



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 4 December 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:22 P.M., 04 December 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Companies House: Disclosure of Information

**Dame Margaret Hodge:**

[\[4031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many applications to restrict publication of personal data under section 790ZG of the Companies Act 2006 Companies House were (a) received and (b) granted in each of the last three years.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The table below sets out the number of applications received to restrict the publication of personal data under section 790ZG of the Companies Act 2006

YEAR	APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	APPLICATIONS GRANTED
2021	42	10
2022	72	25
2023	95	7

There is 1 application currently pending. These figures have been manually collated. This is supplied as management information; it is unaudited and is subject to change. It should, therefore, be used for indicative purposes only.

**Dame Margaret Hodge:**

[\[4032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many refusals by Companies House to grant an application to restrict publication of personal data under section 790ZG of the Companies Act 2006 were subject to (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful judicial review in each of the last three years.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

There have been no judicial reviews against Companies House for refusal to grant applications to restrict personal data under section 790ZG of the Companies Act 2006 in the last three years.

#### ■ Defence: Space Technology

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[4156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to page 34 of the National Space Strategy, published in September 2021, what steps her Department is taking to ensure robust controls on downstream activities that could potentially be used to support military operations of concern.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The UK seeks to prevent the proliferation of military and dual-use technologies that risk being misused in space through a robust system of export controls.

We rigorously assess every export licence application on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (the Criteria). We draw on all available information, including reports from NGOs and our overseas network, ensuring that UK exports are consistent with our national and international obligations and standards.

We will not grant an export licence where to do so would be inconsistent with the Criteria.

**Foreign Investment in UK: Northern Ireland**

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[4594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department plans to host a further investment summit in Northern Ireland.

**Greg Hands:**

The Northern Ireland Investment Summit was approved by our current Prime Minister when he was the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Currently there are no plans for another Summit, but we are working to ensure a strong legacy from it, including linked activity such as the No. 10 hosted Venture Capital Roundtable, aimed at encouraging venture capital investment into Northern Ireland.

We also offered support for Joe Kennedy III's incoming mission to Northern Ireland in October 2023 (US Special Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland).

**Freeports**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[4105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's publication entitled Inward investment in to freeports: December 2021 to November 2023, published on 24 November 2023, if she will detail which freeports the (a) 1,421 jobs and (b) £1,278 million of capital expenditure were attributed to in that publication.

**Greg Hands:**

The investments making up the totals published on 24 November 2023 are spread across the 12 Freeports but details of individual investments are commercially sensitive. This means that publishing the specific location associated with these investments risks identifying such commercially sensitive information. The limitation prevents the Department for Business and Trade to publish further detail about the investments.



**Emily Thornberry:**[\[4106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's publication entitled Inward investment in to freeports: December 2021 to November 2023, published on 24 November 2023, what are the equivalent estimates for the (a) number of jobs created and (b) amount of capital expenditure generated as a result of investment by UK resident entities over the period covered by that publication.

**Greg Hands:**

The publication entitled Inward investment in to freeports: December 2021 to November 2023, published on 24 November 2023 confirms verified foreign investment into Freeports. The Department for Business and Trade can only provide verification for foreign direct investment into the UK, not domestic investment, so we are unable to provide equivalent estimates.

■ **Gift Aid****Lilian Greenwood:**[\[4135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill on the ability of charities to claim gift aid on membership subscriptions.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The purpose of the subscriptions chapter in the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill is to protect consumers from harm caused by unwanted subscription contracts, amounting to £1.6 billion per year.

Generally, charities will only be in scope to the extent that, in the course of their business, they enter into auto-renewing subscription contracts with consumers for the supply of goods, service or digital content in return for payment by the consumer. The Government understands the importance of Gift Aid to charities and officials are engaging with relevant stakeholders and HM Revenue and Customs to ensure the two regulatory frameworks work effectively.

■ **Greensill: Redundancy Pay****Nick Smith:**[\[4382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to question 183281 on Greensill: Redundancy Pay, what estimate he has made of the amount of (a) statutory redundancy pay, (b) statutory holiday pay, (c) statutory notice pay and (d) the protective award settlement paid by from the public purse to former Greensill Capital employees since the collapse of that company.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Redundancy Payments Service (RPS) is dealing with two cases: Greensill Capital Management Company (UK) Limited and its subsidiary, Greensill Capital (UK) Limited.

In respect of Greensill Capital Management Company (UK) Limited the Redundancy Payments Service (RPS) has paid out the following statutory payments to date:

- Redundancy Pay £188,920
- Holiday Pay £321,639
- Loss of Notice Pay £269,578
- Protective Award £1,228,440

In respect of the subsidiary company, Greensill Capital (UK) Limited, to date no claims have yet been received and no payments made.

## ■ Investment

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[4152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Prime Minister unveils £29.5 billion of investment at historic Global Investment Summit, published on 27 November 2023, how much and what proportion of the funding will be invested in each region of the UK.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Global Investment Summit was a roaring success, unveiling £29.5 billion of investment, creating 12,000 jobs in some of the fastest-growing sectors of the UK, including data centres to support AI and life sciences.

Many of the projects announced are nationwide in their application so we cannot forecast regional spend of the combined investment total. We are working with investors to ensure the projects deliver the maximum economic benefit.

The investment announced on the day is a colossal vote of confidence in the UK and this government, and the benefits will be felt across the whole of the UK.

## ■ National Security Strategic Investment Fund

**Liam Byrne:** [\[3591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much funding was made available through the British Business Bank's National Security Strategic Investment Fund in each industrial sector in each year since its establishment.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

As of June 2023, the National Security Strategic Investment Fund (NSSIF) has committed £220m to British Business Bank backed funds, of which £92m has been invested in 217 companies across twelve areas of interest. Private sector investors have invested £718m alongside NSSIF. The sectoral breakdown across the twelve areas of interest is as follows: Audio and Visual Processing £1.1m, Biorisk and Medtech £10.8m, Commercial Space, Platforms and Robotics £1.6m, Computational Behavioural Analysis £1.3m, Cyber Security £14.0m, Data Analytics and AI £28.6m, Financial Technologies £21.7m, Identity Technologies £6.8m, IOT and the Evolving

Environment £1.0m, Novel Data Transport £0.1m, Quantum Technologies £2.1m, Sensors, Novel Materials and Power Sources £2.9m

### ■ **Postage Stamps: Prices**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[4164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department has had recent discussions with (a) Ofcom and (b) Royal Mail on increases in the price of postage stamps.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government's objective continues to be ensuring the provision of a sustainable, accessible and affordable universal postal service.

As a private business, Royal Mail sets the prices for its services and the Government does not have a role in its day-to-day commercial decisions. However, Royal Mail must work within the regulatory framework set by Ofcom, the independent regulator, including the current second-class price cap that prevents second class post rising above inflation ensuring a basic affordable universal service is available to all. Ofcom has consulted on proposals for safeguard caps applicable from April 2024 and will announce its decision in the coming months.

### ■ **Postal Services: Colchester**

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:**

[\[4029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of Royal Mail's postal service in the CO postcode area.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

I am aware that Royal Mail continues to have particular service challenges in some postcode areas. I note that Royal Mail management accepts its performance needs to be much better and has started to address this, for example, by recruiting an additional 3,000 postmen and women so far with a further 500 permanent delivery positions a week going forwards.

Ofcom sets and monitors Royal Mail's service standards and has powers to investigate and take enforcement action where there are reasonable grounds for concluding Royal Mail has failed to achieve its obligations. I note that the regulator recently fined the business £5.6m for failing to meet its service delivery targets in 2022-23.

### ■ **Royal Mail: Universal Service Obligation**

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:**

[\[4030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of Ofcom's enforcement of the postal services obligation on Royal Mail.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Ofcom is the designated independent regulator for the postal sector and the Government has no role in its regulatory decisions. It is for Ofcom to decide how to respond should Royal Mail fail to meet its obligations and I note that the regulator recently fined the business £5.6m for failing to meet its service delivery targets in 2022-23.

**Trade Agreements: Canada****Gareth Thomas:** [\[4321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether negotiating objectives for a trade deal with Canada include the option of retaining an entry price system which could require certain types of fruit and vegetables to have a pre-determined import price or have a tariff applied.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The EU's Entry Price System was removed by the UK with the introduction of the UK Global Tariff in 2021. Market access negotiations between Canada and the UK are ongoing.

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[4322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her negotiating objectives for a new trade deal with Canada include access to cheese tariff rate quotas similar for those in the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between the EU and Canada.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

Negotiations with Canada on market access are ongoing. Both countries share the view that free and fair trade is good for economies, good for business and good for consumers. The UK's key aim is to secure comprehensive access for UK agricultural goods into the Canadian market through the reduction or elimination of tariffs.

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[4323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether negotiations on a UK-Canada trade deal will include an extension to the rules of origin provision and annual origin quotas for certain agricultural products.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

Negotiations with Canada on this issue are ongoing. The UK is seeking to develop simple and modern rules of origin that reflect UK industry requirements and consider existing, as well as future, supply chains supported by predictable and low-cost administrative arrangements.

**Trade Agreements: Montenegro****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[3748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had recent discussions with her counterpart in Montenegro on a free trade agreement.

**Greg Hands:**

Montenegro is a valued trading partner and work continues towards a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which would include commitments on trade.

■ **Unpaid Work****David Linden:**[\[4509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what data her Department holds on the number of people who have undertaken unpaid trial shifts in (a) England and Wales and (b) Scotland in each of the last five years.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Minimum wage legislation prohibits unpaid work trials that are excessive and not part of a genuine recruitment process. An unpaid trial work period lasting a few hours may be reasonable and legal. This is because the main purpose would be to test the individual, and what is done would probably have little or no other value to the employer. However, an unpaid trial lasting more than one day is probably illegal in all but exceptional circumstances.

DBT does not hold information about the number of people who have undertaken unpaid trial shifts in England, Wales and Scotland in each of the last five years.

If someone has undertaken an unpaid work trial and thinks they should have been paid NMW, they can call the ACAS helpline or make a complaint to HMRC.

**CABINET OFFICE**■ **Allergies: Death****Andy Slaughter:**[\[4103\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths from allergies there have been in each year since 2000, by type of allergy.

**John Glen:**

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 28 November is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. [4103 Dataset](#) [PQ4103 dataset.xlsx]
2. [UK Statistics Authority](#) [PQ4103.pdf]

■ **Cabinet Office: ICT****Matt Rodda:**[\[3543\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on (a) IT infrastructure in total, (b) legacy IT infrastructure and (c) IT infrastructure that was first purchased in 2013 or earlier in each of the last three years.

**Alex Burghart:**

(a) As of 21 November 2023, the IT infrastructure spend is £12 million in the last 3 years. The figure includes infrastructure (private/public cloud and data centre) contracts that the Cabinet Office has direct contracts for or with; and excludes Software-as-a-service (SaaS) or Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) products and solutions, that the infrastructure is owned by the supplier.

(b) As of 21 November 2023, £2 million has been spent on what is considered as Legacy IT in the last 3 years.

(c) The Cabinet office does not have any IT infrastructure first purchased in 2013 or earlier on record.

The Cabinet Office is actively managing their legacy estates, and is seeking to exit legacy systems via existing or new change plans.

**■ Civil Service: Consultants****John Redwood:**[\[3074\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he is taking steps to reduce the use of external consultants by the civil service.

**Alex Burghart:**

The use of consultants provides short term, specialist advisory services for specific engagements. Consultants provide niche skills that are not required full time within the Civil Service.

Every department is responsible for their own use of consultancy with governance, assurance and control over budgets to ensure value for money.

**■ Coronavirus: Fraud and Procurement****Dame Nia Griffith:**[\[4367\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) current and (b) former government ministers have been interviewed by the (i) National Crime Agency, (ii) Serious Fraud Office and (iii) National Investigation Service as part of investigations relating to covid-19 (A) procurement and (B) fraud as of 29 November 2023.

**Alex Burghart:**

This information is not held by the Cabinet Office. I can, however, reassure the Honourable Lady that the Government will always assist with any investigations these agencies may be undertaking.

**■ Emergencies: Voluntary Organisations****Navendu Mishra:**[\[4290\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's publication entitled The UK Government Resilience Framework, published in December 2022, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector in participating in local resilience forums.

**John Glen:**

The Government recognises the value that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) have in improving UK resilience. The UK Government Resilience Framework commits to deepening and strengthening relationships with the sector to maximise their contribution at the local and national levels.

Today (4th December 2023), the Deputy Prime Minister has provided an update on progress made since the publication of the Framework. Steps taken include the voluntary and community sector's membership of the UK Resilience Forum chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. The forum brings together national, regional and local government; private and voluntary sectors and other interested parties to consider risk; provide challenge and insight and help align emergency preparedness activities. The Cabinet Office hosts a Voluntary and Community Sector Strategic Discussion Forum to discuss opportunities for greater alignment in more detail. We have also published the 2023 National Risk Register which provides an increasingly transparent resource for relevant bodies including the voluntary and community sector to prepare for the risks to the UK.

To make it easier for more people to volunteer to help before, during and after an emergency, we will also be creating an online volunteering hub. This will be a single place to showcase existing resilience-related volunteering opportunities across the public, voluntary and charitable sectors, locally and nationally. More details can be found in the annual statement and associated publication in the Library.

**■ Government Departments: Consultants****Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[4171\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Government spent on external recruitment consultants in each of the financial years (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22, and (c) 2022-23.

**Alex Burghart:**

This information is not centrally held. Every department is responsible for their own consultancy spend with governance, assurance and control over budgets to ensure value for money.

**■ Migration****Neil O'Brien:**[\[4250\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) gross and (b) net long-term migration was each year from July 1993, broken down by arrivals by (i) asylum and (ii) other humanitarian routes.

**John Glen:**

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 28 November is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. [4250 dataset](#) [PQ4250\_Neil\_OBrien\_Table.xlsx]
2. [UK Statistics Authority](#) [301123\_Sir Ian\_Diamond\_UKSA\_Neil\_OBrien\_4250 .pdf]

**Smart Devices: China**

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** [\[3276\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the National Security Council has carried out a national security risk assessment of the potential threat posed by Chinese-made cellular internet of things modules.

**Alex Burghart:**

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** [\[3278\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of the use of Chinese-made cellular internet of things modules in (a) government (i) properties and (ii) services and (b) national infrastructure; and what steps he is taking to mitigate potential risks of the use of those modules.

**Alex Burghart:**

I refer the Hon Member for Glasgow South to my answer on 26 July 2023 (UIN 194823).

**Three: Vodafone Group**

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[4433\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timetable is for the Investment Security Unit to decide on the proposed merger between Three and Vodafone.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[4434\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has consulted with other Government departments on national security risks posed by the proposed merger between Three and Vodafone, in line with the Investment Security Unit's role of coordinating expertise across Government.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[4435\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed merger between Three and Vodafone on national security.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Deputy Prime Minister, as Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office, takes decisions under the National Security and Investment Act 2021 in a quasi-judicial capacity. The Investment Security Unit coordinates expertise from across



Government so that the Secretary of State may make decisions based on the evidence. It would not be appropriate to comment on individual cases.

## ■ Veterans: Finance

**John Healey:**

[\[4039\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2023 to Question 3092 on Veterans: Finance, whether the £10m funding for the Veterans' Places, Pathways, and People Programme is drawn from his Department's pre-existing budget.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The £10 million of funding for the Veterans' Places, Pathways, and People Programme is additional money and is not from the Department's pre-existing budget. This funding will be used to increase support to a significant community of vulnerable veterans throughout the UK, and will be spent over three financial years.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

## ■ BBC: Journalism

**John McDonnell:**

[\[4326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the BBC Board on the future of investigative journalism in the BBC's programming.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Secretary of State meets the BBC regularly to discuss a wide range of issues.

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the Government. While it is up to the BBC to decide how it delivers its services, the Government is clear that the BBC must make sure it continues to provide the news content required to deliver its remit, as set out in the Charter and Agreement.

The BBC's first Public Purpose in the Charter is to provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them. The Charter also makes clear that the BBC has a vital role to play in enabling all audiences to engage fully with major local, regional, national and global issues, and participate in the democratic process, at all levels, as active and informed citizens.

The Government expects Ofcom, as the BBC regulator, to ensure the BBC is held to account in delivering its public service duties.

## ■ Culture: Rural Areas

**David Morris:**

[\[3838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what funding is available for arts and culture in rural areas.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, HM Government is committed to ensuring that funding for arts and culture is more fairly distributed across the country. Arts Council England's 2023–26 investment programme (the 'National Portfolio'), worth over £444 million per year, has seen investment to cultural organisations in rural areas increase to £44.6 million, benefiting 110 organisations across the country.

In local authority areas identified as predominantly rural, there has been a 22% increase in investment in National Portfolio Organisations and Investment Principles Support Organisations. Urban areas with significant rural portions have seen an increase of 37%.

Cultural opportunities are also provided in rural areas by organisations based in neighbouring urban areas – for instance, through touring. Public library services in the Arts Council's National Portfolio with a base in urban areas are also important to cultural opportunities in rural locations. The National Rural Touring Forum has also had its funding increased to help build capacity in this important part of the sector.

Arts Council England has also supported approximately 30 Cultural Compacts across England – including in rural and Levelling Up priority areas – and has provided these existing Compacts with further funding to build capacity and long-term cross-sector relationships. (Cultural Compacts are partnerships between the cultural and heritage sectors, Local Authorities, and wider local partners such as universities, health agencies, and the private sector, with the aim of enhancing creatives' contribution to local development.)

Additionally, arts and cultural organisations in rural areas are able to access Arts Council England's project grants, an open access programme for arts, libraries and museums projects. This supports thousands of individual artists and community and cultural organisations, with over £105 million of funding awarded in 2022/23.

Meanwhile, DCMS's £86 million Museum Estate and Development Fund has supported several museums in rural areas, including The Food Museum in Stowmarket which presents the agricultural history of East Anglia, the industrial museums Papplewick Pumping Station and Coldharbour Mill, Shandy Hall, the rural home of the writer Laurence Sterne, and Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum.

**■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Consultants****Julian Knight:****[3490]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department has spent on outside consultancy fees in the 2022-23 financial year.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The annual report and accounts 2022-23 (note 4.3), which covers the spend referenced, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcms-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>

## ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Public Expenditure

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[3579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 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.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement. At Spring Budget, the government announced the trailblazer devolution deals with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and West Midlands Combined Authorities (WMCA), which included a commitment to introduce single funding settlements at the next Spending Review for these combined authorities.

At Autumn Statement, the Government published a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GMCA and WMCA, setting out how the single settlements will work. The government also announced an ambitious new 'level 4' of the devolution framework.

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

## ■ Film: Romford

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[3747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of allocating financial support to the Romford Film Festival.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

The Government recognises the significant cultural and economic value of cinemas, and the important role that festivals play in bringing communities and filmmakers together. Public support for UK film festivals is provided through a number of funding mechanisms, including the British Film Institute, the Government's lead body for film and the moving image, and Local Authorities. For this reason, we have not made our own assessment of the potential merits of allocating financial support to the Romford Film Festival.

The BFI National Lottery Audience Projects Fund provides support to ambitious, audience-facing independent UK and international film and broader screen activity of national scale. The fund supports film exhibitors, distributors, and other organisations delivering audience development activity with multi-year and short-term projects as well as research and development. Applications to the fund are accepted all year round but must be received 16 weeks before the activity is due to start. Information including the fund's eligibility criteria can be found on the [BFI's website](#) :

The organisers of Romford Film Festival may also wish to engage with [Film Hub London](#) to understand what relevant support is available. Film Hub London is part of the [BFI Film Audience Network](#) (BFI FAN), a nationwide network of exhibitors taking cultural cinema to their communities. The Network is aimed at boosting film audiences across the UK, particularly for specialised and independent British film.

## ■ **Gambling: Regulation**

**Philip Davies:**

[R] [\[4645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what systems the Gambling Commission has in place to (a) monitor, (b) close down and (c) take other action against illegal gambling sites.

**Stuart Andrew:**

As set out in the response to WPQ 2835, the best available estimates suggest the black market accounts for less than 2.5% of bets in this country. The Gambling Commission takes a risk-based approach to the illegal provision of gambling facilities. The 2021 fees uplift increased investment in how the Commission monitors and tackles the black market. It operates on a system of escalating interventions where it identifies unlicensed operators interacting with British customers, from initial cease and desist letters up to more robust disruption. This includes working with internet search and service providers to delist illegal operators and restrict access, working with payment providers and financial institutions to cut illegal operators off from payments, and working with software providers to prevent access to popular products and games.

As we committed to in the white paper, we are also legislating through the Criminal Justice Bill to give stronger powers to the Gambling Commission to take down criminal gambling websites, and plan to reform the Commission's fee structure to give it greater flexibility to respond to emerging risks, such as black market gambling.

## ■ **Sports: Sponsorship**

**Gerald Jones:**

[\[4486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what progress her Department has made on developing a sponsorship code of conduct that all sporting bodies must adhere to when accepting sponsorship from the gambling industry.

**Stuart Andrew:**

DCMS has been working with representatives from the sports sector, including sports governing bodies, to agree a new code of conduct for socially responsible gambling sponsorship. We hope to make further announcements once the code is finalised and agreed early next year.

## ■ Television Licences: Fees and Charges

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[4429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what her Department's criteria are for determining a rise in the television licence fee.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

We agreed a fair settlement with the BBC that will see the licence fee remain at £159 until 2024 to protect licence fee payers from inflationary pressures, and then rise in line with inflation until the end of 2027 when the current Charter is due for renewal. Exactly how a future increase would be calculated is yet to be confirmed.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[4090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 20 June 2023 to Question 189763, how many rounds have been successfully fired from Capability Drop 3 Ajax vehicles during vehicle movement.

**James Cartlidge:**

During Validation and Verification trials in Kirkcudbright, 2,639 40mm Main Armament Rounds and 12,080 7.62mm Chaingun rounds have been fired on the move. All Ajax live firing has been conducted on CD1 base platforms fitted with CD3 turrets.

### ■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[4089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2023 to Question 3447, how many of the 143 Ajax vehicles delivered to his Department by 1 January 2023 were (a) Capability Drop 1, (b) Capability Drop 2 and (c) other vehicles.

**James Cartlidge:**

Of the 143 Ajax vehicles delivered to the Ministry of Defence by 1 January 2023, 59 were CD1 standard and 84 were CD2 standard.

### ■ Armed Forces: Holiday Leave

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[4261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of Armed Forces personnel sold annual leave in financial year 2023-24.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer to 109823 answered on 20 December 2022. I can confirm that the answer is unchanged, uniformed Armed Forces personnel do not have the ability to "sell" annual leave and therefore none have sold leave in the financial year 2023-24.

**Attachments:**

1. [Armed Forces: Holiday Leave](#) [109823 - Armed Forces Holiday Leave.docx]

**■ Armed Forces: Housing**

**Maria Eagle:** [3111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of single living accommodation facilities do not meet the new minimum standard as of 22 November 2023.

**James Cartlidge:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on Tuesday 27 November 2023 to Question 3110.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-22/3110>

**Helen Morgan:** [3384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 November 2023 on Service Family Accommodation and Winter Planning, HCWS28, for which bases his Department plans to buy 176 homes over the next 12 months.

**James Cartlidge:**

176 homes are being purchased at Imjin Barracks, Gloucestershire.

All 176 homes are new builds and will be constructed to the Net Zero Carbon standard and include sustainability measures such as photovoltaic panels to generate green energy, low carbon heating systems, smart heating controls and electric vehicle charging points for every property.

The first move-ins will take place in early 2024 with the remainder of homes set to be complete by 2026.

**Luke Pollard:** [4252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the letter deposited in the House of Commons, committed on 13 November 2023, paper reference DEP2023-0876, how many service personnel were living in below grade 4 single living accommodation as of 16 October 2023.

**Luke Pollard:** [4253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2022 to Question 78640 on Armed Forces: Housing, what estimate his Department has made of the number of service personnel living in single living accommodation in each year since 2018.

**Luke Pollard:** [4254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November to Question 75786 on Armed Forces: Housing, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of service personnel occupying each grade of single living accommodation, including below grade 4, across the last five calendar years.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

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

**■ Armed Forces: Pay****John Healey:**[\[4341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2023 to Question 2491 on Armed Forces: Pay, what the (a) mean, (b) median and (c) mode average salary was for personnel in the (i) Royal Navy, (ii) Royal Air Force, and (iii) Army in each year since 2010.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

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

**■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[4084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 1826 on Armoured Fighting Vehicles, what the average age of a British Army Snatch Land Rover is.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[4085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 1826 on Armoured Fighting Vehicles, how many Snatch Land Rovers are in the British Army's inventory as of 28 November 2023.

**James Cartlidge:**

The British Army currently has 30 Snatch Land Rovers in its inventory. Defence Equipment and Support have calculated that the average age of the vehicle is 28 years old.

**■ Artillery: Procurement****John Healey:**[\[3569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the status is of the mobile fires platform programme.

**James Cartlidge:**

No decision has yet been taken on the procurement of a future Mobile Fires Platform for the British Army. The project is coming towards the end of the Concept Phase and aims to progress to the Assessment Phase next year, following Departmental consideration and approval of the Outline Business Case; intended to be submitted by the end of this calendar year.

**John Healey:** [3570]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has budgeted for the Mobile Fires Platform Programme.

**James Cartlidge:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given to him by the previous Minister for Defence Procurement, the right hon Alex Chalk KC to Question 172980 on 30 March 2023.

**Attachments:**

1. [Artillery: Finance](#) [172980 - Artillery Finance.docx]

**John Healey:** [3571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the in-service date is for the new mobile fires platform.

**James Cartlidge:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him to Question 194705 on 25 July 2023.

**Attachments:**

1. [Artillery: Procurement](#) [194705 - Artillery Procurement.docx]

**John Healey:** [3572]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to tender for the new mobile fires platform.

**James Cartlidge:**

No decision has yet been taken on the procurement approach for the Mobile Fires Platform. The project team aims to submit an Outline Business Case by the end of this calendar year.

## ■ Cabinet Office: Special Advisors

**John Healey:** [4041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 12 of the Memorandum for the Ministry of Defence Main Estimate 2023-24, which Minister in the Cabinet Office had Special Advisors paid for through Other Government Departments (OGD) transfers of £350,000 in the 2023-24 financial year.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

All Special Advisors including those in the Ministry of Defence are administered centrally by the Cabinet Office. This cost is then recovered by the Cabinet Office as part of the Estimates process. Therefore no Minister in the Cabinet Office had Special Advsiars paid for through OGD transfers in 2023-2024 financial year.



## ■ Conventional Weapons: Military Exercises

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[4107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 25 October 2023 to Question 203030 on Military Exercises: Conventional Weapons, how many 81mm mortars were fired on training exercises in each year since 2015.

**James Heapey:**

Due to the time required to collate the information, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

## ■ Cybersecurity: Government Departments

**John Healey:**

[\[4045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 12 of the Memorandum for the Ministry of Defence Main Estimate 2023-24, how much each Government department received from the £336.234 million transferred for the National Cyber Security Programme.

**James Cartlidge:**

The information requested cannot be shared for security reasons.

## ■ Defence Board: Reviews

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[3115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 70 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, what his planned timetable is for the completion of the independent review of the effectiveness of the Defence Board; and whether he plans to publish the findings of that review.

**James Cartlidge:**

The independent-led effectiveness review of the Defence Board is underway and the department intends for the review to be completed within the 2023-24 reporting year. Key findings will be published within the 2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts.

## ■ Defence Delivery Group

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[3116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 70 of the Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023, published on 20 July 2023, what areas were identified as a priority to improve at the delivery stocktake of the Defence Delivery Group in October 2022.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Defence Delivery Group stocktake of October 2022 focused on how Defence can improve its outcomes in a range of key areas, including: skills; speeding up delivery; communications; and how to optimise delivery of the Defence priorities.

**■ Defence Equipment: Expenditure****John Healey:** [\[3567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 11 of the Integrated Review Refresh 2023, CP 811, published in March 2023, how much of the £2 billion allocated to stockpiles has been spent.

**John Healey:** [\[3568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 11 of the Integrated Review Refresh 2023, CP 811, published in March 2023, how much of the £2 billion allocated to stockpiles has been committed.

**James Cartlidge:**

The £1.95 billion referred to in the Integrated Review Refresh is not exclusively for the purpose of replenishing stockpiles. It also includes spending allocated for wider resilience such as, but not limited to, improving the resilience of infrastructure and medical stores.

As of November 2023, £670 million of this £1.95 billion has been committed to bolstering and replenishing our stockpiles as well as strengthening our overall resilience, but this has not yet been spent.

**■ Defence: Buildings****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[4359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 19 September 2023 to Question 198289 on Defence: Buildings, whether surveys to identify buildings which may have been constructed with RAAC on his Department's land have been completed.

**James Cartlidge:**

As at 28 November 2023, 12,660 buildings on the Defence Estate have been assessed as requiring Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete surveys. Initial surveys have been completed for 11,602 of these; surveys for the remaining 1,058 buildings are ongoing.

**■ Firearms: Lost Property****Jessica Morden:** [\[4108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a list of the types of small arms and light weapons that went missing from his Department's establishments and facilities in each year since 2015.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

We take the security of our small arms and light weapons extremely seriously and have a range of measures in place to ensure the integrity of these arrangements. Whilst we do not publish data in full, we do publish some information on weapon losses on the Ministry of Defence (MOD) website under the Freedom of Information

(FOI) Act. MOD officials will collate that information and I will write to the hon. Member when it is available, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

### ■ Global Combat Air Programme

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[4356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects the Global Combat Air Programme to make an announcement of new future generation combat aircraft.

**James Cartlidge:**

On 9 December 2022, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom announced that we have reached an agreement to launch the Global Combat Air Programme. This will merge our national programmes with the ambition to jointly develop a new next-generation fighter aircraft, due to enter service from 2035.

The Global Combat Air Programme's trilateral partners are currently working to establish the core platform concept and set up the structures needed to deliver this massive defence project, ready to launch the development phase in 2025. Future announcements will be made as the programme progresses and as agreed by our trilateral partners.

### ■ Guided Weapons: Procurement

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[4355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to publish the total cost of the spearfish torpedo upgrade upon the conclusion of that programme.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Spearfish Upgrade Programme will sustain an underwater tactical fight capability through an upgraded Spearfish Heavy Weight Torpedo. This will be carried by all in-service Astute and Vanguard class submarines.

I am currently unable to release whole life programme costs for this upgrade due to ongoing commercial sensitivities. A decision on the future release of cost information will be made in due course.

### ■ Israel: Military Aid

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[4277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2023 to Question 2667 on Israel: Military Aid, whether any (a) lethal and (b) other military equipment other than medical supplies has been provided to Israel since 7 October 2023.

**James Heapey:**

Since 7 October 2023, the UK has provided no lethal or military equipment other than medical supplies to Israel.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[4573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2023 to Question 3678 on Israel: Military Aid; on what dates the Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments which provide the basis for internal MOD decision making processes on a range of defence engagement activity with Israel have been updated since 7 October 2023.

**James Heappey:**

Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments (OSJAs) are continuously reviewed. This will occur as and when either the proposed assistance or the situation in country changes, requiring an update to the overall risk assessment.

■ **Middle East: Armed Forces****John Healey:** [\[3573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military personnel are (a) stationed and (b) deployed in the Middle East.

**James Heappey:**

It has not been possible to obtain the information in the time available. I will write to the right hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Consultants****Maria Eagle:** [\[4065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many consultancy contracts his Department renewed for more than six months in each year since 2019.

**Maria Eagle:** [\[4066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many consultancy contracts were renewed for 12 months or longer in each year from 2019 to 2023 as of 28 November.

**Maria Eagle:** [\[4067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average length of each consultancy contract awarded by his Department was in each year from 2019 to 2023 as of 28 November.

**Maria Eagle:** [\[4068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many consultancy contracts were awarded by his Department in each year from 2019 to 2023 as of 28 November.

**James Cartlidge:**

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

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Consultants and Temporary Employment

**John Healey:**

[\[4342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Annual Report and Accounts for 2021-22, published in July 2022, HC 500, and for 2022-23, published in July 2023, HC 1468, what the (a) Consultancy and (b) Temporary Staff costs were for each contract for MOD main building in (i) 2022 and (ii) 2023.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Department does not maintain records of temporary staff and consultancy contract numbers and expenditure by location. However, we can confirm that the value of expenditure on consultancy and temporary staff incurred by the Department's Head Office in 2022-23 and 2021-22 was as follows:

HEAD OFFICE AND ENABLING ORGANISATIONS	2022-23 £MILLION	2021-22 £MILLION
Consultancy	16.066	10.620
Temporary Staff	11.480	6.425

Head Office includes a number of different teams for example the Directorate General Finance, Chief of Defence People, Secretariat, Policy and Operations as well as others.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: ICT

**Matt Rodda:**

[\[3661\]](#)

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

**James Cartlidge:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to reducing our dependence on legacy IT systems. This is in keeping with wider efforts across Government, and in accordance with the Central Digital and Data Office's Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

As outlined in the National Audit Office report entitled [The Digital Strategy for Defence: A review of early implementation](#) in 2022, the estimated annual departmental spend on digital, which includes IT infrastructure, is approximately £4.4 billion. MOD does not routinely collect consolidated information for spending on legacy IT, and so data is not held in the format you have requested; this could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

**Matt Rodda:**

[\[3662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the guidance by the Central Digital and Data Office entitled Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework,

published on 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by their Department.

**James Cartlidge:**

As of 21 November 2023, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has 11 red-rated legacy IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

The MOD takes the issue of the resilience of our IT networks extremely seriously, and we are driving forward with a number of initiatives to improve it. Work that has been undertaken in line with the CDDO framework includes conducting of obsolescence risk assessments for our critical systems, and creating remediation plans at pace for any of those requiring immediate attention.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Off-payroll Working**

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[4069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much was spent on off-payroll engagements earning more than £245 per day in financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, (c) 2021-22 and (d) 2022-23.

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[4070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average per day payment rate for those employed on off-payroll engagements in his Department was in (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, (c) 2021-22 and (d) 2022-23.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Department collects information centrally on the numbers of off payroll engagements in line with the mandatory disclosure requirements for reporting in Annual Report and Accounts. However, the Department does not centrally collect the range of information that would be required to address these questions, and it is considered that the time and resource required to do so retrospectively, including analysing thousands of contracts over a four year period, would incur disproportionate costs.

The Department will however expand the data collected on off payroll engagements from 2023-24 to enable analysis of this type to be provided in the future.

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[4071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the longest duration an individual has been employed under an off-payroll engagement contract within his Department is.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The majority of off payroll engagements within the Department are short term in nature. In respect to engagements >£245 day rate reported in 2022-23, 86% of these engagements were less than two years. Engagement of individuals under off-payroll terms for longer periods of time are therefore unusual but do arise where the Department is unable to recruit deep specialists on a permanent basis.

As at 31 March 2023, the longest duration an individual paid more than £245 per day, had been employed under an off-payroll engagement contract was 14 years and seven months. This relates to an engagement in the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE).

Such individuals are specialist contractors who hold niche skill sets such as in the AWE case. Having specialist contractors can also be a determining factor for long standing collaborative programmes with international partners.

#### ■ **Ministry of Defence: Public Expenditure**

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[3587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence is a reserved Department not subject to devolution of policy, either to devolved administrations or to local authorities and spending bodies. All its spending programmes are funded centrally, with no programmes being devolved.

#### ■ **National Shipbuilding Office: Finance**

**John Healey:**

[\[4345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2023 to Question 2485 on Ministry of Defence: Shipbuilding, if he will provide a breakdown of the funding the National Shipbuilding Office's received from (a) his Department, (b) Department for Business and Trade, (c) Cabinet Office and (d) Department for Education in 2023-24.

**James Cartlidge:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I provided on 30 November 2023 to Question 3702.

**Attachments:**

1. [National Shipbuilding Office: Finance](#) [3702 - National Shipbuilding Office Finance.docx]

#### ■ **Sloane Helicopters: Contracts**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[4104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2023 to Question 2832 on Sloane Helicopters: Contracts, up to what date was the contract with Sloane Helicopters extended; and up to what maximum value.

**James Cartlidge:**

As I stated in my previous answer, this is being extended pending a competition on a new contract. The commercial arrangements will be determined in due course.

**■ Stonehouse Barracks: Standards****Luke Pollard:** [\[4260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the quality of accommodation for service personnel at RM Stonehouse.

**James Cartlidge:**

Under the Defence Estate Optimisation programme, the Ministry of Defence has announced its intention to vacate RM Stonehouse by 2029. In the interim, we are making a significant investment in the site to improve living and working conditions for the personnel who are based there.

**■ Submarines: Dockyards****John Healey:** [\[3095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 1293 on Submarines: Dockyards, how much his Department has budgeted for the procurement of two submarine floating docks.

**James Cartlidge:**

The cost of two floating docks will be set following agreement of the full business case.

**John Healey:** [\[3096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 1293 on Submarines: Dockyards, when his Department plans the two submarine floating docks will be operational.

**James Cartlidge:**

The in-service date will be set following agreement of the full business case.

**■ Ukraine: Armed Conflict****Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[4078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with his Ukrainian counterpart on reports on the number of Russian personnel and tanks lost during the war in Ukraine.

**James Heapey:**

The Secretary of State regularly holds discussions with Defence Minister Umerov but we are unable to provide details on operational discussions.

**■ Ukraine: Armed Forces****John Healey:** [\[4038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 2076 on Ukraine: Armed Forces, whether his Department has set a target for the number of Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel it plans to train in 2024.



**James Heappey:**

We are committed to being a long-term partner in the training of Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel, including at least a further 10,000 by mid-2024.

■ **Ukraine: Defence****John Healey:**[\[3700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) memorandum of understanding, (b) statements of intent, (c) treaties (d) and other agreements relating to defence the UK has signed with Ukraine since December 1991.

**James Heappey:**

The UK has a wide array of agreements with Ukraine, including Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's), a General Security Agreement (GSA) and Exchanges of Letters (EOLs). These encompass a range of areas of cooperation, including training, defence cooperation and broader bilateral relations.

We cannot provide a full breakdown of agreements between the UK and Ukraine due to national security.

■ **Veterans: Finance****John Healey:**[\[4040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November to Question 3092 on Veterans: Finance, before additional funding was announced in the Autumn Statement 2023, what the annual budget was for the Veterans' Places, Pathways and People Programme for the period from 2024-25 to 2026-27.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

In Financial Year 2021-22, The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, using funding from the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, awarded £9,153,456 to portfolios of projects and to national strategic projects under the Veterans Places, Pathways and People Programme. These projects are now reaching the end of their funding period. An additional £10 Million for the Veterans' Places, Pathways and People programme was announced in the Autumn Statement to "*increase support to a significant community of vulnerable veterans throughout the UK and enable it to become self-sustaining*".

**EDUCATION**■ **Adoption****Sarah Olney:**[\[3310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support she provides to local authorities to help provide post-adoption support.

**David Johnston:**

The department is committed to improving the support available to adopted children and their families to help them make the most of life's opportunities.

Since 2015, the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) has provided funds to local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) to support eligible adoptive and special guardianship order families. The ASF helps children and their families access assessments to support understanding of their needs and a range of therapeutic interventions related to their attachment and trauma. The department has provided over £345 million in ASF funding to local authorities to provide post-adoption support to over 46,000 children since 2015.

The department is providing funding worth £5 million between 2023 to 2025 to support RAAs to develop Centres of Excellence with the aim of providing better wraparound care for adoptive children and their families. Centres of Excellence include teams of health, education and adoption support services, providing joint packages of care for adopted children. The funding is being used to develop new projects in seven RAA areas and participating local authorities will benefit from shared approaches to assessment and support.

The department is also committed to ensuring that adopted children are supported to succeed in education. Previously looked after children attract Pupil Premium Plus at a rate of £2,530 per year and they have top priority in school admissions. All maintained schools and academies must appoint a designated teacher to act as the central point of contact for adoptive families about their child's progress in school. In addition, local authorities must appoint a virtual school head to give schools and adoptive families expert advice on the education needs of adopted children, including how best Pupil Premium Plus funding can be used to support them.

**■ Care Leavers: Housing****Tahir Ali:****[3345]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take to improve the safety of teenage care leavers living in semi-independent accommodation.

**David Johnston:**

Every child growing up in care should have a stable, secure environment where they feel supported. That's why the department has introduced mandatory national standards and Ofsted registration and inspection requirements for previously 'unregulated' independent and semi-independent accommodation for sixteen and seventeen year-old looked after children and care leavers.

The introduction of national standards and Ofsted registration requirements is vital to ensure that sixteen and seventeen year-olds in and leaving care have access to high quality accommodation and support, and action can be taken where provision is not good enough. The department has published guidance for the sector on the new requirements, which is available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm>

[ent\\_data/file/1187743/Guide\\_to\\_the\\_supported\\_accommodation\\_regulations\\_including\\_quality\\_standards.pdf](#).

Within the current spending review period, the department is providing £99.8 million of funding to local authorities to increase the number of care leavers that stay living with their foster families in a family home up to the age of 21 through the 'Staying Put' programme. Going beyond this, the department is also providing an additional £53 million to increase the number of young people leaving residential care who receive practical help with move-on accommodation, including ongoing support from a keyworker, through the 'Staying Close' programme. A further £3.2 million is being given to local authorities this year to provide extra support to care leavers at highest risk of rough sleeping.

The department is committed to actions set out in Stable Homes, Built on Love to ensure an increase in the number of care leavers in safe, suitable accommodation and a reduction in care leaver homelessness by 2027.

#### ■ Carers: Finance

**Munira Wilson:**

[1734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential financial implications of providing all kinship carers with a financial allowance equivalent to the national minimum fostering allowance in the context of potential savings to children services and other public services.

**David Johnston:**

As part of the commitment outlined in 'Stable Homes, Built on Love', the department is exploring the feasibility of introducing a new financial allowance for kinship carers. Further details will be shared in due course.

The department is in the final stages of drafting its kinship strategy, which outlines plans to enhance support for all kinship families in England. This strategy will complement the existing support initiatives offered by the department, such as the peer-to-peer support service and the upcoming training and support programme set to launch next year.

#### ■ Childcare: Bexley

**Sir David Evennett:**

[2782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to increase the number of childcare places in the London Borough of Bexley.

**David Johnston:**

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. Part B of the early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities highlights that local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to parents.

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

Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, the department discusses what action the local authority is taking to address those issues and, where needed, the department will support the local authority with any specific requirements through its childcare sufficiency support contract.

A commitment has been made to ensure that 30 hours of funded childcare is available for every child over the age of 9 months with working parents by September 2025.

More parents are going to be able to return to work while balancing childcare commitments. This is thanks to the government's £4 billion per year expansion of childcare in England. This is the largest expansion of funded childcare ever and will remove barriers to work for nearly half a million parents with a child under three in England.

Local authorities have received £12 million of delivery support funding for this financial year to support with meeting programme and delivery costs associated with rolling out the expanded early years entitlements. Bexley will receive money from this fund. Bexley Local Authority are due to receive £716,747.72 to enable them to deliver additional wraparound places.

The department is also allocating £100 million for local areas to use to make sure childcare settings in their areas have enough physical space. This funding is anticipated to add thousands of new places across the country. More detail on the £100 million capital funding, including allocation amounts to local authorities and accompanying guidance, will be published shortly.

#### ■ **Childcare: Mid Bedfordshire**

**Alistair Strathern:**

[\[4597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the sufficiency of childcare places available in Mid Bedfordshire as of 29 November 2023; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of extended childcare support on the sufficiency of places.

**David Johnston:**

In the government's Spring Budget, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced transformative reforms to childcare for parents, children and the economy. By the 2027/28 financial year, this government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever.

The department announced local authority allocations for the childcare expansion capital grant on 30 November 2023. Central Bedfordshire will receive £649,385 in capital funding to support them to expand early years and wraparound provision.

In addition, Central Bedfordshire is due to receive £1,576,036 to enable them to deliver additional wraparound places. Local authorities have also received a share of £12 million of local authority delivery support funding for this financial year to support with meeting programme and delivery costs associated with rolling out the expanded early years entitlements. The department continues to monitor the sufficiency of Mid Bedfordshire and has regular contact with them and each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing. The key measure of sufficiency is whether the supply of available places is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents and children.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. Part B of the 'Early education and childcare' statutory guidance for local authorities highlights that local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to parents.

Where Mid Bedfordshire reports any sufficiency challenges, the department discusses what action local authority is taking to address those issues, and where needed, supports them with any specific requirements through the department's childcare sufficiency support contract.

## ■ Department for Education: Public Expenditure

**Liam Byrne:**

**[3580]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

**Damian Hinds:**

The department's annual report and accounts sets out the amount the department has spent in a given financial year. The latest document covers the 2022/23 financial year. This details the department's capital and revenue grants and includes funding that goes to local authorities to distribute. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-consolidated-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-to-2023>.

The largest elements of revenue funding the department pays directly to local authorities are through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The published allocations show how much funding local authorities will receive for each of the four blocks of the DSG: the schools block, the central school services block, the high needs block, and the early years block. The latest publicly available allocations are for the 2023/24 financial year and are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2023-to-2024>.

A large proportion of schools' capital funding is delivered through annual allocations to local authorities and larger Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). This includes high needs provision capital allocations and basic need funding to local authorities to meet their duty to ensure there are enough places for children in their areas, and annual allocations to local authorities and MATs to maintain the condition of estates.

The latest allocations are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>, and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-provision-capital-allocations>.

The 2021 Spending Review agreed funding for the department for the 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years, with total funding rising to £91 billion by the 2024/25 financial year. As is common practice, when publishing allocations for individual grants these will show the recipients of funding.

### ■ Free School Meals: Mid Bedfordshire

**Alistair Strathern:**

**[4598]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many families are (a) eligible for and (b) receive free school meals in Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

**Damian Hinds:**

The department publishes figures on the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) in England. The most recently published figures are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. In January 2023, 1,056 (11%) state-funded primary school pupils and 1,377 (11%) secondary school pupils were known to be eligible for FSM in the Mid Bedfordshire constituency. Of these eligible pupils, 852 primary school pupils and 919 secondary school pupils took a FSM on census day.

### ■ Higher Education: Freedom of Speech

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

**[4079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the provisions in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 in the context of the response to recent remarks made by the Rector of St Andrews University on the Israel - Gaza war.

**David Johnston:**

Although the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill received royal assent in May 2023, the main provisions of the Act will not come into force until 1 August 2024. This is because the Office for Students (OfS) will need to create the new free to use complaints scheme introduced by the Act and develop guidance on how providers and students' unions can comply with their new duties, in consultation with the sector.

When in force, however, this Act will only apply to higher education providers in England registered with the OfS. The University of St Andrews will not, therefore, be in scope.

The new duties under the Act will give specific protections to academic staff and introduce routes of redress where an individual may not have clear contractual protections in place in respect of freedom of speech and academic freedom. The Act is clear that the job security of staff should not be undermined by the expression of lawful speech, including where they may question and test received wisdom, and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions.

## ■ Music: Education

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[4115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has (a) commissioned and (b) undertaken an outcomes-based evaluation of the effectiveness of music education hubs.

**Damian Hinds:**

The existing Music Hubs programme is monitored by Arts Council England and they publish a Hub Data Dashboard that contains annual survey data from 2012/13 onwards. The Dashboard can be found at:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/MusicEducationHubs/music-education-hubs-survey-and-data#t-in-page-nav-3>. As set out in June 2023, as part of the Music Hubs Investment Programme, the department plans to commission an independent evaluation to measure and assess the impact of the Music Hub programme against the key aims, to track how the programme meets the overall aims and objectives, as set out in the National Plan for Music Education published in June 2022. This will inform how to improve delivery over the life of the programme.

## ■ Psychology: Training

**Helen Hayes:** [\[3875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to publish the details of (a) funding and (b) arrangements for the September 2024 intake of the Education Psychology Funded Training scheme.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[3876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the timing of publishing arrangements for the 2024 intake of the Education Psychology Funded Training on the number of students applying for training.

**David Johnston:**

Educational psychologists play a critical role in the support available to children and young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. That is why the department is investing £21 million in training 400 more educational psychologists from September 2024. The department regularly reviews the data regarding applications to the course. This is a highly competitive training scheme, with a high volume of applications.

The department is not able to comment on plans to publish the details of the funding and arrangements for the September 2024 intake of the Educational Psychology Funded Training Scheme , as this is subject to a live procurement. An update will be provided as soon as possible.

## ■ Racial Discrimination: Education

**Andrew Bridgen:** [\[3837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of books that discuss critical race theory in school libraries.

**Damian Hinds:**

All pupils deserve to be taught a knowledge-rich curriculum that promotes the extensive reading of books and other texts, both in and out of school. School libraries complement public libraries in allowing pupils to do this. It is for individual schools to decide how best to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils, including which books the library stocks, or whether to employ a qualified librarian.

Given this autonomy, which is granted to schools, the department does not collect information about book stocks.

In February 2022, the department published guidance to help schools understand their legal duties regarding political impartiality. The law is clear that schools must remain politically impartial, not promote partisan political views and should ensure the balanced treatment of political issues.

## ■ Schools: Concrete

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[1866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of officials in her Department who are working in roles relating to the management of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete were not working on school capital projects prior to 4 September 2023.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[1868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the schools listed in the publication entitled Education settings with confirmed RAAC and mitigations in place as of 16 October 2023, what proportion of lessons being taught in those schools are being taught in-person.

**Damian Hinds:**

The department will allocate whatever resources necessary to support schools and colleges to manage and remove RAAC from their buildings. Every school and college with confirmed RAAC is assigned dedicated support from the department's team of 80 caseworkers who work with them to assess what support is needed and implement mitigations plans that are right for them. Schools and colleges with confirmed RAAC are also being supported by the department's ten Regional Directors and their teams across the country.



Project delivery teams are on site to support schools and colleges to minimise the disruption to teaching. A bespoke plan is put in place to ensure that each school and college receives the support that suits their circumstances. Project delivery, property, and technical experts are on hand to support schools to put face-to-face education measures in place.

Members of staff across the department work on RAAC across a range of policy and delivery areas as required. It is therefore not possible to give an accurate figure for numbers of staff working on RAAC.

An updated list of schools and colleges with confirmed cases of RAAC as at 16 October 2023 was published on 19 October and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>. This link contains a summary of the number of schools and colleges with confirmed RAAC and the status of education in place at these schools and colleges at the specified date.

## ■ Schools: Domestic Abuse

**Peter Gibson:**

[2944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to provide additional funding to schools that temporarily enrol children who are temporarily residing in domestic abuse refuge accommodation.

**David Johnston:**

The National Funding Formula (NFF) is used by the department to distribute funding fairly, based on schools' and pupils' needs and characteristics. Through the NFF, schools are funded on a lagged system, based on their pupil numbers in the previous October census. The department does not adjust school funding in-year based on the arrival or departure of individual pupils. This helps to give schools more certainty over funding levels and aids their financial planning.

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. It is important that every local authority have clear criteria for taking action and providing help across the full continuum of need. The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership should agree with the local authority and their partners what services are to be commissioned and delivered so that the right help is given to children at the right time.

In addition to the role played by the police in investigating and intervening, the following agencies have a duty to assist local authorities in their enquiries by providing relevant information and advice if called upon to do so (unless it would be unreasonable, given all the circumstances of the case):

- Any local authority;
- Any local housing authority; and,
- Any local health board, special health authority, integrated care board, NHS trust.

The statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children' (2018) is also clear that effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision. In the case where a parent may deny the existence of a partner, the social worker should use probing, challenging questions and work closely with other agencies, for example, the police.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: North Yorkshire**

**Keir Mather:**

[3394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the ratio of special educational need and disability teaching staff to pupils in (a) Selby and Ainsty constituency and (b) North Yorkshire.

**David Johnston:**

All teachers are teachers of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Information on the school workforce, including the pupil to adult, and pupil to teacher ratios at national, regional, local authority and individual school level, is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication, which is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

In 2022/23, there were 18.2 pupils for every teacher in North Yorkshire local authority.

The department is committed to ensuring all children and young people receive the right support to succeed in their education, to be proud of their achievements in their early years, at school and in further education, to find employment, to lead happy and fulfilled lives, and to experience choice and control as they move into adult life.

In the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, the department sets out its vision to improve mainstream education through setting standards for early and accurate identification of needs and timely access to support to meet those needs.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Training**

**Peter Gibson:**

[3347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to strengthen the training for local authority SEND officers and mediators on helping to ensure that correct decisions are made on education, health and care plans.

**David Johnston:**

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) casework teams in local authorities play a vital role in supporting families to navigate the SEND system and ensure they have good experiences.

As set out in the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, the department is considering the skills and training that local authority caseworker teams require and

will, following consultation, issue new guidance on delivering a responsive and supportive SEND casework service to families.

The department is also working with the Civil Mediation Council and the College of Mediators to strengthen the professional standards for SEND mediators to help ensure the service they provide is of a high-quality.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Wellingborough**

**Helen Hayes:**

**[4216]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of average waiting times from referral to the issue of an education, health and care plan in Wellingborough constituency.

**David Johnston:**

Data on the number of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans is published on GOV.UK at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>. The latest data was published on 8 June 2023. This includes the number of EHC Plans that were issued within a 20-week timeframe in North Northamptonshire.

The department and NHS England will continue to work with North Northamptonshire Council to monitor, and improve the quality, consistency and experience of completing EHC Plan needs assessments, and the issuing of completed Plans.

### ■ **STEM Subjects: Employment**

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[4417]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Third Special Report of Session 2022/23 of the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee Diversity and inclusion in STEM: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report, HC 1427, published on 16 June 2023, what progress her Department has made on a cross-Government action plan to ensure a diverse range of people enter the science and technology workforce by 2030.

**Robert Halfon:**

Demand for skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is growing across the country. We must ensure that everyone, regardless of where they live or come from, has the opportunity to receive outstanding STEM education and pursue STEM-related careers in critical technology sectors such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum, engineering biology, future telecoms, and semiconductors.

Participation in STEM skills programmes is also increasing. Since 2010, there has been a 35% increase in the number of STEM A level entries from girls in England: girls made up 44% of all STEM entries at A level in 2022 and 51% of all science entries at A level in 2022. Since 2018, there has been a 30% increase in the number of STEM A level entries from black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils in England: this compares to a 7% increase in overall entries over the same period. The department has also seen the number of STEM apprenticeship starts by women increase year-

on-year, with 14,110 starts in the 2021/22 academic year, an increase of 56% compared to 9,020 starts in the 2017/18 academic year.

The department must build on this progress by continuing to expand opportunities for participation in STEM. That is why we are working with departments across government on the Talent and Skills strand of the UK Science & Technology Framework to ensure a diverse range of people enter the science and technology workforce by 2030. Actions contributing to this ambition include:

- The department funds the National Centre for Computing Education's 'I Belong' programme to improve secondary schools' awareness of barriers to girls' engagement with computing and support them in taking sustained action to improve the take-up of computer science qualifications.
- UK Research and Innovation's STEM Ambassadors programme inspires young people from under-served backgrounds to engage with STEM subjects by bringing to life the opportunities they open up. Approximately 45% of STEM Ambassadors are women and 15% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)'s AI and Data Science Conversion Course programme, established in 2020, funds universities to develop master's level AI or data science courses suitable for non-STEM students alongside 1,000 scholarships. Since then, over 6,300 students have enrolled on these courses. As of December 2022, 73% of scholarships on the programme had been awarded to women, 35% to black students, 24% to students from another ethnic minority background, and 26% to students with disabilities. DSIT is now working with employers to co-fund 2,000 more scholarships. For every scholarship that industry funds, the government will fund an additional three across the programme.
- The department will shortly publish a public consultation on the Advanced British Standard, a new Baccalaureate-style qualification which will harness the best of A levels and T Levels to support young people with the knowledge and skills they need for the future economy. The new qualification will provide more breadth and increased teaching time, ensuring all young people are prepared for employment and life.

#### ■ Students: Loans

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[4388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the Student Loan Company on the calculation formula used to determine overseas earnings thresholds for student loan repayments for English and Welsh students who live abroad or work for a foreign employer.

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[4389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the Student Loan Company on the calculation formula used to determine overseas earnings

thresholds for student loan repayments for English and Welsh students who live in the US or work for a US employer.

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[4390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the calculation formula used to determine overseas earnings thresholds for student loan repayments for English and Welsh students who live overseas or work for a foreign employer was last revised.

**Robert Halfon:**

The repayment of student loans is governed by the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009 (as amended). The regulations set out the calculation formula to determine overseas repayment thresholds for student loan repayments. A change in the calculation formula would require a legislative amendment.

Ahead of each financial year, in line with the regulations, the department calculates the updated repayment thresholds to apply for English borrowers residing outside of the UK, including those resident in the USA, and provides these to the Student Loan Company (SLC), who administer the loan accounts.

Student loan repayments are income contingent. To take account of differences in living costs in different countries, overseas repayment thresholds are determined by each country's price level index (PLI) data, as published by the World Bank and updated annually. PLI data provides a measure of the differences in the general price levels of countries and, therefore, represents a relative cost of living between countries, enabling a fair threshold to be set.

Based on PLI data, countries are placed into different "bands" reflecting their cost of living relative to other countries and to the UK. As the relative cost of living in different countries varies over time, individual countries may move between bands following an annual threshold update. Where PLI data for a country is not available, the department may determine the applicable PLI value for that country by reference to a comparable country.

## ■ Supported Housing: Finance

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[3761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a fund for local authorities to (a) set up and (b) expand existing supported lodgings schemes.

**David Johnston:**

As set out in the 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' implementation strategy, it is the department's intention to increase provision and take-up of 'supported lodgings' models, where care leavers live in a family environment with support to develop independent living skills.

The current guidance, 'Making a difference: Supported lodgings as a housing option for young people', is available to all local authorities and aimed at advising on the planning and commissioning of supported lodgings. The guidance is available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a79706aed915d04220686ea/making\\_a\\_difference.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a79706aed915d04220686ea/making_a_difference.pdf). The department will continue to encourage and support local authorities with the take-up of this provision and set out its plans for implementation of further support in due course.

## ■ Teachers: Training

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[3615]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to increase (a) the number of training positions for teachers and (b) incentives for specialist teachers to train in the UK.

**Damian Hinds:**

The department does not currently cap or restrict the number of teacher training positions offered by accredited Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers. This enables them to recruit the highest number of candidates that they can whilst ensuring they are able to deliver high-quality training.

For the 2024/25 academic year recruitment cycle, the department has announced an ITT financial incentives package worth up to £196 million, which is a £15 million increase on the last cycle.

For trainees starting ITT in 2024/25, the department is offering a £28,000 tax-free bursary and £30,000 tax-free bursaries in mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing.

The department is also offering a £25,000 tax-free bursary for biology, design & technology, geography and languages (including ancient languages), and a £10,000 tax-free bursary for English, art and design, music and religious education.

The department reviews the bursaries on offer each year to take account of factors including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject. This provides flexibility to respond to the need to attract new teachers, and means the department is spending money where it is needed most.

The department welcomes talented individuals from overseas to train to teach in England. For the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, the department has extended bursary and scholarship eligibility to all non-UK national trainees in physics and languages. This means international physics and languages trainees are eligible for scholarships worth up to £30,000 and bursaries worth up to £28,000. The department is also piloting a new international relocation payment worth £10,000 to help teachers and trainees in languages and physics with the cost of visas and other expenses involved in moving to England.

**ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO****■ Climate Change Convention: United Arab Emirates**

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[4097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, which (a) Ministers and (b) trade envoys will attend COP28.

**Amanda Solloway:**

My Rt hon Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State will attend COP28, as well as Ministers from the following departments: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, HM Treasury, Department for Transport, and Department for Health and Social Care.

The Prime Minister's Trade Envoys to Bangladesh and Japan are attending COP28 as part of the UK's wider delegation of Climate Parliamentarians.

**■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Public Expenditure**

**Liam Byrne:** [\[3581\]](#)

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

**Graham Stuart:**

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

**■ Electricity and Natural Gas: Prices**

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[3974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for what reason Ofgem has changed the methodology for the calculation of the average use of gas and electricity.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Ofgem, the energy regulator is responsible for the methodology used in calculation of the average use of gas and electricity. There has been an observed decrease in average annual consumption across typical households, and so the Typical Domestic Consumption Value has been updated to reflect this.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[3977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the revisions to the typical domestic consumption values for (a) gas and (b) electricity announced by Ofgem on 25 May 2023, if she will have discussions with Ofgem on providing adjusted comparative figures for domestic consumers on the potential impact of the energy price cap on (a) gas and (b) electricity bills.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Ofgem have included comparisons between the 2019 and 2023 Typical Domestic Consumption Values (TDCVs) in respect of the October-December and January-March price cap periods at this link <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/increased-wholesale-energy-costs-lead-rise-price-cap>. It will be for Ofgem to determine whether to make comparisons with the 2019 TDCVs for future price cap announcements.

■ **Energy: Meters****Sir John Hayes:****[4034]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much the Government has spent on the promotion of smart meters since 2019.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Smart Energy GB is responsible for national consumer engagement on the rollout of smart meters in Great Britain. It is an independent, not-for-profit organisation fully-funded by energy companies.

Energy suppliers are responsible for leading engagement directly with their customers to encourage them to take up smart meters.

■ **Energy: Prices****Alistair Strathern:****[4315]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the average energy bill was for households in Mid Bedfordshire constituency in (a) 2021, (b) 2022 and (c) 2023.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Data on average household electricity and gas bills are published as part of the Quarterly Energy Prices statistical series here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/annual-domestic-energy-price-statistics>

The Department collects this information at a regional level (in Tables 2.2.3 and 2.3.3) but does not hold data at the constituency level. Initial estimates for annual bills for 2023 are scheduled for publication on 21 December 2023.

■ **Energy: Standing Charges****Catherine West:****[3880]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has had discussions with Ofgem on increases to the energy standing charge.

**Amanda Solloway:**

I regularly meet with Ofgem to discuss the energy retail market, including standing charges. On 16th November, Ofgem announced a Call for Input (Cfi) on standing charges. The Cfi seeks to gain greater understanding on how standing charges are



applied to energy bills and what alternatives could be considered. Government welcomes this and looks forward to Ofgem's conclusions.

Further information on the CfI may be found online at:

[www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/launch-review-standing-charges-energy-bills](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/launch-review-standing-charges-energy-bills)

## ■ Fuel Poverty

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[4444]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent estimate her Department has made of the proportion of households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England that spent more than 10% of their income on energy costs in each of the last three years.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The latest official Fuel Poverty Statistics for England were published in February 2023 on gov.uk here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2022-Statistics>

In addition to reporting against the official fuel poverty metric for England, these statistics included an affordability measure of the number of households required to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on domestic energy. These can be found in Annex D: Affordability measures for England, of the annual report.

Affordability measure estimates are not held at sub-national level. Figures are available at sub-national level for fuel poverty under the Low-income Low energy efficiency (LILEE) metric, on gov.uk here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2023-2021-data>

## ■ Fuel Poverty: Social Tariffs

**Sir George Howarth:**

**[3720]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a time-limited energy tariff to help lower the cost of energy bills for (a) elderly people, (b) disabled people, (c) families with young children and (d) other people who are vulnerable to the cold.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The outlook for energy prices has improved significantly. The Ofgem price cap has more than halved since its peak at the beginning of this year.

The Government is providing Cost of Living Payments to UK households on eligible means tested benefits, including over 6 million people across the UK eligible 'extra-costs' disability benefits', for those who face wider affordability challenges. This is in addition to ongoing winter support payments such as the Warm Home Discount, the Winter Fuel Payment and the Cold Weather Payment.

The Government will continue to monitor the situation and keep options under review.

## ■ Fuel Poverty: Warwick and Leamington

**Matt Western:**

[3896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate she has made of the number of (a) people and (b) households in Warwick and Leamington constituency living in fuel poverty in (i) 2010, (ii) 2013, (iii) 2018 and (iv) 2023.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The latest statistics for the number of households in fuel poverty in parliamentary constituencies in England, can be found in the published sub-regional fuel poverty Official Statistics, in Table 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>

The estimates covering 2019 to 2021 are published using the current fuel poverty metric and 2010 to 2018 using the previous metric. Information on the number of people in fuel poverty is not held at local area level.

## ■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

**Ben Lake:**

[4506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Sixth Report of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee of Session 2019-21 on Mineworkers' Pension Scheme, HC 1346, published on 29 April 2021, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the report's recommendations on the terms and conditions of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government responded to the Committee's report in June 2021 explaining that it was unable to agree to the Committee's recommendations. That response is available to read [here](#).

## ■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme: Wales

**Ben Lake:**

[4505]

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

**Amanda Solloway:**

As at June 2023, there were 48 members of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme in Ceredigion and 13,838 in Wales as a whole. These are the most recent available figures.

## ■ National Grid: Infrastructure

**Priti Patel:**

[3790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to (a) page 61 of the Autumn Statement 2023 and (b) the connections action plan, when she plans to publish eligibility criteria for community benefits.

**Andrew Bowie:**

On 22 November, the Government published its community benefits for transmission network infrastructure government response. Within this we confirmed our intention for eligibility for wider community benefits to be agreed on a project-by-project basis. For electricity bill discounts, we will work up further proposals on eligibility, including on proximity, and will provide an update in 2024.

**■ National Grid: Repairs and Maintenance****Damien Moore:****[3936]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if the Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of a review of what remedial assistance may be given to support energy suppliers in maintaining the National Grid in areas where costs of upkeep are higher.

**Andrew Bowie:**

Electricity network operators are private companies which build, own, and operate electricity network infrastructure. As regional monopolies, they are regulated by the independent energy regulator, Ofgem. Ofgem uses the price control framework to set the level of investment in infrastructure for each network company and their allowable rate of return. The costs incurred in the maintenance, reinforcement, and new build of Electricity network infrastructure are recovered mainly through electricity consumers' bills. The price control and charging arrangements are matters for Ofgem.

**■ Oil: Prices****Jim Shannon:****[3834]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment she has made of trends in the price of oil in Northern Ireland.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Department publishes a monthly price index of crude oil and average prices for oil derivatives, in the UK, on GOV.UK here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oil-and-petroleum-products-monthly-statistics>

The associated data is not collected at a level of geographic granularity to determine prices in Northern Ireland specifically.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Andrew Rosindell:****[3746]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions on fishing negotiations he has had with his counterparts in the Crown Dependencies.

**Mark Spencer:**

All UK Government departments are responsible for their respective policy areas towards the Crown Dependencies and engage directly with them. Defra officials discuss relevant fisheries issues, including the fisheries negotiations, with the Crown Dependencies on a regular basis.

**■ Agriculture: Subsidies****Caroline Lucas:**[\[3459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the guidance on cross compliance updated on 14 February 2023, which (a) cross compliance standards and (b) rules for participants in the Basic Payments Scheme or Countryside Stewardship will cease to have effect in 2024 and are not otherwise provided for in their entirety in English law as of 23 November 2023.

**Mark Spencer:**

Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) cross compliance rules 1, 4, 5 and 7a are not fully replicated in existing domestic legislation as follows.

GAEC 1, which requires the maintenance of green cover, non-cultivation of land and spraying of pesticides within two metres of a water course. Domestic legislation, the Farming Rules for Water, however, provides rules preventing the application of manure and fertiliser close to a water course. It also prescribes that farmers must take all reasonable precautions to prevent pollution from cultivation practices, such as spraying pesticides. The use of pesticides is also set out in the Code of Practice for using Plant Protection Products.

GAEC 4 and GAEC 5, which require a minimum soil cover and measures to minimise soil erosion. Again, the Farming Rules for Water sets out generalised soil cover and erosion measures where it may prevent agricultural diffuse pollution. There is no reference to mitigation of wind erosion in the Farming Rules for Water. GAEC rules 4 and 5 are not covered elsewhere in domestic legislation.

GAEC 7a, which requires the maintenance of green cover within two metres of the centre of a hedge and the prohibition of cutting a hedge between 1 March and 31 August. Also, the removal of stone walls, earth and stone banks. Defra has recently consulted on new legislation to replace the cross compliance hedgerow protections. As set out in January 2023 Defra plans to pay, as part of Environmental Land Management schemes, for new actions to maintain drystone walls, stone and earth banks in good condition.

**■ Animal Welfare: Labelling****Tracey Crouch:**[\[3770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve animal welfare transparency on labelling of food products.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra ran a Call for Evidence in 2021 to gather data on the impacts of different types of animal welfare labelling reforms. Based on the information gathered, we will continue to work with stakeholders to explore how we can harness the market to improve food information for consumers. We will continue to gather evidence on the impacts of a wide range of market interventions, as well as how they could align with wider labelling proposals such as eco-labelling.

**■ Countryside Stewardship Scheme****Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[2854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to include continuation of the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier in the upcoming Agricultural Transition Plan update.

**Mark Spencer:**

We will shortly publish the Agricultural Transition Plan update and it will include reference to the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier.

**■ Dangerous Dogs****Tahir Ali:**[\[2009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department considered alternative measures to the ban on the XL Bully breed of dog.

**Mark Spencer:**

We considered the ban on XL Bully type dogs carefully and we firmly believe that it is necessary to reduce the risks to the public by this type. This is why we have taken urgent action to ban XL Bully type dogs by the end of the year.

**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[2843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that other dog breeds are not (a) included in the definition of XL bully dogs and (b) subject to the restrictions being placed on XL bully dogs.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra convened a group of experts and other stakeholders to define the physical characteristics of the XL Bully breed type. The definition and guidance has been [published](#) on Gov.uk to help owners and enforcement officers understand whether a dog should be defined as an XL Bully. Other established breeds of dog may meet some of the characteristics of the XL Bully breed type but are not within the scope of the ban.

**Ruth Jones:**[\[3959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to help identify puppies born to dogs identified as American Bully XLs.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra advises that XL Bully breeders should now stop all breeding activity as it will be a criminal offence to breed from, sell, transfer, exchange, gift or advertise these dogs from 31 December 2023. Defra convened an expert group to define the XL Bully breed type and guidance on this definition is available on gov.uk. Owners who are unsure if their puppy or adolescent dog will grow to be an XL Bully type breed are advised to apply for a Certificate of Exemption by 31 January 2024. From 1 February 2024 it will be a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales without a Certificate of Exemption.

**■ Dangerous Dogs: Veterinary Services****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[2393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of vets who are able to provide a Certificate of Exemption for ownership of an American Bulldog XL by 1 February 2024.

**Mark Spencer:**

Owners of XL Bully type dogs who want to keep their dogs after the end of the transition period should apply to Defra for a Certificate of Exemption before 31 January 2024. From 1 February 2024 it will be a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales without a Certificate of Exemption. Vets are not responsible for providing the Certificate of Exemption but must confirm that the dog has been neutered by a certain date for the Certificate to remain valid. Defra has worked closely with stakeholders, including the veterinary sector, on the implementation of the ban on XL Bully type dogs. We will continue to work closely as the ban comes into effect.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: ICT****Matt Rodda:**[\[3005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what is the annual cost to the public purse of his Department's expenditure on (a) IT infrastructure, (b) IT infrastructure purchased prior to 2013 and (c) legacy IT infrastructure for each year since 2010.

**Mark Spencer:**

The total main technology services costs are below for each year from 2018/2019 for Defra, the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Rural Payments Agency, the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the Marine Management Organisation. We cannot provide this information pre 2018/2019 as IT services, and therefore costs, were disaggregated across all parts of Defra group before 2018.

Departments are actively managing their legacy estates and are either seeking to fund or are seeking to exit legacy systems via their existing change plans. The right approach varies: work under way includes upgrades, complete system replacements and migration to public cloud.

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2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
164,966,582	158,456,692	180,763,658	181,673,444	196,388,040

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**Matt Rodda:**

[\[3007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Central Digital & Data Office's guidance entitled, Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by his Department as of 21 November 2023.

**Mark Spencer:**

As of 21 November 2023 Defra, as a Ministerial Department, has to date identified one red-rated legacy IT system as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, but work to continually refine and broaden our use of the risk framework continues. Departments are actively managing their legacy estates and are either seeking to fund or are seeking to exit legacy systems via their existing change plans. The right approach varies: work under way includes upgrades, complete system replacements and migration to public cloud.

## ■ Environment Protection

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

[\[2853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to re-introduce environmental protections following the end of cross-compliance in January 2024.

**Rebecca Pow:**

There is an existing and ongoing strong domestic legal framework for protecting the environment, which will continue when cross compliance ends. We have recently consulted about introducing new hedgerow protections and we will publish the outcome shortly. Otherwise, it has been assessed that the gaps between cross compliance rules and regulatory requirements in regard to water, soil and stone walls are either mitigated by regulation such as through generalised provisions in Farming Rules for Water and the Water Resources Act, guidance like the Code of Practice for the use of Plant Protection Products, and standards in the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme. As a result of these, we do not believe farmers will lower standards and there will not be significant negative environmental impacts in these areas.

## ■ Environmental Land Management Schemes

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

[\[2856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) help optimise the (i) combination, (ii) scale and (iii) location of the take up of Environmental Land Management (ELM) options for nature recovery

targets and (b) ensure that any potential simplification of the ELM scheme design does not affect the UK's ability to meet nature recovery targets.

**Mark Spencer:**

We set out how we will deliver outcomes for food, farming and the environment through our Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes in an update in January. This can be found at [Environmental Land Management \(ELM\) update: how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services](#). This includes our plans to expand and refine the schemes to contribute more to our environmental targets, including on nature recovery, and to target funding towards actions in places where they can have the biggest impacts, in ways that are joined up across larger areas, and that are designed to deliver the required results.

Since then we have launched the 2023 Sustainable Farming Incentive and further rounds of Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery. We will publish more details on the 2024 offer in due course.

■ **Food: Waste**

**Anne McLaughlin:**

[\[4203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's news story entitled Action to reduce food waste announced, published on 1 October 2018, how the funding to tackle food waste was spent.

**Robbie Moore:**

The £15m food waste prevention pilot fund announced in October 2018 was a ring-fenced one-off pilot. Funds were made available in the 2019/2020 financial year. The last scheduled payment was paid in 2022. Awards were made to small and large redistribution organisations for infrastructure to increase their capacity and capability and for Covid-19 emergency surplus food grants. There was also valorising food grants, funding for a Target Measure Act (TMA) field force, citizen behaviour change research, educational resources for schools and support for the hospitality sector.

Further information can be found here: [Food grants | WRAP](#).

■ **Furs: Imports**

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[3841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Scottish and Welsh counterparts on banning the import and sale of fur since April 2022.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra has regular discussions with the Devolved Administrations about a range of animal welfare topics. This includes our work to build the evidence base on the fur sector.



**Ian Byrne:**

[4004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what is his planned timescale for publishing the results of his Department's 2021 Fur Market consultation; and if he will take legislative steps to ban the import and sale of fur.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra published a formal call for evidence on the fur trade in Great Britain, which has now closed. A summary of responses, setting out the results and any next steps in this policy space, will be published in due course. Any future measures would be subject to consultation.

We are continuing to build our evidence base on the fur sector, which will be used to inform any future action on the fur trade. This includes commissioning the Animal Welfare Committee to explore current responsible sourcing practices in the fur industry.

#### ■ Horticulture: Peat

**Harriett Baldwin:**

[4145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of delaying implementation of the forthcoming ban on peat until 2030 on the horticultural sector.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government remains committed to legislating for a ban on the sale of peat as soon as parliamentary time allows. In the professional sector, our proposals include restrictions on the sale of peat from 2026 with a full ban from 2030. We are currently updating our economic Impact Assessment to reflect this.

#### ■ International Organisation of Vine and Wine

**Ruth Jones:**

[3962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the International Organisation of Vine and Wine.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs engages regularly with the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) through dedicated officials who attend the bi-annual Executive Committees and the annual General Assembly. Officials have held bi-laterals with member states as well as the new Director General. The most recent engagement took place 2 - 4 October 2023 in Dijon, France. The main topic of discussion centred around the OIV Budget.

## ■ Living Wage

**Harriett Baldwin:** [\[3803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Low Pay Commission on the level of the national living wage in 2024-25.

**Mark Spencer:**

The National Minimum Wage and National Living Wages rates for all eligible workers, including those in agriculture, are set by the Government, based on the advice of an independent advisory group, the Low Pay Commission.

Recruitment and retention of agricultural workers, of which wages are one element, were considered in the independent review of labour shortages in the food supply chain which the Government commissioned in 2022. The review focussed on farming, processing, and food and drink manufacturing as sectors that are critical for food production and food security. The final report was published on 30 June 2023, and the Government Response will follow shortly.

## ■ Metals: Recycling

**Ruth Jones:** [\[1763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of plastic contamination in (a) steel and (b) other metals exported for recycling.

**Robbie Moore:**

This information is not held centrally.

## ■ Nature Conservation

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[3457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the speech entitled Environment Secretary speech on 25 Year Environment Plan progress, published on 19 July 2023, what the geographical location is of the over a quarter of a million hectares of priority habitats that have been created and restored since 2010; what is the type of those habitats; and what proportion of those habitats are in a favourable condition.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The figure that over a quarter of a million hectares of priority habitat have been created or restored since 2010 is reflective of action taken towards target 1B (an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats by at least 200,000 ha by 2020) in Biodiversity 2020 (the Government's biodiversity strategy for England up to 2020, published in 2011). This activity was not recorded in a spatial way, but this is something we are looking to change with reporting towards the Environment Act target to restore or create over 500,000 hectares of wildlife rich habitat outside of protected sites by 2042.

In the [evidence report](#) for the Environment Act biodiversity targets, on page 26, we published a breakdown of habitat created and restored between 2011 and 2019. Although this does not cover the whole time period referenced, it is indicative of the general split between habitat types created and restored.

Our best data on the location of priority habitat is the [Priority Habitat Inventory](#). This is a spatial data set that shows where priority habitat has been recorded. Habitat must be of a sufficient quality to be considered priority habitat. Habitat is added or removed from the inventory as evidence on gains and losses become available.

Indicator 2a in the [England Biodiversity Indicators](#) provides more information about the condition of priority habitats in England. The indicator outlines the percentage area of priority habitats under several condition categories. Detail on how condition is assessed is given in the background section. The D1 outcome indicator of the 25 Year Environment Plan is undergoing further development and in time will describe the quantity, quality and connectivity of all major habitats across England; priority habitats would be included within this wider picture, although not at a disaggregated level.

## ■ Oilseed Rape: Imports

**Harriett Baldwin:**

**[3802]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will (a) make an estimate of the level of rapeseed imports in each year since 2013 and (b) commission research on the potential impact of restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids on the level of rapeseed imports.

**Mark Spencer:**

The details requested for imports of oilseed rape dated back to 2013 can be seen in the below table. These are published annually by Government in Agriculture in the United Kingdom, [the data set](#) can be found under Table 7.5 Oilseed rape production, value, supply and use.

Units 1,000 tonnes

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total imports	117	87	87	63	345	206	354	503	926	811

Oilseeds are internationally traded commodities. Subsequently, their supply chains are dynamic and responsive to global market developments in price and availability. Our fantastic British farmers are world-leaders and carefully plan their planting to respond to market developments, suit the weather, their soil type, and their long-term agronomic strategy including pest and disease management.

Together with the devolved administrations, Defra has established the UK Agricultural Market Monitoring Group (UKAMMG) to monitor and assess the impact of market

developments across the UK. It monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments, enabling it to provide forewarning of any atypical market movements.

## ■ Veterinary Medicine

**Henry Smith:** [\[3772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to (a) publish the results of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations consultation and (b) introduce revised regulations.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[3960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to (a) publish the results of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations consultation and (b) introduce revised Regulations.

**Mark Spencer:**

Veterinary medicines play a vital role in protecting our animals' health and welfare. Defra is updating the Veterinary Medicines Regulations in respect of Great Britain, to ensure the Regulations continue to be fit for purpose, and we consulted on these changes earlier this year. We are finalising the response to the consultation, where we will set out the changes we are taking forward. We are aware that there is significant interest in our proposed changes and we are taking our time to make sure we get it right. We will then seek to introduce the revised Regulations as soon as possible.

## ■ Waste Disposal: Local Government

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:** [\[3302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the ability of local authorities to design local waste disposal services.

**Robbie Moore:**

Subject to compliance with regulations and having regard to any statutory guidance, local authorities currently have the ability to design their local waste disposal services.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Development Aid

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[4219\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what proportion of bilateral Official Development Assistance spend for financial year 2023-24 has been disbursed to less developed countries as of 28 November 2023.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is measured on a calendar year basis and the UK's ODA spend for the previous year is published in Statistics on International Development, available on gov.uk. Year-to-date figures are not available. The OECD will publish provisional figures on donors' 2023 ODA spend to Least Developed Countries and Low Income Countries in spring 2024. FCDO will publish Final Statistics on International Development for 2023, including a country-by-country breakdown of bilateral ODA spend, in autumn 2024.

The FCDO's ODA allocations for 2023/24 are set out in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23.

**■ Development Aid: Gender****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[4220\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what proportion of bilateral Official Development Assistance programmes have a focus on gender equality in the latest period for which data is available.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

Official data, sourced from the Statistics for International Development and OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System, is available for 2021. This data indicates that in 2021 59 per cent of FCDO bilateral ODA programme budget spend had a focus on gender equality (of which 49 per cent was marked as Significant and 10 per cent marked as Principal). As part of our new International Women and Girls Strategy, we will ensure at least 80 per cent of FCDO's bilateral aid programmes have a focus on gender equality by 2030. This is a reflection of how we are prioritising gender equality in our work and investment moving forward.

**■ Development Aid: LGBT+ People****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[4221\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what proportion of bilateral Official Development Assistance programmes have a focus on supporting LGBT rights.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK is proud to champion LGBT+ rights around the world. With no OECD Development Assistance Committee marker on LGBT+ rights, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is unable to track centrally all its spend on the issue. However, since 2018 the UK has allocated over £13.5 million to empower and build the capacity of grassroots LGBT+ organisations and human rights defenders. Last week, the UK launched a new LGBT+ rights programme, committing a further £40 million over 5 years. The aims of this programme include reducing violence and discrimination, improving inclusive access to public services and legislative reform.

**■ East Jerusalem and West Bank: Armed Conflict****Rachael Maskell:** [\[3511\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what information his Department holds on the (a) location in the (i) West Bank and (ii) East Jerusalem of areas of violence and the numbers of casualties in each such area since since 7 October 2023.

**David Rutley:**

There have been significant casualties in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), since 7 October 2023 eight Palestinians have been killed and at least 73 injured by settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. As the Foreign Secretary said on 24 November, violence by settlers in the occupied West Bank is completely unacceptable and the UK calls on Israel to hold those responsible to account.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Abduction****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[3609\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many officials in his Department have been kidnapped whilst on official business overseas in each of the last 10 years.

**David Rutley:**

No Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials have been kidnapped while carrying out official HMG business overseas in the last 10 years.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Argentina****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[3602\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he plans to visit Argentina.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[3603\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with his Argentinian counterpart since the presidential election in that country.

**David Rutley:**

The Foreign Secretary spoke to Argentinian President-elect Javier Milei on 22 November 2023 to congratulate him on his election victory and to wish him well as he prepares to take office. As fellow G20 members, we look forward to developing a strong and constructive relationship. The UK and Argentina work well together on many shared priorities, including climate change, science and innovation and human rights, and we are keen to develop and strengthen our collaboration with President-elect Milei's administration. I [Minister Rutley] look forward to engaging with

President-elect Milei's administration when I next have the opportunity to visit Argentina.

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

**Matt Rodda:** [\[3655\]](#)

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

**David Rutley:**

It is not possible to disaggregate the requested expenditure purely against infrastructure. The majority of FCDO IT is delivered through strategic commercial partners, as a managed service. A key aspect of this service is ensuring the FCDO IT infrastructure is compliant, modern and delivers value for money for the tax payer.

**Matt Rodda:** [\[3656\]](#)

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

**David Rutley:**

As of 21 November 2023, FCDO, as a Ministerial Department, has one red-rated legacy IT system as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework. FCDO are actively managing their legacy estate via their existing change plans through system upgrades.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Public Expenditure**

**Liam Byrne:** [\[3584\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 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.

**David Rutley:**

No FCDO programme spend is devolved for administration by local government in England or by other local spending bodies.

■ **Guyana: Venezuela**

**Anna McMorrin:** [\[4242\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the referendum in Venezuela on the Venezuela-Guyana border on Sunday 3 December 2023.

**David Rutley:**

The UK is not a party to proceedings in the International Court of Justice between Venezuela and Guyana over the demarcation of their border. The UK is clear that the border was settled in 1899 through international arbitration and we continue to support this decision. We urge the parties to resolve this issue peacefully.

■ **Javier Milei****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[3194\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for (a) his policies and (b) the Falkland Islands of the election of Javier Milei as the President of Argentina.

**David Rutley:**

I [Minister Rutley] join the Foreign Secretary in congratulating President-elect Javier Milei on his election victory. As fellow G20 members, we look forward to developing a stronger and more constructive relationship. The UK and Argentina have worked well together on many shared priorities, among them climate change, science and innovation and human rights, and we are keen to develop and improve such collaboration with President-elect Milei's administration.

The UK has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and is committed to proactively upholding the Falkland Islanders' rights, including their right of self-determination.

■ **Laos: Religious Freedom****Brendan O'Hara:**[\[3632\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the level of observance of the right to (a) assemble, (b) worship freely and (c) other aspects of freedom of religion and belief in Laos.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK is committed to promoting and defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), as demonstrated by our hosting the 'International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief' in July 2022. We also work through the UN to promote and protect these rights. The UK Embassy in Laos raises concerns about limitations on freedom of expression and other human rights issues, including freedom of religion, on a regular basis, both publicly and in private. We do this bilaterally with the Government of Laos as well as at the UN Human Rights Council. I visited Laos in September 2023 and raised our concern over particular human rights cases with Laos Ministers.



## ■ Occupied Territories: International Courts

**Mr David Jones:**

[\[4101\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what criteria he applies when deciding whether to file an amicus brief to international court proceedings; what amicus briefs the Government has submitted to international courts in the last 12 months; and what recent discussions he has had with international counterparts on the policies of the Israeli Government in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**David Rutley:**

The process and rules around filing a submission or making some other form of intervention will depend upon the particular statute or rules of procedure of the international court in question. There will be many factors which determine whether HMG decides to become a party to a case, make submissions or intervene in some other manner. These will include both legal and policy considerations, including UK views on any relevant international law issues and wider diplomatic considerations, amongst others. Looking specifically at UK involvement at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the last twelve months, the UK: intervened in the Ukraine v Russia (Genocide Convention) and the Gambia v Myanmar (Genocide Convention) cases; submitted a statement to the Court in the Legal Consequences (Occupied Palestinian Territories) Advisory Opinion; and is a joint party, alongside several other states, in the Montreal Convention (PS 752) case against Iran. The UK also intervened in the request to the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) for an advisory opinion on climate change-related obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

FCDO Ministers frequently discuss a wide range of issues with their international counterparts. We cannot provide specific detail on those discussions.

## ■ Pakistan: Crimes of Violence

**Sir Peter Bottomley:**

[\[4320\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with the High Commissioner for Pakistan on the recent attack of Pakastani national on 26 November 2023 in England.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government engages with the High Commission of Pakistan on a wide range of issues. This includes ensuring the safety of Pakistani nationals in the UK. It would not be appropriate to comment further while active police enquiries into the incident are underway.

**■ Poland: Abduction****David Simmonds:**[\[4305\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his Polish counterpart on cases outstanding of children abducted from the UK to Poland.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Government takes international parental child abduction (IPCA) very seriously and I [Minister Docherty] recognise the distress of all those affected. Ministers and senior officials raise IPCA with the Polish authorities at every appropriate opportunity. I raised the issue with my Polish counterpart, Minister Arkadiusz Mularczyk, most recently on 7 September. The former Foreign Secretary also raised the issue in his dialogue with Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, on 5 July, and the Minister for International Affairs (MoJ) raised IPCA with Deputy Justice Minister Sebastien Kaleta on 18 September. We will continue to engage with representatives of the new Polish government on this issue, once formed.

**■ Russia: Sanctions****Jim Shannon:**[\[4163\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his US counterpart on the potential merits of introducing additional sanctions against Russia.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK regularly engages with international counterparts, including the US, on Russia sanctions. Earlier this month, the former Foreign Secretary joined G7 foreign ministers in Tokyo where they reaffirmed their commitment to increase economic pressure on Russia and reinforce coordination on sanctions. This means implementing further sanctions, including those to which the UK committed at the G7 earlier this year. With the EU and US, we also undertake joint diplomatic outreach in countries where we are seeing spikes in trade of sanctioned goods with Russia.

**■ Sierra Leone: Security****Ruth Jones:**[\[3961\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the security situation in Sierra Leone.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

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

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

## ■ Allergies: Health Services

**Andy Slaughter:**[\[4102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospital admissions due to anaphylaxis there have been in each year since 2000.

**Helen Whately:**

Data on admissions due to anaphylaxis is not available prior to 2011. The following table shows the number of admissions due to anaphylaxis between 2011/12 and 2022/23:

YEAR	ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK DUE TO ADVERSE FOOD REACTION	ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK, UNSPECIFIED	ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK DUE TO SERUM	ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK DUE TO ADVERSE EFFECT OF CORRECT DRUG OR MEDICAMENT PROPERLY ADMINISTERED
2022/23	1482	1589	20	579
2021/22	1903	2364	27	617
2020/21	1906	2406	37	565
2019/20	2134	2708	11	664
2018/19	2287	2670	18	532
2017/18	1855	2345	11	625
2016/17	1768	2324	16	679
2015/16	1711	2116	9	646
2014/15	1594	1958	19	634
2013/14	1505	1992	7	608
2012/13	1381	1764	12	590
2011/12	1258	1871	7	599

Source: NHS England

## ■ Babies: Heart Diseases

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[1052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the early identification and treatment of congenital septal defect in newborns.

**Maria Caulfield:**

NHS England's Clinical Reference Group has identified that there is still scope for improvement in antenatal diagnosis rates for congenital heart defects and has established a work stream which has commenced in summer 2023 to understand any variation in foetal cardiology services across England. This group is currently gathering evidence on the availability and capacity of foetal cardiology services across the country, with the aim of producing subsequent recommendations to NHS England.

## ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[4165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the number of COVID-19 cases.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Based on the latest scientific evidence, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has recommended a COVID-19 vaccination for those at higher risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19. This includes all adults aged 65 years old and over and those aged six months old and over with specified underlying health conditions.

The National Health Service COVID-19 vaccination programme provides vital protection to those eligible, keeping people from developing serious illness, and helping to minimise hospitalisations during busy winter months. This year's autumn COVID-19 vaccine programme started on 11 September 2023 in England as a precautionary measure following the identification a new COVID-19 variant called BA 2.86. As of 30 November 2023, over 11.2 million autumn vaccinations for COVID-19 have been administered since start of the autumn campaign. The programme has seen a fast rollout of COVID-19 vaccination to care home residents.

Additionally, on 1 November 2023, the Get Winter Strong campaign was launched urging those eligible who have not yet come forward for the flu and COVID-19 vaccines to 'get winter strong' and join the millions of others in taking up the offer ahead of the festive and new year season.

## ■ Dental Services

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[3679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people who have been unable to register with an NHS dentist.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Patients in England are not registered with a dental practice in the National Health Service, although many NHS dental practices do tend to see patients regularly. NHS dental practices are contracted to deliver activity and to deliver a course of treatment to an individual irrelevant of where they live, rather than to provide ongoing regular care. This means that there is no geographical restriction on which practice a patient may attend, allowing patients the choice of where they would like to receive a course of treatment.

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

The annual GP Patient Survey also includes questions on whether patients have tried to obtain an appointment with an NHS dentist and, if so, whether they had been successful. The latest GP Patient survey data is available at the following link:

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

**■ Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Sales****Preet Kaur Gill:****[4228]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many fines have been issued by Trading Standards to retail outlets for the sale of (a) tobacco and (b) e-cigarette products in each of the last 10 years.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

The information requested is not held centrally. However, the Department has previously commissioned various reports into the compliance of tobacco and vaping legislation, which was led by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute. These reports are available at the following link:

<https://www.tradingstandards.uk/news-policy-campaigns/tobacco-control/>

**■ First Aid****Navendu Mishra:****[4288]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Home Office's publication entitled Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume 2: Emergency Response, published in November 2022, what steps she is taking to ensure Public Access Trauma kits are available in all locations where they are most likely to be needed.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department has accepted this recommendation and is working with a broad range of stakeholders, including NHS England and the National Counter Terrorism Security Office, to finalise and implement an appropriate strategy to promote the use of Publicly Accessible Trauma Kits. A review of the equipment contained in the kits is

also underway, in line with Recommendation 146 of the Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume 2: Emergency Response.

### ■ General Practitioners: Standards

**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[4445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the average waiting times for GP appointments in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each of the last three years.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Information on the approximate length of time between appointments being booked and taking place is not held at constituency or city level. The following table shows the percentage of appointments taking place on the same day as booking and within two weeks of booking for England and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Midlands region in each of the last three years:

	NATIONAL - PERCENTAGE OF APPOINTMENTS OCCURRING ON THE SAME DAY OF BOOKING	ONS MIDLANDS REGION - PERCENTAGE OF APPOINTMENTS OCCURRING ON THE SAME DAY OF BOOKING	NATIONAL - APPOINTMENTS OCCURRING WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF BOOKING	ONS MIDLANDS REGION - APPOINTMENTS OCCURRING WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF BOOKING
APPOINTMENTS - 12 MONTHS FROM NOVEMBER TO OCTOBER				
November 2020 - October 2021	45.2%	47.2%	88.6%	88.7%
November 2021 - October 2022	43.8%	45.8%	85.1%	85.3%
November 2022 - October 2023	43.1%	44.7%	82.5%	82.6%

### ■ GP Practice Lists: Gender

**Nick Fletcher:** [\[4006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of allowing patients to register with their GP as a gender which is different to the one they were assigned at birth.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Patients can request to register or change their gender to that with which they identify. No formal assessment has been made, however the Government is clear that biological sex matters and that there are different health needs between the sexes. It is important that patients continue to receive the right care for their need whilst feeling comfortable and confident to access the healthcare they need.

## ■ Gynaecology: Rotherham

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[3684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2023 to Question 2154 on Gynaecology: Waiting Lists, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of waiting times for NHS gynaecology services in Rotherham.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government is taking action to recover elective services, including for patients waiting for National Health Service gynaecology services in Rotherham, by providing record levels of staffing and funding as the NHS implements the Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care. We have not made a specific assessment of waiting times for NHS gynaecology services in Rotherham.

## ■ Intensive Care: Hospital Beds

**Mr Rob Roberts:**

[\[4287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answers of 20 November to Questions 2738 and 2739 on Intensive Care: Hospital Beds and Hospital Beds respectively, if she will make a comparative estimate of the number of NHS acute hospital beds (a) available and (b) required in winter 2023-24; how many and what proportion of the 5,000 additional beds that were promised have been deployed; and what her planned timeframe is for the deployment of the remainder of the 5,000 beds in each constituency.

**Helen Whately:**

Published data from NHS England shows that there were 99,067 total general and acute (G&A) beds available in October 2023, including 96,781 core beds and 2,285 escalation beds.

Our Delivery Plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services set the ambition to increase the core G&A bed base by 5,000 permanent staffed beds in 2023/24 compared to planned levels for 2022/23. This would increase the number of core beds to 99,500. As of October, the National Health Service has delivered 2,281 additional core beds. NHS England continues to work with local systems and trusts to deliver this ambition this winter.

G&A bed numbers are expected to peak in January 2024 in response to expected demand. A breakdown of these additional beds by constituency is not available centrally.

## ■ Lisdexamfetamine

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[4222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to improve the supply of elvanse.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

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

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

The Department has been working closely with manufacturers of all ADHD medicines and some issues have now been resolved, including Elvanse Adult 50 milligram and 70 milligram capsules. However, we know that there continue to be disruptions to the supply of some other medicines, including other presentations of Elvanse, which are expected to resolve in early 2024.

**■ Mental Health Services: Artificial Intelligence****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 29 March 2023 to Question 173068 on Mental Health Services: Artificial Intelligence, when he plans to publish the results of the app testing.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 15 November 2023]:* The real-world testing of WYSA, which is one of the projects for the AI in Health and Care Award, finished in August 2023. The results are being independently evaluated by a Technology Specific Evaluation team from iCAIRD and are expected to be published early 2024.

Evaluations of AI in Health and Care projects will fill key evidence gaps for relevant published evidence standards frameworks and focus on accuracy, safety, effectiveness, value, fit with site, implementation, feasibility of scale up and sustainability of scale up.

**■ NHS: Temporary Employment****Wes Streeting:**[\[2418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) total, (b) substantive, (c) bank and (d) agency workforce was at each NHS (i) integrated care system, (ii) trust and (iii) foundation trust in (A) April and (B) September 2023.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

*[Holding answer 23 November 2023]:* Substantive staff data collected is published by NHS England, with the most recent data available being from July 2023. The data is available at the following link:



<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/july-2023>

Headcount data is available by trust and integrated care system. Bank and agency headcount data is unvalidated and is not of a statistical quality for publication.

## ■ Pharmacy: Training

**Valerie Vaz:** [\[4138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of trends in the level of pharmacy students in Walsall South constituency.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, backed by over £2.4 billion to fund additional education and training places over the next five years, sets out the ambition to increase training places for pharmacists across England by nearly 50% to around 5,000 by 2031/32, and to grow the number of pharmacy technicians. Increasing training places will increase the number of pharmacy students, including those choosing to study in schools of pharmacy in proximity to Walsall South constituency.

## ■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

**Emma Hardy:** [\[3918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make it her policy to freeze prescription charges for 2024-25.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2023]:* No decision has been made on whether to make any changes to prescription charges for 2024/2025. In England, there are extensive arrangements currently in place to ensure that prescriptions are affordable for everyone. Around 89% of prescriptions are dispensed free of charge and extensive arrangements are already in place to help those with the greatest need. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

## ■ Social Services: Finance

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[4477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of funding allocated for social care.

**Helen Whately:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for York Central on 22 November 2023 to Question [2356](#).

## ■ Suicide

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[4357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will provide additional funding to replace the funding for suicide prevention allocated under the NHS Long Term Plan which ends in March 2024.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Funding beyond 2024/25 is subject to future spending decisions through which we will consider further opportunities to build upon our £57 million investment for suicide prevention under the NHS Long Term Plan. In addition, the Government's £10 million Suicide Prevention Grant Fund will run to March 2025 to support voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in meeting demand for their services supporting people experiencing suicidal thoughts or approaching a mental health crisis. We expect to start making this funding available to successful applicants as soon as possible in the New Year.

## ■ Veterans: Mental Health Services

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[3692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help provide proactive mental health support to veterans.

**Maria Caulfield:**

NHS England has several bespoke services and initiatives to meet the needs of our Armed Forces community including Op COURAGE, the Veterans Mental Health, and Wellbeing Service, which provides a comprehensive mental health care pathway for veterans.

NHS England commissioned Op COURAGE in April 2023 which is the integrated veterans' mental health and wellbeing service, replacing the previously three separate services of Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service, the Complex Treatment Service, and the High Intensity Service. Access to Op COURAGE is via referral or by direct contact from veterans. The integrated Op COURAGE service has received over 3,500 referrals since it started in April 2023.

The Government is providing an additional £10 million to support the Veterans' Places, People and Pathways Programme to increase support to a significant community of vulnerable veterans throughout the United Kingdom and enable it to become self-sustaining.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Animal Experiments: Licensing

**Sarah Olney:** [\[3882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will recall all licences for companies to carry out animal testing.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

This Government recognises that scientific research using animals plays a vital part in our understanding of how biological systems work in health and disease. The use of animals in science supports the development of new medicines and cutting-edge medical technologies, for humans and animals, as well as supporting the safety and sustainability of our environment.

The Government is also clear that animals must be protected. The legal framework in the UK requires that animals are only ever used in science where there are no alternatives, where the number of animals used is the minimum needed to achieve the scientific benefit, and where the potential harm to animals is limited to that needed to achieve the scientific benefit.

The Government has no plans to ban all animal testing but is committed to fully implementing the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement), and promoting non-animal alternatives wherever possible.

**■ Anti-social Behaviour****Carolyn Harris:**[\[3869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to paragraph 60 g) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, published by his Department on 27 March 2023, whether that stakeholder engagement has been completed; which stakeholders were consulted; and if he will publish the results of the engagement.

**Chris Philp:**

'Cuckooing' is most commonly associated with the county lines drug distribution model. That's why, as part of our ambitious 10-year Drugs Strategy, we are investing up to £145m over three years to tackle drugs supply and county lines activity, taking action against county lines holders and safeguarding children and vulnerable people.

The targeted stakeholder engagement exercise, announced as part of the Government's Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan in March 2023, was conducted over the spring/summer of this year. Officials engaged on the potential merits and scope of a new offence to tackle cuckooing with a variety of key stakeholders such as the police, CJS partners, local authorities, other Government departments, specialists in the field which included academics and NGOs, and the Devolved Governments.

The results of the engagement exercise revealed there are a range of powers and tools available to disrupt cuckooing activity and officials continue to work closely with police and wider partners to both raise awareness of cuckooing and share effective practice to tackle this abhorrent practice.

**■ Asylum: Advisory Services****Tim Farron:**[\[2837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 1324 on Asylum: Advisory Services and with reference to paragraph 2.3 of the Terms and Conditions for the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility

contract, whether a decision has been taken to extend the contract beyond the initial four-year period.

**Robert Jenrick:**

More information is available at: [AIRE - Advice Issue Reporting and Eligibility - Contracts Finder](#)

## ■ Asylum: Finance

**Alex Sobel:**

[3669]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a specific timeframe for Section 95 applications to be completed.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office endeavours to complete applications as fast as possible.

**Stephen Morgan:**

[3928]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of starting the 28 day notice period for the end of asylum support 10 days after the issue of a Biometric Residence Permit.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Following the service of an asylum decision, an individual continues to be an asylum seeker for the purpose of asylum support until the end of the relevant prescribed period, also known as the 'grace period' or 'move on period'. This period is 28 calendar days from when an individual is notified of a decision to accept their asylum claim and grant them leave. There are no current plans to extend this period (of 28 days).

Individuals should make plans to move on from asylum support as soon as they are served their asylum decision. We offer support to all individuals through Migrant Help or their partner organisation in doing this. This includes providing advice on accessing the labour market, on applying for Universal Credit and signposting to local authorities for assistance with housing.

**Neil O'Brien:**

[4251]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse was for (a) financial support and (b) accommodation for people (i) seeking asylum and (ii) arriving through other humanitarian routes in each of the last 10 years, broken down by local authority.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation and other support to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute while their application for asylum is being considered. Costs are subject to change depending on numbers being accommodated within the asylum system. The Home Office is currently spending around £8.3m per day on hotel accommodation. Total expenditure on

asylum and humanitarian routes is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown which disaggregates the cost of financial support and accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees by local authority.

### ■ **Borders: Guard Dogs**

**Julie Elliott:**

[3821]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the spend by the Border Force on the (a) upkeep, (b) care and (c) maintenance of border security dogs was in each year since 2015.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Border Force does not hold the spend on the upkeep, care and maintenance of border security dogs in each year since 2015 in an easily accessible format.

Home Office overall annual reports and accounts are available on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website, which includes Border Force.

### ■ **Crime: Mid Bedfordshire**

**Alistair Strathern:**

[4600]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will publish the charge rate for crimes reported in the Mid Bedfordshire constituency in each of the last 10 years.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes information on the number of crimes, and their investigative outcomes, on a quarterly basis, broken down by Police Force Area. These can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

The Home Office does not hold information at Parliamentary Constituency level.

### ■ **Diamorphine: Clinics**

**Grahame Morris:**

[4319]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the effectiveness of Diamorphine Assisted Treatment in tackling drug-related crime.

**Chris Philp:**

Diamorphine Assisted Treatment (DAT) is an option that remains open to local areas under the existing legal framework, and we support those areas who pursue this approach, where the relevant licences are obtained from the Home Office. DAT is aimed at those who are already engaging with treatment but are not responding to opioid substitution therapy.

Evidence supporting the value of targeted injectable opioid treatment (“IOT”) programmes, including heroin/diamorphine assisted treatment (“DAT”), in both the UK and other countries has been published and informed the UK clinical guidelines for drug misuse and dependence, as well as guidance on commissioning and developing IOT services.

There is mixed evidence for the effectiveness of DAT in tackling drug-related crime compared with other forms of opioid substitution therapy. However, the crime reduction benefits of effective drug treatment, including IOT, is well documented and investing in improved capacity and quality of drug treatment services is an important part of the Government’s approach to reduce drug-related crime as is set out in the Drug Strategy.

### ■ **Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Seized Articles**

**Preet Kaur Gill:** **[4231]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) e-cigarette and vaping and (b) tobacco products were seized at UK borders in each of the last 10 years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

On point a, Border Force does not hold data on eCigarettes and vaping in an easily accessible format.

Border Force regularly publishes data on tobacco products seized at the UK border.

The latest transparency returns can be found at the link here; Border Force transparency data: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data>

### ■ **Home Office: Public Expenditure**

**Liam Byrne:** **[3586]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

At Spring Budget, the government announced the trailblazer devolution deals with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and West Midlands Combined Authorities (WMCA), which included a commitment to introduce single funding settlements at the next Spending Review for these MCAs. At Autumn Statement, the Government published a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GMCA and WMCA, setting out how the single settlements will work.

The Government also announced an ambitious new 'level 4' of the devolution framework, including a single transport funding settlement for eligible institutions, and a 'consolidated' pot at the next multi-year SR covering two DLUHC investment themes – local growth and place, and housing and regeneration. Following successful delivery of the 'consolidated' pot, and learning from the trailblazers, Level 4 institutions will then become eligible to receive a single settlement from the subsequent multi-year Spending Review.

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

## ■ Immigration: Employment

**Derek Twigg:**

**[4058]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2023 to Question 2778 on Immigration: Employment, and Freedom of Information release 31192, published on 11 June 2014, how many illegal working enforced visits were made by the UK Border Agency by employment sector in each year since 2012.

**Robert Jenrick:**

To maintain the highest standards of accuracy, the Home Office refers to published data, as this has been subject to rigorous quality assurance under National Statistics protocols prior to publication.

Information about the number of illegal working enforcement visits conducted by Immigration Enforcement by employment sector is not available in our published data.

Our published data on enforcement visits (including illegal working visits) is available at the following link - [Statistics relating to the Illegal Migration Act - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-the-illegal-migration-act) ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

## ■ Immigration: EU Nationals

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

**[4380]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average length of time taken was to process an EU settlement scheme application in the latest period for which data is available.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The following link contains more details in regards to EUSS processing times: [EU Settlement Scheme: current estimated processing times for applications - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-current-estimated-processing-times-for-applications) ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

All applications made under the scheme are determined on a case-by-case basis depending on their individual circumstances.

The latest link to our quarterly statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-september-2023>

## ■ Offensive Weapons: Sales

**Helen Hayes:** [4213]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of the sale of (a) knives and (b) other illegal weapons on online shopping apps.

**Helen Hayes:** [4214]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of age verification and identity checks by (a) Temu and (b) other online shopping apps for sales of (i) knives and (ii) other age-restricted items.

**Helen Hayes:** [4215]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 18 October 2023 to Question 202514 and the absence of a reference to that potential legislation in the King's Speech, what plans his Department has to bring forward legislative proposals on banning machetes and zombie knives.

**Chris Philp:**

Organisations who sell knives to those aged under 18 face a range of fines from £500 to £1 million.

The government keeps knife crime legislation under continual review and has taken action in a number of areas.

The Criminal Justice Bill includes new measures for tackling knife crime, including increasing the maximum penalty for selling specified weapons or for selling any knives to under 18s to 2 years.

This measure will bring the offence within the remit of PACE powers, which is key to the police's ability to investigate some of the more serious offences, for example, those who sell knives privately to under 18s, or those who sell prohibited weapons through social media or personal messaging applications.

The Criminal Justice Bill will strengthen measures which we took in the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 around age verification for online sales, including stopping knives being sent to residential addresses after they are bought online, unless the seller has arrangements in place with the delivery company to ensure that the product would not be delivered into the hands of a person under 18.

Further controls have been introduced through the Online Safety Act 2023 which sets out a series of priority offences which includes the sale of weapons. Companies will need to proactively mitigate the risk that their services are used for illegal activity or to share this illegal content, to design their services to mitigate the risk of this occurring and to remove any content that does appear as soon as they are made aware of it.



Ofcom published the first draft codes of practice on illegal content for consultation on 9 November 2023. Government expects these to be finalised in late 2024. These codes of practice will set out the steps companies can take to fulfil the duties for illegal content. In scope services will either need to follow these codes, or show their approach is equally effective.

On 30 August 2023 the Government response to our consultation on new knife legislation was published confirming that the Government will seek to legislate to ban certain types of large knives and machetes. The ban on zombie style machetes and knives will be implemented by secondary legislation when parliamentary time allows.

## ■ **Passports: Republic of Ireland**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[4080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 5 November 2019 to Question 4944 on Passports: Republic of Ireland, how many British passports were printed for residents of the Republic of Ireland whose applications were processed by the Belfast passport office between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Following the introduction of a new passport application processing system that distributes work digitally across all available work locations, the data for the number of applications processed is not broken down by office. The information requested is therefore not held in a reportable format from 2020 onwards.

## ■ **Public Buildings: Security**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[4077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the King's Speech 2023, whether he has had discussions with the Leader of the House on the timetable for introducing Protect Duty legislation.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

I continue to engage with my Ministerial colleagues on the Government's important legislative program, including the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also known as Martyn's Law.

The pre-legislative scrutiny of the bill provided important feedback which I have been carefully considering. Ahead of introduction to Parliament, the Government will launch a public consultation on the Standard Tier ensuring the Bill strikes the right balance between public protection and avoiding undue burdens on smaller premises.

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

**Matt Hancock:**

[\[3625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have received a health and care worker visa since the establishment of that visa category.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office publishes data on Entry clearance visas in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on 'Skilled Worker – Health and Care' visas granted are published in table Vis\_D02 of the [Entry clearance detailed dataset](#). Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to 2023 Q3 (July to September) time period.

■ **Visas: Skilled Workers****Chi Onwurah:****[4149]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November to Question 1561 on Visas: Applications, what is the (a) target time and (b) average time taken to process a skilled worker visa.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office makes every attempt to meet the service level agreement standard, but in certain cases additional checks are required which can mean visa requests take longer to process.

Data on performance against service standards is published through migration transparency data and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

The Home Office also publishes information on visa processing times for applications inside and outside the UK at: [Visa processing times - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ **Visas: South Asia****Navendu Mishra:****[3996]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to help stop private agents selling free visa appointments in (a) India, (b) Pakistan, (c) Nepal and (d) Bangladesh.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We are continuing to monitor abuse and will continue to consider other interventions. We are also working collaboratively with FCDO on the issue.

**JUSTICE**■ **Community Orders****Jessica Morden:****[4110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hours of Community Payback are yet to be delivered as of 28 November 2023 in each (a) region of (i) England and (ii) Wales and (b) probation service area in the latest period for which figures are available.

**Edward Argar:**

Below is a table which shows the total number of community payback hours yet to be delivered for each region of England and Wales as of 27 November 2023.

<b>REGION</b>	<b>HOURS OUTSTANDING</b>
<b>England and Wales Total</b>	<b>3,978,852</b>
East Midlands	271,848
East of England	446,167
Greater Manchester	272,324
Kent, Surrey and Sussex	272,131
London	630,995
North East	182,048
North West	340,021
South Central	301,545
South West	280,126
Wales	155,132
West Midlands	370,286
Yorkshire and The Humber	456,228

The current number of hours outstanding reflects the hours yet to be delivered on the Unpaid work caseload.

Please see attached annex for a table which shows the total number of community payback hours yet to be delivered for Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) as of 27 November 2023.

This Government has announced up to £93million additional investment in Unpaid Work over the next three years. The funding is being used to recruit an additional ~500 Unpaid Work staff so that we can ramp up delivery to address the Covid backlog and effectively manage oncoming orders.

This investment gives Probation a vital opportunity to relaunch Unpaid Work and make sure that placements are visible and robust, and put UPW delivery on a sustainable footing following disruption caused by the pandemic.

#### Explanatory note

Data for part B (Probation service areas) has a high proportion of hours allocated to unknown PDUs within regions. This is due to regional practice on how UPW requirements are managed (single Regional PDU for all UPW requirements vs

localised PDUs managing both standalone UPW requirements and other multi requirement orders).

**Attachments:**

1. [Table](#) [2023-12-04 PQ 4110 Annex.xlsx]

**Jessica Morden:** [\[4111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hours of community service were not carried out in each (a) local justice area and (b) region in (i) England and (ii) Wales in each year since 2010.

**Edward Argar:**

Please see attached annex for data table contain information on how many hours of community service were not carried out in each local justice area and region in England and Wales since 2010.

Owing to data migration issues following the move to a single National Recording Platform, with Transforming Rehabilitation in 2014 and subsequent changes to Probation Delivery boundaries, it is less possible to accurately map older locations to the current Probation Regions.

The dataset covers reasons hours are not carried out including offender deaths, deportation, orders revoked, and resentenced, successful appeals and Suspended Sentence Order (SSO) activated.

This Government has announced up to £93million additional investment in Unpaid Work over the next three years. The funding is being used to recruit an additional ~500 Unpaid Work staff so that we can ramp up delivery to address the Covid backlog and effectively manage oncoming orders.

This investment gives Probation a vital opportunity to relaunch Unpaid Work and make sure that placements are visible and robust, and put UPW delivery on a sustainable footing following disruption caused by the pandemic.

**Attachments:**

1. [Table](#) [2023-12-04 PQ 4111 Annex.xlsx]

■ **Legal Aid Scheme: Immigration**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[3672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the legal (a) aid and (b) advice provision for individuals with (i) immigration and (ii) refugee law queries in (A) Plymouth and (B) the South West.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[3673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the remote provision of immigration and asylum advice; and whether he has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on the remote provision of such advice.

**Luke Pollard:** [3674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of asylum seekers who have had access to confidential remote legal advice in the last 12 months.

**Luke Pollard:** [3675]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of remote advice provision in asylum seeker accommodation sites.

**Mike Freer:**

Legal aid is available for immigration and asylum cases, including those involving victims of domestic abuse and modern slavery, for separated migrant children, and for cases where someone is challenging a detention decision.

Earlier in November, the Legal Aid Agency published a list of immigration legal services providers that are willing and able to provide remote advice to clients in the South West of England; the list is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-providers-south-west-support-directory>.

The ongoing Review of Civil Legal Aid is considering the broader economic context of the civil legal aid market as a whole across eleven categories (including immigration) so that it can operate sustainably in the long-term; the Review's final report is expected in March 2024. When the Illegal Migration Act 2023 is implemented, individuals who receive a removal notice under the IMA will have access to free legal advice in relation to that notice.

Section 27(2) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 allows the Lord Chancellor to make arrangements for legal services to be provided by telephone or by other electronic means. Whether legal advice in a particular case is delivered remotely or in-person is down to the discretion of the legal provider. As set out in the Government's response of 28 September 2023 to the consultation on legal aid fees for IMA work, which included an equality impact assessment (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/legal-aid-fees-in-the-illegal-migration-bill/outcome/legal-aid-fees-in-the-illegal-migration-act-government-response>), a great deal of legal advice is already provided "remotely", largely by telephone. The Government intends to allow advice to be provided remotely at Detained Duty Advice Scheme surgeries for those detained at Immigration Removal Centres. The Government acknowledges and agrees with stakeholder feedback on the need for some clients to continue to be seen face-to-face. Accordingly, conducting remote advice will be enabled at provider discretion, thus ensuring the continuation of appropriate decisions on the delivery of advice in relation to vulnerable clients.

The Department does not have data on how the advice is ultimately provided to the clients (whether face-to-face or remotely) because the decision on how to provide the service is at the discretion of the service providers, taking into account the best interests of the client. Data on the number of legal aid matters started on immigration

and asylum is publicly available as part of the quarterly legal aid statistics (see tables 5.1 and 6.2 in the tables published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/legal-aid-statistics-april-to-june-2023> ). Under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, all immigration advisers must be registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) or be regulated by a Designated Qualifying Regulator (DQR). The OISC and the DQRs are responsible for ensuring immigration advisers are fit, competent, and act in their clients' best interests. In relation to work funded under legal aid, the "Standard Civil Contract 2018: Immigration and Asylum Specification" includes a number of measures to ensure immigration and asylum advice is only provided by caseworkers who hold appropriate accreditation.

### ■ Ministry of Justice: ICT

**Matt Rodda:** [\[3663\]](#)

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

**Matt Rodda:** [\[3664\]](#)

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

**Mike Freer:**

The spend by the Ministry of Justice on its IT infrastructure as set out in the question is provided in the table below, covering the previous three years:

	2020/21 COSTS	2021/22 COSTS	2022/23 COSTS
Current IT infrastructure	£191,003,356	£186,076,175	£190,539,822

It has not been possible to separate out costs in a meaningful way between current and legacy systems, or identify costs for pre-2013 systems. This is due to both the complexity of the IT estate, which includes outsourced services, and the finance systems in use across the department not being set up to operate in that way that facilitates this.

The costs in the table include the costs of networks, devices, voice and video infrastructure, print services, wifi, software licences that underpin the operation of the department (eg Oracle, Microsoft) and hosting. They do not include costs of bespoke software. The costs are the external (contract) costs to purchase infrastructure outright or as a service but do not include costs related to people or processes or documentation within MoJ.

The Ministry of Justice is actively managing its legacy estate and are either seeking to fund or are seeking to exit legacy systems via our existing change plans. The right approach varies: work under way includes upgrades, complete system replacements and migration to public cloud.

The Ministry of Justice regularly assesses the most critical services within its IT estate including those using legacy systems against its own framework. There is a significant programme of activity in place to mitigate these risks through decommissioning, migration to more modern environments and upgrades.

Earlier in 2023, an assessment was carried out on the top 10 most critical legacy IT systems. Out of these 10 systems, 5 were identified as red-rated IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework

The Ministry of Justice is in the process of assessing all of its critical systems against the CDDO framework which will provide data on how many of these are red-rated within this framework.

#### ■ Ministry of Justice: Public Expenditure

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[3588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

**Mike Freer:**

The MoJ does not devolve any spending programmes.

However, the MoJ does provide grant funding as below:

#### **BUDGETED GRANTS FIGURES 2022/2023**

<b>Grant type</b>	<b>Amount</b>
YOT	£88,483,459.00
PCC	£136,527,593.19
Section 31	£5,930,576.00

#### ■ Prison Accommodation

**Julie Elliott:**

[\[3822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of (a) single level beds and (b) bunkbeds in use in the prison estate.

**Edward Argar:**

All beds used across the prison estate are required to comply with quality standards. Any issues are addressed by Property Services in His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service.

The quality standards take account of specific needs relating to use in the prison estate, including health and safety considerations that are additional to those for commercially available beds.

Where beds are already in situ, prison staff report identified faults for rectification or replacement using the facilities management reporting system.

**Prisoner Escapes: Wandsworth Prison****Ruth Cadbury:** [3847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to publish the report of the Independent investigation into HMP Wandsworth escape, announced on 15 September 2023.

**Edward Argar:**

In September, the Lord Chancellor appointed Keith Bristow QPM to conduct an independent investigation into Daniel Khalife's alleged escape from HMP Wandsworth. Public protection is of the utmost importance and the investigation was asked to identify shortcomings and ensure lessons are learned to help prevent incidents of this nature occurring again in future. Mr Bristow has submitted his findings and recommendations. We are considering these carefully and will update Parliament in due course, taking into account the ongoing criminal proceedings.

**Prisoners on Remand****Julie Elliott:** [3823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of the prison population was on remand on average in each year since 2015.

**Gareth Bacon:**

The proportion of the prison population that was on remand in each year since 2015 can be calculated from the figures for the total remand population and those for the total prison population (males and females) that are set out in Table A1.1 of the latest published Offender Management Statistics Quarterly - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1173712/Population\\_30June2023\\_Annual.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1173712/Population_30June2023_Annual.ods).

**Prisoners' Release: Housing****Sarah Champion:** [4181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many tents prisons have provided to people leaving prison in (a) 2022-23 and (b) 2023-24 to date.



**Edward Argar:**

There is no official policy to issue tents as part of releasing people from prison, therefore the Ministry of Justice does not collect data on the number of tents issued. As such no information can be provided.

Our Prisons Strategy White Paper set out our plans to reduce reoffending, including improving prison leavers' access to accommodation. This includes delivering our transitional accommodation service, known as Community Accommodation Service – Tier 3 (CAS-3), which provides up to 84 nights of basic temporary accommodation for prison leavers who would otherwise be homeless.

CAS-3 launched in five initial probation regions in July 2021. The service was expanded to Wales in June 2022, with expansion to the remaining six probation regions in England by the end of the year, to support the thousands of offenders who leave prison homeless.

Between 01 July 2021 and 31 March 2023 5,796 individuals, who would have otherwise been homeless, were accepted on to CAS-3.

**Prisoners' Transfers: Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[3749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the time taken to transfer prisoners with mental health issues to secure hospitals.

**Edward Argar:**

The Lord Chancellor has not yet had an opportunity to meet the Health Secretary on this issue since her appointment this month.

However, we are determined to reduce unnecessary delays and ensure that people in prison who meet the criteria for detention under the Mental Health Act and require a transfer to hospital can access the specialist care and treatment they need in a timely manner.

Working closely with our health and justice partners, we are driving forward work to introduce a non-statutory independent role designed to improve oversight and monitor delivery of the 28-day time limit set out in NHS England's good practice guidance.

**Prisoners: Lost Property****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[4189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much compensation was paid to prisoners for items lost in transit at HMP Swansea in 2023.

**Edward Argar:**

There has been no compensation paid to prisoners for items lost in transit from HMP Swansea in 2023.

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[4190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of how many letters addressed to prisoners went missing in the last month.

**Edward Argar:**

We do not hold information about items not delivered to the prison. Information about any items that may have gone missing after delivery could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[4191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much compensation has been paid by HM Prison and Probation Service to prisoners who had complaints upheld on missing parcels in the last 60 days.

**Edward Argar:**

We do not hold information centrally relating to compensation paid for missing parcels, and it could not be collected without incurring disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Prisons: Locks and Keys

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[4192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on how many occasions a prison has had to have locks replaced because of the loss or theft of keys in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023; and what estimate he has made of the cost of each incident.

**Edward Argar:**

One prison had to replace locks due to the loss of keys in 2022. The cost of this was £28,650.

There have been no such incidents to date in 2023. All incidents are thoroughly investigated to ensure the safety of and security of staff and prisoners.

#### ■ Probation Service: Resignations

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[4449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many probation officers in the probation delivery units in the areas covering Greater London left the probation service in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

**Edward Argar:**

The quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication covers staffing information, including number of leavers by group by structure/division. The latest publication covers data for up to the period 30 September 2023.

Data for the number of probation officers who left the London Probation Service by probation delivery unit, in the period 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022 and the period 1st January 2023 to 30th September 2023 is provided in table 1 and table 2 below.

**Table 1: Probation officers who left the London Probation Service by probation delivery unit, in the period 1st January 2022 - 31st December 2022**

(headcount)

<b>PDU</b>	<b>HEADCOUNT</b>
LDU Cluster Ealing, Harrow and Hillingdon	1
PDU Barking, Dagenham and Havering	2
PDU Brent	4
PDU Camden and Islington	2
PDU Croydon	3
PDU Ealing and Hillingdon	6
PDU Enfield and Haringey	5
PDU Greenwich and Bexley	4
PDU Hackney and City	3
PDU Hammersmith, Fulham, Kensington, Chelsea, Westminster	4
PDU Harrow and Barnet	2
PDU Kingston, Richmond and Hounslow	6
PDU Lambeth	2
PDU Lewisham and Bromley	4
PDU Newham	3
PDU Redbridge and Waltham Forest	6
PDU Southwark	5
PDU Tower Hamlets	5
PDU Wandsworth, Merton and Sutton	3
PS London Accrued Programmes and Structured Interventions	1
PS London Corporate Services	0
PS London Headquarters	0
PS London Public Protection Custody	8

PDU	HEADCOUNT
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>

**Table 2: Probation officers who left the London Probation Service by probation delivery unit, in the period 1st January 2023 - 30th September 2023 <sup>(P)</sup>**

(headcount)

PDU	HEADCOUNT
LDU Cluster Ealing, Harrow and Hillingdon	0
PDU Barking, Dagenham and Havering	1
PDU Brent	6
PDU Camden and Islington	4
PDU Croydon	4
PDU Ealing and Hillingdon	6
PDU Enfield and Haringey	2
PDU Greenwich and Bexley	0
PDU Hackney and City	0
PDU Hammersmith, Fulham, Kensington, Chelsea, Westminster	6
PDU Harrow and Barnet	2
PDU Kingston, Richmond and Hounslow	3
PDU Lambeth	3
PDU Lewisham and Bromley	3
PDU Newham	4
PDU Redbridge and Waltham Forest	3
PDU Southwark	2
PDU Tower Hamlets	0
PDU Wandsworth, Merton and Sutton	0
PS London Accrued Programmes and Structured Interventions	0

PDU	HEADCOUNT
PS London Corporate Services	1
PS London Headquarters	1
PS London Public Protection Custody	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

The leaving rate for probation officers in the London Probation Service was 12.4% in the 12 months to 30 September 2023 – a fall from the year prior.

Both recruitment and retention remain a priority across the Probation Service. We have accelerated recruitment of trainee Probation Officers (PQiPs) to increase staffing levels, particularly in Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) with the most significant staffing challenges. There were 2,185 staff, equivalent to 2,164 FTE, as at 30 September 2023 undertaking the PQiP training, which we anticipate will start to directly impact on the reduction of caseloads as they qualify.

**Notes to table 1 and table 2:**

1. Movements due to machinery of Government changes or due to staff transferring to or from the private sector as a result of changes in the management of establishments are not included in these tables.
2. Leaver numbers are provisional, pending the end of year re-run of data.
3. As with all HR databases, extracts are taken at a fixed point in time, to ensure consistency of reporting. However, the database itself is dynamic and where updates to the database are made late, subsequent to the taking of the extract, these updates will not be reflected in figures produced by the extract. For this reason, HR data are unlikely to be precisely accurate.
4. Leaving includes staff who have left the employment of HMPPS altogether and does not include internal transfers within the department. Reasons for leaving include, resignation, retirement, dismissals, redundancies, transfers to other government departments and even death. Figures for staff leaving by their different reasons for leaving are published as part of the HMPPS workforce bulletin.

*(p) Figures relating to current financial year are provisional and may be subject to change in future.*

■ **Probation Service: Staff**

**Ruth Cadbury:**

**[4450]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many probation officers were employed in the probation delivery units in the areas covering Greater London in (a) 2020, (b) 2021, (c) 2022 and (d) 2023.

**Edward Argar:**

The number of probation officers in post based in London Probation Service are given in the table below. Figures broken down by each PDU can be found in the accompanying excel file.

**Table 1: Band 4 Probation Officers in post in London Probation Service <sup>1</sup>, as at 30 September 2020-2023**

*FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT*

<b>As at...</b>	<b>Number of Probation officers</b>
30 September 2020	434
30 September 2021	565
30 September 2022	549
30 September 2023	562

## Notes

- On 1 June 2014, the National Probation Service, which is responsible for high-risk offenders in the community, was created and staff in the Probation Trusts joined HMPPS as civil servants. In late June 2021, more than 7,000 staff from private sector Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) came together with probation staff already in the public sector in the new Probation Service.

From April 2021, the Probation Service underwent a reorganisation, with staff moving into new Probation Delivery Units (PDUs). Therefore, prior to this date, staff were based in LDUs (Local Delivery Units). During the reorganisation, there was a split of some staff who had moved into the new PDUs and some staff who were still assigned to the old LDUs on the reporting system. A small number of staff remained on cost centres related to the old structure after the move

**Attachments:**

- [Table](#) [2023-12-04 PQ 4450 table.xlsx]

**LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

**Sir Edward Leigh:**

**[900445]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has for further devolution in England.

**Jacob Young:**

As the Chancellor set out at Autumn Statement, we remain committed to ensuring that every part of England that wants a devolution deal by 2030 will have one.

In addition to the four new devolution deals and deeper devolution offer announced last week, we have committed to consider whether level 2 powers and funding can be devolved to county councils that meet key criteria set out in the Levelling Up White Paper. We are also in advanced discussions with Devon and Torbay about a devolution deal there.

**Jeremy Quin:**

[\[900452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities take relevant environmental requirements into account when considering new housing developments.

**Lee Rowley:**

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear, local authorities should ensure that local planning policies and decisions, relating to all forms of development contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[900454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of demand for temporary accommodation on the finances of local authorities.

**Felicity Buchan:**

Local authorities deliver vital homelessness services, and we recognise that the increasing demand for temporary accommodation places pressures on councils. That is why, taking the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlements together, we have increased the funding available to local government in England in real terms.

In addition, we are providing over £1 billion to councils over three years through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. Autumn Statement announced a further £120 million of UK wide funding to help councils address Ukraine and homelessness pressures in 2024/25, and we are increasing the Local Housing Allowance to the 30th percentile of local rents from April.

The Government has allocated £450 million across two years to a third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund, which will help support Afghans on resettlement schemes and others in temporary housing need.

## ■ Combined Authorities: Devolution

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[4184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Technical paper on Level 4 devolution framework, published on 22 November 2023, whether his Department is commissioning any (a) gateway assessments with combined authorities, (b) learning exercises and (c) other evaluations of the existing (i) combined authority and (ii) devolution settlements in England.

**Jacob Young:**

The published Technical Paper on Level 4 Devolution [available here](#) sets out the Department is reviewing the Gateway Assessment process for institutions in receipt of Investment Funds. Further details will be set out in the usual way.

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Incentives****Emily Thornberry:**[\[4366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2023 to Question 1496 on Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Incentives, what the equivalent figure for the value of non-cash vouchers awarded to junior staff working for his Department was as performance related bonuses in the year 2022-23.

**Simon Hoare:**

Updates to the publication on paybill and NCPRP will be set out in the usual way.

**Evictions****Grahame Morris:**[\[4393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Section 21 notices have been issued in each month in 2023.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[4394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Section 21 notices have been issued in each of the last five years.

**Jacob Young:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer to Question UIN [183090](#) on 9 May 2023.

**Homelessness: Rural Areas****Sir John Hayes:**[\[3695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to reduce homelessness in rural areas.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government understands there are housing needs that can be particular to rural areas and that homelessness in rural areas can present different challenges to cities.

Our cross-government strategy, 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good', published in September 2022, sets out how we are investing £2 billion over three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, including over £530 million of Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25 funding to local authorities across England. Our funding programmes are based on an approach tailored to local need, providing local authorities with the flexibility to invest in tailored support and services to meet their local area needs.



At Autumn Statement 2023, the Government announced additional funding of £120 million to help councils address Ukraine and homelessness pressures in 2024/25. This will help local authorities deliver statutory duties through providing financial support for people to find a new home, working with landlords to prevent evictions, or providing temporary accommodation, including in rural communities.

### ■ Housing: Disability

**Alistair Strathern:** [\[4316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the supply of adapted housing for (a) adults and (b) children with disabilities in Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question [UIN 193596](#) on 17 July 2023. Local data is not held centrally, but planning rules already mean that councils must consider the needs of older and disabled people when planning new homes.

### ■ Housing: Mid Bedfordshire

**Alistair Strathern:** [\[4601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish the number of (a) social, (b) affordable rent and (c) shared ownership affordable homes as a percentage of homes completed in mid Bedfordshire constituency in each of the last five years.

**Lee Rowley:**

The numbers of new affordable homes, including social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership, are collected by local authority.

Data by local authority can be found in Live Tables 1006 to 1008 available [here](#).

### ■ Local Government: Contracts

**Angela Rayner:** [\[4187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2023 to Question 1396 on Local Government: Standards and the Answer of 27 November 2023 to Question 2902 on Local Government: Contracts, on what basis his Department decided on the anticipated number of a minimum of six and maximum of 32 reviews.

**Simon Hoare:**

As per document reference 2022/S 000-024515 for the provision of external assurance reviews, the estimation of the potential numbers of reviews that could be required was based on the number of external assurance reviews that were undertaken in previous years in response to requests for Exceptional Financial Support for the years 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Department has published details of that provided support and the associated reviews on Gov.uk.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Dan Carden:** [\[4513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letter of 14 November 2023 from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing of Liverpool City Council about homelessness in Liverpool.

**Felicity Buchan:**

A response to the letter was issued on 1 December 2023.

**■ Planning Obligations****Angela Rayner:** [\[4185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many times (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department have met local authorities to discuss the operation and application of Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 since his appointment.

**Angela Rayner:** [\[4186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many times (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department have met housing developers to discuss the operation and application of Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 since his appointment.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act introduces powers for the Government to create a new mandatory, non-negotiable Infrastructure Levy. This will reform the existing system of developer contributions, made up of negotiated Section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Ministers have and will continue to engage with a range of stakeholders as we prepare for these reforms. Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on Gov.uk.

**■ Private Property: Parking****Damien Moore:** [\[4246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of further regulating the fines chargeable by parking companies operating on private land.

**Jacob Young:**

Following the introduction of the Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019, the Government is taking action to improve the regulation of the private parking industry and is developing a new code of practice to ensure the best possible protection for motorists and parking companies alike.

We are currently considering the impact of any changes to parking charges levels and debt recovery fees before a decision is made on the appropriate level.

In due course it is the Government's intention to consult on these elements of the code, as such we have recently concluded a call for evidence to make sure the consultation on parking charges and debt recovery fees is as well informed as possible.

The Government is working with both industry and consumer representatives to ensure the code comes into effect as quickly as possible.

## ■ Private Rented Housing

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[4237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of measures to help people without a guarantor access private rental tenancies.

**Jacob Young:**

The Renters (Reform) Bill will deliver the Government's commitment to a fairer private rented sector – improving the system for responsible tenants and good faith landlords.

The Government strongly encourages landlords and letting agents to assess the suitability of potential tenants on an individual basis. To ensure a sustainable tenancy for both parties, landlords and letting agents may require a guarantor for a tenancy.

The Department recognises that providing a guarantor can be difficult for some. We would encourage prospective tenants to discuss their individual circumstances with the letting agent or landlord about alternative forms of reference that might be acceptable. Local authorities may offer rent deposit, bond and guarantee schemes to help people on low incomes or at risk of homelessness.

## ■ Second Homes: Social Rented Housing

**Dr Thérèse Coffey:**

[\[900437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to restrict the sale of social housing for use as a second home.

**Jacob Young:**

Councils can make decisions to put covenants on properties sold through Right to Buy to prevent them being used as holiday lets, and in Designated Rural Areas homes can only be resold to a local person.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Childcare: Northern Ireland

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[4294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the feasibility of raising the earnings threshold for eligibility for tax free childcare in Northern Ireland in the context of the absence of a

Northern Ireland Executive preventing implementation of Government measures on childcare announced in Spring 2023.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

Childcare is a devolved policy in Northern Ireland and the absence of a functioning Executive in Northern Ireland is exacerbating the challenges faced by families with regards to childcare and a wide range of other policy areas.

That is why this Government is doing all it 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.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: ICT**

**Matt Rodda:**

[\[3665\]](#)

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

**Mr Steve Baker:**

As of 21 November 2023, the Northern Ireland Office has zero red-rated legacy IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Public Expenditure**

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[3589\]](#)

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

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The Northern Ireland Office does not devolve the administration of any of its spending programmes to local government in England.

A range of policy areas are transferred to the Northern Ireland Executive as set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and subsequent legislation. The Secretary of State and I remain committed to working with the political parties in Northern Ireland to pave the way for the restoration of a fully functioning Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, so that local decision making can occur by those elected to do so.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Animal Experiments****Rachael Maskell:**[\[4459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on (a) reducing the use of and (b) ending animal testing.

**Andrew Griffith:**

DSIT Ministers work with colleagues on a range of science, innovation and technology issues, including on the use of animals in research. This is the responsibility of a number of Government Departments and officials across these Departments continue to work together to support the delivery of important scientific research and the protection of animals.

**■ Broadband****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[4442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England that do not have (i) broadband and (ii) mobile internet access.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**

Ofcom collects coverage data as part of its reporting requirements, most recently published in its Connected Nations summer update, with data for the period to April 2023. Ofcom provides coverage data for premises, and we are unable to break this down between households and other premises.

Ofcom estimates that around 30,000 premises in the UK (0.1%) and 13,000 premises in England (less than 0.1%) lack access to either a fixed broadband network with 'decent broadband' (at least 10 Mbit/s download and 1 Mbit/s upload speed) or good indoor 4G coverage.

In the constituency of Coventry North East, 381 premises lack access to either a fixed broadband network with 'decent broadband' (at least 10 Mbit/s download and 1 Mbit/s upload speed). For the Coventry City Council area that figure is 1,137. Ofcom does not publish aggregated data for the region of the West Midlands, however more data can be found in Ofcom's Connected Nations reports.

In respect of mobile coverage, Ofcom reports that 132,383 premises across England do not have indoor 4G mobile coverage from any MNO. This falls to 11,222 premises for 4G outdoor coverage. With 2G and 3G coverage added in, 9,622 premises do not have indoor data coverage from any MNO, falling to 1,127 premises without outdoor data coverage. Unfortunately, Ofcom data does not enable us to make an assessment of the number of premises in the West Midlands, the Coventry North East constituency, or the Coventry local authority area that do not have coverage from any mobile network operator.

## ■ Research Bureaucracy Review

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[4147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to page 38 of her Department's publication entitled, Government's response to the Independent Review of the UK's Research, Development and Innovation Organisational Landscape, published November 2023, for what reason her Department plans to wait until early 2024 to respond to the 2022 Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government is committed to addressing the issues set out in the Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy. Since the review was published last year, the government has worked with the sector to produce a government response which is in the final stages before publication. In the meantime, government departments and funding bodies have begun implementing many of the Review's recommendations and taking practical steps to reduce bureaucracy in the research system

## ■ Research: Finance

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[4154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 27 November 2023 to Question 3220 on Research: Finance and with reference to the Answer of 22 February 2023 to Question 150475 on Euratom and Horizon Europe: Finance and to paragraph 4.49 of the Autumn Statement 2023, CP 977, published on 22 November, whether the £750 million of R&D spend has been drawn from the allocation made in the 2021 Spending Review for association with Horizon Europe in this financial year.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The government is investing in wider R&D priorities through savings generated from the bespoke Horizon deal that works in the interests of UK taxpayers, and researchers and businesses. The £750 million package is funded from money allocated to Horizon and Copernicus as part of government's record 2021 Spending Review funding settlement for R&D. This package will maximise opportunities for UK researchers, businesses and innovators, including £250 million for Discovery Fellowships, £145 million for new business innovation support and funding to support a new National Academy of mathematical sciences. This funding comes on top of our commitment to deliver a multi-billion-pound package of support through the existing Horizon Europe Guarantee scheme.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[4418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the answer of 27 November 2023 to Question 3220 on Research: Finance and with reference to the Answer of 22 February 2023 to Question 150475 on Euratom and Horizon Europe: Finance and to paragraph 4.49 of the Autumn Statement 2023, CP 977, published on 22 November, whether the £750 million of R&D spend has been drawn from the allocation

made in the 2021 Spending Review for association with Horizon Europe in this financial year.

**Andrew Griffith:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to UIN 4154.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ **Alstom: Redundancy**

**Mrs Heather Wheeler:**

[\[4136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of job losses at the Alstom manufacturing plant in Derby on (a) future rolling stock competitions, (b) value for money in procurement and (c) businesses in the supply chain supporting the plant.

**Huw Merriman:**

We are in close discussion with Alstom about its plans for the future of its Derby site and about the potential for redundancies among its workforce. While any decision about the future of the Derby site is ultimately for Alstom, we are giving careful consideration to the potential impacts of this on future rolling stock competitions, our ability to secure value for money through procurements, and on businesses within the rail supply chain supporting the plant, as well as the implications for the local economy and employment. My officials are also leading a cross Whitehall task force to develop appropriate mitigation plans in the event of redundancies.

### ■ **Carnival: Conditions of Employment**

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[4317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) Carnival UK on proposed changes to employment contracts at Carnival UK.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Minister for Maritime met with the President of Carnival UK & P&O Cruises on 24 November 2023 to discuss Carnival UK's ongoing negotiations with Nautilus International and its seafarers as part of its annual pay review. Carnival UK confirmed that it had no intention to dismiss and re-engage its workers.

### ■ **Department for Transport: ICT**

**Matt Rodda:**

[\[3649\]](#)

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

**Anthony Browne:**

The cost to the public purse of external contractors used to maintain legacy IT estate cross-government is not centrally held and we are therefore unable to provide an estimate in relation to the years specified.

**Matt Rodda:**[\[3650\]](#)

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

**Anthony Browne:**

Zero.

**East Coast Main Line: Railway Signals****Chi Onwurah:**[\[4415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2023 to Question 800 on East Coast Main Line: Weather, how many signalling failures there were on the East Coast Main Line in (a) 2021 and (b) 2022; and what assessment he has made of trends in the (i) number and (ii) frequency of signalling failures on the East Coast Main Line since 2010.

**Huw Merriman:**

The average time between Service Affecting Failures on the ECML has become less frequent since 2010 and is trending downwards. I can confirm there were 312 signalling failures in 2021/22, and 247 in 2022/23.

**Flitwick Station****Alistair Strathern:**[\[4313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding his Department has allocated for accessibility works at Flitwick station.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department has allocated sufficient funding to Network Rail to complete the scheme.

**Harlington Station****Alistair Strathern:**[\[4314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to improve accessibility at Harlington station.

**Huw Merriman:**

We are assessing over 300 nominations for Access for All funding beyond 2024, including a nomination for Harlington railway station. If successful, the funding will create an obstacle free, accessible route from the station entrance to platforms. Successful nominations will be announced in due course.



## ■ High Speed 2 Line: Scotland

**Gavin Newlands:** [\[3859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the total Barnett consequentials due to Scotland with the completion of Phases 1, 2a, 2b, and 3 of High Speed 2.

**Gavin Newlands:** [\[3860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the Barnett consequential funding for Scotland following completion of Phase 1 of High Speed 2.

**Gavin Newlands:** [\[3861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department made of the Barnett consequentials for Scotland of expenditure on High Speed 2 as of 3 October 2023.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Barnett consequentials will continue to apply in the usual way for all three devolved administrations as set out in the published Statement of Funding Policy document. All decisions on Barnett consequentials beyond the Spending Round 2021 period will be taken at the next Spending Round.

## ■ Inland Waterways: Leicestershire

**Andrew Bridgen:** [\[3836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to reopen the canal in Measham; and if he will take steps to provide compensation to Measham Parish Council for the loss of that amenity in recent years.

**Huw Merriman:**

Whilst provision for the extension of the canal at Measham was made under previous plans for HS2, decisions regarding the restoration and reopening of the canal are a matter for the Ashby Canal Trust and not the Department for Transport or HS2 Ltd.

## ■ Littleworth Station

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[4037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reopening Littleworth railway station in Deeping St Nicholas.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Network North announcement reiterated the Government's commitment to support local devolution and local leaders to prioritise transport initiatives that best support their communities. This included funding for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) in the North and Midlands for Local Integrated Transport Settlements (LITS) from 2025/26-2031/32.

This provides them with greater flexibility to consider more proposals such as any to reopen Littleworth Station. It is for the local authority to bring forward such proposals.

**■ Railways: Fares****Tahir Ali:** [4565]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with rail companies on the affordability of fares.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department regularly meets with the rail industry, on a variety of issues including rail affordability. Following last year's biggest ever Government intervention to cap rail fare increases below inflation, we will continue to protect passengers from cost-of-living pressures and will not increase next year's rail fares by as much as July RPI.

We have also introduced several other initiatives to support passengers, including launching flexible season tickets and three new Railcards.

**■ Rolling Stock: Costs****Grahame Morris:** [4400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of rolling stock leasing costs.

**Huw Merriman:**

Since privatisation rolling stock owning companies (ROSCOs) have invested billions of pounds of capital into improving the national train fleet, including procurement of over 14,000 new vehicles since 1997.

The investments made by the ROSCOs are reflected in lease costs by the operators which will have been tested in competition for new rolling stock. It passes risk from the Government to the private sector and also means that such capital does not need to be spent by the Government on rolling stock but can be invested elsewhere in infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and roads.

**TREASURY****■ Child Trust Fund: Walsall South****Valerie Vaz:** [4137]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of Child Trust Fund accounts (a) created and (b) claimed by 18-21 year olds in Walsall South constituency.

**Bim Afolami:**

Information on Child Trust Funds are available in HMRC's Annual Savings Statistics. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-savings-statistics-2023>

A geographical and age breakdown of the data for open accounts and matured accounts that have been claimed could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

## ■ **Childcare: Tax Thresholds**

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[4295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the feasibility of increasing the earnings threshold for eligibility for tax free childcare.

**Laura Trott:**

The £100,000 per parent per annum earnings threshold in Tax-Free Childcare was set because the Government believes it strikes the right balance between helping parents with their childcare costs, and managing the public finances in a responsible way.

## ■ **Climate Change: Banks**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[4244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the report by ActionAid entitled How the Finance Flows: The banks fuelling the climate crisis, published 4 September 2023.

**Bim Afolami:**

The government welcomes representations from industry relating to finance and Net Zero.

The Government and officials engage with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

## ■ **Development Aid**

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[4218\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his Department's planned timescale is for returning to spending 0.7% of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance.

**Laura Trott:**

The Government remains committed to returning to a target of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA when, on a sustainable basis, the government is not borrowing for day-to-day spending and underlying debt is falling.

## ■ **Driving Licences and Passports: Income**

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[4227\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has been collected from the ordering of new (a) passports and (b) driving licences in each of the last three financial years.

**Gareth Davies:**

In each of the last three financial years the income collected from the ordering of new driving licenses is:

- 2020/21 - £86.3m

- 2021/22 - £117.8m

- 2022/23 - £123.5m

The income collected from new passports is published in Home Office's Annual Report and Accounts. Data for the specified years is available through the following links.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/650879614cd3c3001468cc2e/Home\\_Office\\_Annual\\_Report\\_and\\_Accounts\\_22-23.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/650879614cd3c3001468cc2e/Home_Office_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_22-23.pdf)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1090460/Home\\_Office\\_ARA\\_21-22\\_Final\\_-\\_Gov.uk.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1090460/Home_Office_ARA_21-22_Final_-_Gov.uk.pdf)

## ■ East West Rail Line

**Richard Fuller:** [\[4381\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has established a (a) board and (b) working group for the purposes of realising the economic growth potential of East West Rail.

**Gareth Davies:**

HM Treasury has recently established an official-level East West Rail economic growth board with representatives from relevant government departments (DfT, DLUHC, DBT, DSIT & the IPA). The board will ensure that central government is fully joined up in its support for locally-led plans to maximise the benefits of East West Rail, and will co-ordinate activity accordingly.

The government provided £15m of funding at Spring Budget 2023 to support local authorities along the East West Rail route to further progress their plans to make the most of the railway for their communities.

## ■ Income Tax: Pensioners

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[4352\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many pensioners who do not pay income tax as their state pension is their sole income will start to pay tax from April 2024.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

From April 2024, the full weekly rate of the basic State Pension will be £169.50 and the new State Pension will be £221.20. The Personal Allowance – the amount of income that each individual may receive before paying income tax – is currently set at a level high enough (£12,570) to ensure that those pensioners whose sole income is the basic or new State Pension, and who have not deferred or receive protected payments, do not pay any income tax.

## ■ Individual Savings Accounts: Children

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[4353\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the changes announced in the Autumn Statement 2023 to allow multiple subscriptions in each year to individual savings accounts (ISAs) of the same type from 6 April 2024 will apply to Junior ISAs.

**Bim Afolami:**

The subscription rules for Junior ISAs differ in a number of ways to those of an adult ISA, and are intended to ensure that tax-free savings made on behalf of children are managed and maintained efficiently and there is no complexity of 'small pots', which would create problems as those children reach adulthood. The government will publish draft amendments to the ISA rules early in 2024.

## ■ Public Sector Net Cash Requirement: Interest Rates

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

[\[4012\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish an estimate of the potential impact of borrowing an additional 1% of gross domestic product on interest rates.

**Bim Afolami:**

Responsible decisions on borrowing are a key pillar of government support to the MPC in its action to bring inflation down to the 2% target. The external evidence suggests that for every extra 1% of GDP of borrowing (£25 billion), we could potentially be pushing up interest rates by as much as half a per cent. And there are reasons to believe that in current conditions it could be higher than that. Treasury modelling suggests that in the current economic conditions the impact might be between 0.5 and 1.25 per cent, without taking into account any supply-side impacts on the economy.

More detail on the methodology can be found here : [Further detail on HMT analysis of borrowing and interest rates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[4223\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2023 to Question 1954 on Revenue and Customs: Staff, how many and what proportion of the 17,300 customer compliance staff work on matters relating to the UK's departure from the EU.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

HMRC does not segment its data in this way, and therefore this information would only be available at disproportionate cost.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Access to Work Programme

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[3941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to increase funding for the Access to Work scheme in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2025-26 and (c) 2026-27.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The funding for Access to Work has increased in 2023/24 compared to the 2022/23 outturn. Funding provision for 2024/2025, 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 is yet to be finalised.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[3942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of Access to Work applications (a) were (i) approved and (ii) rejected and (b) given 100% of award in each year since 2021 to 2023 as of 27 November.

**Tom Pursglove:**

What proportion of Access to Work applications (a) were (i) approved and (ii) rejected

	APPROVED	NOT APPROVED
Apr-21	75.20%	24.80%
May-21	72.40%	27.60%
Jun-21	69.70%	30.30%
Jul-21	71.10%	28.90%
Aug-21	73.00%	27.00%
Sep-21	72.30%	27.70%
Oct-21	70.50%	29.50%
Nov-21	69.00%	31.00%
Dec-21	66.10%	33.90%
Jan-22	70.60%	29.40%
Feb-22	72.20%	27.80%
Mar-22	71.80%	28.20%
Apr-22	78.70%	21.30%
May-22	68.90%	31.10%
Jun-22	66.50%	33.50%

	APPROVED	NOT APPROVED
Jul-22	65.60%	34.40%
Aug-22	65.60%	34.40%
Sep-22	66.10%	33.90%
Oct-22	63.90%	36.10%
Nov-22	65.10%	34.90%
Dec-22	65.40%	34.60%
Jan-23	67.20%	32.80%
Feb-23	69.00%	31.00%
Mar-23	69.70%	30.30%
Apr-23	71.40%	28.60%
May-23	72.70%	27.30%
Jun-23	71.10%	28.90%
Jul-23	68.10%	31.90%
Aug-23	71.70%	28.30%
Sep-23	70.70%	29.30%
Oct-23	70.30%	29.70%

*Please note that the not approved includes rejections, advice provided, no contact, no evidence, not eligible, not pursued, and closed other.*

*Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.*

**(b) given 100% of award in each year since 2021 to 2023**

The information requested about Access to Work applications that have been made in England, Wales and Scotland is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

However, the Access to Work statistics includes how many applications result in provision being approved from 2007/08 to 2021/22. Please see Table 3 of the Access to Work statistics.

The latest Access to Work statistics can be found here:

[. Access to Work statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

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The latest Access to Work statistics can be found here:

[Access to Work statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

**[4568]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for Access to Work support were received in each month since 1 May 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested about Access to Work applications is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

However, Access to Work statistics include how many applications result in provision being approved from 2007/08 to 2022/23. Please see Table 3 of the Access to Work statistics.

The latest Access to Work statistics can be found here:

[Access to Work statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

■ **Benefits Rules: Age**

**Kim Johnson:**

**[3999]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of applying adult rate (a) Universal Credit and (b) other benefits to people aged over 21.

**Jo Churchill:**

No assessment has been made.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: ICT**

**Matt Rodda:**

**[3651]**

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

**Paul Maynard:**

DWP is unable to provide a breakdown of the figures requested as this would require a high degree of manual processing to pull the information together centrally.



**Matt Rodda:**

[\[3652\]](#)

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

**Paul Maynard:**

As of 21 November 2023, DWP has 6 red-rated legacy IT systems as defined in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Public Expenditure

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[3578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

**Paul Maynard:**

The government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement. At Spring Budget, the government announced the trailblazer devolution deals with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and West Midlands Combined Authorities (WMCA), which included a commitment to introduce single funding settlements at the next Spending Review for these MCAs.

At Autumn Statement, the government published a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GMCA and WMCA, setting out how the single settlements will work. The government also announced an ambitious new 'level 4' of the devolution framework, including a single transport funding settlement for eligible institutions, and a 'consolidated' pot at the next multi-year SR covering two DLUHC investment themes – local growth and place, and housing and regeneration. Following successful delivery of the 'consolidated' pot, and learning from the trailblazers, Level 4 institutions will then become eligible to receive a single settlement from the subsequent multi-year Spending Review.

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

## ■ Employment: Mental Health Services

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[4289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to support the delivery of mental health first aid in the workplace.

**Mims Davies:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for the Health and Safety (First-Aid Regulations) 1981 which require employers to provide first aid to employees who are injured or become ill at work.

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations are designed to help individuals who require immediate intervention or support where necessary until professional emergency care arrives. They require employers to consider mental health alongside physical health when undertaking a first aid needs assessment.

An employer's assessment of first aid needs requires a risk based approach and should consider whether training employees in mental health first aid is necessary in their workplace.

**Household Support Fund****Caroline Lucas:****[3767]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what his Department's policy is on the Household Support Fund for 2024-25.

**Mims Davies:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [3412](#).

**Priti Patel:****[3793]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2023, what funding will be provided to each local authority in the 2024-25 financial year for the Household Support Fund; and what his planned timetable is for (a) informing local authorities of their allocations and (b) providing guidance on the use of that funding.

**Mims Davies:**

I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [3412](#).

**Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing****David Linden:****[4510]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the amount of deductions made under the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy to (a) Housing Benefit and (b) Universal Credit claimants in each year since 2013.

**Mims Davies:**

Information on the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy (RSRS) sufficient to produce such an estimate can be found on Stat-Xplore. Stat-Xplore includes the mean of RSRS reduction, the number subject to the RSRS and the number of spare rooms for both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Housing Element Claimants.

Stat-Xplore can be found [here](#).

## ■ Local Housing Allowance

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[4569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the refreezing of Local Housing Allowance after 2025 on low income renters.

**Mims Davies:**

The Secretary of State has completed his review of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates for 2024/25. As announced by the Chancellor in the recent Autumn Statement, from April 2024 the Government will be investing £1.2 billion increasing LHA rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents. This results in a significant investment of £7bn over five years and ensures 1.6 million private renters in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit will gain, on average, nearly £800 per year in additional help towards their rental costs in 2024/25.

The Secretary of State has committed to reviewing LHA rates annually and the rates for 2025/26 have not yet been reviewed.

## ■ Maternity Allowance: Eligibility

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[4139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 3.10 of the Autumn Statement 2023, CP 977, published on 22 November 2023, if he will take steps to ensure self-employed parents remain able to verify their eligibility for maternity allowance.

**Paul Maynard:**

Self-employed parents will continue to be able to claim Maternity Allowance. We are working to reflect the changes announced in the Autumn Statement in the claims process for Maternity Allowance announced and details will be published in due course.

## ■ Pension Credit: Applications

**Anne McLaughlin:**

[\[4204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2023 to Question 3498 on Pension Credit: Applications, what steps his Department is taking to modernise the Pension Credit application process.

**Paul Maynard:**

Citizens currently have the choice of three routes to make an application to Pension Credit, online, by phone or by paper. Through our Service Modernisation Programme, DWP aims to further improve the process of claiming Pension Credit based on user research with customers and their representatives.

## ■ Pensions Ombudsman: Complaints

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[4293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints the Pensions Ombudsman Early Resolution Team escalated to the Pensions Ombudsman in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022; and how much funding his Department provided the Pensions Ombudsman in those years.

**Paul Maynard:**

The Pensions Ombudsman (TPO) is reviewing its Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and data as part of its business planning for 2024/25.

TPO does not hold data in a format that could produce a validated response as the information requested does not form part of TPO's current KPI's. It will consider this as a metric in the work between the department and TPO when agreeing 2024/25 KPI's.

The Department for Work and Pensions provided TPO with funding of £8,870,000 in 2020/21, £7,931,195 in 2021/22, £10,413,705 in 2022/23, and £11,268,672 in 2023/24.

## ■ Pensions Ombudsman: Standards

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[4291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the waiting times for the Pensions Ombudsman to respond to enquiries that the Early Resolution Team have escalated.

**Paul Maynard:**

TPO's Early Resolution team (ERT) investigates complaints where TPO believes the complaint may be resolved informally. Over 80% of cases that go to ERT are resolved there, but where this is not possible, the complaint is passed to TPO's Adjudication Team. Cases may then be escalated to the Pensions Ombudsman where the complainant does not agree with the adjudicator's decision.

DWP have recently provided additional funding to TPO towards reducing waiting times. This funding has been used to create a new casework support team. This has significantly increased case clearances.

Due to variation in the complexity of cases, TPO does not currently hold validated data on the average time for cases to pass through the Adjudication Team and Ombudsman.

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[4292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of (a) financial and (b) staffing support for the Pensions Ombudsman in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021, (iii) 2022 and (iv) 2023 to date.

**Paul Maynard:**

DWP have increased the financial support to The Pensions Ombudsman (TPO), with an additional £750,000 of funding provided in 2022/23 towards tackling the case backlog and an additional £1,698,347 in 2023/24 towards the case backlog and waiting times, enabling TPO to create a new casework support team. This has significantly increased case clearances.

The Department also provide support, when necessary, in the areas of digital, commercial, security and HR alongside continuing stewardship support and advice.

The TPO 2022/23 annual report and accounts are due to be laid in Parliament and will provide further detail.

**■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[4239]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he has taken to reduce waiting times for PIP assessments.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We are committed to ensuring people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in a timely manner. Reducing customer journey times for PIP claimants is a priority for the department and we are working constantly to make improvements to our service.

We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence, including that from the claimant.

We have seen a decrease in PIP clearance times, with the latest statistics showing that the average end-to-end journey has reduced from 26 weeks in August 2021 to 15 weeks at the end of July 2023. This is because we're:

- using a blend of phone, video and face-to-face assessments to support customers and deliver a more efficient and user-centred service;
- increasing case manager and assessment provider health professional resource; and
- prioritising new claims, while ensuring that claimants awaiting award reviews do not fall out of payment through no fault of their own.

In addition, the Health Transformation Programme (HTP) is modernising health and disability benefit services to create a more efficient service, to reduce processing times and improving trust in our services and decisions. As part of this, from July 2023, a limited number of claimants have been able to begin their claim for PIP entirely online, which we aim to roll out across England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the end of 2024.

**■ Poverty: Nottingham****Nadia Whittome:**[\[4296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to support those living in destitution in Nottingham.

**Mims Davies:**

The Government is committed to reducing poverty and supporting low-income families. We will spend around £276bn through the welfare system in Great Britain in 2023/24 including around £124bn on people of working age and children.

From April 2023, we uprated benefit rates and State Pensions by 10.1% and, subject to Parliamentary approval, working-age benefits will rise by 6.7% from April 2024, in line with inflation.

In 2021/22 there were 1.7 million fewer people in absolute poverty after housing costs than in 2009/10, including 400,000 fewer children and 1 million fewer working age adults.

With almost one million job vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting people to move into and progress in work. This approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment - particularly where it is full-time - in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. In 2021/22 working age adults living in workless families were 7 times more likely to be in absolute poverty after housing costs than working age adults in households where all adults work.

To help people into work, our core Jobcentre offer provides a range of options, including face-to-face time with work coaches and interview assistance. In addition, there is specific support targeted towards young people, people aged 50 plus and job seekers with disabilities or health issues.

To support those who are in work, the voluntary in-work progression offer is now available in all Jobcentres across Great Britain, providing an estimated 1.2 million low paid workers on UC access to personalised work coach support to help them increase their earnings.

In addition, on 1 April 2024, the Government will increase the National Living Wage for workers aged 21 years and over by 9.8% to £11.44 representing an increase of over £1,800 to the gross annual earnings of a full-time worker on the NLW.

This government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living which is why we are providing total support of £104bn over 2022-25 to help households and individuals.

Included within this, to support low-income households with increasing rent costs, the government will raise Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents for private renters from April 2024. This will benefit 1.6m low-income households by on average £800 a year in 24/25.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[4297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to help ensure claimants subject to benefit sanctions have adequate income to afford living essentials.

**Jo Churchill:**

Sanctions are calculated only with reference to the full value of the standard allowance to which that claimant is entitled and are deducted from the claimant's total Universal Credit (UC) award. Sanctioned claimants who receive other awards or additional money, such as the housing and childcare elements, will continue to do so in full, unless the total UC award is eroded by the earnings taper or other income.

As a safeguard for claimants who demonstrate they cannot meet their immediate and most essential needs as a result of their sanction, we have a well-established system of hardship payments available. These needs can include accommodation, heating, food, and hygiene. Claimants are able to apply for a hardship payment from the first assessment period that the sanction has been applied to.

Sanctions are only applied if the claimant fails to meet a tailored requirement without good reason.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Interviews

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[4098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of benefit applications involved a face-to-face interview in each of the last five years.

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[4100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of applications made (a) following face-to-face interviews and (b) determined on paper were successful in the last 12 months.

**Jo Churchill:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[4099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to increase the number and proportion of benefit decisions that include a face-to-face interview with the claimant.

**Jo Churchill:**

Many benefits across DWP use interviews or consultations to establish entitlement or eligibility. For example, Universal Credit requires face to face interviews for claimant commitments which impact eligibility, and Personal Independence Payment and the Work Capability Assessment use health-related consultations delivered in person, through telephony or video to help DWP decision makers determine eligibility.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Tribunals

**Navendu Mishra:**

[3990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for (a) legal and (b) other expert support at benefits tribunals.

**Tom Pursglove:**

At the First-tier Tribunal, proceedings are designed to be straightforward and accessible to all. The tribunal panel is trained and experienced in dealing with a wide range of appellants with individual needs. Accordingly, the Department does not consider that it needs to provide any advocacy funding at this level.

Legal Aid, which is administered by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), is still available for advice and assistance on welfare benefits appeals to the Upper Tribunal, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court. At the First-tier Tribunal, Legal Aid may be available through the exceptional case funding scheme, if failure to provide Legal Aid may risk a breach of an individual's human rights.

At all appellate stages, claimants are able to appoint a representative to assist with their appeal and there is helpful signposting to free support available on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/appeal-benefit-decision/submit-appeal>

## ■ Unemployment: Chronic Illnesses

**John McDonnell:**

[4331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an estimate of the number of people that are both economically inactive due to a health condition and on an NHS waiting list.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The department monitors trends in economic inactivity and works closely with other departments and organisations to understand the relationship between health and economic inactivity. There are a number of factors that could be contributing to a rise in economic inactivity. However, these factors are complex and may interact with one another and further work is required to establish whether, and to what extent, there is a relationship between the growth in NHS waiting lists and long-term sickness in the labour market.

## ■ Work Capability Assessment: Reviews

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[3870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Government Response to the Work Capability Assessment: Activities and Descriptors Consultation, CP973, updated on 22 November 2023, if he will publish his Department's review of substantial risk cases.



**Tom Pursglove:**

We have listened to stakeholder concerns about the impact on vulnerable customers of removing LCWRA Substantial Risk altogether and agree that LCWRA risk should be preserved for the most vulnerable. The changes we are making will ensure that the LCWRA Substantial Risk is applied as per the original policy intent so that claimants are not excluded unnecessarily from support that is available to them. The department carried out internal policy work on substantial risk, not a “review” of substantial risk cases.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Good Law Project: Legal Costs

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[2472\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what was the total sum (a) paid to and (b) received from the Good Law Project by HM Government in respect of legal costs in each financial year since 2017-18.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 27 November 2023. The correct answer should have been:**

**Michael Tomlinson:**

There were 52 cases against His Majesty's Government in which the Good Law Project were involved as a party which concluded in the period since the start of the 2017-18 financial year. HM Government won 14 and lost 2 of those cases, 15 cases were settled, and 31 cases withdrawn by the Good Law Project.

In total, the Good Law Project has paid £539,766.19 in legal costs to HM Government, while HM Government has paid £63,738.71 in legal costs to the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2017-2018, no payments were made or received.

In financial year 2018-2019, £40,000.00 was paid to, and £4,753.00 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2019-2020, £0 was paid to, and £59,013.19 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2020-2021, £0 was paid to, and £10,000.00 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2021-2022, £0 was paid to, and £270,000.00 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2022-2023, £23,738.71 was paid to, and £196,000.00 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2023-2024 to date, no payments have been made or received.

**There were 42 case files opened in respect of actual court proceedings between His Majesty's Government and the Good Law Project during the period since the start of the 2017-18 financial year. HM Government won 19 and lost 6, 7 cases were settled, and 9 cases were withdrawn by the Good Law Project. One has yet to deliver an outcome.**

**In total, in regard to these 42 cases:**

The Good Law Project has paid £984,098.45 in legal costs to HM Government, while HM Government has paid £160,925.71 in legal costs to the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2017-2018, no payments were made or received.

In financial year 2018-2019, £40,000 was paid to, and £4,753 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2019-2020, £0 was paid to, and £59,013.19 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2020-2021, £85,000 was paid to, and £10,000 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2021-2022, £0 was paid to, and £286,000 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2022-2023, £35,925.71 was paid to, and £544,000 was received from, the Good Law Project.

In financial year 2023-2024, £0 has been paid to, and £80,332.26 has been received from, the Good Law Project.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Cyprus: Turkey

Dr Matthew Offord:

[2566]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department has made a recent estimate of the number of people that migrated from Turkey to the occupied region of Northern Cyprus since 1983.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 27 November 2023. The correct answer should have been:**

**Leo Docherty:**

In accordance with the rest of the international community, with the sole exception of Turkey, the UK does not recognise the self-declared "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" as an independent state. The FCDO does not hold any information about the number of people that emigrated from Turkey to ~~the occupied region in the north of~~ Cyprus since 1983.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Public Interest Intervention Notice - Telegraph Media Group

**Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Lucy Frazer):** [\[HCWS86\]](#)

My Department has written to the Barclay family and RedBird IMI, the current and proposed owners of Telegraph Media Group (TMG), to inform them of my decision to issue a Public Interest Intervention Notice (PIIN) in relation to the anticipated acquisition of the Telegraph Media Group Ltd (TMG) by Redbird IMI.

This relates to concerns I have that there may be public interest considerations – as set out in section 58 of the Enterprise Act 2002 – that are relevant to the anticipated acquisition of TMG by RedBird IMI and that these concerns warrant further investigation.

At this stage, my decision to issue the PIIN triggers the requirement for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to report to me on jurisdictional and competition matters; and for Ofcom to report to me on the media public interest considerations in section 58(2A) of the Enterprise Act 2002 – namely, the need for accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion in newspapers. I have asked both the CMA and Ofcom to report back to me by 26 January 2024.

I have also made an Order to prevent actions by the parties to the merger that might prejudice the process or impede my ability to protect the public interest during the period in which the Intervention Notice is in force. It prohibits transfer of the ownership of the business without my prior written consent. It also requires the parties to ensure that steps are not taken to integrate the business with any other enterprise, to take action to ensure that no significant changes are made to the management and oversight of the business, and to do what is within their power to ensure that key editorial staff within the business are not removed or transferred without my prior written consent, or they are at least encouraged to remain.

This Order came into force at 10am on 1 December 2023. It will remain in force until the PIIN ceases to be in force.

I reserve the right to take such further action under the Act as I consider appropriate, which may include exercising my powers under section 42 of the Act in relation to any other relevant merger situation. My decision to issue a PIIN is without prejudice to my ability to take any such additional action in accordance with the Act.

My role as the Secretary of State in this process is quasi-judicial and procedures are in place to ensure that I act independently and follow a process which is scrupulously fair, transparent and impartial.

DCMS will update Parliament after both reports from the regulators have been received and considered.

## ■ Sport Update

**Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Lucy Frazer):**

[\[HCWS85\]](#)

I wish to inform the House that the Government has today published its response to the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Women's Football.

Women's football has developed rapidly in recent years and there is no doubt that we are at a defining moment. The Lionesses' win at the UEFA EURO 2022 Final and their journey to the final of the FIFA World Cup earlier this year has continued to raise the profile of women's football, both domestically and internationally. It is vital that we continue to build on these successes to ensure a long lasting and sustainable future for women's football in this country.

The Review of Women's Football examined the opportunities and challenges for the women's and girl's game. The Review made ten strategic recommendations which would lift minimum standards and deliver bold and sustainable growth at elite and grassroots levels. The Government supports all ten of the recommendations in the Review, and believes that these must be acted on as a priority to ensure the women's game propels itself to the next level. I want to take this opportunity to thank Karen Carney again for the enormous amount of hard work and commitment that went into producing such a prominent Review. I am grateful for her continued support for the women's game and I very much look forward to working with her going forward.

Responsibility for driving forward the recommendations sits across multiple stakeholders including the Football Association (FA); NewCo (the new independent entity that will be responsible for the management of the women's professional game); clubs; the Premier League, the English Football League (EFL), broadcasters, the Football Foundation, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Sport England and the Government. Government will continue to drive forward the recommendations requiring government action whilst working with other key organisations to ensure implementation across the board.

In order to hold all stakeholders accountable, the Government will be convening an implementation group, which will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of each recommendation.

The Government has announced a further £25 million for the Lionesses Futures Fund, in addition to £5 million from the FA. This £30 million fund will deliver up to 30 3G pitches in England, with gold-standard provision for women and girls. These state-of-the-art artificial grass pitches will be built around women and girls priority use, using reserved peak-time slots, women and girls only evenings and priority booking for women and girl's teams to drive up participation and create pathways for growth. The funding will also provide safe and necessary grassroots facilities, such as women and girl's changing rooms and showers, to welcome the next generation of players both on and off the pitch. All this builds on our investment of over £300 million in similar facilities across the UK, which also substantially benefits the women's and girls' game at a grassroots level.

The ambition has always been for the Review's recommendations to go beyond women's football and apply to women's sport more widely - sharing best practice and giving women and girls equal opportunities to play the sport they love. With this in mind, the Government will be convening a roundtable discussion with industry leaders across all women's sports.

By collectively implementing the recommendations from the Review, the women's game in this country can become a world leading sport that not only generates immense economic and social value, but also sets the standards for women's professional sport globally that allows others to follow.

The full text of the Government's response to the Review of Women's Football can be found [here](#).

## DEFENCE

### ■ Defence Equipment Plan

**Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps):**

[\[HCWS87\]](#)

I wish to inform Parliament that the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence has written to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee with our 2023 update on the affordability of the 2023 Defence Equipment Plan as at the end of financial year 2022-23, which details the Department's spending plans in equipment procurement and support projects over a period of 10 years.

I am placing a copy of his letter and the supplementary tables in the Library of the House and they have been published online. This more concise update takes the place of the usual Equipment Plan financial summary report and maintains continuity of financial reporting ahead of implementing the outcomes of the Integrated Review Refresh and the Defence Command Paper 2023 (DCP23). I welcome the continued engagement of the National Audit Office (NAO) who have today published their independent assessment of our plans.

The world is increasingly dangerous and the transition into a multipolar, fragmented and contested world had happened more quickly and definitively than anticipated in the original Integrated Review. The risk of escalation is greater than at any time in decades.

This year's Equipment Plan comes at a time where there are significant financial pressures due to pivotal world events, including the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the plan recognises the significant impact inflation has had on Defence's budget.

We have increased the budget for the Equipment Plan to £288.6 billion. Against this assumption we estimated there was a 6% pressure, but there are other reasonable scenarios in which the department has a surplus over ten years. The position reported in the plan and by the NAO does not reflect the Government's aspiration to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP as soon as economic and fiscal conditions allow.

While we are currently forecasting a pressure, the department is confident it can live within its equipment budget, with only 25% of the Equipment Plan committed over the

next decade, providing the headroom to adjust the programme as needed and ensuring we can remain responsive to emerging events. We have also made significant changes to how we manage the nuclear enterprise which will support us to deliver the nuclear deterrent on schedule.

We published DCP23 this summer and work is already underway to develop proposals to deliver its intent within our current budget. The additional funding from the 2022 Autumn Statement and 2023 Spring Budget is already allowing us to make new investments in stockpiles and munitions.

While we recognise the affordability challenge of the 2023-2033 Equipment Plan, it is only right that the choices we make to address this reflect the Government's priorities as set out in DCP23, as the department focuses more on Artificial Intelligence, digital capabilities and assuring supply chains to modernise our Armed Forces. We continue to work on reform to our acquisition processes including more iterative development of capabilities.

## ■ Update on the AUKUS Defence Partnership

**Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps):**

[\[HCWS89\]](#)

Just over two years ago, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia launched the ground-breaking new strategic partnership – known as AUKUS. As we have seen over the last two years or so, the world has become more dangerous. That's why Defence partnerships like AUKUS only become more important in ensuring the UK and our allies maintain a strategic advantage.

For more than a century, our nations have stood shoulder to shoulder, along with other allies and partners, to help sustain peace, stability, and prosperity around the world.

On Friday, I was delighted to meet with the US Secretary for Defense, Lloyd Austin, and the Australian Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Richard Marles at the Defense Innovation Unit in California for the annual AUKUS Defence Ministers' Meeting.

For Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines (Pillar I), we are collaborating to deliver this capability at the earliest possible date while upholding the highest nuclear non-proliferation standard.

For Advanced Capabilities (Pillar II), we are significantly deepening cooperation on a range of security and defence capabilities, making sure that each nation has the capabilities needed to defend against rapidly evolving threats.

Through these efforts, AUKUS contributes to integrated deterrence by pursuing layered and asymmetric capabilities that promote deterrence and stability.

We reflected on the exceptional progress made as part of delivering on the Optimal Pathway to develop a conventionally armed, nuclear powered, submarine capability to the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy, as announced by the AUKUS leaders in March this year. This includes increased training opportunities for Australian sailors in the UK and US, and the introduction of enabling legislation to the US Congress and

Australian Parliament. We reaffirmed our shared commitment to upholding the highest standard for nuclear non-proliferation.

Our industry is supporting Australia in this endeavour. Both BAE Systems in Barrow and Rolls Royce in Derby are playing a key role in the delivery of this world-class capability.

We also reflected on how the strategic alignment of our national defence strategies, anchored by our shared values, is facilitating unprecedented collaboration in advanced technologies. Through Pillar II, we are accelerating and deepening the development and delivery of advanced military capabilities, based on the most important challenges we face. This progress will improve our shared ability to tackle emerging threats.

We are significantly scaling up our cooperation on maritime capabilities and have committed to test these through a landmark maritime autonomy experimentation and exercise series. This will help us test our interoperability and increase the sophistication and scale of autonomous systems in the maritime domain. There will be significant opportunities for UK industry to engage.

We are advancing our trilateral anti-submarine warfare activities and undersea vehicle launch and recovery. These capabilities help to increase the range and capability of our undersea forces and will also support SSN-AUKUS. This follows our successful trials last month, where HMS *Tamar* played a key role in combined exercises off the east coast of Australia.

We are strengthening cyber capabilities across the three AUKUS partners, ensuring that we are working hand in hand with our industry partners across all our supply chains and protecting this endeavour for the future.

We are developing quantum technologies to increase resilience for our trilateral forces in Global Positioning System-degraded environments and enhance stealth in the undersea domain, including on future SSN-AUKUS submarines.

Critical to all of our capability development is our ability to facilitate faster and deeper defence trade between our nations. These efforts will increase private-sector cooperation across our nations, which is crucial to our ambition in emerging technologies. The Advanced Capabilities Industry Forum will provide a mechanism for industry-industry and government-industry consultation on how to transfer the necessary technology, data, and know-how needed to deliver capability quickly. We have also previewed our first AUKUS Innovation Challenge.

In addition, we have confirmed our trilateral cooperation on the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) programme. This will provide 24/7, all-weather capabilities that will increase AUKUS nations' ability to characterise objects deep in space up to 22,000 miles (36,000 kilometres) away from earth, supporting HMG's commitments to be a meaningful actor in space under the National Space Strategy (2021). Cawdor Barracks in South-West Wales has been identified as the UK's preferred host site, which will progress subject to planning permission.



Together, these initiatives provide us with a solid foundation to enhance our collective security and deterrence to keep all three nations' safe in a world which is becoming more dangerous by the day.

For additional detail, I refer members to the AUKUS Defence Ministers' communique <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3604511/aukus-defense-ministers-meeting-joint-statement/>

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ EU programmes update

**Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology (Michelle Donelan):**  
[\[HCWS88\]](#)

On Monday 4 December the UK and EU will sign our bespoke new agreement finalising the UK's association to the Horizon Europe and Copernicus programmes. This deal is set to create and support thousands of new jobs as part of the next generation of research talent. It will help deliver the Prime Minister's ambition to grow the economy and cement the UK as a science and technology superpower by 2030.

As part of the new deal negotiated over the last six months, the Prime Minister secured improved financial terms of association to Horizon Europe that are right for the UK – increasing the benefits to UK scientists, value for money for the UK taxpayer. It ensures:

1. UK taxpayers will not pay for the time where UK researchers have been excluded since 2021, with costs starting from January 2024.
1. The UK will have a new automatic clawback that protects the UK as participation recovers from the effects of the last two and a half years. It means the UK will be compensated should UK scientists receive significantly less money than the UK puts into the programme. This was not the case under the original terms of association.

Later today we expect UK and EU representatives to meet in the format of the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes, where they are due to sign a decision to adopt Protocols I and II and amend Annex 47 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, thereby formalising the UK's association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus.

I will meet in Brussels with EU Research and Innovation Commissioner Iliana Ivanova and members of the UK and EU R&D sectors to discuss and promote efforts to boost UK participation in Horizon Europe and Copernicus.

My visit to Brussels marks the start of joint UK-EU work to ensure that UK businesses and researchers and their international counterparts come together and seize the opportunity that UK association to the programmes brings.

Researchers, academics, and businesses of all sizes can confidently bid for a share of the more than £80 billion available through the two programmes, with calls for the 2024

Work Programme already open. It builds on the Government's record-breaking backing for R&D, with a commitment to invest £20 billion in UK R&D by 2024-25, borne out in recent announcements like the £500 million boost to the AI Research resource and £50 million for battery manufacturing R&D, announced in the Autumn Statement.

DSIT will shortly launch a communications campaign to maximise participation in Horizon Europe and Copernicus from researchers, academics and businesses of all sizes in the UK. Encouraging smaller businesses to pitch for, and win, Horizon and Copernicus funding supports DSIT's aim to help the UK's promising science and tech firms scale-up and grow. Officials will work closely with key sector stakeholders to ensure this message reaches businesses of all kinds, who might not have previously considered applying, as well as researchers and academics in every part of the country.