecutive years. The Bathing Water Regulations 2013 (regulation 13) require sites to be de-designated in this circumstance and for permanent advice against bathing, in relation to at least one whole bathing season, to be issued. There can be many reasons for a 'Poor' bathing water classification, including run-off from agricultural land, sewage impacts and local activities. An application can be made to Defra to redesignate a site that has been de-designated as bathing water should the site meet the eligibility criteria set out in the bathing waters application guidance on GOV.UK.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Abduction****Andrew Rosindell:****[3607]**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what information his Department holds on the number of British citizens that have been kidnapped in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in each of the last five years.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The FCDO does not have any recorded kidnap cases in The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during the past five years. FCDO Travel Advice highlights a small but increasing threat of criminal "express" kidnaps in DRC. Travel Advice highlights incidents in early 2023 of foreigners being targeted by individuals impersonating police in the Limete area of Kinshasa and that kidnaps in DRC are generally for financial gain or motivated by criminality.

**■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Humanitarian Aid****Andrew Rosindell:****[3605]**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the (a) UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Democratic Republic of Congo: Humanitarian Response Plan 2023 and (b) UK–Democratic Republic of Congo development partnership on (i) development and (ii) the prevention of genocide in that country.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK is committed to supporting efforts to build stability and reduce violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-led (OCHA) Humanitarian Response Plan is a critical tool for the coordination of the activities of the humanitarian community in their response to urgent humanitarian needs. The UK leads by example, delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance with our £21 million programme in eastern DRC as well as urging the international community to give more resources and lobbying the DRC Government to take responsibility to improve access. Three projects in eastern DRC received £1 million in funding from the Jo Cox Memorial Grant (JCMG) to identify and prevent identity-based violence. These projects were undertaken between July 2019 and July 2022. Workshops supported by the JCMG have helped to inform British Embassy Kinshasa's current atrocity prevention approach including monitoring and calling out hate speech and ethnically motivated attacks against Tutsi and Rwandaphone communities in DRC.

**■ Development Aid: Belt and Road Initiative****Lisa Nandy:**[\[3466\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many UK Overseas Development Aid projects are involved in supporting the Belt and Road Initiative.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

HMG is not spending Official Development Assistance in support of China. China is an important source of investment for many developing countries. Chinese investment, including under its Belt and Road Initiative, can help fill the global infrastructure gap. However, we recognise the potential risks that Chinese overseas investment can present.

HMG's policy on China is set out in the Integrated Review Refresh. In HMG's engagement, we will always work to protect ourselves, our democracy and our economy.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: South Sudan****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[3608\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many officials from his Department are stationed in South Sudan.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

There are currently 24 FCDO UK based staff stationed in South Sudan.

**■ Gaza: Fuels****Stephen Crabb:**[\[3165\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reports that Hamas are withholding fuel from civilians in Gaza.

**Leo Docherty:**

We are aware of Israel's concerns about the stockpiling of fuel by Hamas terrorists. However, this does not negate the need for fuel to urgently get to those who do need it in Gaza. Fuel is necessary to allow humanitarian organisations to deliver assistance, power hospitals and operate desalinisation plants and bakeries. We urge the Government of Israel to allow sufficient aid and fuel into Gaza to meet the needs of civilians. Incremental progress has been made, but significantly more is needed. The UK was outraged at Hamas' terror attacks in Israel on 7 October, and supports Israel's right to defend itself proportionately, in line with International Humanitarian Law.

**■ Gaza: Hamas****Tom Randall:** [\[3555\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart about reports Hamas is using ambulances to travel within Gaza.

**Leo Docherty:**

We maintain regular contact with the Government of Israel on a full range of issues relating to conflict in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary met his counterpart Foreign Minister Cohen on 23 November in Israel where they discussed aspects relating to the conflict. The safety of humanitarian personnel and healthcare workers in Gaza is critical to enable aid to reach those who need it most. We strongly condemn all forms of violence and incitement to violence directed towards humanitarian personnel and healthcare workers and we have been consistently clear that everything must be done to protect lives. The wounded and critically ill in Gaza should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

**■ Gaza: Hospitals****Tahir Ali:** [\[3336\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he plans to take diplomatic steps to improve the conditions for civilians within the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza.

**Leo Docherty:**

All medical facilities in Gaza must be protected and allowed to operate in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to abide by International Humanitarian Law, including minimising casualties, protecting civilians and critical civilian infrastructure. We continue to press for increased humanitarian assistance (food, water and medical supplies) as well as fuel to reach Gaza. Fuel is needed to power hospitals and desalination plants as well as bakeries, critical to meet civilian needs.

**■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid****Rachael Maskell:** [\[3506\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with the NGOs working in Gaza on their ability to deliver aid to all parts of Gaza during the humanitarian pause.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[3507\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on a ceasefire of the amount of aid delivered to Gaza during the humanitarian pause.



**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The FCDO is actively engaging with international partners and those operating on the ground to do all we can to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The UK is supportive of limited and temporary cessations of hostilities as part of measures to facilitate the flow of life-saving humanitarian aid into Gaza. It is crucial that we capitalise on the pause in hostilities to allow as much food, water, medical supplies and fuel as possible to reach vulnerable civilians in Gaza. This pause should act as a confidence-building mechanism for future pauses, including those solely on humanitarian grounds.

Since Hamas' abhorrent terrorist attacks on 7 October, the UK Government has provided an additional £60 million in humanitarian funding and has sent more than 74 tonnes of emergency relief for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This funding will support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and other trusted partners to respond to critical food, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will continue to engage closely with regional counterparts including Israel and Egypt to allow a sufficient flow of humanitarian aid into and through Gaza.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[3508\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence on using the armed forces to deliver desalination equipment to the coast of Gaza.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[3509\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence on using the armed forces to deliver food to the coast of Gaza.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We have increased our military assets in the eastern Mediterranean to deter malign actors, support British nationals and giving the UK the presence to respond to the humanitarian crisis as needed. This includes the deployment of a Royal Navy task group to the eastern Mediterranean, including RFA Lyme Bay and RFA Argus, three merlin helicopters and a company of Royal Marines as a contingency measure. RAF surveillance aircraft are also patrolling the skies to track threats to regional stability such as the transfer of weapons to terrorist groups.

To support the UK's humanitarian response, four aircraft, enabled by the RAF, flew 74 tonnes of emergency relief to Egypt for Palestinian civilians in Gaza. We keep the situation under review.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[3510\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with aid agencies on the potential implications of the onset of winter in Gaza.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We maintain regular contact with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) on a full range of issues relating to conflict in Gaza. The FCDO is actively engaging with international partners and those operating on the ground to do all we can to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Trusted partners on the ground, including UN agencies, will receive and utilise £60 million in lifesaving humanitarian aid to support people in Gaza.

■ **Israel: Hamas****Rachael Maskell:**[\[3285\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of calling for an extension of the humanitarian pause in the Israel-Hamas conflict.

**Leo Docherty:**

This pause must be used to ensure much greater volumes of food, fuel and other life-saving aid reach Gaza on a sustained basis. We hope it will build confidence towards future, repeated and lengthy humanitarian pauses. We have already tripled our aid commitment to Palestinians this year and will now work closely with the UN and other partners to this end. We continue to call for immediate, unimpeded, and safe humanitarian access for lifesaving aid to reach civilians. The UK will continue to work with all partners in the region to reach a long-term political solution, which delivers lasting peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

**Greg Smith:**[\[3361\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on Hamas's placement of military infrastructure within civilian areas.

**Leo Docherty:**

It is clear that Hamas has put Palestinians at grave risk by embedding themselves in the civilian population, and Hamas has used civilians as human shields. The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 23 November, where he met President Herzog, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Cohen and other senior Israeli interlocutors to discuss the conflict. However, we are not going to specifically comment on individual locations. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence against Hamas but the Israel Defense Forces military actions in Gaza must be carried out in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and Israel must take all possible measures to protect civilians.

**Nicola Richards:**[\[3377\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the potential implications for his policies of claims made by the Israel Defense Forces that they have located a Hamas rocket-making facility inside a mosque in the Zeitoun area of Gaza City.

**David Rutley:**

The Foreign Secretary met Foreign Minister Eli Cohen during his visit to Israel on 23 November 2023. Discussions centred on the urgent need for humanitarian aid to access Gaza during the humanitarian pause and how UK efforts can help alleviate the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The United Kingdom is outraged at Hamas' terror attacks in Israel, and supports Israel's right to self-defence, in line with International Humanitarian Law. We make clear that the terrorist actions of Hamas have no justification, no legitimacy, and must be universally condemned. The UK supports equal measures of justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

■ **Israel: Palestinians****Stephen Farry:**[\[4011\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will have discussions with international partners on the potential creation of (a) an international monitoring arrangement and (b) a peacekeeping presence through (i) the United Nations and (ii) an ad hoc arrangement to help support a ceasefire in Israel and Palestine.

**David Rutley:**

We maintain regular contact with the United Nations on a full range of issues relating to conflict in Gaza. The FCDO is actively engaging with international partners and those operating on the ground to do all we can to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and support British nationals who wish to leave. The UK is supportive of limited and temporary cessations of hostilities as part of measures to facilitate the flow of life-saving humanitarian aid into Gaza. It is crucial that we capitalise on the hostage deal to allow as much food, water, medical supplies and fuel as possible to reach vulnerable civilians in Gaza. This pause should act as a confidence-building mechanism for future pauses, including those solely on humanitarian grounds. We will continue to use all the tools of British diplomacy and development to enhance the prospects of peace and stability in the region, working closely with our partners.

■ **Israel: Tunisia****Iain Stewart:**[\[3196\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with his Tunisian counterpart on that country's Parliamentary Committee's approval of a draft bill criminalising the normalisation of relations with Israel; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of that bill on regional relations.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Foreign Secretary has had no discussions with his Tunisian counterpart regarding the issue the Member for Milton Keynes South refers to. The UK is a firm supporter of Israel's normalisation ambitions, and of the Abraham Accords which are a historic milestone that bring us closer to the goal of shared prosperity throughout the region. We continue to encourage close regional cooperation in order to tackle

regional challenges and, as we look ahead to the future, to secure a meaningful political horizon for Israelis and Palestinians.

### ■ Middle East: Hamas

**Mr Jonathan Djanogly:** [\[3137\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent discussions he has had with his Middle Eastern counterparts on the threat to regional security and stability posed by Hamas.

**David Rutley:**

Since Hamas' abhorrent terrorist attacks on 7 October, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Minister of State for the Middle East have spoken to counterparts from more than 20 countries as part of extensive diplomatic efforts to prevent regional escalation and to sustain the prospect of peace and stability in the Middle East. On 22 November the Foreign Secretary hosted Islamic and Arab leaders in London to discuss the Israel/Gaza conflict and on 24 November, the Foreign Secretary travelled to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to engage with leaders from the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel. Ministers also continue to focus on opposing any attempts by malign actors to cause further escalation in the region.

### ■ Nigeria: Abduction

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[3606\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what information his Department holds on the number of British citizens that have been kidnapped in Nigeria in each of the last five years.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We are aware of low numbers of British nationals kidnapped in Nigeria over the past five years. It is difficult to provide a definitive figure because of differing recording practices across agencies and because not all kidnaps are reported to the Nigerian authorities or to the FCDO. Through the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership, we are providing mentoring and capacity-building support to Nigerian Police Force units to improve their anti-kidnap capacity, help reduce harm to victims, and hold those responsible to account.

### ■ South Sudan: Poverty

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[3611\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce poverty in South Sudan.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

In the 2023/24 financial year, the UK committed £28.1 million of humanitarian aid to displaced people in South Sudan. In 2022/23, our UK Government funding provided emergency food aid for an estimated 193,106 people and daily water and sanitation

provision for 83,311 people. We also fund crucial education and health programmes that deliver services to the most vulnerable.

## ■ Wang Yi

**Brendan O'Hara:**

[\[3631\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what information his Department holds on the treatment of Wang Yi in China.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Wang Yi was Pastor of the Early Rain Covenant Church, an unregistered Protestant house church in Chengdu. He was detained in December 2018 on the charge of 'inciting subversion of state power and illegal business operations.' On 30 December 2019 Chengdu Intermediate People's Court announced it had sentenced Wang to nine years in prison following a closed trial.

We continue to monitor the persecution of Christians for practicing their religion in China. The freedom to practise, change or share ones faith or belief without discrimination is a human right that all people should enjoy. The British government works with international organisations and networks to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief for all where it is threatened, including through the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe, and the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance.

More broadly, we coordinate with international partners to increase international attention on China's human rights violations. Most recently, we did in September 2023 in the G7 Foreign Ministers Communiqué.

## ■ Yemen: Peace and Security

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[3559\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for peace and security in the region of the hijacking on 19 November 2023 of the Galaxy Leader.

**David Rutley:**

The United Kingdom condemns the unlawful seizure of MV Galaxy Leader by the Houthis in the Red Sea and we call for the immediate, and unconditional, release of the ship and its crew.

Iran has long provided military and political support to the Houthis. We have made it clear to Iran that it bears responsibility for the actions of its proxies and partners. Iran must actively restrain these groups to prevent the conflict escalating across the region.

The UK is committed to ensuring the safety of shipping in the region, including through our contribution to the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) and Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****Catherine West:****[3877]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the (a) availability and (b) supply levels of covid-19 vaccine.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The United Kingdom has sufficient supply of vaccines to meet the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice for the current 2023 autumn booster campaign and for anticipated campaigns in 2024. All vaccines used in the UK to date are effective at protecting against severe disease from current COVID-19 variants.

There is regular contact between the UK Health Security Agency and vaccine manufacturers to ensure the future supply of vaccines to the UK. Advice on eligibility for COVID-19 vaccines and the choice of vaccine products for future campaigns is provided by the JCVI.

All those eligible for a COVID-19 booster as part of the current vaccination campaign and who are yet to come forward are strongly encouraged to do so.

**■ Diabetes and Obesity: Drugs****Martyn Day:****[3292]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that second generation GLP-1 weight management medications are being (a) sold and (b) marketed according to their licence specifications.

**Martyn Day:****[3294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has held discussions with the MHRA on preventing unlicensed online (a) marketing and (b) sale of second generation GLP-1 weight management medications.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) are members of the GLP1-RA Incident Management Team. Risk management in relation to the advertising and sale of these medicinal products is a standing item for discussion.

MHRA is obliged to consider complaints received about the advertisement of prescription-only medicines (POMs) to the public. Advertising investigations are carried out on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the circumstances of the particular case. Completed advertising investigations leading to correction of advertising materials are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/advertising-investigations-by-mhra>

MHRA works closely with other regulators to help ensure that the public are protected from the advertising of POMs. A joint enforcement operation is in place with the

Advertising Standards Authority to take targeted action against weight-loss treatment providers who use social media to promote POMs.

MHRA takes proportionate action, on a case-by-case basis, to enforce the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 in respect of the advertisement, sale, and supply of second-generation glucagon-like peptide 1 weight management medications. In cases of serious non-compliance, this can include undertaking formal criminal investigations and, where appropriate and evidentially supported, prosecution through the Crown Prosecution Service.

## ■ Donors: Health Education

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

[\[3207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the impact of funds dispersed by NHS Blood and Transplant to organisations for the purposes of raising awareness of organ, blood and stem cell donation.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) provides funds to organisations via two routes, the Community Grants Programme and special project grants. Both funds complement and enhance NHSBT's integrated marketing approach and are focused raising awareness, building trust with specific communities, and overcoming barriers to donation.

Since April 2023, The Community Grants Programme has provided around £700,000 of funding to 50 groups resulting in 304 initiatives, 134 events, 99 social media campaigns and 26 press and radio campaigns. The Community Grants Programme has contributed to increases in new Black heritage blood donors, increasing from 1% of new donors being from Black heritage backgrounds to 6% now. Overall, there was an increase from 31% to 48% of non-donors across ethnic backgrounds saying they would donate blood in July 2023.

## ■ General Practitioners: Bradford East

**Imran Hussain:**

[\[3851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many FTE GPs at each (a) main practice and (b) branch surgery in Bradford East constituency were (i) fully qualified and (ii) in training grades as of October 2023.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors in general practice at each main practice in Bradford East as of October 2023, with the data for branch practices being held at the main practice:

PRACTICE NAME	ALL DOCTORS IN GENERAL PRACTICE, FTE	FULLY QUALIFIED GENERAL PRACTITIONERS, FTE	GENERAL PRACTITIONERS IN TRAINING GRADE, FTE
Thornbury Medical Practice	2.5	2.5	0.0
Farrow Medical Centre	5.7	4.7	1.1
Idle Medical Centre	5.9	5.9	0.0
Little Horton Lane Medical Centre - Raja	1.9	1.9	0.0
Primrose Surgery	2.3	2.3	0.0
Bradford Moor Practice	1.0	1.0	0.0
Haigh Hall Medical Practice	2.6	2.6	0.0
The Ridge Medical Pract.	32.7	15.6	17.1
Moorside Surgery	5.0	4.0	1.1
The Avicenna Medical Practice	2.4	2.4	0.0
Ashcroft Surgery	14.2	6.8	7.4
New Otley Road Medical Practice	1.7	1.7	0.0
Valley View Surgery	2.0	2.0	0.0
Peel Park Surgery	2.3	2.3	0.0
Dr Gilkar	5.6	2.4	3.2
Moor Park Medical Practice	1.4	1.4	0.0
Eccleshill Village Surgery	1.0	1.0	0.0

## Notes:

1. Data does not include estimates for practices that did not provide fully valid staff records



2. Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) refers to the proportion of full time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work. 1 would indicate they work a full set of hours (37.5), 0.5 that they worked half time. In GPs in Training Grade contracts 1 FTE = 40 hours and in this table these FTEs have been converted to the standard wMDS measure of 1 FTE = 37.5 hours for consistency.
3. Figures shown do not include staff working in Prisons, Army Bases, Educational Establishments, Specialist Care Centres including Drug Rehabilitation Centres, Walk-In Centres and other alternative settings outside of traditional general practice such as urgent treatment centres and minor injury units.

## ■ Health Services and Social Services: Disability

**Henry Smith:**

[\[2857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has made an assessment of the levels of compliance by health and social care providers with the Accessible Information Standard.

**Maria Caulfield:**

National Health Service organisations and publicly funded social care providers must comply with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) to meet the communication needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss. NHS England has completed a review of the AIS to help ensure that everyone's communication needs are met in health and care provision. The review considered the effectiveness of the current AIS, how the standard is implemented and enforced in practice, and identified recommendations for improvement.

One of the aims of the review was to strengthen assurance of implementation of the AIS, and a self-assessment framework has been developed to support providers of NHS and social care services to measure their performance against the AIS and develop improvement action plans to address gaps in implementation. The self-assessment framework has also been designed to help the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to gain insight into people's experiences and whether their accessible communication needs are being met, and help CQC better understand organisational performance and to include that in the CQC assessment framework for provider organisations.

Following publication of the revised standard, NHS England will continue work to support its implementation with awareness raising, communication and engagement and updated e-learning modules on the AIS to ensure NHS staff are better aware of the standard and their roles and responsibilities in implementing it.

## ■ Long Covid: Medical Treatments

**Keir Mather:**

[\[3396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to improve treatment plans for long covid.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government has invested more than £50 million in 22 research projects for post-COVID-19 conditions to improve understanding of the diagnosis and the effectiveness of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies and interventions, as well as to evaluate clinical care. We are also monitoring research being undertaken internationally. The National Institute for Health and Care Research welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including post-COVID-19 conditions.

■ **Mental Health Services****Christian Wakeford:**[\[4302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to increase access to mental health services.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We remain committed to the aims of the NHS Long Term Plan, investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year by March 2024 to expand and transform mental health services in England. This extra funding will enable an extra two million people to be treated by mental health services in the National Health Service by March 2024.

We expect integrated care boards to continue to meet the Mental Health Investment Standard by increasing their investment in mental health services in line with their overall increase in funding for the year.

■ **Mental Health Services: Men****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has taken steps to increase support for young men suffering from mental health conditions in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We remain committed to the aims of the NHS Long Term Plan, investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year in expanding and transforming mental health services in England, including in Romford constituency. This extra funding will enable an extra two million people, including young men, to be treated by mental health services within the National Health Service by March 2024. We expect integrated care boards to continue to meet the Mental Health Investment Standard by increasing their investment in mental health services in line with their overall increase in funding for the year.

The new suicide prevention strategy for England, including Romford constituency, is a five-year strategy which sets out the Government's ambition for suicide prevention. Many of the actions within the new strategy will support suicide prevention in men by addressing the common risk factors for this group, such as a history of drug or alcohol misuse, family or relationships problems, and social isolation and loneliness.

**■ Mental Health Services: Selby and Ainsty****Keir Mather:****[3400]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps she has taken to reduce the waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services in Selby and Ainsty constituency.

**Maria Caulfield:**

It is the responsibility of the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board to make available appropriate provision to meet the mental health and other care needs of the local population in Selby and Ainsty.

Nationally, we are supporting the expansion and transformation of mental health services for children and young people through the NHS Long Term Plan, as part of the accompanying investment of at least an extra £2.3 billion a year by March 2024, with the aim for an additional 345,000 children and young people to be able to get the mental health support they need. We also provided an additional £79 million for 2021/22 to allow around 22,500 more children and young people to access community mental health services and around 2,000 more to access eating disorder services.

We continue to roll out mental health support teams in schools and colleges across the country offering early support to children experiencing anxiety, depression, and other common mental health issues.

In addition, the National Health Service is working towards implementing five new waiting time standards for people requiring mental healthcare in both accident and emergency and in the community, to ensure timely access to the most appropriate, high-quality support. Four of these include children and young people.

**■ Mental Health Services: Warwick and Leamington****Matt Western:****[3894]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding per adult was provided for mental health services in Warwick and Leamington constituency in (a) 2019 and (b) 2022.

**Matt Western:****[3908]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding per child and adolescent was provided for CAMHS mental health services in Warwick and Leamington constituency in (a) 2019 and (b) 2022.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The information requested is not collected centrally.

## ■ Midazolam

**Andrew Bridgen:**

[\[3234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the guidance by NICE entitled Covid-19 rapid guideline: managing symptoms including at the end of life in the community, NG163, published on 3 April 2020, by what process (a) that guidance was commissioned and (b) the NHS decided (i) to procure Midazolam for use in (A) end-of-life and (B) other patient care and (ii) the quantity of Midazolam it would procure in each of the last four years.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline NG163 published in 2020 was commissioned as part of a programme to provide rapid guidance on the management of affected patients with COVID-19. Several of NICE's COVID-19 rapid guidelines were incorporated into a single guideline for the management of COVID-19 in children and adults (NG191), which was last updated in June 2023.

Early in the pandemic, NHS England convened a National Clinical Group comprising senior specialist clinicians and relevant specialist pharmacists to develop priority medicines lists for critical care, end of life care and antibiotics and these were kept under review as the pandemic and subsequent clinical knowledge evolved. As part of this process, midazolam was identified as a priority medicine for use in both critical care as an alternative to propofol in the sedatives category, and end of life care as a first line medicine in the anxiety category.

The following table shows the quantity of midazolam procured by the National Health Service in England using NHS England procurement frameworks for use in secondary care in each of the last four years to 2023/24:

FINANCIAL YEAR	QUANTITY OF PACKS
2020/21	587,003
2021/22	482,458
2022/23	415,512
2023/24	229,693

It is not possible to differentiate between Midazolam use in end of life and other patient care. This data excludes procurement for use in primary and community care.

In primary health care, procurement is undertaken by retail pharmacies on an individual basis, based on their perception of future demand needs or in direct response to prescriptions received from patients. There is no centralised procurement process for primary care and therefore there is no information that is relevant to the question asked.

Health is largely a devolved matter, and decisions on the procurement of medicines in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are therefore a matter for the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive respectively.

## ■ Pharmacy

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[2917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS centres for dental development, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of NHS centres for pharmacy development.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

*[Holding answer 27 November 2023]:* Training for pharmacists has recently been reviewed. Training for pharmacists is best undertaken in the multidisciplinary settings in which they will work.

As part of implementing these revised standards, NHS England is working with Schools of Pharmacy to support the introduction of cross-sector clinical placements and is exploring how to optimise the distribution of training posts. Clinical placements aim to give students supervised practice opportunities in a range of settings and experience of working as part of multidisciplinary teams, which will be key to the development of our pharmacy workforce.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[2922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she is taking steps to improve (a) the training of pharmacists on and (b) their access to new drug therapies.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

As a regulated profession, pharmacists have a professional responsibility to keep up to date and must complete a revalidation process with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) annually to provide assurance of competence. In 2021, the GPhC published new learning outcomes for the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists, including learning outcomes that specifically relate to novel and new therapies. To support this outcome, NHS England commissioned new learning resources within the e-learning for healthcare provisions.

## ■ Primary Health Care: Mid Bedfordshire

**Alistair Strathern:**

[\[4026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of primary care funding for Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2023]:* The Department provides funding to NHS England through financial directions. NHS England allocates funding to integra for primary care taking account of national contracts, for example, the GP contract, the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework and the dentistry contract. National contracts are determined in consultation with the relevant sectors.

**■ Respiratory Diseases: China****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[3527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the potential implications for her policies of the reported increase in incidence of respiratory diseases in China.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The UK Health Security Agency is closely monitoring the situation in China and will continue to work with international partners to assess the emerging information as it becomes available.

**■ Special Educational Needs: Neurodiversity****Rachael Maskell:**[\[3505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on ensure that the evidence submitted to an education, health and care plan by a clinician carries appropriate weight when determining resource requirements.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions on a wide range of matters with Cabinet colleagues including the Secretary of State for Education.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working closely with the Department for Education to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND), receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time. We are doing this through working together to implement the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, which was published 2 March 2023 . The improvement plan includes actions to reform the education, health and care plan system.

**■ Suicide Prevention Fund****Alex Sobel:**[\[3935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she had had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of extending the funding of the Suicide Prevention Grand Fund.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No such discussions have taken place. The process for assessing all applications made to the Suicide Prevention Grant Fund is still ongoing.

The fund attracted a huge amount of interest from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, from small, community-led organisations at local level to large national level organisations. We received over 1800 applications overall, covering a range of activities aimed at preventing suicides. We are currently assessing bids and we aim to inform applicants on whether they have been successful by the end of the year.

**■ Suicide: Health Services****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has taken steps to increase support for suicide prevention services in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government is delivering on its commitments on mental health. We are investing at least £2.3 billion of additional funding a year by March 2024 to expand and transform mental health services within the National Health Service, so an extra two million people, including in Romford constituency, can get mental health support.

We are investing £57 million in suicide prevention, and all local areas, including Romford constituency, now have suicide prevention plans to address the specific needs of their populations.

The new suicide prevention strategy for England is a five-year strategy which sets out the Government's ambition for suicide prevention. It is a multi-sector and cross-government suicide strategy, with actions from a wide range of organisations that will be delivered over the next few years.

The Department has also established a £10 million Suicide Prevention Grant Fund to run from 2023 to March 2025 to support voluntary, community or social enterprise organisations to deliver suicide prevention activity.

**■ Surrogacy****Stephen Kinnoch:**[\[4188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans she has to implement the recommendations of the Law Commission's report Building families through surrogacy: a new law, HC1236, on (a) establishing a new pathway for surrogacy in which intended parents can be recognised as legal parents from birth, when supported by Regulated Surrogacy Organisations, (b) establishing a surrogacy register to enable people born through surrogacy to find out about their origins, (c) removing the need for surrogates' partners to consent to parental orders and (d) introducing up to date guidance on what counts as a reasonable expense within a surrogacy agreement.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government is giving consideration to all the recommendations in the Law Commission report, Building families through surrogacy: a new law, and will publish a full response in due course.

**■ Tobacco: Sales****Gareth Johnson:**[\[3461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether adult smokers will be required to present an identification document to retailers after the introduction of the generational ban on smoking.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Smoking is responsible for around 80,000 deaths a year in the United Kingdom. Smoking causes around one in four cancer deaths in the UK and is responsible for just over 70% of all lung cancer deaths. No other consumer product kills up to two-thirds of its users. Smoking costs our country £17 billion a year and puts a huge burden on the National Health Service. Almost every minute of every day someone is admitted to hospital because of smoking, and up to 75,000 general practitioner appointments attributed to smoking each month, constituting over 100 appointments every hour.

This is why the Government is planning to create a smokefree generation by bringing forward legislation so that children turning 14 years old or younger this year will never be legally sold tobacco products. As per existing age of sale legislation, smokers will be required to produce identification if retailers are uncertain that they are above the legal smoking age.

**■ Vaccination****Catherine West:**[\[3029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish a national vaccination strategy.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Development of a vaccine strategy remains under review given the evolving understanding from the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the existing seasonal flu and the 12 national immunisation programmes.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Hate Crime: Research****Caroline Lucas:**[\[3174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what research his Department has commissioned on the (a) impact on communities and (b) economic cost of hate crime in the past three years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We keep our approach to tackling hate crime under review, taking into account the international evidence base and our internal research. Over the last three years we have undertaken internal research and commissioned external research from IPSOS UK and RAND Europe where necessary.



**LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES****■ Agriculture: Land Use****Greg Smith:****[3362]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the acreage of farm land used for (a) housing development, (b) commercial development, (c) solar panels and (d) battery storage in each of the last five years.

**Lee Rowley:**

Figures for 2019 onwards are derived using a revised methodology and are expressed as three-year totals. They are not directly comparable with figures for earlier years. Accordingly, the available information for the last three years for which figures are available for (a) and (b) is set out in the table below. Separate figures for (c) and (d) are not available.

Period <sup>(b)</sup>	AMOUNT OF LAND CHANGING USE (ACRES)	
	<sup>(A)</sup>	
	Change of use:	
	Agriculture to residential	Agriculture to Industry and commerce
2019 to 2022 <sup>(c)</sup>	9,854	3,168

Source: *DLUHC Land use change - hectarage statistics, (part of) Live Table P361 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-change-hectarage-2019-to-2022>*

Notes:

(a) Figures are published in hectares and have been converted into acres for this table.

**■ Business Premises: Change of Use****Ben Everitt:****[3374]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that commercial premises that are converted to residential use provide an adequate level of (a) affordable housing and (b) homes for social rent.

**Ben Everitt:****[3375]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Local Authority Housing Fund on the

number of (a) commercial buildings that have been converted to residential use and (b) long-term empty homes that have been converted to affordable housing.

**Lee Rowley:**

Commercial premises can be converted to residential use under permitted development rights. Under current guidance, contributions for affordable housing should not be sought for permitted development.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (the 2023 Act) introduces powers to create a new Infrastructure Levy which will reform the existing system of developer contributions in England. It will be possible for the Levy to capture land value uplift associated with permitted development, subject to provision that is made in regulations. Under our current proposals, the Infrastructure Levy will capture value uplift associated with the change of use of commercial buildings to residential use, whilst recognising the need to preserve the viability of brownfield development schemes. We are currently analysing responses to our recent technical consultation which sought views on this proposed approach.

If the Levy is charged on development it can be used to fund social housing within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, and any other description of housing that Infrastructure Levy regulations may specify. This is set out in new section 204A(4) (in Schedule 12 of the 2023 Act). This includes Social Rent homes and Affordable Rent homes.

Following the conclusion of the first two rounds of the Local Authority Housing Fund in 2024, an evaluation will be conducted which will include an assessment on the delivery routes that participating local authorities have taken.

■ **Levelling Up Fund**

**Angela Rayner:**

**[3843]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November to Question 2903 on Levelling Up Fund, which projects which met or exceeded the 74.25 score threshold in England and Wales and 72.25 score threshold in Scotland were not selected due to the application of the relevant caps on projects by (a) local authority, (b) ITL1 region and (c) ITL2 region.

**Jacob Young:**

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [2903](#) on 27th November 2023. The published methodology note sets out the robust process that was followed to select bids. In total, the methodology resulted in 55 projects provisionally selected for funding; no further bids were or added or removed by ministers.

**NORTHERN IRELAND**■ **Lough Neagh: Ownership****Claire Hanna:****[4000]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will take steps to move the (a) bed and (b) banks of Lough Neagh into public ownership.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The damage being caused to the environment, wildlife and local businesses due to the deteriorating situation around Lough Neagh is intolerable.

However, the administration of Lough Neagh is a matter that is fully devolved to Northern Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The absence of a functioning Executive in Northern Ireland is exacerbating the severe challenges associated with managing serious environmental issues such as this.

The Government are doing all we can to engage with the party leaders to support a return to stable government so that these important issues can be addressed by those elected to do so.