



Daily Report

Monday, 26 February 2024

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 February 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:55 P.M., 26 February 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ **Humphrey Burke**

Neil O'Brien:

[\[15158\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, if she will (a) review the sentence in the case of Humphrey Burke and (b) make an assessment of whether it might be regarded as an unduly lenient sentence.

Robert Courts:

The Attorney General and I have 28 days from the date of sentence to refer a case to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenience Sentence (ULS) scheme.

This is a statutory time limit and cannot be extended in any circumstances.

Humphrey Burke was sentenced in 2022 and therefore his case cannot be referred under the ULS scheme.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Business: Floods**

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[13996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what guidance was provided to local authorities on the eligibility criteria for businesses applying for a Business Recovery Grant following flooding.

Kevin Hollinrake:

For both Storm Babet and Storm Henk Business Recovery Grant activation, Local Authorities were invited by letter to agree a MOU with DBT which established the responsibilities of the parties and the principles for their co-operation. An operational guidance document provided further context, including definitions of terms, detail on the schemes and indicative timelines for reporting and payments.

A frequently asked questions document was provided, supplemented via regular stakeholder engagement sessions with officials to address queries and process requirements.

■ **Companies: Disclosure of Information**

Scott Benton:

[\[14249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she is taking steps to enhance due diligence procedures for individuals establishing limited companies.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is taking action to enhance checks conducted on individuals establishing limited companies. The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023 and the majority of new powers will come into force in March 2024. Companies House will have enhanced abilities to protect the integrity of the register. This will include powers to query suspected fraudulent incorporations and require further evidence. During 2025, compulsory identity verification checks will be implemented for directors (and equivalents), persons with significant control and those filing information with Companies House before they can transact with the Registrar.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Health and Safety**Chris Stephens:****[R] [15103]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to comply with principle (d) of schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Department for Business and Trade ensures compliance with this principle through the delivery of the following;

Provision of workplaces and equipment that comply with applicable legislation and standards. Arrangements that ensure any colleagues that may require workplace, equipment, or procedural adaptations are assessed and acted on, where reasonably practicable

HR line manager arrangements that ensure stimulating and engaging objectives are set, and flexible work arrangements that offer colleagues flexibility in how they work and deliver their tasks.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Information Officers**Dr Matthew Offord:****[14024]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in her Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Greg Hands:

The Department for Business and Trade press and media team is made up of 22 employees. Roles range from grades Higher Executive Officer (HEO) to Senior Civil Servant-1 (SCS1) and have salaries between £32,858 - £38,272 (HEO) and £75,000 - £117,800 (SCS1).

As announced by the Government last year, departments are submitting productivity plans to modernise the Civil Service and reduce the size of the state to pre-pandemic levels.

■ Maternity Leave: Labour Turnover

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[13892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which industries experience the highest (a) loss and (b) retention of female staff after maternity leave.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The 2019 Parental Rights Survey shows that over a fifth (22%) of mothers reported not returning to work or starting another job following birth. Mothers working in 'Hospitality' (38%) and 'Wholesale and Retail' (27%) sectors were more likely to report they did not return or start another job than mothers in 'Public Administration, Health and Education' (15%).^[1]

Over half (54%) of all mothers returned to the same job following birth. Mothers working in 'Public Administration, Health and Education' were more likely (63%) to report returning to the same job than those in 'Business, Professional Services, Leisure and Other Services' (50%) and 'Hospitality' industries (35%).^[2]

1, [2] The sectors reported represent those where there are statistically significant differences from the total.

■ New Businesses

Scott Benton: [\[14250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department plans to implement financial safeguards to prevent individuals who have previously mismanaged businesses from establishing limited companies.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Insolvency Service takes robust enforcement action against directors where there is evidence of unfit conduct and will bring disqualification proceedings where in the public interest.

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 will further strengthen these safeguards. Individuals who are disqualified under director disqualification legislation will be prohibited from being appointed as a director and their existing directorships will become void. The Act also extends the grounds for making a director disqualification order so that individuals who persistently breach new identity verification or filing requirements may face disqualification.

■ Post Offices: Rural Areas

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[15123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a Post Office access target for outreach mobile services in rural communities.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Post Office operates as a commercial business and the company has the freedom to deliver the branch network within the parameters we set. The Government-set Access Criteria ensures that services remain within local reach of all citizens, including rural communities.

Providing outreach services is a measure that Post Office takes to ensure communities have the access they require to Post Office products and services, particularly in local areas where permanent solutions are not always possible due to lack of premises or retailers. In these communities, outreach branches ensure customers are not left behind and can continue to access the Post Office services on which they rely.

■ Post Offices: Wales**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[15124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what proportion of the total rural population in Wales was within three miles of (a) Local, (b) Local Plus, (c) Main or Crown and (d) mobile outreach Post Office branches in the latest period for which data is available.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government protects the Post Office network by setting minimum access criteria to ensure that 99% of the UK population lives within three miles of a post office. These criteria ensure that however the network changes, services remain within local reach of all citizens.

Post Office network coverage data is not available in the detail requested. However, according to the most recent Post Office Annual Network Report, there were 566 rural branches in Wales as of March 2023.

■ Postal Services: Standards**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[15122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending Post Office target access criteria to include (a) distances by road and (b) services provided.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government protects the post office network by setting minimum access criteria to ensure that 99% of the UK population lives within three miles of a post office. These criteria ensure that however the network changes, services remain within local reach of all citizens.

Post Office continue to ensure that at least the three core services of mails, cash and basic banking, and bill payments are provided within a reasonable distance for customers as defined by the Government-set Access Criteria. This ensures that these services remain easily accessible to all customers.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Andrew Gilligan**

Andrew Gwynne: [\[14827\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Mr Andrew Gilligan was subject to the terms of the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers from 25 October 2022 to 20 February 2024.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[14828\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Mr Andrew Gilligan was employed on a full-time basis as a special adviser to the Prime Minister throughout the period from 25 October 2022 to 20 February 2024.

John Glen:

Andrew Gilligan has been a special adviser to the Prime Minister since March 2023.

All special advisers abide by the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers.

■ **Blood: Contamination**

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[15033\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to (a) identify and (b) contact people in Hull North who were (i) infected and (ii) affected by the contaminated blood scandal as part of Government preparations for responding to Infected Blood Inquiry recommendations on compensation.

John Glen:

The Inquiry's second interim report covers a set of extremely challenging issues, and it is right that we fully consider the needs of the community and the far-reaching impact that this scandal has had on their lives. The Inquiry's final report is due on 20 May 2024 and I will make a further statement to the House regarding the Government's next steps within 25 sitting days of the final report being published.

In October 2022, the Government made interim payments to infected people and bereaved partners registered with existing support schemes. We will continue to engage with the infected and affected community as appropriate, including ensuring that the APPG and the wider community is represented. At this time we are not engaging with groups on an individual basis regarding the Government's response to the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[15034\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people in Hull North have received interim compensation payments as a result of (a) their infection and (b) their family member's infection resulting from contaminated blood or blood products.

John Glen:

This information is not available by Parliamentary constituency. Since October 2022, the Government has paid over £400 million in interim compensation payments to

those infected or bereaved partners registered with the UK Infected Blood Support Schemes, totalling over 4000 individuals.

■ **Cabinet Office: Health and Safety**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[15102\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to comply with principle (d) of schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Alex Burghart:

The Cabinet Office is fully compliant with principle (d) of schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

The Cabinet Office designs work and workplaces to adapt to the needs of individuals. The majority of our Estate has modern, flexible, ergonomic workplaces to accommodate individuals' requirements.

The Cabinet Office has a major transformation programme, Building A Better Cabinet Office (ABCO) and over the last few years has implemented improvements in workplaces and technology to provide modern, flexible working environments for our people. These improvements include, for example, the modernisation & refurbishment of furniture at London: 1 Horse Guards Road, Newcastle: Benton Park View and York: Imphal Barracks and also the move to new accommodation in Glasgow and in York. These sites now provide access to a series of working environments, including desks, collaborative working spaces and meeting rooms.

The Cabinet Office has a comprehensive framework to ensure individuals who have any additional requirements are not disadvantaged and are adequately supported to have the appropriate workplace adjustments in place.

■ **Cabinet Office: Information Officers**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14025\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Alex Burghart:

The Cabinet Office press and media team is made up of 17 employees. Roles range from grades HEO to SCS1 and have salaries between £32,250 - £117,800.

This figure is for Cabinet Office central departmental press office and media team only.

■ **Civil Servants: Maternity Leave**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[13894\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department takes to support civil servants who are returning to work after maternity leave.

John Glen:

The Cabinet Office Maternity Leave policy outlines the support available for Cabinet Office employees who are returning to work after maternity leave. Employees are protected from suffering any detriment as a result of taking maternity leave and will return to work on terms and conditions no less favourable than the ones that would have applied had they not been absent. They will also receive any relevant pay awards.

A new risk assessment is carried out for staff that are pregnant or that have recently given birth to help them return to work. This considers the specific health and safety of the individuals and is regularly reviewed until the measures introduced as part of the assessment are no longer needed.

Cabinet Office employees are offered flexibility, for example to initially help their child settle into childcare, when returning to work from maternity leave. Employees are encouraged to discuss with their Line Managers how they can support the individual in making the transition back to work as smooth as possible.

If employees wish to return to work using a different working pattern, they are encouraged to speak to their Line Manager as early as possible so they can support the employee's return to work. All requests are considered in line with the Cabinet Office Flexible Working policy. Individuals also have a statutory right to request flexible working.

If the employee is still breastfeeding when they return to work and require a place to rest and store expressed milk, there are avenues of support available. They should let their Line Manager know a few weeks before they return to work so the Line Manager can organise a suitable space for the individual. Cabinet Office has guidance on facilities to support pregnant and nursing employees.

■ General Elections**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[14293\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Prime Minister plans to call the next general election.

Alex Burghart:

Under the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022, the precise timing of the next general election is a matter for the Prime Minister. A general election must take place by January 2025.

As the hon. Member will be aware, the Prime Minister has indicated recently that his working assumption is that a general election will take place in the second half of this year. Although, of course, this remains a matter for the Prime Minister's discretion.

In the meantime, the Government is working to deliver a brighter future for Britain, with long-term economic security and opportunity: where hard work is always rewarded; where ambition and aspiration are celebrated; where young people get the skills they need to succeed in life; where families are supported, where those who

have worked hard all their lives have the dignity they deserve in retirement; and, with security at home and abroad.

■ **Genomics: China**

Catherine West:

[\[14260\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government (a) is taking steps to ensure the security of genetic data of UK citizens and (b) has raised potential concerns relating to Chinese genomics companies as part of the US-UK Strategic Dialogue on Biological Security.

Alex Burghart:

Organisations which hold sensitive biological data are subject to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). In addition, organisations such as Genomics England, UK Biobank and NIHR BioResource consider national security in decision making about partnerships with other companies.

The Office for Life Sciences is undertaking a programme of work to assess how we can minimise the risks from biological data to protect our burgeoning bioeconomy, without stifling innovation, and build confidence in sharing personal data to improve health outcomes in the UK and across the world. This is being conducted in consultation with relevant Departments and Agencies across Government, and key partners such as Genomics England and UK Biobank.

Underpinned by the UK Biological Security Strategy and the U.S. Biodefense Strategy, the U.S.-UK Strategic Dialogue on Biological Security reflects a shared ambition to protect against a growing and diverse spectrum of biological threats. These risks include future pandemics as well as those that might arise from misuse of biotechnology and genomic data by state actors.

■ **Jonathan Montgomery**

Dan Carden:

[\[14435\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Statement on Update on the Government response to the Infected Blood Inquiry, UIN HCWS254, published by the Haemophilia Society on 8 February 2024, whether his Department consulted people affected by the infected blood scandal before that appointment was made.

Dan Carden:

[\[14436\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Statement on Update on the Government response to the Infected Blood Inquiry, UIN HCWS254, published by the Haemophilia Society on 8 February 2024, if he will publish the appointment process for that appointment.

Martyn Day:

[\[14446\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what conflict of interest risk assessment was made regarding the appointment of Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery as Chair of the

group of clinical, legal and social care experts to advise the Cabinet Office on detailed technical considerations of responding to the Infected Blood Inquiry's recommendations on compensation.

John Glen:

Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery was appointed via direct Ministerial appointment to ensure that he and the expert group could begin their work as soon as possible. The appointment of the expert group will ensure the Government has the relevant expertise to make informed choices in responding to the Inquiry's recommendations on compensation following the publication of the final report.

In regard to the appointment process for the chair of the expert group, a number of candidates with relevant experience were shortlisted for the role. All candidates underwent thorough due diligence and conflict of interest checks.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

Andrew Bridgen: [\[14082\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on how goods entering the mainland UK from Northern Ireland will be differentiated from goods entering from the EU at Cairnryan.

Andrew Bridgen: [\[14085\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that goods entering the mainland UK from Northern Ireland will be differentiated from goods entering from the EU.

Mr Steve Baker:

Unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses to the rest of the UK market is a longstanding Government policy, underscored and strengthened as a result of the package of commitments in our Safeguarding the Union Command Paper. The Windsor Framework (UK Internal Market and Unfettered Access) Regulations 2024 further entrench the legislative protections for unfettered access.

We will use existing systems, using commercial information and evidence, to differentiate qualifying Northern Ireland goods. Operational measures will be in place to prevent avoidance of the rules, drawing on the anti-avoidance powers we have in law to deal with people looking to abuse the system.

We will work closely with all Devolved Administrations on arrangements for non-qualifying goods which move into Great Britain via Northern Ireland.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Churches: Nigeria

Sir Edward Leigh:

[7472]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church has had discussions with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on the attack on the St Francis Xavier Church in Owo, Nigeria in 2022; and whether the Church is providing aid for the victims of that attack.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 16 January 2024]: The Archbishop of Canterbury issued a statement at the time of the attack on the Roman Catholic Church of St Francis Xavier in 2022, saying: “The massacre of worshippers – men, women and children – during a Mass in South-west Nigeria was an act of pure evil and a profound offence to God. My prayers are with all affected by this barbaric attack. I continue to pray for the nation of Nigeria.” The Archbishop meets often with politicians and clergy from Nigeria and has raised the issues of inter community and inter-religious violence.

Bishops of the Church of England are in regular discussion with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on matters affecting freedom of religion or belief, including in Nigeria. On 6th June 2022 the Lord Bishop of Leeds asked a question of the Minister of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in the House of Lords, during exchanges on an answer to an urgent question on the attacks. He stressed that while condemnation by religious leaders was necessary and important, it often had limited impact on the self-proclaimed and ideologically-driven religious groupings and organisations behind such attacks.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-06-06/debates/B6A5FF6E-A393-4201-9A75-BEBB56A981CD/details#contribution-22B83542-1AF7-4AB0-B1B6-B6D78F081CF2>

The Church has not provided any direct financial aid to the victims of this attack, but through its diocesan companion links with Nigeria and the work of its voluntary mission agencies it is continuing to support the Church in Nigeria more broadly as it responds to violations of freedom of religion or belief.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Greater London

Feryal Clark:

[14405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much the Arts Council has spent in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London (i) in each year of this Parliament and (ii) since 2010.

Julia Lopez:

All successfully awarded Arts Council England investment in Enfield North, the London Borough of Enfield, and London ONS Region, April 2010-Present:

Funding Year Enfield North constituency Enfield Borough London ONS Region

2010/11 £34,050 £153,708 £39,366,238

2011/12 £9,515 £75,233 £47,166,392

2012/13 £50,000 £491,029 £348,729,487

2013/14 £195,329 £697,821 £225,578,345

2014/15 £157,991 £705,777 £280,984,241

2015/16 £8,100 £680,052 £225,004,504

2016/17 £137,056 £790,097 £223,873,225

2017/18 £90,084 £777,327 £205,562,587

2018/19 £133,235 £822,124 £224,609,953

2019/20 £250,035 £1,206,353 £265,311,863

2020/21 £906,799 £2,182,360 £478,167,469

2021/22 £923,795 £1,333,534 £302,678,586

2022/23 £864,278 £1,058,173 £285,984,508

2023/24 £746,093 £1,281,282 £212,007,332

Total £4,506,360 £12,254,870 £3,365,024,730

These figures are not mutually exclusive. All represented funding for Enfield North is included in the figures for the London Borough of Enfield; likewise, all Enfield Borough funding is included in the London ONS figure. Multiple-year funding agreements (such as National Portfolio Organisations) have their investment represented over the appropriate multiple funding years. A project's location data (such as local authority, constituency, or region) for all Grants for the Arts Fund (GFTA) and Development funds is determined by the applicant's postcode, and therefore does not always reflect where the actual activity took place.

■ **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Information Officers**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[14018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in her Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Julia Lopez:

The DCMS press and media team is made up of 13 employees. Roles range from grade B to grade A (U) and have salaries in bands between £36,369 - £72,234.

This figure is for DCMS central departmental Press Office and Media team only. As announced by the Government last year, departments are submitting productivity plans to modernise the Civil Service and reduce the size of the state to pre-pandemic levels.

■ **Film and Television: Government Assistance**

Alex Sobel: [\[14262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to take steps to support the television and film industry in the context of its recovery from a period of production downturn.

Alex Sobel: [\[14263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will make an assessment of the impact of the period of production downturn on the television and film industry in the UK.

Alex Sobel: [\[14264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of offering financial support to freelance employees within the television and film industry during the period of production downturn.

Alex Sobel: [\[14265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the rise in the cost of living on (a) the television and film industry and (b) freelance employees within that industry.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has set out a clear plan to grow the creative industries by a further £50 billion and add another 1 million jobs by 2030. That includes supporting the growth of the television and film industry.

Since 2010, the Government has introduced a range of tax reliefs across the creative industries, including expanded relief for film and high-end television. Our screen sector tax relief is estimated to be worth more than £13 billion in GVA to the UK economy.

We have taken a number of additional steps to ensure that British film and television companies are able to invest in production, expand their businesses and offer opportunities for cast and crew across the UK, in spite of production disruption resulting from the pandemic and the recent strike action in the US.

This includes the £500 million Film and TV Production Restart Scheme and the Culture Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas. To build on this, and support the industry to not only survive but thrive, further government actions have been taken. This includes our support for the British Film Institute and British Film Commission, which has helped drive a near doubling of UK studio capacity, and the £28 million UK

Global Screen Fund, which is expanding the global reach of UK independent content. The sector also benefits from the continued success of our screen sector tax reliefs (for film, high-end TV, animation and children's TV), which in 2021-22 provided £792 million of support for over 1000 projects.

We recognise the impact of the US strikes and cost of living crisis on the film and TV workforce. HMRC has a 'Time to Pay' policy which may provide some support to affected cast and crew. This policy allows individuals experiencing temporary financial difficulty to schedule their tax debts into affordable, sustainable, and tailored instalment arrangements with no maximum repayment period. These arrangements can be applied to any tax debt and are flexible, so they can be amended if circumstances change.

In the Creative Industries Sector Vision, the Government set out an ambition to improve the job quality and working practice of the sector, including supporting the high proportion of freelancers in the sector. This includes promoting fair treatment and working practices, enhancing support networks and resources for creative freelancers through Creative UK's Redesigning Freelancing initiative. DCMS and industry will also continue to work together to produce an action plan in response to the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre's Good Work Review, and proposals include the recent launch of the British Film Institute's £1.5 million Good Work Programme for screen. The government will continue to work with the BFI and the newly established screen sector Skills Task Force to support a strong skills pipeline in the sector and attractive careers pathways into the industry.

■ Football: Regulation

Paula Barker:

[\[14282\]](#)

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

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is on the side of football fans and the local communities that football clubs serve. We have a clear plan to deliver a sustainable future for football, with fans at its heart, and our legislation will deliver this through a new independent regulator as soon as parliamentary time allows.

■ Football: Women

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[15094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help tackle (a) sexism, (b) misogyny and (c) abuse in football.

Stuart Andrew:

There is no place for sexism, misogyny or abuse of any kind in sport, including football, and it is vital that football authorities continue to work together to tackle it. The Government welcomes the ongoing work of the relevant football leagues, the

FA, and organisations such as Women in Football and Kick it Out in challenging discrimination and breaking down inequalities between the sexes.

Following a bombardment of abuse directed towards female sports broadcasters, footballers and other athletes on social media, I wrote to X and Meta to understand whether they are aware of any abuse towards women in sport on their services which violates their policies, and, if so, what action they have been taking to address it. Both X and Meta have now responded to my letter setting out the action they are taking including enforcement, reporting processes and safety settings.

We continue to liaise closely with all the police and football authorities about their work to tackle discrimination. This includes actions targeted at and around football grounds, such as improving reporting systems, providing better training and support for referees and stewards, and improving the quality of CCTV around stadia.

Fans can also be charged with a Football Banning Order and fined if found to use derogatory language at football games, with the possibility of more severe sentences if it has been recorded as a hate crime. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has been working with the FA, Premier League and English Football League to determine what evidence is required to charge an incident as a hate crime.

■ Future of Women's Football Review

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[15095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to publish outcomes from the implementation group meetings established to take forward the recommendations from the Carney Review.

Stuart Andrew:

We remain committed to hosting the initial implementation group meetings in March and July 2024 as set out in the Government response to the Review of Women's Football. Minutes summarising actions and outcomes will be published on GOV.UK.

■ Horse Riding

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[14492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she has taken to support equestrian sports in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

Stuart Andrew:

Supporting grassroots sport is a key government priority and we are committed to ensuring that everyone is able to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits that sport and physical activity provides. Our new strategy 'Get Active' sets out our unapologetic ambition to build a more active nation, with a target to get 3.5 million more people classed as 'active' by 2030.

We provide the majority of support for grassroots sport through our arm's length body, Sport England - which receives £323 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding each year.

Since 2020, Sport England has provided over £8.3 million of support to programmes which facilitate participation in grassroots equestrianism. This includes £5 million of support which has been provided to the British Equestrian Foundation to grow and develop the sport between 2022 and 2027. There have not been any recent awards to equestrian clubs in the Romford constituency.

Organisations in the Romford constituency should be aware that Sport England provides support for grassroots sport through a range of available funds, including the Small Grants Programme and the Active Together Fund. Further information on these funds and eligibility criteria can be found [here](#).

■ National Physical Activity Taskforce

Caroline Nokes:

[15054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many times the National Physical Activity Task Force has met; when those meetings took place; and how many (a) people and (b) women attended each of those meetings.

Stuart Andrew:

The National Physical Activity Taskforce (NPAT) was launched in September 2023 as part of the government sport strategy Get Active, to bring together government departments, the sport sector and independent experts to deliver coordinated and innovative policy that will help encourage people to get active.

The NPAT meets quarterly and has held two productive meetings since its launch. The inaugural meeting took place on 27 September 2023, the second on 12 December 2023 with the third scheduled for March 2024.

Each meeting includes standing representatives ex officio, as well as rotating members to ensure diverse representation from across the sport and physical activity landscape. Independent experts are invited on an ad-hoc basis to present key data sets relating to specific meeting topics.

The number of attendees and gender ratio varies at each meeting. The NPAT terms of reference, minutes, and names of attendees are published on gov.uk.

■ Rugby

Paula Barker:

[14302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support the future sustainability of Rugby League.

Stuart Andrew:

Government has set out its ambitions for supporting the long-term sustainable growth of the sport sector in the new sport strategy, Get Active.

This includes supporting sports like Rugby League to access additional, alternative forms of investment to help the sector to continue to grow and thrive, and by highlighting best practice, good governance mechanisms, and opportunities offered

by technology and innovation. This will allow sport to thrive for future generations, and support the continuation of our sporting institutions.

Paula Barker:

[\[14303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has appointed independent advisors to help the Department's work on the future sustainability of Rugby League.

Stuart Andrew:

To support the Rugby Football Union and Premiership Rugby Limited on their plans for the future of professional Rugby Union, Government appointed Rugby Football League's former CEO Ralph Rimmer and Chris Pilling of UK Sport to work with the sport's authorities.

The independent advisers' remit only extended to cover issues facing Rugby Union.

■ Rugby: Expenditure

Paula Barker:

[\[14300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department has spent on support for (a) Rugby Union and (b) Rugby League clubs in each year since 1 March 2020.

Stuart Andrew:

Government provides the majority of its support for Rugby Union and Rugby League through its arms-length body Sport England. A breakdown of funding for each year for both sports is outlined below:

Rugby Union

2020/21- £26,305,065 (includes £21,565,000 of COVID-19 Sport Winter Survival Package provided to the RFU)

2021/22 - £1,484,441

2022/23 - £15,185,674 (This includes £12,505,000 of System partner funding provided to the RFU to grow and develop the sport between the years 2022 and 2027)

2023/24 - £5,737,648

Rugby Union also received £160 million through the Sport Survival Package, helping professional and community sport clubs survive the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and ensure the continuation of sport competitions and events.

Rugby League

2020/21 - £7,044,354

2021/22 - £10,860,922

2022/23 - £10,849,990

2023/24 - £886,207 (The Sport England funding register is only updated to December 2023 at this point, so funding awarded since December has not been captured in this sum)

Rugby League also received £17.1 million through the Sport Survival Package, which included grant funding to support the delivery of the Rugby League World Cup in 2022.

Paula Barker:

[14301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department has spent on support for grassroots amateur Rugby League clubs since 5 March 2021.

Stuart Andrew:

Supporting grassroots sport is a key government priority and we recognise the importance that high quality facilities play in encouraging people to take part in sport and ensuring participation rates continue to grow. Our new strategy 'Get Active' sets out our unapologetic ambition to build a more active nation, with a target to get 3.5 million more people classed as 'active' by 2030.

Between 2021 and 2025, the UK Government has committed over £400 million to multi-sport grassroots facilities across the UK. This is all part of our mission to ensure every community has the pitches and facilities it needs.

We provide the majority of support for grassroots sport through our arm's length body, Sport England - which receives £323m in Exchequer and Lottery funding each year. Since 2021, Sport England has provided over £22.6m of support to programmes which facilitate participation in grassroots rugby league.

In partnership with the National Lottery, Sport England has also supported the 'CreatedBy' capital grants programme. Which delivered £26.4m in legacy funding to celebrate England's hosting of the 2022 Rugby League World Cup, providing investment in facilities and equipment to encourage participation.

■ **Tennis: Romford**

Andrew Rosindell:

[14491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support tennis (a) courts and (b) clubs in Romford constituency.

Stuart Andrew:

Supporting grassroots sport is a key government priority and we recognise the importance that high quality facilities play in encouraging people to take part in sport and ensuring participation rates continue to grow. Our new strategy 'Get Active' sets out our unapologetic ambition to build a more active nation, with a target to get 3.5 million more people classed as 'active' by 2030 including 1 million more children.

We provide the majority of support for grassroots sport through our arm's length body, Sport England - which receives £323 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding each year. Since 2020 Sport England has provided over £14.4 million of support to programmes which facilitate participation in grassroots tennis.

The UK Government is also investing £21.9 million of funding between 2022-2024 to renovate and improve thousands of [park tennis courts](#) across Great Britain. This includes £300,000 of investment across 25 tennis courts and five parks in the Romford Constituency.

■ Video Games: Training

Justin Tomlinson:

[14059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what grant funding is available to help support training in small and medium-sized enterprises in the video games development sector.

Julia Lopez:

This Government is committed to supporting the growth and success of the UK's video game sector, as part of our ambition to grow the creative industries by a further £50 billion and to support one million more jobs by 2030.

DCMS provides support for UK video games development through the UK Games Fund (UKGF) which is investing £13.4 million over 2022-2025 to support new intellectual property (IP) and talent development in small and medium-sized UK games studios. This includes the Tranzfuser programme and Dundee Development project which mentor teams of talented and entrepreneurial graduates across the UK to develop their professional and business skills as well as their own IP. The UKGF also provides grants of up to £150k for the development of new games.

DCMS has also invested £28.4 million in the Create Growth Programme (CGP) to support high-growth creative businesses and SME in twelve English regions outside London to scale up and become investment ready. Nine regions including Greater Manchester, Hull and East Yorkshire, Nottingham and West of England and Cornwall have identified the video games sector as a priority and have developed a suite of measures to support their growth. Interventions include access to relevant workshops and masterclasses, as well as one-to-one mentoring with industry experts.

More widely, we are taking steps to build a pipeline of talent into our creative industries, which includes supporting those in, and returning to, the video games sector through interventions such as Apprenticeships, the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and the Good Work Review. There will be up to 35 regional skills bootcamps in the creative sector across 16 regions in England this year, subject to successful training provider procurement. A number of upcoming national skills bootcamps in the creative sector will be aimed at the video games sector. SME employers pay only 10% of the total cost of training existing staff during these 16 week bootcamps.

DEFENCE

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees****John Healey:**[\[13890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel from his Department worked on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy on a (a) full-time and (b) part-time basis in each month since April 2021.

James Heappey:

For statistics from April 2021 to June 2023, I refer the right hon. Member to my letter answering Questions 187098 and 187105, placed in the Library of the House under reference number DEP2023-0588.

From July 2023 until February 2024, the number of staff who worked on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy on a full-time or part-time basis is summarised below. These figures include civilian augmentees, military personnel, and overseas staff.

MONTH	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME	TOTAL HEADCOUNT
Jul-23	193	19	212
Aug-23	220	23	243
Sept-23	208	23	231
Oct-23	193	20	213
Nov-23	199	20	219
Dec-23	200	19	219
Jan-24	197	17	214
Feb-24	206	11	217

Attachments:

1. [Afghanistan: Refugees](#) [20230713 PQ Jessica Morden MP.pdf]

■ **Air Force: Recruitment****Luke Pollard:**[\[14241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications to enlist in the Royal Air Force were rejected in each of the last five years, broken down by the reason for rejection.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The number of Royal Air Force (RAF) Regular applications rejected by date of application, and the proportion of applications this represents can be found at Table 1

below. Applications submitted through the Defence Recruiting System (DRS) are also distinguished from those submitted through the Recruitment Information Technology System (RITS).

Table 1:

APPLICATION DATES AND SYSTEM	TOTAL NUMBER OF REJECTIONS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL APPLICATIONS
1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019 (DRS)	14,040	46.7%
1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020 (DRS)	14,511	40.8%
1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021 (DRS)	19,403	54.2%
1 July 2021 – 31 December 2021 (DRS)	7,877	62.9%
1 March 2022 – 30 June 2022 (RITS)	3,509	67.8%
1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 (RITS)	18,658	60.9%

Source: Analysis (Air)

Table 2 shows the reasons RAF Regular applications submitted through DRS were rejected as a proportion of the total number of RAF Regular applications made on DRS in that timeframe.

Table 2:

	1 JULY 2018 – 30 JUNE 2019 (DRS)	1 JULY 2019 – 30 JUNE 2020 (DRS)	1 JULY 2020 – 30 JUNE 2021 (DRS)	1 JULY 2021 – 31 DECEMBER 2021 (DRS)
Age	1.1%	1.0%	0.0%	-
Commonwealth	0.0%	0.4%	2.1%	1.1%
Education Attainment	12.3%	8.0%	7.8%	10.0%
Failed to Attend Event(s)	8.0%	4.8%	4.1%	2.6%
Finance	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-
Fitness	0.5%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%

	1 JULY 2018 – 30 JUNE 2019 (DRS)	1 JULY 2019 – 30 JUNE 2020(DRS)	1 JULY 2020 – 30 JUNE 2021(DRS)	1 JULY 2021 – 31 DECEMBER 2021(DRS)
Ineligible	5.5%	5.7%	5.6%	7.0%
Medical	6.0%	5.7%	9.8%	8.7%
Motivation/Commitment	7.1%	9.9%	12.8%	10.4%
Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre (OASC)	1.5%	0.9%	0.6%	0.0%
Other	0.4%	1.3%	6.4%	17.4%
Psychometric Test Result	2.5%	1.6%	1.2%	0.8%
Role Availability	0.0%	0.1%	2.8%	4.1%
Security Clearance	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Tattoo Policy	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Unsuitable for Interview	1.6%	1.0%	0.6%	0.7%

Source: Analysis (Air)

Please note, percentages have been rounded to the nearest 1 decimal point. In the case of 0.0%, it is not actually zero but instead a very small number that rounds to 0.0%. Where the value is 0, this is represented by '-'.

DRS closed in December 2021. Rejections from this system are as at 31 May 2022, the last available data.

RITS has been in use since March 2022. Rejections from this system are as at July 2023, the applications may have since been subject to rejection.

Reasons for rejection on RITS are not held by Analysis Air who are the source of the tables above. The rejections on DRS with a rejection type of 'Other' increased for the period for 1 July 2021 – 31 December 2021 as applications have been closed and candidates advised to reapply on RITS.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition

John Healey:

[13688]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many CT40 rounds have been fired by Ajax on the move as of 8 February 2024.

James Cartlidge:

2,118 CT40 rounds have been fired by Ajax on the move as of 8 February 2024.

■ **Armed Forces: Cadets****John Healey:**[\[13884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget was for the cadet expansion programme in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Phase One of the Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) was launched in June 2012 with a budget of £10.85M allocated jointly by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD), each providing £8.35million and £2.5million respectively. Phase Two (CEP 500) commenced in July 2015, with the Government committing an extra £50million from LIBOR fines.

Phase Three began in 2020. The Secretary of State for Defence set an ambition to grow to 60,000 cadets in schools by 2024. This equated to an increase of approximately 4,000 more cadets over and above the levels of growth in numbers that had been forecast in CEP 500 applications from schools. DfE has contributed up to £1.1 million annually to CEP in England only. Ministry of Defence annual funding contributions are shown in the below table, and cover CEP across the UK.

FINANCIAL YEAR (FY)

2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24	FY 2024/25
£1.4million	£2.1million	£2.8million	£3.6million

Data is only available from the start of the CEP in 2012.

John Healey:[\[13885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many community cadet forces ceased operating in (a) state and (b) independent schools in each region since 2010.

John Healey:[\[13886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many community cadet forces (a) began and (b) ceased operating in (i) state and (ii) independent schools in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

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

■ **Armed Forces: Foreign Nationals****John Healey:**[\[13874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential merits of exempting

armed forces personnel from changes to legal migration rules for family and work visas in 2024.

John Healey: [\[13876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for the Home Department of the potential impact of changes to (a) minimum income thresholds and (b) other legal migration rules for family and work visas on armed forces (i) recruitment and (ii) retention.

John Healey: [\[13877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for the Home Department of the potential impact of changes to (a) minimum income thresholds and (b) other legal migration rules for family and work visas on armed forces personnel with foreign spouses.

John Healey: [\[13878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Commonwealth and (b) foreign nationals serving in the armed forces will be affected by (i) changes to minimum income thresholds and (ii) other changes to legal migration rules for (A) family and (B) work visas in 2024.

John Healey: [\[13879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of (a) changes to minimum income thresholds and (b) other changes to legal migration rules for (i) family and (ii) work visas on (A) Commonwealth and (B) foreign nationals serving in the armed forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

All Armed Forces personnel, regardless of their nationality, are subject to the Minimum Income Requirement (MIR) if they wish to sponsor a visa for a non-UK family member to enter and later settle in the UK. The Secretary of State has met with the Home Secretary, and the two departments are working together to mitigate potential impacts on the recruitment and retention of our Armed Forces that the increased MIR may have.

■ Armed Forces: Medals

Sir Gavin Williamson: [\[14063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of presenting medallic recognition to the service personnel who served on HMS Diamond while it was stationed in the Red Sea.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Medallic recognition for operations is kept under continuous review by the Ministry of Defence. The case for a medal would be considered on the basis of a recommendation made by the Operational Commander to the Operations

Recognition Board, which would in turn make recommendations to the Chiefs of Staff and Ministers.

■ **Armed Forces: Recruitment**

Andrew Rosindell:

[13919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many individuals were enlisted into the British Armed Forces from the Romford constituency in the last 12 months.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Official Statistics on intake to the Regular Forces by Parliamentary Constituency are included in the Ministry of Defence's Annual Location Statistics (ALS).

The latest edition (1 April 2023) of the ALS can be found at the following website, noting that the relevant Tables are 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-statistics-for-uk-regular-armed-forces-and-civilians-2023>. Figures included in the ALS cover the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, and are split by Service. The next edition (1 April 2024) will cover the 12 months ending 31 March 2023 and 2024 and is expected to be published in June.

Andrew Rosindell:

[13920]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of cadet organisations for increasing levels of recruitment into the armed forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence sponsored cadet forces are military-themed voluntary youth organisations. The Cadet Forces are not set up as conduits for entry into the Armed Forces – this position is clearly stated in the UK's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, many ex-cadets do go on to join the Regular or Reserve Forces; approximately 40% of officers and 20% of other ranks in the Regular Forces were previously cadets.

The Government is convinced of the benefits of Cadets, not just for the young people who participate but also for society as a whole and it remains committed to supporting the Cadet movement.

■ **Army: Recruitment**

Luke Pollard:

[14239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications to enlist in the Army were rejected in each of the last five years, broken down by the reason for rejection.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

REASON	RECRUITING			
	YEAR (RY) 19/20	RY 20/21	RY 21/22	RY 22/23
Age – Over Age	43	80	39	42
Age – Underage	5	~	6	6
Alcohol	~	0	13	19
Army Officer Selection Board (AOSB) Briefing Failure	~	0	~	6
Appeal in Progress	0	0	0	0
Appeal Outcome	9	11	6	~
Assessment Centre Fail	47	23	18	19
Attitude/Maturity	80	128	106	93
Authority Rejection	11	19	137	27
Basic Skills	8	29	~	0
BMI	232	16	20	9
Candidate not selected by Army Personnel Centre (APC) Glasgow	0	14	0	13
Clearance – Care Order	0	~	5	~
Clearance – Counter Terrorist Check (CTC)	~	~	0	0
Clearance - Crime	~	7	4	350
Clearance – Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS)	0	0	~	0
Clearance – Financial Issues	0	0	0	~
Clearance – Nationality	68	46	15	25
Clearance – Non completion of forms	0	2166	1360	1140

REASON	RECRUITING			
	YEAR (RY) 19/20	RY 20/21	RY 21/22	RY 22/23
Clearance – Piercings	170	127	72	24
Clearance – Residency	186	129	45	20
Clearance – Tattoos	143	149	102	252
Clearance – Visa	50	58	77	287
Commonwealth – No current vacancies	463	6207	4832	4557
Commonwealth – Not Suitable for entry	85	222	191	142
Consent Form not provided	~	7	~	~
Continuing Education	0	0	0	0
Criminal Convictions/Crime	0	0	~	~
Current Operations	0	0	0	9
Delinquency/Crime	534	629	336	0
Discipline	9	5	5	~
Drugs	67	11	~	0
Education	~	0	~	~
Failed Basic Eligibility	4750	279	260	280
Failed to Attend Event(s)	335	236	199	188
Finance	~	0	~	0
Fitness	19	38	20	19
Family Origin	0	0	25	19
Questionnaire Consent not given (SCT)				
Joining Other Service – 0 Royal Air Force		0	~	~

REASON	RECRUITING			
	YEAR (RY) 19/20	RY 20/21	RY 21/22	RY 22/23
Joining Other Service – 0 Royal Marines		0	~	~
Joining Other Service – 0 Royal Navy		0	0	~
Language Ability – English Speaking & Listening	~	~	~	0
Medical	17443	18180	13832	14656
Motivation/Commitment	110	414	201	116
No Vacancy Available	~	7	176	37
Non-Productive Enquiry/Lack of Contact	0	0	0	0
None	~	~	0	0
Other non-Military Employment	0	0	0	24
Prior Service Check Rejection	838	1374	1055	671
Psychometric Test Result	~	~	~	0
Refusal of Parental Consent	0	0	0	0
Start New Stream	0	0	0	20
Terms and Conditions of Service	0	0	0	~
Unsuitable at Interview	16	28	7	~
Unsuitable for Job Choice	0	0	0	2
Waiver Refused	7	8	~	0
Total Rejections	25750	30657	23189	23100

REASON	RECRUITING			
	YEAR (RY) 19/20	RY 20/21	RY 21/22	RY 22/23
Total Applications	89114	90651	63580	58870
Rejections Percentage	28.9%	33.8%	36.5%	39.2%

Source: Recruiting Group

Notes/Caveats:

1. '~' denotes a value less than 5, to limit disclosure and ensure confidentiality.
2. The information for Recruiting Year (RY) 2023/24 has not been included as the data is not yet complete.
3. This data only represents Ordinary Applications to join the regular Army, including Commonwealth applications.
4. Applicants can be rejected for multiple reasons, this data represents only the main reason for rejection.
5. 'None' refers to applicants where there is no reason for failure recorded.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Expenditure

Derek Twigg:

[\[15018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of his Department's budget was spent on AI development in each year since 2016.

James Cartlidge:

The Defence AI Centre is monitoring over 250 projects and programmes that are exploring the use of AI technologies as part of a capability or system. However, it is difficult to calculate the Department's overall spend on AI as cost data for these component elements is typically integrated within broader programme costs. Work is underway to better delineate this investment across MOD and improve our understanding over time.

■ Aspire Defence

Maria Eagle:

[\[15020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, HC1468, published in July 2023, for what reason there was constructive loss relating to Aspire.

James Cartlidge:

The ASPIRE Programme was intended to digitise (where appropriate) the Air Engineers' Toolkit (AET) processes, procedures, and tools with the aim of reducing

the training burden and facilitating movement between delivery teams more effectively.

The value of the loss represents the value spent to date on the programme. Alternative routes to develop the work package are currently being explored. It is expected that an element of the current Aspire expenditure may become part of the scope of the product replacement programme.

■ Challenger Tanks

John Healey: [\[14800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of whether the UK has the necessary facilities to undertake the full spectrum of trials that will be needed to qualify the Challenger 3 main battle tank.

John Healey: [\[14801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the first pre-production Challenger 3 main battle tank was sent to Germany for trials.

James Cartlidge:

The UK has the necessary facilities to undertake Challenger 3 trials and most of the trial activity will take place in the UK. The first pre-production vehicle was sent to Germany for a small number of trials that use Rheinmetall proprietary ammunition which would not be cost effective to clear on UK ranges for important but limited trial use. The remainder of the Challenger 3 prototypes will undergo full trialling in the UK, including firing trials.

■ Chinook Helicopters: Accidents

James Gray: [\[13866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing the 100 year classification of documents relating to the 1994 Mull of Kintyre Chinook disaster.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The closed records held at The National Archives contain personal information relating to 3rd party individuals. The early release of this information would breach those individuals' data protection rights. As part of MOD's business as usual activity to renew the Retention Instrument associated with these closed records, an assessment of the potential merit of removing the 100-year closure status is due to take place in 2029.

■ Combined Cadet Force

John Healey: [\[13887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many combined cadet forces ceased operating in (a) state and (b) independent schools in each region since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The requested information is only available from 2012. The number of Combined Cadet Force units that ceased operating in (a) State and (b) Independent Schools between 2012 and early 2024 are as follows:

REGION	INDEPENDENT	STATE
East Anglia	1	2
East Midlands	1	3
Greater London	0	2
North East	1	6
North West	1	5
South East	2	4
South West	0	12
West Midlands	0	2
Yorkshire and Humberside	0	5
Scotland	0	0
Wales	0	0
Northern Ireland	0	0

John Healey:[\[13888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many combined cadet forces (a) began and (b) ceased operating in (i) state and (ii) independent schools in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

It is taking time to collate the required information to answer the right 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.

John Healey:[\[13889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) combined and (b) community cadet forces worked with (i) state and (ii) independent schools in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

It is taking time to collate the required information to answer the right 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.

■ Defence Equipment: Procurement**Lee Anderson:** [\[14158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Defence Command Paper 2023: Defence's response to a more contested and volatile world published in July 2023, what steps his Department is taking in its procurement process to ensure that the UK has access to (a) key materials, (b) components and (c) critical technology.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) operates a range of initiatives to identify and address threats to our supply chains, including access to materials, components and technology. We are developing an extensive MOD-wide Supply Chain Resilience Programme, which aims to prioritise the mapping of our most critical supply chains. In addition, through the Defence Suppliers Forum Supply Chain Resilience Working Group, we work closely with industry and maintain an open dialogue to identify and put in place the measures needed to protect the supply chains of our key programmes, whilst maintaining the resilience of the UK's industrial and technology base.

■ Defence: Artificial Intelligence**Derek Twigg:** [\[15017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to engage with small and medium-sized enterprises that express interest in developing defence-related AI technologies.

James Cartlidge:

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make a significant contribution to the defence AI supply chain and we are pursuing several initiatives to more clearly communicate our AI requirements, address barriers to frictionless collaboration, and incentivise engagement and co-creation with small and medium-sized enterprises.

In addition, MOD published its SME Action Plan in 2022 outlining specific commitments to improve engagement with smaller businesses including improving visibility of opportunities and simplifying our procurement approach. We are also encouraging our major suppliers to publish their own sub-contract opportunities through the Defence Sourcing Portal, making it easier for SMEs to find and bid for defence work.

■ Defence: Space Technology**Andrew Lewer:** [\[14176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that its approach to procurement helps to retain the (a) skills and (b) workforce needed to support exports of military space technology.

James Cartlidge:

The space industry is an important part of the UK economy and is vital to delivering government's ambitions for space. We are working closely with Departments across government and with the UK space industry to develop and retain the skills and workforce they need. This is set out in the National Space Strategy (2021) and Defence Space Strategy (2022) which place a priority on the space sector having the right skills and expertise for both civil and military purposes.

Through the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) investment in space capabilities, we are providing jobs and skills in the UK. The Skynet programme, worth circa £5 billion over ten years, is procuring satellites that are largely designed and manufactured in the UK. This investment promotes the technologies and skills which make UK industry competitive. We have also invested a further £1.4 billion in space over ten years to develop new capabilities that will position the UK as a world leader on space technology.

Through the Skynet secure satellite communications programme, we are using social value requirements in our major contracts to secure industrial sponsorships of educational schemes and through-life skills development. In addition, UK Space Command is developing the UK Space Academy, a Centre of Excellence for space training for the benefit of both government and industry.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, in close consultation with MOD, will publish a plan for the space industry in the coming months, which will increase growth and resilience for this vital part of the economy.

Ben Bradley:[\[14272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people employed in the UK military space sector; and how many people in the UK military space sector were involved in satellite design as of 16 February 2024.

James Cartlidge:

The space sector is important for the UK, adding £7 billion to the economy in 2022. In that year, the sector employed 48,800 people, increasing from 47,000 the previous year. Many of these jobs work on a range of activities, both civil and military, for governments and a range of other customers. Defence accounts for an estimated 10.2% of total space industry income in 2022 and continues to be a significant part of government's support to the sector. The Skynet secure satellite communications programme, where we are investing £5 billion over the next decade, has provided a significant boost to the UK space sector. In the initial stage of the next generation of Skynet alone we have created up to 600 jobs. Defence has also committed £1.4 billion over 10 years to deliver cutting edge space technology, including a multi-satellite system known as ISTAR1 which is supporting high tech jobs in the UK as a world leader in science. We will continue to support growth in the space sector, including through the upcoming plan for the space sector which will be published in the coming months by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology in

close consultation with Defence, which will increase growth and resilience for this vital part of the economy.

■ Devonport Dockyard

Maria Eagle:

[\[14812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023, HC 1468, what the cause was of the reduction in asset life of plant, property and equipment at HMNB Devonport.

James Cartlidge:

As a result of a Safety Review, a decision was made to demolish three dockside buildings, as they no longer met current seismic standards. Plant and equipment within the buildings that was usable was removed and the remainder was disposed of because it was judged as no longer fit for purpose.

■ Elbit Systems UK: Contracts

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[15197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department undertook an overseas security and justice assistance assessment of the service contracts awarded to Elbit Systems UK Limited on (a) 13 September 2023 and (b) 17 January 2024.

James Cartlidge:

Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments are undertaken when providing security assistance to another Government/state. It therefore would not be applicable in this instance. However, both contracts were awarded in line with Departmental procurement procedures.

■ Hawk Aircraft: Procurement

Maria Eagle:

[\[15022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, HC1468, published in July 2023, for what reason the Hawk Collision Warning System was cancelled.

James Cartlidge:

As the Annual Report sets out, the decision to cancel Collision Warning System on Hawk was made departmentally as part of the Integrated Review.

There was no Off The Shelf commercial system available which can fit in the existing Hawk T1 cockpit. The majority of the costs incurred were in analysis and trials of bespoke cockpit configuration changes to enable integration. This analysis showed that proposed configurations remained immature, were sub-optimal against key user requirements and disproportionately costly. Air Safety remains our paramount concern. We are now pursuing the introduction of additional Hawk T1 aircraft transponder conspicuity measures.

■ HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[14771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral reply of 19 February 2024 to the Rt hon Member for New Forest East on HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark, Official Report, column 458,, whether his assurance that one of those ships will always be being made ready to sail means that neither will be mothballed.

James Cartlidge:

I can confirm that neither HMS ALBION nor HMS BULWARK will be scrapped or mothballed before their planned out of service dates in 2033 and 2034 respectively. As has been the case since 2010, one Landing Platform Dock ship will be held in extended readiness such that she will be capable of being regenerated if we have strategic notice that she will be needed.

As such, HMS ALBION will take HMS BULWARK's place in extended readiness. While you would not expect me to reveal the fine detail of readiness forecasts for security reasons, I can confirm HMS BULWARK will be regenerated from extended readiness and maintained so that she can be ready to deliver defence outputs if required.

■ HMS Atherstone

Maria Eagle:

[\[14811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023, HC 1468, how the constructive loss related to HMS ATHERSTONE withdrawal from service arose.

James Cartlidge:

Constructive losses are not cash losses and do not cost the department. For example, when decommissioning a ship the accounts would show a 'loss' for the vessel. In fact, future savings made from not having to maintain an older vessel will be made available for other priorities.

HMS Atherstone was decommissioned in 2017 as a savings measure. The constructive loss refers to this early retirement, which allowed resources to be invested into new capabilities rather than the increasing costs of maintaining an aging vessel.

■ Israel: Armed Forces

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[14153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2024 to Question 12736 on Israel: Armed Forces, which courses Israeli personnel took part in; when those courses took place; and how many Israeli personnel participated in those courses.

James Heappey:

This information is being withheld in order to protect personal information and to avoid prejudicing relations between the United Kingdom and another State.

■ **Marines: Patrol Craft****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[13914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was for upgrading the Royal Marines' offshore raiding craft to commando raiding craft specification in the latest period for which data is available.

James Cartlidge:

A total cost of £11.35 million provides the full capability requirement and extends the through-life management until 2030.

■ **Military Aircraft****Maria Eagle:**[\[14813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023, HC 1468, what Project Shadow was; and for what reason it was cancelled.

James Cartlidge:

Details related to Project Shadow are withheld for security reasons.

■ **Military Exercises****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[13529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2024 to Question 10764, how many times British armed forces personnel have taken part in (a) bilateral and (b) multinational training exercises with (i) Germany, (ii) France, (iii) Italy, (iv) Poland, (v) the Netherlands, (vi) USA and (vii) Spain.

James Heappey:

The information requested is not held centrally. The following has been compiled from sources across the single-Services. It is a 'best estimate' based on the available information.

YEAR	BILATERAL	RN	ARMY	RAF	MULTINATIONAL	RN	ARMY*	RAF
	Germany	6	0	0	Germany	2		0
	France	4	4	0	France	6		0
2016	Italy	0	1	0	Italy	3		0
	Poland	0	0	0	Poland	1		0
	The Netherlands	0	0	0	The Netherlands	2		0

YEAR	BILATERAL	RN	ARMY	RAF	MULTINATIONAL	RN	ARMY*RAF
	USA	7	15	0	USA	7	3
	Spain	0	2	0	Spain	2	0
	Germany	1	0	0	Germany	2	0
	France	1	4	0	France	9	0
	Italy	0	1	0	Italy	1	0
2017	Poland	0	1	0	Poland	1	0
	The Netherlands	2	0	0	The Netherlands	3	0
	USA	3	15	0	USA	12	3
	Spain	2	2	0	Spain	0	0
	Germany	1	2	0	Germany	2	0
	France	4	7	0	France	6	0
	Italy	1	1	0	Italy	4	0
2018	Poland	0	1	0	Poland	2	0
	The Netherlands	0	2	0	The Netherlands	1	0
	USA	5	19	0	USA	9	3
	Spain	1	2	0	Spain	4	0
	Germany	0	1	0	Germany	2	0
	France	5	9	0	France	6	0
	Italy	0	1	0	Italy	3	0
2019	Poland	2	1	0	Poland	1	0
	The Netherlands	1	1	0	The Netherlands	5	0
	USA	10	20	0	USA	9	4
	Spain	1	2	0	Spain	3	0
	Germany	0	0	0	Germany	0	0
2020	France	2	0	0	France	3	0
	Italy	0	0	0	Italy	0	0

YEAR	BILATERAL	RN	ARMY	RAF	MULTINATIONAL	RN	ARMY*RAF
	Poland	0	0	0	Poland	0	0
	The Netherlands	2	0	0	The Netherlands	3	0
	USA	6	0	0	USA	7	6
	Spain	0	0	0	Spain	0	0
	Germany	0	2	0	Germany	3	3
	France	5	6	0	France	7	3
	Italy	1	1	0	Italy	3	4
2021	Poland	0	1	0	Poland	2	0
	The Netherlands	2	0	0	The Netherlands	6	1
	USA	11	21	0	USA	17	8
	Spain	0	2	0	Spain	3	1
	Germany	0	2	0	Germany	1	4
	France	1	7	0	France	4	3
	Italy	3	0	0	Italy	1	3
2022	Poland	0	0	0	Poland	1	1
	The Netherlands	0	1	0	The Netherlands	3	2
	USA	3	22	0	USA	13	12
	Spain	0	3	0	Spain	3	2
	Germany	0	4	0	Germany	2	2
	France	1	7	0	France	9	3
	Italy	0	1	0	Italy	1	1
2023	Poland	0	0	0	Poland	1	1
	The Netherlands	0	1	0	The Netherlands	3	1
	USA	5	22	0	USA	15	10
	Spain	0	3	0	Spain	2	2

** Due to the way in which Army data is held, multinational involvement cannot be readily separated from bilateral. Many of the bilateral exercises listed will be*

multinational, but the data capture only shows the primary sponsor of the exercise and not the additional participants. Army data from 2020 has been discounted due to uncertainty as to which exercises did or did not take place due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

■ Ministry of Defence: Information Officers

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) press, media team is made up of 15 employees. Roles range from grades Executive Officer to Grade 6 and have salary ranges between £28,300 to £31,060 up to £67,820 to £76,490. This figure is for the MOD Directorate of Defence Communications Press Office and Media personnel only.

■ Navy: Recruitment

Luke Pollard:

[\[14240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications to enlist in the Royal Navy were rejected in each of the last five years, broken down by the reason for rejection.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The following table provides a breakdown of rejected applications to the Royal Navy by reason for since 2019:

REASON	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Age	58	106	43	48	36
BMI	142	225	212	168	209
Commonwealth - No Current Vacancies				2583	1296
CRB Clearance	~	5	8	6	9
Discipline	65	115	92	135	96
Education	188	330	454	260	79
Failed to Attend Event(s)	1818	816	487	1586	1677
Finance	9	18	5	9	~
Fitness	128	705	172	229	101

REASON	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Height/Weight	36	46	39	93	145
Medical	2395	2573	1470	1414	573
Motivation/Commitment	2189	1691	1444		
Nationality	132	37	347	73	94
Not Selected Final	170	44	92		
Previous Service	47	74	36	16	55
Psychometric Test Result	902	310	165	242	390
Residency	522	1109	945	49	103
Rehabilitation of Offenders Act	80	115	44	72	82
Security Clearance	32	42	32	45	22
Sifted Out / Did not meet criteria	208	658	773	1517	1043
Substance Misuse	17	52	27	10	17
Suitability Event Result	85	42	38	75	29
Tattoo	40	58	47	63	87
Under 18 Consent Form not Provided	~	11	16	17	21
Unsuitable at Interview	84	159	184	108	103
Visa	21	43	86	93	86
Not Recorded/Not available	39	93	19	238	158
Grand Total	9413	9477	7277	9149	6515

Source: Royal Navy Recruitment and Attraction

The following table provides the proportion of applications to the Royal Navy that were rejected in each of the last five years:

PROPORTION
OF REJECTED

APPLICATIONS	32%	29%	29%	33%	25%
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Source: Royal Navy Recruitment and Attraction

Notes/Caveats:

1. '~' denotes a value less than 5, to limit disclosure and ensure confidentiality.
2. Only Applications to join the RN/RM Regular Service are included in this data
3. The data shows rejections in the year the application was received, as opposed to the year that rejection was confirmed, which may be in a subsequent year.
1. Some 'rejections' show the date the application was migrated onto RITS from DRS, as opposed to date the application was received, which will increase the proportion of rejected applications showing in 2022.
5. Due to change of recruiting IT system and digital reporting process, years 2022 and 2023 show comparatively larger numbers of 'unrecorded' or 'incorrect' rejection reasons. This is under ongoing data validation review.

■ **Patrol Craft**

Maria Eagle:

[\[14810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023, HC 1468, for what reason CUTLASS was withdrawn from service early.

Maria Eagle:

[\[15021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, HC1468, published in July 2023, for what reason CUTLASS was withdrawn from service early.

James Cartlidge:

CUTLASS was withdrawn from service and replaced by STARTER in December 2020 in order to both significantly enhance our Military Aid to the Civil Authorities Explosive Ordnance Disposal capability and provide a significant through-life cost saving.

■ **Patrol Craft: Finance**

Maria Eagle:

[\[15023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, HC1468, published in July 2023, for what reason there was constructive loss relating to patrol craft.

James Cartlidge:

It should be noted that write off assets are not cash losses and do not represent a cost to the Department.

This constructive loss refers to two second hand patrol craft purchased in financial year 2016-17 for the use of the Gibraltar Defence Police. The craft were procured in consultation with the Police and tested in UK waters but, when they reached Gibraltar, they were found to be too unstable for use in the Straits of Gibraltar where high sea states are common. After due consideration, two of them were transferred to the Defence Equipment Sales Authority for disposal.

■ Red Sea: Warships**Ian Mearns:**[\[13717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of Operation Prosperity Guardian.

James Heappey:

Due to the ongoing nature of Operation Prosperity Guardian and for reasons of operational security it would be inappropriate to release detailed costings at this time.

■ Roll-on Roll-off Ships**John Healey:**[\[13703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has made for the future provision of roll-on-roll-off shipping capabilities when the existing contract ends.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence are currently in negotiations to extend the current contract, this work is ongoing and commercially sensitive. It would therefore be inappropriate to comment further at this time.

■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary**Maria Eagle:**[\[14809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023, HC 1468, how the constructive loss related to Fort Austin and Rosalie withdrawal from service arose.

James Cartlidge:

RFA Fort Austin and RFA Fort Rosalie were decommissioned in 2021 as a savings measure. A constructive loss is not a cash loss and does not cost the department. The constructive loss refers to this early retirement, which allowed resources to be invested into new capabilities rather than the increasing costs of maintaining an aging vessel.

■ Saudi Arabia: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill: [\[14311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 16 November 2020 to Question 114286 on Saudi Arabia: Military Aid, whether British personnel continue to accompany the deployment of Giraffe radars to Saudi Arabia.

James Heappey:

Yes. Under Op CROSSWAYS UK service personnel continue to accompany the deployment of Giraffe radars to Saudi Arabia. This capability is defensive in nature and deployed to help Saudi Arabia defend itself from aerial threats to her territorial integrity.

■ Saudi Arabia: Royal Artillery

Kenny MacAskill: [\[14309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Operation Crossways, when did 12th Regiment Royal Artillery deploy to Saudi Arabia with self propelled high velocity missiles.

James Heappey:

The 12th Regiment Royal Artillery deployed to Saudi Arabia with self-propelled high velocity missiles in May 2022.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[14310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Operation Crossways, whether 12th Regiment Royal Artillery based in Saudi Arabia has shot down unmanned aerial vehicles from Yemen since 7 October 2023.

James Heappey:

No unmanned aerial vehicles have been shot down by the 12th Regiment Royal Artillery based in Saudi Arabia since 7 October 2023.

■ Shipbuilding

Maria Eagle: [\[14477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 December 2023 to Question 4940 on Shipbuilding, how many and what proportion of the jobs in the Direct Jobs column of the table will be located within the UK.

Maria Eagle: [\[14478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 December 2023 to Question 4940 on Shipbuilding, if he will update that table to include a breakdown by each (a) devolved nation and (b) region in England.

James Cartlidge:

This Government is championing shipbuilding and a strong shipbuilding enterprise supports jobs right across the United Kingdom. All jobs referenced in the response to Question 4940 will be based here in the UK.

Although information regarding exact regional breakdowns is not held by the MOD, investment in naval shipbuilding has led to significant job creation. This includes through the Type 26 and Type 31 programmes that are being built in Scotland by BAE Systems and Babcock respectively and the Fleet Solid Support Ships that are being built by Team Resolute, with the majority of the works being carried out by Harland and Wolff in Northern Ireland.

■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

Drew Hendry:

[14142]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to (a) identify, (b) procure and (c) supply additional military aid for Ukraine.

James Heappey:

The UK liaises closely with the Ukrainian Government to understand their military needs, as the conflict continues to evolve.

The UK uses a wide range of sourcing mechanisms to procure the military equipment that Ukraine most requires. This includes our own acquisition systems and international mechanisms, such as the UK-administered International Fund for Ukraine, which uses financial contributions from international partners to procure priority equipment for Ukraine. We supply this through a range of national and international, military and civilian supply routes with and through the International Donor Coordination Centre.

Our objective is to catalyse international support to meet the scale of the challenge being faced by Ukraine and the Defence Secretary recently announced that in addition to our co-lead of the Maritime Capability Coalition the UK will, with Latvia, co-lead a major drone capability coalition for Ukraine. We have also brought together 15 nations to sign an agreement on two multinational procurement initiatives covering munitions and missiles.

■ **Warrior Vehicles**

Maria Eagle:

[15019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 120 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, HC1468, published in July 2023, for what reason there was constructive loss relating to Warrior SDSR 2010.

James Cartlidge:

It is taking time to collate the information. I will write to the right hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION**■ PwC: Contracts****Emily Thornberry:**[\[14507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the contract agreed by her Department with PriceWaterhouseCoopers on 21 November 2023 with tender reference 398710/1312346, whether the option for an eight-week extension in that contract was taken up after the end of the initial eight-week period on 16 January 2024; and with reference to page four of the order form for that contract, whether the total contract value of £425,000 included the cost of an eight-week extension.

Damian Hinds:

The original work was competitively tendered. The option to extend was taken and was legally permitted under the terms of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The cost did not include the extension, the contract was extended by 1 month. The final cost of the contract will be published in line with standard transparency requirements.

■ Special Educational Needs: Neurodiversity**Matt Hancock:**[\[15056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what early identification tools will be used in the Early Language and Support for Every Child pathfinder aimed at improving the identification of neurodivergent children in early years settings and primary schools.

Matt Hancock:[\[15057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to announce the trials that will be conducted as part of the Early Language and Support for Every Child pathfinder to enhance the early identification and support for neurodivergent children in early years settings and primary schools.

Matt Hancock:[\[15058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Early Language and Support for Every Child pathfinders in partnership with NHS England effectively evaluate the impact of the programme on (a) neurodivergent children and (b) their families; and what plans she has to use this evidence to inform future (i) policy and (ii) practice in early years education and child development for neurodivergent children.

Matt Hancock:[\[15059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Early Language and Support for Every Child pathfinders in partnership are effectively (a) reaching and (b) engaging (i) neurodivergent children and (ii) their families; and what steps she is taking to evaluate the effectiveness of the trials.

David Johnston:

As part of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Change Programme, the Early Language Support for Every Child

(ELSEC) pilots are testing innovative workforce models. The pilots aim to improve identification and support for children with speech, language and communication needs in early years and primary schools. ELSEC is not designed to identify neurodivergent children, although some of the speech, language and communication needs being addressed are likely to be associated with neurodivergence.

Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) is a jointly funded programme between NHS England, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education. It will deploy specialists from both health and education workforces to upskill mainstream primary schools and build their capacity to identify and meet the needs of children with neurodivergent needs. Adopting a whole-school approach, PINS is needs rather than diagnosis-led, and will include children without a formal diagnosis. Individual assessment or intervention or specific diagnostic tools are therefore not part of the programme.

Both programmes aim to intervene at an early stage in the child's education journey. Both will be formally evaluated to provide quantitative and qualitative information on impact. Learning from the programmes will be used to inform future policy development on how services and schools can support children with speech, language and communication needs or who are neurodiverse.

■ Universities: Finance

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[14062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the withdrawal of CPLA-linked funding in British universities on local economies.

Robert Halfon:

Higher education (HE) providers are autonomous and therefore responsible for ensuring they have adequate governance and risk management procedures in place. The department expects the HE sector to be alert to risks when collaborating with any international partners.

The government's International Education Strategy makes clear that the internationalisation of the HE sector cannot come at any cost. A key element of that strategy is diversification. Universities must ensure they have appropriate processes in place to manage risks associated with dependence on a single source of funding, whether that is from a single organisation or a single country.

The Office for Students (OfS), the regulator of HE in England, monitors the risk of over-reliance on overseas income at a sector level. The role of the OfS is not to direct how HE providers manage themselves or to limit their recruitment from a particular country of origin, but to ensure they understand where there is greater reliance and how any risks are being managed, and to take action to protect students from the consequences of unmanaged financial risk, if necessary.

■ Universities: Judaism

Bridget Phillipson:

[14034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of (a) the Jewish chaplain and (b) Jewish staff and students at the University of Leeds.

Bridget Phillipson:

[14035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of Jewish chaplains at universities in England.

Robert Halfon:

Antisemitism, intimidation and threats of violence must never be tolerated on university campuses. University Jewish Chaplains play a vital role in supporting Jewish students and staff across the country. The disgraceful abuse targeted at the Chaplain in Leeds is appalling and extremely disturbing. The government has worked closely with West Yorkshire Police to ensure robust action is taken in relation to these matters. As the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, I have visited Leeds University, spoken to the Vice Chancellor to seek reassurances that the University is taking appropriate action in the wake of these appalling incidents and have met with the Chaplain and his wife. The department remains in regular contact with the University Jewish Chaplaincy, the Community Security Trust and West Yorkshire Police and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Last week's report by the Community Security Trust highlights the devastating increase in antisemitic incidents in higher education. This government takes antisemitism extremely seriously and is deeply concerned about the growth in antisemitic incidents on campus since 7 October 2023. That is why, on 22 November 2023, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his Autumn Statement an additional £7 million over three years to tackle antisemitism in education. The department has issued an invitation for interested organisations to tender for contracts to deliver a comprehensive package of measures across schools, colleges and universities and aim to have suppliers in place for the start of the new financial year. A link to the report by the Community Security Trust can be found here:

https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_2023.1707834969.pdf.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to all schools, colleges, and universities on 11 October 2023, urging them to respond swiftly to hate-related incidents and actively reassure Jewish students that they can study without fear of harassment or intimidation. The department wrote again to Vice Chancellors on 16 November 2023, further emphasising the use of disciplinary measures and the importance of police engagement, as well as the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national. This was one of the key actions set out in the five point plan for tackling antisemitism in higher education, which was published on 5 November 2023. The plan involves:

- Calling for visas to be withdrawn from international students who incite racial hatred.
- Writing to Vice Chancellors emphasising the use of disciplinary measures, the importance of police engagement, and the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national (sent on 16 November 2023).
- Liaising with the Office for Students on its role in reviewing incidents and any potential actions.
- Continuing to make it clear in all discussions that acts that may be criminal should be referred to the police.
- Establishing an antisemitism quality seal, which universities will be invited to sign up to demonstrate a commitment to tackling antisemitism. This is a key element of the invitation to tender published on 6 February 2024. More information on the five point plan can be found here: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/05/how-were-protecting-jewish-students-on-university-campuses/>.

The department will not hesitate to take further action across the education estate to stamp out antisemitism and harassment of Jewish pupils, students and staff.

■ Veterans: Teachers

Steve McCabe:

[13227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2024 to Question 8296 on Veterans: Teachers, whether the Government has plans to improve data capture relating to the number of veterans who are applying for teacher training programmes.

Damian Hinds:

The department will review its approach to data capture on veterans as part of its annual planning cycle.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Information Officers

Dr Matthew Offord:

[14022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in her Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) press and media team is made up of 24 employees. Roles range from grades EO to G6 and have salaries between £25,310 - £73,440. This figure is for DESNZ Communications Directorate Press Office only.

As announced by the Government last year, departments are submitting productivity plans to modernise the Civil Service and reduce the size of the state to pre-pandemic levels.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[14367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on using HMRC Real Time Income data to target energy support schemes for households.

Amanda Solloway:

We are looking at longer term solutions to improve the targeting of support at vulnerable households, and this includes discussions with many departments, including HMRC on the scope of the data they hold.

■ Energy Charter Treaty

Claire Hanna:

[\[14110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Written Statement of 4 September 2023 on the Review of the UK's membership to the Energy Charter Treaty, HCWS995, what steps she plans to take on UK membership of that Treaty.

Graham Stuart:

On 22 February 2024, the UK announced it is withdrawing from the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). The UK will now initiate the process to withdraw from the ECT. The UK is required to give a one-year notification of withdrawal, removing Treaty protections for new energy-related investments made after this period. Under current ECT terms, existing investments are covered by a 20-year sunset clause.

■ Fuel Poverty: Energy Bills Rebate

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[14363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of households that will be in fuel poverty in winter 2024-25 and ineligible for energy bill support.

Amanda Solloway:

Fuel poverty is devolved; the Department has responsibility for England. The next estimates of fuel poverty in Scotland will be published by the Scottish Government on 29th February.

Targeted energy bill support is in place across Great Britain through the Warm Home Discount (WHD), the Winter Fuel Payment and additionally the Winter Heating Payment in Scotland. The fuel poverty statistics for England published on 15th February provide analysis of how WHD eligibility across 2023 supported households

that would have been in fuel poverty and other low-income households in Annex F.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2023-statistics>

Kenny MacAskill: [14364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of households that will not be in fuel poverty in winter 2024-25 and will receive energy bill support.

Amanda Solloway:

Fuel poverty is devolved; the Department has responsibility for England. The next estimates of fuel poverty in Scotland will be published by the Scottish Government on 29th February.

Targeted energy bill support is in place across Great Britain through the Warm Home Discount (WHD), the Winter Fuel Payment and additionally the Winter Heating Payment in Scotland. The fuel poverty statistics for England published on 15th February provide analysis of how WHD eligibility across 2023 supported households that would have been in fuel poverty and other low-income households in Annex F.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2023-statistics>

■ Heat Pumps: Finance

Alexander Stafford: [14441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what fiscal steps she is taking to ensure people switching to a heat pump are not financially penalised.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government increased Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) grant available for air source heat pumps (ASHP) by 50%. The £7,500 grant is available for both ASHP and ground source heat pumps, making it one of the most generous grant schemes of its kind in Europe. This is in addition to the 0% rate of VAT on the installation of heat pumps which is in place till March 2027.

BUS is part of a wider programme of measures supporting the deployment of heat pumps including the Home Upgrade Grant, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Energy Company Obligation Scheme.

■ Heating: Environment Protection

Alexander Stafford: [14439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will have discussions with E3G on a clean heat discount scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the cost of transition to Net Zero is fair and affordable for all energy consumers. The potential impacts of rebalancing across technologies and consumers will be fully considered.

In 'Powering Up Britain', the Government committed to outlining a clear approach to price rebalancing by the end of 2023/24 and making significant progress affecting relative prices by the end of 2024. No decisions have yet been taken on that approach.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[14440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of E3G's briefing entitled Electricity levy rebalancing: Make clean heat accessible to all UK households, published on 27 October 2023.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the cost of transition to Net Zero is fair and affordable for all energy consumers. The potential impacts of rebalancing across technologies and consumers will be fully considered.

In 'Powering Up Britain', the Government committed to outlining a clear approach to price rebalancing by the end of 2023/24 and making significant progress affecting relative prices by the end of 2024. No decisions have yet been taken on that approach.

■ Heating: Finance

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[14305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will take steps to ensure that people switching to heat pumps are not financially disadvantaged.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government increased Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) grant available for air source heat pumps (ASHP) by 50%. The £7,500 grant is available for both ASHP and ground source heat pumps, making it one of the most generous grant schemes of its kind in Europe. This is in addition to the 0% rate of VAT on the installation of heat pumps which is in place till March 2027.

BUS is part of a wider programme of measures supporting the deployment of heat pumps including the Home Upgrade Grant, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Energy Company Obligation Scheme.

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station

Sarah Jones:

[\[14154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the total (a) investment, (b) number of directly-created jobs and (c) number of supply-chain jobs at Hinkley C on the economy in (i) Somerset and (ii) the UK.

Andrew Bowie:

Hinkley Point C (HPC) is not a government project and so the Department has not assessed economic impact. EDF have advised that 19,250 job opportunities have

been created on site so far and £5.3bn spent directly with companies in the South West. Further, EDF state that 3,700 UK businesses are in the HPC supply chain and that 22,000 people across the UK are working on the project.

■ Housing: Environment Protection

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[14307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make it her policy to work with industry to provide increased financial incentives to encourage people to environmentally upgrade their homes.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is investing £400 million in a three-year energy efficiency scheme to incentivise households to upgrade their homes. The scheme is in development, and further information will follow in time.

Separately, our £20 million Green Home Finance Accelerator programme is supporting industry to pilot innovative finance products which allow able-to-pay homeowners to meet the cost of energy retrofit. These pilots will generate exemplars to inform wider industry and policy thinking.

We have also consulted on proposals for mortgage lenders to support homeowners to improve the energy performance of their properties. We plan to respond to the consultation this year.

Alexander Stafford: [\[14443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an assessment with industry stakeholders of the potential merits of increasing financial incentives to environmentally upgrade homes.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is investing £400 million in a three-year energy efficiency scheme to incentivise households to upgrade their homes. Scheme development, including discussions with industry stakeholders, is underway, and further information will follow in time.

Additionally, our £20 million Green Home Finance Accelerator programme is currently working with industry to pilot innovative private finance products which allow able-to-pay homeowners to meet the upfront cost of energy efficiency and low-carbon retrofit. The pilots, which include products with a range of financial and service incentives, will generate exemplars to inform wider industry and policy thinking.

■ Natural Gas: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon: [\[14076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what data his Department holds on the number of households off the gas grid in Northern Ireland (a) in total, (b) by constituency and (c) by council.

Andrew Bowie:

The [2021 Census in Northern Ireland](#) carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) showed that 512,357 households in Northern Ireland (67%) used a non-mains gas form of central heating or had no central heating, and are thus likely to be off the gas grid. Data is available by Local Government District, Ward and Settlement.

For Northern Ireland as a whole, more recent 2022 data on the total number of gas connections is also available via the [Annual Retail Energy Market Monitoring Report](#).

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Cumbria**Sarah Jones:**[\[14156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of the cancellation of the NuGen development at Moorside on (a) electricity generation capacity, (b) investment, (c) the number of directly-created jobs, (d) the number of supply-chain jobs in (i) Cumbria and (ii) the UK; and what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of the cancellation of that project on gross value added in Cumbria.

Andrew Bowie:

On 8 November 2018 Toshiba announced it would wind-up NuGen, the UK developer set to deliver a new nuclear project at Moorside. This was a commercial decision for the company. This was not a Government project and so the Department has not assessed economic impact. We have launched a public consultation on a proposed new policy for siting new nuclear power stations (as the first step towards developing a new nuclear National Policy Statement). The Moorside site is listed in the current National Policy Statement (EN-6) and these sites are likely to have attributes that make them potentially suitable for new nuclear development.

Sarah Jones:[\[14157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much financial support the Government (a) agreed to give to support the NuGen project in Moorside over the course of its proposed development and (b) gave to the project before it was cancelled.

Andrew Bowie:

On 8 November 2018 Toshiba announced it would wind-up NuGen, the UK developer set to deliver a new nuclear project at Moorside. This was a commercial decision for the company. There was no Government financial support given to the project.

■ Power Stations: Biofuels**Andrew Percy:**[\[13987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department is taking steps to transition biomass powers stations which have a generating capacity of under 100MW to bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS).

Andrew Bowie:

Plants of below 100MW may be eligible to apply for the Greenhouse Gas Removals Business Model, which will provide revenue support for negative emissions.

The Government is also currently consulting on potential support for large scale biomass power stations (100MW and above) to help facilitate the transition to power bioenergy with carbon capture and storage. Larger scale generation should provide the greatest immediate benefits from both a decarbonisation and energy security perspective. Nevertheless, we welcome responses on the eligibility criteria proposed in the consultation.

Renewable Energy: Community Development**Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[13213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, of 5 September 2023, Official Report, column 281, when she plans to launch the consultation on barriers preventing the development of community energy schemes.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is actively working with the Community Energy Contact Group on the content of the consultation. Whilst we hope to publish the consultation as soon as possible, until these discussions have concluded we are unable to outline a definitive timeline.

Kenny MacAskil:[\[14392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she plans to provide for community benefit from (a) solar farms and (b) wind farms with solar panels located within them.

Andrew Bowie:

It is important that communities can participate in and benefit from hosting net zero infrastructure. Solar developers already offer a range of community benefits and the Government considers these schemes are best agreed voluntarily and locally to ensure they meet the needs of local areas.

As part of the Autumn statement package, Government committed to review its approach to community benefits to ensure that we are being strategic in identifying key sectors where community benefits can support delivery of infrastructure.

Sizewell C Power Station**Sarah Jones:**[\[14155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the (a) total investment, (b) number of directly-created jobs and (c) number of supply-chain jobs forecast for the Sizewell C development on (i) Suffolk and (ii) the UK.

Andrew Bowie:

The Government has published an interim assessment of the Sizewell C’s project value for money, as part of the Secretary of State’s reasons for designating the project to use the Regulated Asset Base model for nuclear, and is working closely with the project on supply chain and workforce plans as project development continues. These plans include awarding 70 percent of the value of construction to UK businesses, including £4.4bn of investment in Suffolk and the East of England during construction, which would support thousands of jobs in the UK’s national nuclear supply chain and related sectors. The Government has committed to publishing a full value for money assessment at the point of a final investment decision.

■ **Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**

Dame Andrea Jenkyns: [\[14358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the average capacity factor was for the fixed bottom offshore windfarm fleet in each of the last five years; what the average capacity factor was for fixed bottom offshore windfarms that were commissioned between 2017 and 2020; and if he will make an estimate of the capacity factor of windfarms due to be commissioned in 2025.

Andrew Bowie:

The Department publishes historic capacity factors (also known as load factors) for offshore wind generation. These can be found in ‘Digest of UK Energy Statistics: Chapter 6.3’ - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/renewable-sources-of-energy-chapter-6-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

YEAR	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Offshore Wind Load Factor (%)	39.9	40.4	45.7	37.4	40.7

The Department publishes estimates for future offshore wind load factors for given commissioning years in Annex A of ‘Electricity Generation Costs Report 2023’ - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electricity-generation-costs-2023>

YEAR	2025	2030	2035	2040
Fixed Bottom Offshore Wind Load Factor (%)	61	65	69	69

The main reason we expect load factors to be higher for new wind farms commissioning in 2025 compared to the existing fleet is due to the increased turbine size and improved technology of newer turbines.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Cetaceans: Import Controls**

Henry Smith: [\[13998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to introduce a ban on the (a) display and (b) importation of (i) dolphins, (ii) whales, (iii) porpoises and (iv) other cetaceans.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government considers cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) to be highly intelligent, social animals, with complex needs that are unlikely to be met when removed from their natural marine habitat and kept in captivity.

The Zoo Licensing Act 1981 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006 require high standards for the welfare of kept animals. We consider these protections sufficient to ensure cetaceans are not displayed or otherwise kept in captivity in this country.

We are not aware of any cetaceans being kept in captivity or being displayed but if there was any indication that cetaceans were to be displayed or kept in captivity here again then we would of course consider further actions.

■ **Environment Agency: Legal Opinion**

Tim Farron: [\[13956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many staff were in the Environment Agency's legal services team in each year since 2015.

Robbie Moore:

The data in relation to Environment Agency Legal Services full-time equivalent numbers is detailed below:

	LEGAL SERVICES
Mar-15	137.1
Mar-16	144.6
Mar-17	136.8
Mar-18	137.8
Mar-19	141.5
Mar-20	146.4
Mar-21	142.7
Mar-22	137.2
Mar-23	145.4

LEGAL SERVICES

Jan-24

148.4

■ **Environment Protection: Standards****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[15052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's planned timetable is for responding to the Office for Environmental Protection's report entitled Progress in improving the natural environment in England 2022/2023, published in January 2024.

Rebecca Pow:

Under the Environment Act 2021, we are required to respond to the Office for Environmental Protection's (OEP) reports on progress in implementing the Environmental Improvement Plan no later than 12 months after the OEP report was laid in Parliament. As the OEP's report was laid on 17 January 2024, we have until 16 January 2025 to respond.

We will carefully review the OEP's findings and respond in due course.

■ **Food: Labelling****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[15141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department takes to ensure compliance with food labelling regulations for products marketed as (a) vegetarian and (b) vegan; and what penalties are applied to businesses for non-compliance with those regulations.

Mark Spencer:

The fundamental principle of food labelling rules is that information provided to the consumer must not mislead and must enable the safe use of food so that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy.

While there are no specific rules covering information on the suitability of food for vegetarians or vegans, the requirement that food information must not mislead consumers applies to such labels as for other voluntary labels.

Food labelling rules are enforced by local authorities. The Food Standards Agency has agreements and protocols in place to support local authorities in their work and gives guidance to explain the regulations and how they can be applied to food businesses. When assessing foodstuffs for non-compliance, Trading Standards officers adhere to an established hierarchy of enforcement actions, ranging from improvements notices to criminal charges resulting in custodial sentences and unlimited fines.

Hill Farming

Tim Farron: [\[14521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the upland farming Pathways to Success modelling analysis prepared between 1 March 2022 and 1 August 2022.

Mark Spencer:

The work referenced was not completed. However, we have provided information on the potential impact of our farming reforms. For example, the evidence compendium was most recently updated in September 2022 and the Agriculture in the UK Dashboard was published in November 2023. These set out the contribution of Direct Payments on farm incomes, including analysis by sector, location in England and type of land tenure.

Plastic Bags: Fees and Charges

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[14471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much money has been raised (a) in total and (b) for (i) charitable and (ii) community causes by the charge for single-use carrier bags in each year since 21 May 2021.

Robbie Moore:

Since the Government introduced the charge, it has generated over £190 million for good causes and the number of single-use plastic carrier bags used in the main supermarkets has fallen by more than 7 billion, a reduction of over 98%.

A full dataset of details for each retailer on the amount of gross proceeds, VAT, total costs and net proceeds can be found on gov.uk.

Defra publishes a summary of this data which includes the amounts of money given to good causes: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carrier-bag-charge-summary-of-data-in-england>.

There is no requirement in the legislation which requires retailers to donate proceeds from the charge to good causes. Only large retailers are required to keep a record of and report on the uses to which these proceeds have been put.

With regards to the request to provide a detail of how much money has been raised (a) in total and (b) for (i) charitable and (ii) community causes by the charge each year since 21 May 2021, this level of breakdown is not something that Defra holds.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[14472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which (a) charities and (b) community organisations have received funds from the charge for single-use carrier bags in each year since 21 May 2021.

Robbie Moore:

Since the Government introduced the charge, it has generated over £190 million for good causes and the number of single-use plastic carrier bags used in the main supermarkets has fallen by more than 7 billion, a reduction of over 98%.

A full dataset of details for each retailer on the amount of gross proceeds, VAT, total costs and net proceeds can be found on gov.uk.

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There is no requirement in the legislation which requires retailers to donate proceeds from the charge to good causes. Only large retailers are required to keep a record of and report on the uses to which these proceeds have been put.

With regards to the request to provide the detail of which (a) charities and (b) community organisations have received funds each year since 21 May 2021, this information is not something that Defra holds.

■ River Mersey: Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances**Dan Carden:****[14918]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle levels of poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances in the River Mersey.

Robbie Moore:

We are working to assess levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) occurring in the environment, their sources, and their potential risks to inform policy and regulatory approaches. This includes the Environment Agency's monitoring of PFAS levels in the River Mersey as part of a national programme of PFAS monitoring. We are committed to protecting human health and the environment.

Following a ban on specific PFAS chemicals more than a decade ago (notably perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS)) we have seen a decline in the level of these chemicals in our rivers.

We have welcomed the Health and Safety Executive's publication of the PFAS Regulatory Management Options Analysis (RMOA). We have accepted the RMOA's recommendations, which include work under UK REACH to reduce PFAS emissions by considering restrictions. This will begin by considering a restriction on PFAS in fire-fighting foams.

■ Rivers: Trees**Selaine Saxby:****[15206]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the number of kilometres of tree cover there are along the banks of (a) rivers and (b) tributaries in England.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra can provide both a rapid indicative estimate and a longer-term definitive estimate to the question.

It will take within the region of two to four weeks' time to produce an indicative estimate, with estimates solely based upon earth observation techniques.

It may take up to one year's time to achieve a definitive answer, as we await the completion of field work undertaken as part of the Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment.

The main difference between the indicative estimate and a comprehensive estimate is the ability to include smaller tree size and tributary sizes:

- The indicative estimate would be derived from earth observation and would not include smaller trees less than 2.5m in height and would exclude smaller tributaries less than 0.5m in width.
- The comprehensive estimate would be supported by field survey work that would include estimates for smaller trees down to 30cm in height and tributaries less than 0.5m in width.

Parochial estimates would be that possibly up to 30% of trees are less than 2.5m in height and 5% of tributaries are less than 0.5m in width.

Rural England Prosperity Fund**Alex Sobel:****[15001]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to extend the funding period for the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

Robbie Moore:

The Government is committed to helping rural businesses prosper. The Rural England Prosperity Fund is a rural top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, providing allocations for eligible local authorities in England to help address the additional needs and challenges facing rural areas.

Overall, the fund will provide up to £110 million in funding to eligible local authorities between April 2023 and March 2025.

To date the fund is providing capital funding to support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy.

This includes small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas to create leisure and tourism facilities, the capital funding of net zero infrastructures for rural business, and the diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start up, expansion or scale up of these businesses where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses.

The Government intends to monitor and evaluate the impact of the fund, with any decision on additional funding a matter for a future Spending Review.

■ Timber

Selaine Saxby:

[\[14986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has taken steps to help increase domestic production of virgin and waste wood.

Rebecca Pow:

Trees are at the forefront of Government action on Net Zero – not just because of the carbon they lock up as they grow, but because of the carbon that stays locked up when timber is put into long-term use.

We have set a new legal target that will see tree cover reach 16.5% of England's total land area by 2050, which will increase productive woodland.

Our Woodlands into Management Forestry Innovation Funds are supporting projects that will develop new technologies and working practices to help homegrown timber production meet demand.

Last year, we published the Timber in Construction Roadmap setting out the Government's plan to increase the safe use of timber in construction in England.

We increased the recycling target for businesses handling wood packaging in 2024 to 42% (from 35% in 2023) and will be setting recycling targets to 2030 as part of the new packaging Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations that will come into force later this year.

■ Waste Disposal

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[15029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England, published on 18 December 2018, what his policy is on (a) extended producer responsibility and (b) product standards for (i) textiles, (ii) bulky waste items, (iii) construction and demolition materials, (iv) vehicle tyres and (v) fishing gear.

Robbie Moore:

We are not exploring Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for textiles, furniture, construction and fishing gear while we focus our efforts on delivering EPR for packaging. The Government remains committed to introducing EPR for packaging in 2025.

We are working on product standards for textiles, bulky waste items, construction and demolition material and fishing gear through:

- Bulky waste: To take forward our commitment to improve waste prevention in the furniture and furnishings sector we encourage sharing of best practice on product design and take-back systems, through trade associations, voluntary agreements, and industry standards, such as initiatives to reduce waste mattresses led by the National Bed Federation.

- Construction: The Government is working with industry to explore what policy interventions would best support a shift in the design of construction products to encourage greater reuse and use of recycled materials. This could potentially include options like resource efficiency product standards.
- Textiles: We support the Waste and Resources Action Programme with grant funding of £860,000 2023/24 for Textiles 2030 which, through working with industry, looks at improving textile product standards such as recyclability and durability. [Circular design for fashion and textiles | WRAP](#)
- End-of-life fishing gear: We are working through the British Standards Institution to improve gear design and reduce the environmental impact throughout its lifespan.

We do not have current plans to consult on EPR or product standards for vehicle tyres, but we will keep this option under review.

■ Water Companies: Meetings

Sarah Olney:

[\[12411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the (a) attendance at and (b) minutes of his meeting with water company executives on 23 January 2024.

Robbie Moore:

The Environment Secretary held a roundtable with water company CEOs on 23 January to discuss their performance and necessary improvements. This follows his letter to water companies late last year, calling for increased sewer management to prevent storm overflows.

The roundtable formed part of Defra's ongoing engagement with the sector and our Plan for Water to drive more investment, stronger regulation and tougher enforcement to hold water companies to account.

Details of external ministerial meetings are published on a quarterly basis.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Academic Technology Approval Scheme

Chi Onwurah:

[\[14866\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the reasons for changes in the time taken to respond to applications for Academic Technology Approval Scheme certificates.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[14867\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the reasons for applicants for research places at Newcastle University waiting longer than five months for an Academic Technology Approval Scheme certificate.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK takes seriously its responsibility towards countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced conventional military technology. The Academic Technology Approval Scheme is a thorough, necessary and proportionate tool to protect UK research from misappropriation and divergence to military programmes of concern. As reflected in our guidance, processing takes at least 30 working days. While the majority of cases are processed within this time, more complex cases can take longer, in order to ensure that a thorough assessment can be carried out.

■ Afghanistan: Women**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[13549\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of (a) detentions and (b) arrests of Afghan women and girls due to alleged violations of dress code; and what discussions he has had with his Afghan counterpart on those matters.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

UK officials have raised with the Taliban the recent arrest and detention of women and girls for not complying with strict dress codes and urged them to reverse discriminatory policies that target women and girls. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

We have repeatedly condemned Taliban policies and actions that restrict the rights of women and girls, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. We will continue to work with the international community to press the Taliban to reverse course.

Sir George Howarth:[\[13696\]](#)

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 recent arrests of Afghan women and girls for alleged violations of the Islamic dress code.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

UK officials have raised with the Taliban the recent arrest and detention of women and girls for not complying with strict dress codes and urged them to reverse discriminatory policies that target women and girls. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

We have repeatedly condemned Taliban policies and actions that restrict the rights of women and girls, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. We will continue to work with the international community to press the Taliban to reverse course.

Ahmad Manasra**Ben Lake:** [\[14288\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with international human rights organisations on the case of Ahmad Manasra.

Ben Lake: [\[14290\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether the Government has made representations to the Government of Israel on the (a) treatment and (b) appeal for early release on medical grounds of Ahmad Manasra.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Government maintains regular engagements with many international partners, including the Government of Israel and other organisations, over issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children in detention. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention.

The Government continues to call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law, most recently in the Prime Minister's call with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 15 February.

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement**Sarah Dyke:** [\[14338\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent progress his Department has made on ratifying the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement; and what his latest estimate is of the timescale for ratification.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK was pleased to be among the first signatories to the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement when it opened for signature at the UN on 20 September 2023 and the Agreement was laid before Parliament for scrutiny on 16 October 2023. Work is in hand on the legislation and other measures needed to translate the detailed and complex provisions of the Agreement into UK law before we can ratify the Agreement, which will be taken forward when parliamentary time allows.

British Overseas Territories**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[13923\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to (a) improve links and (b) increase cooperation with the British Overseas Territories.

David Rutley:

Following the UK-OT Joint Declaration agreed at the November 2023 Joint Ministerial Council, the FCDO is leading a refresh of the UK's strategy on the Overseas Territories, for publication in 2024. This work is underway in collaboration with other UK Government Departments and in consultation with the Overseas Territories. Following the publication of the revised strategy, and as set out in the Joint Declaration, the UK will develop partnership compacts with each Overseas Territory. These will outline joint priorities and will allow for transparent and formal agreement on specific actions.

Recent examples of cooperation and collaboration on areas of mutual interest include the visit of Lord Sharpe, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home Office, to the Cayman Islands and the Foreign Secretary's visit to the Falklands Islands. The Foreign Secretary met with Falkland Islanders to see their work to build a thriving community and protect their natural environment. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the UK's commitment to uphold the Islanders' right of self-determination. We look forward to further engagement with the Territories.

■ Central African Republic: Politics and Government**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[13954\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment he has made of the security situation in the Central African Republic; if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the group known as Movement for the Emergence of the Central African Republic; and whether he has made an assessment of the sources of funding for that group.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The security situation remains volatile across the Central African Republic (CAR) with numerous armed groups continuing to operate, many of them forming, merging and dissipating at short notice. Violence has been driven by the rebel groups Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) and Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation (3R), as well as from the recent expansion of self-defence group Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé in south-eastern CAR, which often targets civilians. However, there have been recent improvements in security, including in the capital Bangui, following greater cooperation between the UN Peacekeeping Mission (MINUSCA) and the Central African Armed Forces. The UK is committed to supporting MINUSCA to improve security in CAR, including through our assessed contributions that amounted to approximately £50 million in 2023.

■ Ethiopia: Food Supply**Lisa Nandy:**[\[14051\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the food security situation in Ethiopia as of 16 February 2024; and what steps his Department is taking to help support those most in need.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Multiple, overlapping crises are causing concerning levels of critical food insecurity across Ethiopia. The UK is committed to providing support to the most vulnerable and those in desperate need. We have already increased our humanitarian support this financial year by over 50 percent, from £46 million to £74 million in order to better respond to the immediate crisis, including a £23 million contribution to the Productive Safety Net Programme that will reach a further 350,000 people living in extreme poverty across Ethiopia. Additionally, I recently announced £100 million to the Ending Preventable Deaths Programme that will support over three million people across the country.

■ EU Nationals: Voting Rights**Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[14779\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he is seeking to secure additional bilateral voting rights agreements with EU states to ensure EU citizens who arrived in the UK from 2021 onwards can continue voting in local elections after May 2024.

Leo Docherty:

In December 2018, the UK wrote to all 27 EU Member States signalling our willingness to enter into bilateral agreements to ensure continuity of local election voting and candidacy rights for each other's citizens. Since 2018, we have entered into five bilateral agreements, these are: Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg, Poland and very recently Denmark, which is subject to Parliamentary ratification. The existence of constitutional barriers in some Member States has prevented the UK from entering into agreements with certain Member States. However, the UK remains open to negotiating fully reciprocal bilateral agreements where EU Member States are interested in doing so.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: British Overseas Territories**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[13924\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he plans to visit any British Overseas Territories in the next six months.

David Rutley:

The Overseas Territories are an integral part of the British family. In addition to our ongoing support, visits by the UK Government reaffirms the unique bond between the UK and the Overseas Territories. This year I [Minister Rutley] as Minister for Overseas Territories visited the British Virgin Islands, the British Antarctic Territory, the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island. The Foreign Secretary in his visit to the Falkland Islands also saw first-hand the positive impacts of UK and Overseas Territories partnership, and the modern, prosperous community the Islanders have built. We look forward to further engagement with the Territories including during the development of the UK strategy for the Overseas Territories and future visits to the Territories. The FCDO will confirm specific visits in due course in the usual manner.

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

Jonathan Ashworth:

[15073]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether any non-executive directors employed in his Department are non-domiciled.

David Rutley:

No.

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

Colum Eastwood:

[14447]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many officials from his Department worked in the US by (a) embassy and consulate and (b) grade in each financial year since 2010.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 21 February 2024]:

A 1) FCDO/XFCO HEADCOUNT FOR UK BASED STAFF WORKING IN USA EMBASSY AND CONSULATES ONLY
2014-2023

[illegible]

Miami	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10
New York (CG)	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10
San Francisco	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10
Washington	40-49	40-49	30-39	30-39	30-39	50-59	40-49	40-49	50-59	40-49

A 2) FCDO/XFCO HEADCOUNT FOR CBS/LOCALLY ENGAGED STAFF WORKING IN USA EMBASSY AND CONSULATES ONLY 2014-2023

	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023
Atlanta	10-19	10-19	Fewer than 10	10-19	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	10-19	10-19	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10
Boston	20-29	10-19	10-19	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10
Chicago	20-29	20-29	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19
Houston	30-39	20-29	10-19	10-19	Fewer than 10	10-19	Fewer than 10	10-19	10-19	10-19
Los Angeles	20-29	20-29	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19
Miami	20-29	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	20-29
New York (CG)	60-69	60-69	30-39	20-29	20-29	20-29	20-29	20-29	10-19	10-19
San Francisco	30-39	20-29	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	60-69	10-19	10-19
Washington	160-179	140-159	140-159	160-179	140-159	160-179	160-179	160-179	160-179	160-179

B 1) FCDO/XFCO/XDFID HEADCOUNT FOR UK BASED STAFF WORKING IN ALL USA LOCATIONS
2014-2023

	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023
AA / AO/ EO	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10
HEO	20-29	20-29	20-29	20-29	20-29	30-39	30-39	30-39	30-39	30-39
SEO	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	10-19
G7	20-29	20-29	20-29	20-29	20-29	30-39	30-39	30-39	30-39	30-39
G6	10-19	20-29	10-19	10-19	20-29	10-19	20-29	20-29	10-19	10-19
SCS	20-29	20-29	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19

B 2) FCDO/XFCO/XDFID HEADCOUNT FOR CBS/LE/SAIC WORKING IN ALL USA LOCATIONS
2014-2023

	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023
S1/S2/S3	440- 459	50-59	50-59	50-59	40-49	50-59	50-59	50-59	50-59	50-59
AA/AO	70-79	60-69	60-69	80-89	80-89	90-99	90-99	80-89	90-99	90-99
EO	140- 159	70-79	70-79	70-79	80-89	70-79	80-89	80-89	70-79	70-79
HEO	80-89	50-59	60-69	70-79	70-79	70-79	70-79	80-89	80-89	80-89
SEO	20-29	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19
G7	20-29	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19
G6/SCS	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10

In line with FCDO data retention rules data is not held prior to 2014.

■ Gaza: Ceasefires

Rachael Maskell:

[13797]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the conditions set out to achieve a ceasefire between Gaza and Israel by the respective parties.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We want to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

Several vital steps are required: the release of all Israeli hostages; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; the removal of Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza; and a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary continue to reiterate these steps in their contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders, including during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 24 January, as well as with leaders in Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon in recent weeks.

■ Gaza: Food

Dr Neil Hudson:

[14233]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made a recent assessment of the scale of food shortages in Gaza.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is increasingly concerned over the growing food insecurity in Gaza. Palestinian civilians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We want to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it. The UK is providing £60 million in humanitarian assistance to support partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the WFP and Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza. We will continue to support and have supported the WFP to deliver a new humanitarian land corridor from Jordan into Gaza. 750 tonnes of life-saving food aid arrived in the first delivery and a second delivery of 315 tonnes has been made.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Pauses

Rachael Maskell:

[\[13793\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent progress he has made towards securing a further humanitarian pause in the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We want to see an end to the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible. We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

Several vital steps are required: the release of all Israeli hostages; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; the removal of Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza; and a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary continue to reiterate these steps in their contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders, including during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 24 January, as well as with leaders in Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon in recent weeks.

We need to generate momentum now towards a permanent peace. That is why we are pressing for a Contact Group, bringing together the key players, to be set up at once.

■ Gaza: Israel

Caroline Lucas:

[\[13981\]](#)

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 press notice by Amnesty International entitled Israel/OPT: New evidence of unlawful Israeli attacks in Gaza causing mass civilian casualties amid real risk of genocide, published on 14 February 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We have previously assessed that Israel is committed and capable of complying with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We are currently reviewing our assessment. Those assessments are supported by a detailed evidence base. Too many civilians have been killed and we want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes.

Dan Carden:

[\[14356\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the statement by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, published on 8 February 2024, whether his Department is taking diplomatic steps to help prevent the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We acknowledge this statement. As we have said, there must be a reduction in civilian casualties and all parties must act within International Humanitarian Law. We want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. These are points the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have consistently made and reinforced with Prime Minister Netanyahu when he and the Prime Minister spoke on 15 February.

We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life. This remains the focus of all our diplomatic effort.

Dan Carden:[\[14379\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the report by Amnesty International entitled New evidence of unlawful Israeli attacks in Gaza causing mass civilian casualties amid real risk of genocide, published on February 12 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We have previously assessed that Israel is committed and capable of complying with IHL. We are currently reviewing our assessment. Those assessments are supported by a detailed evidence base. Too many civilians have been killed and we want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes.

■ Gaza: Vaccination**Rachael Maskell:**[\[13791\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to help ensure that people in Gaza can be vaccinated.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (PHRST) has deployed experts through the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). These experts are supporting the UN to strengthen disease surveillance and coordination of public health services in Gaza.

The UK is providing £60 million in humanitarian assistance to support partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) to respond to health and other critical needs in Gaza.

■ Israel and Occupied Territories: Casualties**Rachael Maskell:**[\[13794\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he is taking steps to monitor trends in the number of casualties and fatalities in (a) Gaza, (b) the West Bank and (c) Israel; and if he will publish the latest data available for 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Too many civilians have been killed. There must be a reduction in civilian casualties. All parties must act within International Humanitarian Law.

We want Israel to take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. The Prime Minister has made this clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu repeatedly and has been in close contact throughout.

We are calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

■ Israel: Arms Trade**Dan Carden:**[\[14373\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many arms export licences to Israel have been reviewed against the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria since the International Court of Justice's order relating to the case of the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v Israel), published on 26 January 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

The Criteria provide a thorough risk assessment framework, and the Export Control Joint Unit will not issue an export licence to any destination where to do so would be inconsistent with the Criteria, including where there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law.

All our export licences are kept under careful review, and we are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences, as well as refuse new licence applications, where they are inconsistent with the Criteria.

■ Jimmy Lai**Jim Shannon:**[\[14579\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he raised the case of Jimmy Lai with his Chinese counterpart at the Munich Security Conference in February 2024.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

On 16 February, the Foreign Secretary met with Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, at the Munich Security Conference. In line with the Government's "protect, align, and engage" approach to China, as set out in the Integrated Review Refresh, the Foreign Secretary raised a number of issues important to the UK national interest. The Foreign Secretary reiterated his call for the release of British national Jimmy Lai.

■ Karim Ennarah**Rushanara Ali:** [\[14086\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, when his Department last raised the case of Karim Ennarah with the Egyptian Government.

David Rutley:

The Minister for North Africa, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, last raised Karim Ennarah's case with the Egyptian Ambassador on 20 February 2024 and also raised this case with Foreign Minister Shoukry during his visit to Cairo last year. Our Embassy in Cairo continues to raise the challenges faced by human rights defenders with the Egyptian authorities, and UK representatives have also done so via Item IV Statements at the Human Rights Council. Human rights defenders make a vital contribution to the health of all societies and should be able to conduct their work and lives unimpeded in Egypt, fully benefiting from their rights under the Egyptian Constitution.

■ Non-aligned Movement**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[13918\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the outcome of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kampala in January.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

As the United Kingdom is not a member or observer of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), we were not represented at the summit. The British High Commission in Kampala monitored the event remotely. The outcome document is publicly available and sets out the NAM's positions on a range of global issues.

■ Pakistan: Christianity**Patrick Grady:** [\[14170\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent (a) violence against and (b) the persecution of Christians in Pakistan.

Patrick Grady: [\[14171\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart on the persecution of Christians in that country.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK strongly condemns violence and persecution against Christians in Pakistan. The former Foreign Secretary raised the persecution of religious communities, including attacks against the Christian community in Jaranwala, with Pakistan's Prime Minister, Anwarul Haq Kakar on 25 September. On 21 August, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia wrote to Pakistan's caretaker Foreign Minister

Jalil Abbas Jilani, urging the Government to ensure the safety of the Christian community following the attacks in Jaranwala. Lord Ahmad also raised the issue with Foreign Minister Jilani when they met on 13 September and in his meeting with the Pakistani High Commissioner on 6 September.

Alongside our diplomatic engagement, UK programmes seek to address the challenges faced by religious minorities in Pakistan. Our Aawaz II programme brings together community leaders and minority representatives to promote tolerance and reduce violence, and our Hate Speech and Disinformation programme works is working to protect marginalised communities from hate speech online.

■ **Palestinians: Recognition of States**

Rachael Maskell:

[13795]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what diplomatic steps he is taking at the UN to secure the future recognition of the state of Palestine.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. We must give the people of the West Bank and Gaza the political perspective of a credible route to a Palestinian state and a new future, and it needs to be irreversible. This is not entirely in our gift. However, we and our partners can help by confirming our commitment and vision. Crucially, we must state our clear intention to grant recognition, including at the United Nations. That can't come at the start of the process, but it doesn't have to be the very end of the process.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has an important long-term role to play. We already provide technical and practical support to the PA, and will work with our allies to continue this, and do more. The PA must also take much needed steps on reform, including setting out a pathway to democratic progress. Just as the PA must act, so must Israel, which means releasing frozen funds, halting settlement expansion and holding to account those responsible for extremist settler violence.

We need to generate momentum now towards a permanent peace. That is why we are pressing for a Contact Group, bringing together the key players, to be set up at once.

■ **Red Sea: Piracy**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[14232]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of the disruption to shipping in the Red Sea on global transfer of (a) fertiliser and (b) energy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Red Sea is a vital sea lane for international shipping. 12 per cent of international trade, worth over \$1 trillion, passes through the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Suez

Canal every year. The global economy has therefore been threatened by the Houthi's dangerous and destabilising attacks since 19 November.

Djibouti and Ethiopia, for example, are particularly dependent on importing fertilisers through the Red Sea (75 per cent from Morocco, and 70 per cent from North Africa, respectively). Supply of fertiliser is time sensitive (because it is needed at specific points in a crop's life) and so delays in delivery may be more impactful on such countries' food security, than the consequences of delays to other goods.

The Department for Transport assesses jet fuel to be the most concerning commodity at risk of this disruption; globally, 30 per cent of seaborne jet fuel, 12 per cent of seaborne oil, and 8 per cent of seaborne liquefied natural gas (LNG) passes through the Red Sea.

■ Sanctions: Russia

Drew Hendry:

[\[14140\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of people sanctioned for creating propaganda in support of the Russian offensive in Ukraine.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government keeps potential sanctions designations under close and regular review; it is not appropriate to speculate on future sanctions as this could reduce their impact.

■ Somalia: Food Supply

Lisa Nandy:

[\[14052\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the food security situation in Somalia as of 16 February 2024; and what steps his Department is taking to help support those most in need.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Food insecurity levels in Somalia remain high, driven by climate change and conflict. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification assessment estimates that 4 million Somalis are facing high levels of food insecurity in the first three months of 2024.

The UK is providing £53.5 million in lifesaving humanitarian support this financial year, including £16.5 million for El Niño response efforts. We are also tackling the drivers of food insecurity to prevent future crises. In November, the Prime Minister announced up to £100 million in funding for Somalia to increase resilience to future climate shocks over the next four years.

■ Sudan: Food

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[14235\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made a recent assessment of the scale of food shortages in Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

17.7 million people in Sudan (37 percent of the population) are now thought to be experiencing acute food insecurity. This is likely to worsen in the coming months. As much as 70 percent of the population could be experiencing acute food insecurity by June. The conflict has now spread to the "breadbasket" state of Jazira, where food production, grain milling, storage and transportation, are heavily impacted. The UK is pushing for a concerted international community response. In November, at the Global Food Security Summit in London, the UK pledged a further £14.3 million in humanitarian aid for Sudan, bringing our total support package for Sudan to £38 million for 2023-2024, which includes some food and nutrition assistance.

■ Sudan: Food Aid

Paul Bristow:

[\[14445\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department is taking steps to provide additional aid to alleviate the potential famine in Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The conflict is having a devastating impact on Sudanese populations, with 17.7 million people (37 percent of the population) now thought to be experiencing acute food insecurity, with the high risk of further deterioration. The UK is providing more than £38 million in humanitarian funding in 2023-24, including £12.2 million to UNICEF for lifesaving nutrition activities. In 2024/2025, the UK bilateral Official Development Assistance to Sudan will double to £89 million.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14009\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what estimate has he made of the number of people in Sudan in need of (a) humanitarian assistance and (b) protection since 15 April 2023.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The United Nations estimate that 24.8 million people are in need of assistance in Sudan; this is 51 percent of the population.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14010\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he plans to increase humanitarian aid to Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK continues to provide assistance to people in need in Sudan through our humanitarian aid package of £38 million for 2023-2024. In 2024/2025, the UK bilateral Official Development Assistance to Sudan will double to £89 million.

Lisa Nandy:[\[14053\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking with (a) regional and (b) international partners to help ensure the supply of humanitarian aid to people within conflict zones in Sudan.

Lisa Nandy:[\[14054\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with relevant partners in Sudan on access to humanitarian relief in that country.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is working with regional and international partners, to help bring an end to the hostilities, ensure the protection of civilians, and secure safe humanitarian access to and for the most at need communities. In November 2023, the UK alongside Norway jointly funded the Sudan Humanitarian Conference in Cairo from 18-20 November, which brought together Sudanese grassroots organisations, NGOs and the international humanitarian system to develop coordination mechanisms to give a greater voice to Sudanese organisations in the humanitarian response. The UK continues to support the many people in need in Sudan through our humanitarian aid package of £38 million for 2023-2024. In 2024-2025 UK bilateral official development assistance to Sudan will double, to £89 million.

Ben Lake:[\[14094\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will increase humanitarian aid to Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK continues to provide assistance to people in need in Sudan through our humanitarian aid package of £38 million for 2023-2024. In 2024/2025, the UK bilateral Official Development Assistance to Sudan will double to £89 million.

■ UNRWA: Staff**Hywel Williams:**[\[15024\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2023 to Question 13364 on UNRWA: Finance, what progress his Department has made on its review into the allegations concerning the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We are pressing the UN Office of Internal Oversight and Catherine Colonna to produce a rapid interim report. We want UNRWA to give detailed undertakings about changes in personnel, policy and precedents to ensure this can never happen again.

We are working with allies to try to bring this situation to a rapid conclusion - not least because UNRWA have a vital role to play in providing aid and services in Gaza.

■ **Western Sahara: Self-determination of States**

Jeremy Corbyn:

[\[14781\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will urge the UN Security Council to set a timetable for the referendum of self-determination in Western Sahara.

Jeremy Corbyn:

[\[14782\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will call for a census of (a) the indigenous people and (b) Moroccan settlers in Western Sahara.

David Rutley:

The UK continues to support UN-led efforts to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We strongly support the work of Staffan de Mistura as Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to Western Sahara, and will continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process and monitor progress.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Autism and Learning Disability: Patients**

Barbara Keeley:

[\[15041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) autistic people and (b) people with learning disabilities were in long-term segregation in inpatient settings on the most recent date for which data is available.

Maria Caulfield:

As published in Baroness Hollins' final report as the Chair of the Independent Care (Education) Treatment Review (IC(E)TR) Oversight panel on 8 November 2023, it was found that there were approximately 115 people who are autistic or have a learning disability in long-term segregation (LTS) in inpatient settings at any one time. This was during delivery of the second phase of the IC(E)TR, which ran between November 2021 and March 2023, using the Care Quality Commission's definition of LTS.

■ **Autism: County Durham**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[14315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for (a) assessment for and (b) diagnosis of autism in County Durham.

Maria Caulfield:

Nationally, we are taking steps to improve autism assessment and diagnosis services. NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance for autism assessment services on 5 April 2023. These documents are intended to help the National Health Service improve autism assessment services and improve the experience for adults and children who are going through an autism assessment. In 2023/24, £4.2 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available the appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including autism assessments and diagnosis services, in line with relevant clinical guidelines.

In respect of children and young people in County Durham, the NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB has identified challenges with their neurodevelopmental pathways, which include access to autism assessments and diagnosis, and have prioritised a programme of work to address these challenges. The work will look at new investment, capacity and needs, and ways to reduce the current backlogs.

In addition, the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust is taking actions to support improvements for families on the neurodevelopmental pathway, which also includes autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, including running three pilots to test different methods of improving the efficiency of the pathway. While families are waiting to access a neurodevelopmental assessment, including for autism, they can access the County Durham bubble of support, which provides advice and guidance before, during and after assessment.

In respect of adults, keeping in touch processes are in place locally to ensure regular contact is maintained with patients awaiting assessment for autism, and to ensure that they are supported throughout the pathway. Increasing support for adults on the neurodevelopmental pathway, including pre-assessment support, is a priority for the ICB and local authority in 2024/25.

■ **Autism: Young People**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[14316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the challenges for young people who are on the waiting list for an autism diagnosis when they move from child to adult mental health services.

Maria Caulfield:

While this specific assessment has not been made, we expect integrated care boards to have due regard to relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines when commissioning services, including for autism assessments. The NICE guideline, Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis, recommend that a local, multi-agency autism strategy group should be set

up, and one of the aims of that group should be to support the smooth transition to adult services for young people going through the diagnostic pathway.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance for autism assessment services. This guidance will help the National Health Service improve autism assessment services and improve the experience for people referred to an autism assessment service. This includes guidance to local areas on how to manage referrals and transitions between child and adult assessment services, as well as the support that should be available whilst people are waiting for an assessment.

■ **Bowel Cancer: Disadvantaged**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[14245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has made an assessment of the (a) extent of and (b) reasons for inequalities in bowel cancer outcomes.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[14246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has made an assessment of the (a) extent of and (b) reasons for geographical disparities in the number and proportion of bowel cancers diagnosed at stages (i) 3 and (ii) 4 in the last five years.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department and the National Health Service are working to improve bowel cancer outcomes for patients across England including an improvement of referral rates. Through the Help Us Help You campaign, the NHS has urged people to take up the offer of bowel screening when invited, while gradually extending the screening offer from those aged 60 years old, down to those aged 50 years old, ensuring more people are diagnosed with bowel cancer at the earliest stage.

The NHS is also now offering routine preventative bowel cancer screening to thousands of people in England with a genetic condition, Lynch syndrome, that increases their chance of developing certain cancers. This gives the NHS a better chance of finding cancers at a time when they can be more easily and effectively treated.

Tackling disparities is important in improving cancer outcomes. The Government is committed to its levelling up mission to narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy by 2030 and increase healthy life expectancy by five years, by 2035. Our approach will continue to focus on supporting people to live healthier lives, helping the NHS and social care to provide the best treatment and care for patients, and tackling health disparities through national and system interventions such as the NHS's Core20PLUS5 programme.

■ Bowel Cancer: Screening

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[15027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of the decision to lower the age for bowel cancer screening on levels of bowel cancer.

Andrew Stephenson:

Evidence shows that screening people at a younger age would enable more bowel cancers to be picked up at an earlier stage, where treatment is likely to be more effective and survival chances improved. Based on the UK National Screening Committee's (UK NSC) last review of the bowel cancer screening programme, since April 2021, the National Health Service in England has been gradually reducing the age for bowel screening from 60 years old down to 50 years old.

Modelling work commissioned by the UK NSC at the time concluded that introducing the faecal immunochemical test (FIT) for home testing in the 50 to 74 year old age range, at as low a threshold as possible, would be the most cost effective approach. Work continues in this area to ensure that lowering the age of bowel cancer screening down to 50 years old is done with workforce planning and capacity. Further details of the evidence around screening at a younger age and the modelling work, is available at the following link:

<https://view-health-screening-recommendations.service.gov.uk/bowel-cancer/>

■ Dementia: Clinical Trials

Rachel Hopkins:

[14989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how her Department plans to ensure that increases in funding lead to increased participation in clinical trials of people living with dementia.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government's responsibility for delivering dementia research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation. The NIHR is investing in a range of activities to increase the participation of people living with dementia in clinical trials.

In January 2024, the NIHR announced the Dementia-Translational Research Collaboration Trials Network (D-TRC TN) which is supported by almost £50 million of funding over five years. This will expand the United Kingdom's early phase clinical trial capabilities in dementia, speeding up the development of new treatments. The D-TRC-TN will increase opportunities for people with dementia to take part in clinical trials, irrespective of where they live in the UK. The NIHR also works in partnership with Alzheimer's Research UK, the Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Scotland to deliver and invest in Join Dementia Research, an online platform which enables the

involvement of people with a dementia diagnosis, and their carers, to take part in a range of research, including clinical trials.

The Department of Health and Social Care published the full response to the O'Shaughnessy Review into commercial clinical trials on 22 November 2023, integrating the response into the delivery of our vision to benefit all kinds of clinical research, including trials funded by medical research charities, as well as industry. This included the announcement of a Clinical Trials Delivery Accelerator focused on dementia, with up to £20 million of funding.

■ Dementia: Research

Claire Hanna:

[\[14376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to her Department's Press Release entitled, Prime Minister launches Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission, published on 14 August 2022, if she will publish a plan for the delivery of that mission.

Andrew Stephenson:

On 20 March 2023 the Dame Barbara Windsor Mission announced the appointment of two Co-Chairs, Hilary Evans and Nadeem Sarwar. Together, they will convene the Government, industry, the National health Service, academia, and families living with dementia, to tackle this devastating illness.

They have and continue to engage extensively across the sector to understand and develop the mission's key aims, ensuring it addresses the challenges the sector faces, and that patient's voices are heard. This has informed the mission's focus on three key pillars: biomarkers and experimental medicine; clinical trials infrastructure and innovation; and end-to-end implementation.

With a number of funding announcements made recently, the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission continues to develop its deliverables and will announce further plans for their delivery in due course.

Alex Sobel:

[\[14385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the £95 million allocated to the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission will be apportioned to (a) innovations in biomarkers, data, and digital and imaging technologies, (b) Increasing the number and speed of UK-based clinical trials for research into dementia and neurodegeneration and (c) its end-to-end implementation.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission focuses on three key pillars. The first of which centres on biomarkers and experimental medicine, and will be allocated £44 million out of the total £95 million of funding for the mission, with the intention of securing match funding from industry partners. The second pillar will focus on clinical trial infrastructure and innovation, with two recently announced initiatives to support its delivery. The first of these initiatives is the National Institute for Health and Care

Research's Dementia-Translational Research Collaboration Trials Network, with almost £50 million of funding over five years. This will expand the United Kingdom's early phase clinical trial capabilities for dementia, speeding up the development of new treatments. The second initiative is the Clinical Trials Delivery Accelerator, focused on dementia, and also named the Dementia Accelerator. This was announced in the Autumn Statement 2023, in response to Lord O'Shaughnessy's independent review into commercial clinical trials in the UK, with up to £20 million of additional funding. The third pillar will be focused on end-to-end implementation, specifically on aligning translational research, clinical practice, and regulatory frameworks to prepare health-systems for new dementia medicines. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, NHS England, the Department, the devolved administrations, and the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission are already working closely together to plan for the implementation of new dementia medicines, should they gain approval in the UK.

Rachel Hopkins:

[14987]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to double funding for dementia research by 2024-25.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is dedicated to supporting research into dementia and has committed to doubling funding for dementia research, to £160 million per year by the end of 2024/25. The Government's responsibility for delivering dementia research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and Department for Science Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation.

The Government is making significant progress towards meeting its commitment and has instigated momentous new programmes of work, such as investing almost £50 million over five years into the NIHR's Dementia Translational Research Collaboration Trial Network which will expand the United Kingdom's early phase clinical trial capabilities in dementia, speeding up the development of new treatments. A new Clinical Trials Delivery Accelerator focused on dementia was also announced in the Autumn Statement 2023, with up to £20 million of funding to help innovation reach National Health Service patients even faster. Many new initiatives and research projects will begin to spend in 2024/25.

In 2022/23, the most recent year we have data for, we estimate that total Government spend on dementia research was £96.9 million. Spend is dependent on the number and quality of applications received as well as the volume of research that requires infrastructure support, therefore research spend can only be calculated retrospectively after the end of the financial year.

Rachel Hopkins:

[14988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the £95 million investment in dementia clinical (a) trials and (b) innovative research will be allocated across the Mission's pillars of (i) innovations in biomarkers, data and digital and imaging technologies, (ii) increasing the number and speed of UK-based clinical trials for research into dementia and neurodegeneration and (iii) end-to-end implementation.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission was launched in August 2022 with £95 million of Government funding. There is now more than £120 million of committed funding to the mission, which will be invested into three key pillars. The first pillar centres on biomarkers and experimental medicine, and will receive £50 million of the funding for the mission, with the intention of securing match funding from industry partners. As part of this pillar, Innovate UK launched a Small Business Research Initiative competition, with the aim of accelerating innovations in clinical biomarker tools and technologies for dementia, where organisations could apply for a share of £6 million of funding out of the allocated £50 million. These technologies will enable the discovery, validation, and implementation of a suite of decision-enabling biomarkers to help transform clinical trials and precision therapies. The competition closed on 4 September 2023, and the recipients awarded a portion of the £6 million will be announced soon.

The second pillar will focus on clinical trial infrastructure and innovation, with two recently announced initiatives to support its delivery. The first of these initiatives is the National Institute for Health and Care Research's Dementia-Translational Research Collaboration Trials Network, with almost £50 million of funding over five years. This will expand the United Kingdom's early phase clinical trial capabilities for dementia, speeding up the development of new treatments. The second initiative is the Clinical Trials Delivery Accelerator, focused on dementia, also named the Dementia Accelerator. This was announced in the Autumn Statement 2023, in response to Lord O'Shaughnessy's independent review into commercial clinical trials in the UK, with up to £20 million of additional funding.

The third pillar will be focused on end-to-end implementation, specifically on aligning translational research, clinical practice, and regulatory frameworks to prepare health-systems for new dementia medicines. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, NHS England, the Department, the devolved administrations, and the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission are already working closely together to plan for the implementation of new dementia medicines, should they gain approval in the UK.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Information Officers**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[14019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in her Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department has 25 press and media relations posts. Roles range from Civil Service Executive Officer to Senior Civil Service pay band 1. These figures are for the central departmental communications team only.

■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment**Mark Eastwood:**[\[14361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department plans to take to support ICBs in increasing the adoption of real time continuous glucose monitoring for patients with type 2 diabetes.

Mark Eastwood:[\[14362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients in West Yorkshire ICS with (a) Type 1 and (b) Type 2 diabetes use real time continuous glucose monitoring as of 16 February 2024.

Andrew Stephenson:

Diabetes care is commissioned by local integrated care boards (ICBs). ICBs are responsible for developing commissioning policies and making local decisions on how to utilise their funding.

Real time continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) for people living with type 1 and type 2 diabetes is prescribed in both primary and secondary care settings. Regrettably, as the reporting systems for secondary care prescribing varies across England, and depends on local commissioning arrangements, we do not have accurate figures for secondary care prescribing.

Our latest reports indicate that 70% of patients with type 1 diabetes in the West Yorkshire ICB are prescribed real time CGM in primary care. There will be additional patients who are prescribed real time CGM in secondary care, but we are unable to identify those patients from national reporting.

We are currently developing an alternative reporting model to provide reports that identify people with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes. The ICB recognises and continues to explore options to address the need for an end-to-end data solution for CGM and other diabetes technology, which allows the monitoring of access, uptake and health inequalities, care quality and safety, and spend.

■ Earwax: Medical Treatments

Margaret Greenwood: [\[14210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will have discussions with NHS England on the potential (a) impact of not including ear wax removal services in the standard general medical services contract on health inequalities and (b) merits of appointing a (i) national clinical director and (ii) specialty advisor on audiology to advise on this matter.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[14211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has had recent discussions with NHS England about the potential inclusion of ear wax removal services in the standard general medical services contract for 2024-25.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[14212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will require NHS England to publish commissioning guidance to integrated care boards on universal provision of ear wax removal services.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[14213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the RNID's findings in its report entitled Blocked Ears, Blocked Access: The crisis of NHS ear wax removal in England, published in January 2024.

Andrea Leadsom:

In June 2018, there was an update to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance, which states that ear wax syringing is no longer recommended due to safety concerns. Instead, self-care methods including olive-oil drops and, if required, ear irrigation or micro-suctioning, are recommended.

The Government has no plans to include ear wax removal services in the national Standard General Medical Services Contract. Irrigation and micro-suctioning require a higher level of expertise and specialist equipment than syringing, which most general practices (GPs) do not have. This means that patients who were previously treated with syringing by their GPs may now require a referral to other National Health Service providers, to access irrigation or micro-suctioning services.

Local commissioners, including integrated care boards, are responsible for arranging services which will meet the recommendations on ear wax removal, as set out in the NICE guidance. This may involve commissioning GPs who agree to develop the required expertise to deliver these treatments or other providers, to whom GPs may refer patients, to provide ear wax removal services.

NHS England issued a communication to all commissioners in June 2022 which asked them to ensure that GPs, with whom they have agreed will not deliver ear irrigation or have not been commissioned to provide micro-suction services, are able to refer patients to appropriate local NHS services for ear wax removal, where

symptoms persist following self-care methods. This includes arranging services in line with guidance on ear wax removal services, published by NICE. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng98/chapter/Recommendations#removing-earwax>

The Department is not aware of any plans by NHS England to appoint a national clinical director or speciality advisor for ear wax removal services. Finally, the Department has noted the publication of the Royal National Institute for Deaf People's (RNID) report Blocked Ears, Blocked Access with interest, and will meet with members of the RNID to discuss this report in due course.

■ Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Sales

Craig Whittaker:

[13989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the consultation entitled Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping, what steps her Department plans to take to enforce the proposals relating to (a) tobacco and (b) vape products bought from online retailers.

Andrea Leadsom:

A strong approach to enforcement is vital if the smokefree generation and youth vaping policy is to have real impact. Underage and illicit sale of tobacco, and more recently vapes, is undermining the work the Government is doing to regulate the industry and protect public health. The sale of illicit products frequently targets children and young people in disadvantaged communities, widening health disparities.

For this reason, HM Revenue and Customs and Border Force published the joint illicit tobacco strategy, *Stubbing Out the Problem*, in January 2024. This sets out our plans to be at the forefront of tackling illegal activity and opportunities that criminals might seek to exploit. One of the strategies key aims is to reduce the demand for illicit tobacco, which will include tackling online sales of illicit tobacco on social media platforms, gathering intelligence on social media sales, and working with social media platforms to ensure we are effective in limiting criminal groups' ability to sell illicit tobacco through these channels.

Additionally, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is creating a framework of standards and governance, underpinned by legislation, to enable the widespread use of trusted digital identity services. This will make it possible for people to prove things about themselves in a secure way without using paper documents.

The Government wants to make sure that those under the legal age of sale cannot buy tobacco products and vapes online, so we have committed to further enhance online age verification. As set out in the command paper, *Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation*, we will work with retailers that sell tobacco products and vapes to produce good practice guidance to help retailers adopt online age verification, to address underage sales.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Sales

Craig Whittaker:

[13990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has considered the potential merits of introducing a retailer licensing scheme for the sale of vapes.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Government is concerned about the worrying rise in vaping among children. Youth vaping has tripled in the last three years, and one in five children now use a vape. To address this, we recently published our response to the smoking and vaping consultation, which sets out our plan to restrict vape flavours, point of sale display, and packaging. The response is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-smokefree-generation-and-tackling-youth-vaping/outcome/creating-a-smokefree-generation-and-tackling-youth-vaping-consultation-government-response>

We also set out our plans to introduce an age of sale requirement for non-nicotine vapes and other consumer nicotine products, as well as a £100 fixed penalty notice for underage sales of tobacco and vaping products. In addition, the consultation response announced that disposable vapes will be banned, which will be taken forward by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. The Government will introduce legislation as soon as possible.

Whilst there are no current plans to introduce a retail licensing scheme, we have announced £30 million of additional funding per year to tackle illicit and underage sales of tobacco and vape products. In April last year, we also provided funding for a new enforcement unit to tackle the illegal and underage sale of vapes, which has conducted targeted inspections in ports, upskilled trading standards officers, and piloted online underage test programmes.

■ Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[13767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for the legal teams of the families involved in the Essex mental health independent inquiry.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[13768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to meet families involved in the Essex mental health independent inquiry to discuss the terms of reference for that inquiry.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[13770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when she last met with the families involved with the Essex Mental Health Statutory Public Inquiry.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 19 February 2024]: The Department announced on 28 June 2023 that the Essex Mental Health Inquiry was converted to a statutory inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005. This is now known as the Lampard Inquiry.

This is an independent inquiry and the decision to make payment of any legal fees for work on the statutory inquiry is a matter for the Chair, Baroness Kate Lampard. As such, the Department does not get involved with the decision to award fees for legal work on this inquiry. The Department has no legal basis for payment of any legal fees incurred for any work before the conversion of the inquiry to a statutory footing.

The Chair of the inquiry launched a public consultation on the terms of reference for the inquiry in November 2023, whereby families and other stakeholders had the opportunity to represent their views on the proposed terms of reference. My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, would welcome a meeting with the families to discuss the terms of reference. The meeting will be arranged in due course.

■ Genomics: China**Catherine West:**[\[14261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has plans to (a) review and (b) update guidance on partnerships between private healthcare providers and Chinese genomic companies.

Andrew Stephenson:

As part of the new UK Biological Security Strategy, the Government is assessing how we can minimise the risks from biological data to protect our burgeoning bioeconomy, without stifling innovation, and build confidence in sharing personal data to improve health outcomes in the United Kingdom and across the world. The Office for Life Sciences is conducting this work at pace.

The Research Collaboration Advice Team, which has been operating since March 2022 as part of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, provides advice to UK stakeholders about research collaborations. In 2020, Universities UK, with support from the Government, the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure and the National Cyber Security Centre, published guidelines to help universities tackle security risks related to international collaboration. Universities UK continues to evaluate the effectiveness of their guidelines, updating it when necessary.

■ Hay Fever: Medical Treatments**Jim Shannon:**[\[13550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the number of people who are on prescription medication for hayfever.

Andrew Stephenson:

Information is held on prescriptions for individual medicines, but not for the clinical reason for that prescription. Therefore, the information requested on the number of people who are on prescription medication for treatment of hay fever, is not held centrally.

While information is collected on the number of items dispensed for medications licensed for treatment of hay fever, some patients may be prescribed these medicines for conditions other than hay fever and some patients may be prescribed medication licensed for other indications to treat their hay fever.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[13964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there are block contract payment models in use for cardiac services.

Andrew Stephenson:

Through the 2022 Health and Care Act, the 2023/25 NHS Payment Scheme has replaced the National Tariff Payment System. This is a set of rules, prices and guidance used by commissioners and providers of National Health Service care, to ensure the available funding delivers the most efficient, cost-effective care to patients. The scheme contains four payment mechanisms, block contracts being one of these, along with aligned payment and incentives, activity-based payments, and local agreements. Contracts are developed and agreed between integrated care boards and healthcare providers, where the appropriate mechanism for specific services will be decided locally. The aligned payment and incentives approach, which includes a fixed and a variable element, covers almost all NHS provider activity. Within that, almost all elective activity is paid for under the variable element, including cardiac services. Block contracts are used primarily to fund providers for low volume activity, which may apply to some specific cardiac services.

Mr Virendra Sharma:[\[13965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of the use of block contract payment models in cardiac services.

Andrew Stephenson:

Through the 2022 Health and Care Act, the 2023/25 NHS Payment Scheme has replaced the National Tariff Payment System. This is a set of rules, prices and guidance used by commissioners and providers of National Health Service care to ensure the available funding delivers the most efficient, cost-effective care to patients. The scheme contains four payment mechanisms, block contracts being one of these, along with aligned payment and incentives, activity-based payments, and local agreements. Contracts are developed and agreed between integrated care boards and healthcare providers, where the appropriate mechanism for specific services will be decided locally.

The aligned payment and incentives approach, which includes a fixed and a variable element, covers almost all NHS provider activity. Within that, almost all elective activity is paid for under the variable element. Block contracts are primarily used to fund providers for low volume activity. This is a nationally set value, usually paid annually by commissioners to healthcare providers, therefore providing an element of budget certainty for providers. Additionally, given these are usually single payments, they can reduce administrative burdens for both providers and commissioners. Block contract payment methods can also be useful in areas where activity levels are difficult to measure.

■ Heart Diseases: Retirement

Jim Shannon:

[\[13555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been medically retired due to heart attacks in the last 5 years.

Andrew Stephenson:

The number of people who have medically retired due to heart attacks in the last five years is not held centrally. The NHS Long Term Plan sets out that by 2028 the proportion of patients accessing cardiac rehabilitation will be amongst the best in Europe, with up to 85% of those eligible accessing care. This will prevent up to 23,000 premature deaths and 50,000 acute admissions over 10 years.

To support elective recovery, the Government plans to spend more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to drive up and protect elective activity for heart disease, ensuring early access to diagnostic tests and treatment.

The NHS Health Check programme is a core component of England's cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention pathway. Over 15 million people are eligible for an NHS Health Check every five years, with 1.3 million being delivered a year, preventing an estimated 500 heart attacks and strokes.

The Government is supporting local authorities to improve uptake of the NHS Health Check and return it to pre-pandemic levels. In addition, we are investing in the development and rollout of an innovative new digital NHS Health Check, from spring 2024, and in a pilot for workplace CVD health checks for up to 150,000 people in their place of work.

■ Integrated Care Boards: Finance

Wes Streeting:

[\[12458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what were the total financial deficits of each NHS Integrated Care Board in England for the (a) 2022-23 and (b) 2021-22 financial year.

Wes Streeting:

[\[12459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the financial deficit of each NHS trust was in each of the last five financial years.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 8 February 2024]: The financial surplus/deficit figures for all integrated care boards are published by NHS England in quarterly financial performance reports which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/financial-performance-reports/>

■ Lisdexamfetamine**Vicky Foxcroft:****[14138]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she has had with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry on (a) the expiry of the patent for Elvanse is out of date and (b) the potential merits of (i) producing and (ii) procuring a generic version of Elvanse.

Andrew Stephenson:

No such discussions have taken place, although we are aware of the supply issues affecting medicines used for the management of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, including Elvanse capsules. This is a global issue, and other markets are also affected. We can confirm that intermittent supply disruptions affecting Elvanse capsules are expected to be largely resolved by April or May 2024.

■ Liver Cancer: Health Services**Elliot Colburn:****[14137]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by the British Liver Trust entitled Liver Cancer – A Call to Action, published in October 2023, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing an optimal care pathway for liver cancer.

Andrew Stephenson:

The care of and treatment for patients with cancers, including liver cancer, is a priority for the Government. National Health Service cancer standards have been reformed with the support of clinicians to speed up diagnosis for patients, which means people will receive a diagnosis or have cancer ruled out within 28 days of urgent cancer referral from their general practice. NHS England's Early Diagnosis of Cancer Programme is contributing to the NHS Long Term Plan's commitment to diagnose 75% of all cancers at stage one or two by 2028. Identifying those at risk and ensuring patients are tested and referred to a surveillance programme, where necessary, will lead to improved patient outcomes.

The Government is taking steps through NHS England to improve outcomes for cancer patients, including liver cancer. Diagnostic checks are a key part of cancer pathways and the 153 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) opened by the Government will give earlier diagnostic tests, benefitting millions of patients including those who are referred with suspected less survivable cancers. NHS systems have been asked to prioritise CDC capacity towards their most challenged cancer

pathways, where this is clinically appropriate, and these centres have delivered over six million additional tests for all elective activity since July 2021.

Alan Brown:

[\[14139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts on (a) care for patients with and (b) treatment for liver cancer.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government works with international partners in various fora to tackle some of the biggest health challenges of our time, including cancer.

The care of and treatment for patients with cancers, including liver cancer, is a priority for the Government. National Health Service cancer standards have been reformed with the support of clinicians to speed up diagnosis for patients, which means people will receive a diagnosis or have cancer ruled out within 28 days of an urgent cancer referral from their general practice (GP). NHS England's Early Diagnosis of Liver Cancer Programme is contributing to the NHS Long Term Plan's commitment to diagnose 75% of all cancers at stage one or two, by 2028. Identifying those at risk and ensuring patients are tested and referred to a surveillance programme, where necessary, will lead to improved patient outcomes.

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

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

■ Liver Diseases: Research

Bob Blackman:

[\[14005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help researchers access funding for liver health.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department funds research into liver health through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Between 2018/19 and 2022/23 the NIHR funded over £51.6 million across 80 projects related to liver health.

The NIHR funds and supports research into liver health through its research programmes and infrastructure. This includes a two-part commissioned call on liver disease through NIHR research partnerships that launched in May 2022, through the Clinical Research Network. This supports patients, the public, and health and care organisations across England to participate in high-quality research, and supports

National Health Service doctors working in hepatology to apply for clinical research training through the NIHR Clinical Research Training Programme.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including liver health. The usual practice of the NIHR is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics. Research proposals in all areas compete for the funding available. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. In all disease areas, the amount of NIHR funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity.

■ **Liver Diseases: Screening**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[14622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to take steps to (a) roll out intelligent liver function testing nationally and (b) help ensure that Integrated Care systems implement pathways for early detection of liver disease.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is working with the National Health Service to support earlier diagnosis of liver disease and the identification of patients at risk. This includes plans agreed as part of the £2.3 billion of diagnostics transformation programme funding, to upgrade laboratory digital capabilities to ensure that labs across the country have the capability required to offer Intelligent Liver Function Tests.

Over the coming year, NHS England is due to pilot a new diagnostic pathway for liver disease, which will include fibrosis scanning in community diagnostic centres. The Government looks forward to seeing the results of that pilot.

■ **Ophthalmic Services**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[13978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling appropriately qualified optometrists to issue certificates of vision impairment.

Andrea Leadsom:

We recognise that the Certificate of Visual Impairment is an important step in enabling individuals with sight loss to access appropriate support. In England, that certification is currently undertaken by ophthalmologists, who are specialists in eye conditions. No assessment has yet been made of the potential merits of enabling appropriate qualified optometrists to issue certificates of visual impairment.

■ Prisoners: Medical Treatments

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[14433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure continuity of access to medication for people in prison.

Maria Caulfield:

People in prison are entitled to the same standard and range of health and social care services, as they would receive in the community. A number of mechanisms are deployed by healthcare and pharmacy teams within prison settings to ensure continuity of access to medication. A robust medicines reconciliation will be in place, usually within 24 hours of arriving at a prison, to ensure the healthcare provider is aware of what medication the patient is currently taking. Medication will be re-prescribed within the prison healthcare setting at the earliest opportunity and medication will be either supplied direct to the patient for their own management or will be administered on a dose by dose basis at a treatment hatch.

Minor ailment protocols allow healthcare staff to supply low level medication for the management of simple health conditions. Patients can request these as needed and will be assessed by the healthcare team for suitability. Patient Group Directions allow the healthcare team the opportunity to administer or supply prescription-only medication for a group of patients, within strict inclusion criteria. Medication should be supplied on release and transfer to ensure continuity. Prescriptions will also be available for patients on release, to take to their nominated community pharmacy, or to access medication in urgent circumstances while they reside within a prison establishment.

■ Smoking: Health Services

Sarah Champion:

[14087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many mental health trusts are implementing smoking cessation services.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is the number one entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death in this country. It is responsible for 80,000 yearly deaths in the United Kingdom and one in four of all UK cancer deaths. Smoking is closely associated with poor mental health and wellbeing, as people with mental health conditions die 10 to 20 years earlier, with smoking contributing significantly to this. Further information on the wellbeing of smokers aged 18 years old and over, and the relationship between smoking and mental health, is available respectively at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smoking-prevalence-in-adults-current-smokers-aged-over-18-years-by-wellbeing-group-and-region>

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/26/health-matters-smoking-and-mental-health/>

It also costs our country £17 billion a year, £14 billion of which is through lost productivity alone. It puts huge pressure on the National Health Service and social

care, costing over £3 billion a year. At the end of quarter three of 2023/24, 37 out of 48 Mental Health services identified as eligible under the NHS Long Term Plan, are reporting that they are delivering tobacco dependence treatment services.

■ Smoking: Young People

Karl McCartney:

[\[14030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish the names of the organisations that responded to the consultation entitled Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping.

Karl McCartney:

[\[14031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish the names of the organisations who disclosed links to the tobacco industry that responded to the consultation entitled Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is the number one entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death in this country. It is responsible for 80,000 deaths in the United Kingdom a year, and one in four of all UK cancer deaths. It costs our country £17 billion a year, £14 billion of which is through lost productivity alone. It puts huge pressure on the National Health Service and social care, costing over £3 billion a year.

The Government response to the consultation entitled Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping, was published on 29 January 2024. The consultation received nearly 28,000 responses. Whilst there are no plans to publish the names of all the organisations that responded, we did confirm that we received responses from 896 organisations as well as 307 responses from those who disclosed links with the tobacco industry.

As outlined in our consultation response, the UK is a party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and so had an obligation to protect public health policy from the vested interests of the tobacco industry. In the consultation response we summarise the views of respondents with disclosed links to the tobacco industry but have been clear that we have not considered these views when determining our policy response.

■ Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[13937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to raise awareness of sudden unexplained death in childhood (SUDC); and whether there is a timeframe for information relating to SUDC to be included on the NHS website.

Andrea Leadsom:

I refer the Rt hon. Member for Spelthorne to the answer I gave the Rt hon. Member on 19 February 2024, to Question [11788](#).

To further raise awareness of sudden unexplained death in childhood (SUDC), NHS England intends to update the When a Child Dies leaflet in collaboration with affected families, parents, and carers, as well as National Child Mortality Database colleagues and SUDC charities, including SUDC UK and relevant professional groups. The Department and NHS England also held a roundtable in July 2023, which brought together expert organisations to discuss possible ways to improve SUDC training and awareness, both collectively and within organisations.

Helen Morgan:

[\[15212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to facilitate research into Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). This includes funding for the NIHR's Great Ormond Street Hospital Biomedical Research Centre, which has carried out a study on sudden unexplained death in childhood, titled Autopsy Investigation of Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood.

While it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including sudden unexplained death in childhood. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients, health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality

■ Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood: Research

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[13938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department (a) has taken and (b) is taking steps to increase research into the causes of sudden unexplained death in childhood.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). This includes funding for the NIHR's Great Ormond Street Hospital Biomedical Research Centre, which has carried out a study on sudden unexplained death in childhood, titled Autopsy Investigation of Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood.

While it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including sudden unexplained death in childhood. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients, health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

■ Tobacco: Labelling

Craig Whittaker:

[\[13993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has made an assessment of the environmental impact of introducing paper inserts with quit information messages into (a) tobacco pouches and (b) cigarette boxes.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is the number one entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death in this country. It is responsible for 80,000 yearly deaths in the United Kingdom and one in four of all UK cancer deaths. It costs our country £17 billion a year, £14 billion of which is through lost productivity alone. It puts huge pressure on the National Health Service and social care, costing over £3 billion a year.

Research suggests tobacco pack inserts can increase the likelihood of smokers making a quit attempt, by providing motivational messages and information on the benefits of quitting, in addition to the graphic health warnings already on tobacco products.

A UK wide consultation, Mandating quit information messages inside tobacco packs, was open for eight weeks from August 2023 to October 2023. As part of the consultation, respondents were asked to provide information on any environmental concerns about the use of inserts, and how these could be mitigated. We are considering feedback to the consultation and a consultation response will be published in due course.

■ Tobacco: Sales

Craig Whittaker:

[\[13994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether additional support will be provided for Trading Standards to enforce the proposed generational ban on tobacco sales.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is the number one entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death in this country. It is responsible for 80,000 yearly deaths in the United Kingdom and one in four of all UK cancer deaths. It costs our country £17 billion a year, £14 billion of which is through lost productivity alone. It puts huge pressure on the National Health Service and social care, costing over £3 billion a year. That is why we are introducing legislation to create the first smokefree generation, making it illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009.

To ensure the law is enforced, the Government is providing an additional £30 million per year for enforcement agencies, including Trading Standards, to support work to tackle illicit and underage sales. The Government will also introduce a £100 fixed penalty notice for the underage sale of tobacco and vaping products. This will support Trading Standards to take quicker and more proportionate enforcement action against the irresponsible retailers who allow underage sales. We will continue to work

closely with local trading standards and businesses to provide guidance on implementing and enforcing the Smokefree Generation policy.

Karl McCartney:

[14032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she has had with the (a) National Federation of Retail Newsagents, (b) Association of Convenience Stores, (c) British Independent Retailers Association, (d) Scottish Grocers Federation and (e) Federation of Wholesale Distributors on the introduction of a generational ban on the purchase of tobacco.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is the number one entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death in this country. It is responsible for 80,000 yearly deaths in the United Kingdom and one in four of all UK cancer deaths. It costs our country £17 billion a year, £14 billion of which is through lost productivity alone. It puts huge pressure on the National Health Service and social care, costing over £3 billion a year.

This is why the Government is planning to create a smokefree generation by bringing forward legislation so that children turning 15 years old this year or younger, will never be legally sold tobacco products.

Since this announcement, officials have undertaken a series of discussions with retailers and most recently met with the British Independent Retailers Association, the Association of Convenience Stores, and other trade associations to discuss the smokefree generation and youth vaping policy. We will continue to engage with the retail sector and ensure they are supported to implement future legislation.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly:

[14485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting (a) cigar-based products and (b) pipe tobacco from the Government's proposed ban on the sale of tobacco products.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is the number one entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death in this country. It is responsible for 80,000 yearly in the United Kingdom and one in four of all UK cancer deaths. It costs our country £17 billion a year, £14 billion of which is through lost productivity alone. It puts huge pressure on the National Health Service and social care, costing over £3 billion a year.

The evidence is clear that there is no safe level of tobacco consumption, and all tobacco products are harmful. When smoked, tobacco kills up to two-thirds of its long-term users. Tobacco smoke has been classified as a group one carcinogen, and tobacco smoke from cigars leads to the same types of diseases as cigarette smoke.

The upcoming smokefree generation legislation proposes to align to existing age of sale legislation by applying it to any product containing tobacco, including cigars and pipe tobacco. In the Government's response to the consultation, Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping published on 29 January 2024,

63.8% of respondents to the question on product scope agreed that all tobacco products should be included in the new age of sale restrictions.

■ UK Health Security Agency: Finance

Philip Davies:

[\[13942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2024 to Question 12282 on UK Health Security Agency: Finance, if she will list (a) all the third parties that have contributed to the UKHSA vaccines income and (b) how much each has third party has given in each year since the UKHSA was formed.

Maria Caulfield:

The following table shows vaccine sales outside of the devolved administrations, broken down into customer groupings, for the years 2021/22 and 2022/23:

DESCRIPTION	2021/22	2022/23	TOTAL
Crown Dependencies	£1,223,335.78	£1,588,977.85	£2,812,313.63
Other Government Departments	£1,852,162.14	£504,059.22	£2,356,221.36
Other customers	£434,379.82	£692,485.88	£1,126,865.70
Total	£3,509,877.74	£2,785,522.95	£6,295,400.69

■ WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Mr David Jones:

[\[14826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which concluded on 10 February 2024.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 23 February 2024]: Smoking is the number one entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death in this country. It is responsible for 80,000 yearly deaths in the United Kingdom and one in four of all UK cancer deaths. It costs our country £17 billion a year, £14 billion of which is through lost productivity alone. It puts huge pressure on the National Health Service and social care, costing over £3 billion a year.

This is why the Government is committed to creating the first smokefree generation, ensuring no child born after 1 January 2009 will ever legally be sold tobacco. The tenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control was an opportunity for the UK to showcase this international leadership on tobacco control. The decisions

agreed at COP10 will not impact our smokefree generation policies or our plans to tackle youth vaping.

■ **Young Offenders: Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

Janet Daby: [15159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the youth secure estate have been diagnosed with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder as of 21 February 2024.

Maria Caulfield:

Neither the Department nor NHS England hold this information centrally.

Janet Daby: [15162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there are existing screening practices in place in the youth secure estate to diagnose young offenders who may have Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England has statutory responsibility for the direct commissioning of health services in the children and young people secure estate. All children in the secure estate receive individualised care according to their needs, and following an assessment via the Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool (CHAT). This is an evidence based, validated health assessment tool for under 18-year-olds, which screens for physical health, substance misuse, mental health, and neurodisability.

The CHAT is templated onto the clinical IT system, SystemOne, and is completed on admission to the estate, with regular reviews. Key health information from the CHAT can be shared with custody and residential staff via the Child Health Summary, to ensure all staff are aware of a child's health needs.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Anti-social Behaviour: Greater London**

Feryal Clark: [14415]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Chris Philp:

Last year the Government launched the Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan>) ensuring the police, local authorities and other relevant agencies have the tools they need to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The plan is backed by £160m of funding. This includes funding an increased police and other uniformed presence to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, targeting

hotspots. Initially we worked with 10 police force areas, but on 15 February we announced total funding of £66m will be allocated to every police force to support a hotspot approach across England and Wales from April onwards.

We are also strengthening police and local authority powers to tackle anti-social behaviour through a number of measures in the Criminal Justice Bill.

■ Asylum

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[14778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he is taking steps to help ensure the adequacy of resources for supporting the integration of asylum seekers into British society in (a) local authorities and (b) organisations in the (i) voluntary, (ii) community and (iii) faith sector.

Tom Pursglove:

This Government's priority is to focus our efforts and resources to support those who most need it. As not all of those who seek asylum are found to need international protection, integration resources are available to those granted permission to stay. Under the New Plan for Immigration, the Government committed to offering an enhanced integration package for refugees arriving through safe and legal routes.

Individuals granted asylum have access to the labour market and to mainstream services that support their integration, including benefits and healthcare. We are working across Government to ensure these services meet the needs of all newly granted refugees.

Support is offered from Migrant Help or their partner organisation to all individuals when they receive a decision on their asylum claim. This support includes providing advice on accessing the labour market, on applying for Universal Credit and signposting to local authorities for assistance with housing.

■ Asylum: Bournemouth

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[14824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the use of hotels to house asylum seekers in Bournemouth.

Tom Pursglove:

As a result of the range of measures put in place to stop the boats, reform the management of the asylum accommodation estate and deliver alternative forms of accommodation sites, we have successfully met our ministerial commitment of closing over 50 hotels across the UK by the end of January 2024.

We continue to work with our providers on closing further hotels across the estate and will write to local authorities and MPs when a decision to close a site has been made.

■ Asylum: Hendon**Dr Matthew Offord:****[14008]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum hostels were operating in Hendon constituency; and how many have subsequently lost such status in the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area and the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation (including in contingency hotels and other contingency accommodation) is published in table Asy_D11 here: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets).

■ Asylum: Housing**Sir Stephen Timms:****[14777]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to notify local authorities of when (a) asylum seekers and (b) settled refugees are relocated to their area as a result of hotel closures.

Tom Pursglove:

The programme of hotel closures is managed carefully to ensure those asylum seekers still eligible for support are relocated to suitable alternative Home Office accommodation, which may be in a different location from their current hotel. The Home Office's accommodation providers manage the moves of asylum seekers from one location to another. Whilst we expect impacts on local authorities to be minimal, we have put in place additional resource to work with our accommodation providers and local partners to manage this process and minimise disruption. We are working with our partners, including local authorities, to provide timely notification of key events that impact them.

■ Asylum: Payments**John McNally:****[14340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of weekly payments to asylum seekers in catered accommodation being under £10 on their ability to access cash.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office has a legal obligation to meet the essential living needs of destitute asylum seekers. Support is usually provided in the form of accommodation and a weekly allowance loaded onto a payment card called an Aspen card, which can be used to make purchases from retail outlets.

Individuals living in catered accommodation are issued a reduced weekly payment to cover essential living items that are not met by their accommodation provider, such as clothing and travel.

The level of allowance is reviewed each year to ensure it covers an individual's essential living needs. Following the 2023 review, allowances have increased for many supported individuals including pregnant women and young children.

■ Asylum: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[14217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress his Department has made on ending the use of hotels for asylum seekers in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Tom Pursglove:

As a result of the range of measures put in place to stop the boats, reform the management of the asylum accommodation estate, and deliver alternative forms of accommodation sites, we have successfully met our ministerial commitment of closing over 50 hotels in January 2024.

We continue to work with our providers on closing further hotels across the estate and will write to local authorities and MPs when a decision to close a site has been made.

■ Bibby Stockholm: Costs

Richard Drax:

[\[14080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason people accommodated on the Bibby Stockholm barge are transported to Weymouth by a full size bus; what the cost to the public purse is for this service; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using a minibus for this service.

Tom Pursglove:

Those resident on the barge are not detained. Through our contracted service provider, the Home Office provides a bus service to take asylum seekers from the port to destinations agreed with local agencies. This is designed to ensure the movement of asylum seekers on and off the vessel is orderly and controlled, with the impact on the surrounding community as small as possible.

Financial assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly on the overall cost of each large site and vessel to test the value for money to the taxpayer.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[14109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the time taken to issue biometric residence permits.

Tom Pursglove:

Home Office colleagues are working closely together to improve our processes and ensure Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) are issued as quickly as possible.

BRP production is an automated function on our caseworking systems. However, delays can arise due to process errors. We have introduced a dedicated support function to work at speed to resolve user/process issues and to drive BRP process improvements across the end-to-end system.

Where customers encounter a delay in the receipt of their BRP, we offer a range of services to allow customers to report the delay, and we aim to resolve the problem within five working days of notification. Employers and landlords can use the Employer Checking Service and the Landlord Checking Service to verify a right to work or rent in the absence of a BRP, while Government departments and public bodies can verify status in the absence of a BRP through the Status Verification and Enquiries Checking (SVEC) team.

■ Burglary: Greater London

Feryal Clark:

[14418]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help tackle burglaries in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Chris Philp:

The Crime Survey for England and Wales data shows a 56% fall in domestic burglaries when comparing the year ending September 2023 with the year ending March 2010. This is clearly good news; however, we recognise the impact domestic burglary can have on individuals and communities, and we are committed to tackling and preventing this crime.

The public rightly expects that the police will visit them when a home burglary has been committed, which is why we welcome the announcement made by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) on 8 June, that all 43 police forces in England and Wales have been implementing this attendance policy since March 2023. We are working with police leaders to ensure forces are making their attendance data available to the public. <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-now-attending-scene-of-every-home-burglary>.

The police commitment to attend home burglaries is supported by specific College of Policing good practice guidance on conducting residential burglary investigations: <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/residential-burglary>.

Police forces across England and Wales have also committed to pursue all lines of enquiry where there is a reasonable chance it could lead to catching a perpetrator and solving a crime. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pursuing-all-reasonable-lines-of-enquiry-letter-to-police-leaders/pursuing-all-reasonable-lines-of-enquiry-letter-to-police-leaders>

To help ensure the police have the resources they need to fight crime and tackle anti-social behaviour, we have delivered on our commitment to recruit 20,000 additional police officers by the end of March 2023. There are now over 149,000 officers in

England and Wales, higher than the previous peak in March 2010, and as of 30 September, the MPS has over 35,000 officers.

■ **Fraud: Bank Services**

Grahame Morris:

[901629]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to ensure banks follow the Banking Protocol to protect vulnerable adults from fraud.

Tom Tugendhat:

- The government continues to work closely with UK Finance to ensure bank branch staff are trained and follow the Banking Protocol.
- UK Finance figures indicate that since launching in 2016, the initiative has prevented victims from losing £202.8million and led to 1005 arrests.
- The Protocol sits alongside other measures to protect customers from fraud including the recent National Comms Campaign.

■ **Home Office: Domicil**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[15075]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any non-executive directors employed in his Department are non-domiciled.

Chris Philp:

Non-executive's personal data, including those relating to personal taxation or status, are protected by the UK General Data Protection Regulation. Collection of personal data on non-dom status is not routinely collected and is generally not required for making public appointments. If any such data was held it could only be published if doing so was in compliance with data protection law.

Non executive board members are not employees of the Home Office and act in an advisory capacity.

Data relating to public appointments are covered by the Public Appointments Privacy Statement found here [Privacy – Apply for a public appointment – GOV.UK \(apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/privacy/public-appointments-privacy-statement)

■ **Home Office: Health and Safety**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [15114]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to comply with principle (d) of schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has a Health and Safety and Fire Management system within which risk assessments are conducted and reviewed appropriately for our buildings and people.

The Home Office complies with all UK Health, Safety and Fire Safety statutory provisions proportionate and relevant to its undertaking including principle (d) of schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

The control measures in said risk assessments apply the principle of prevention using the hierarchy of controls e.g. elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls, health surveillance and the issue of personal protective equipment.

■ Home Office: Information Officers

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[14012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office press and media team is made up of 30 employees. Roles range from grades HEO to G6 which have salary bands between £34,350 and £80,520.

This figure is for Home Office central communication directorate who work solely on press and media.

■ Immigration Controls: Greater London

Feryal Clark: [\[14423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many raids were carried out by Border Force in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London in 2023.

Michael Tomlinson:

Immigration have carried out the following intelligence led enforcement visits from 01/01/2023 to 30/09/2023 to:

1. Enfield North constituency – 60
1. London Borough of Enfield – 118
1. Greater London (Excluding Enfield) - 2488

■ Immigration: Applications

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[14304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many civil servants are assigned to process indefinite leave to remain applications made using the (a) priority service and (b) super priority service.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[14306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many civil servants are assigned to process indefinite leave to remain applications.

Tom Pursglove:

The number of civil servants processing Indefinite Leave to Remain applications, including priority and super priority applications, is forecast in advance, based on anticipated intake levels. However, the actual number of civil servants assigned to this work at any one time will vary as we actively monitor workflows to ensure sufficient resources are in place to meet demand.

Tonia Antoniazzi:[\[14308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many indefinite leave to remain applicants have used the (a) priority service and (b) super priority service in the last 12 months.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office publishes data on the number of indefinite leave to remain applications, in the [Migration transparency data](#), in table VSI_02 of the [Visas and citizenship data: Q3 2023](#).

Knives: Crime**Feryal Clark:**[\[14414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help tackle knife crime in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Feryal Clark:[\[14416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help tackle arson in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Feryal Clark:[\[14417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help tackle violent assaults in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Chris Philp:

Since 2019, the Home Office has provided over £43m of funding for a London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) (including £9.5m this year) which is providing a multi-agency, preventative response designed to tackle the drivers of serious violence and knife crime. In addition, we have invested over £60m (including c.£8.9m this year) in 'hotspot policing' to boost the policing response to serious violence in London and provide high-visibility police patrols and problem-solving tactics in the streets and neighbourhoods most affected.

VRUs are tasked with investing in evidence-based approaches designed to steer vulnerable young people away from involvement in violence. As part of this approach, the London VRU is funding local interventions in Enfield including an outreach and detached youth team which delivers after school activities and creative sessions, 1-1 holistic support for young people, mentoring sessions and sports sessions for

children and young people. Alongside this, the policing hot spot response programme is targeting key locations in Enfield Town and Fore Street. In addition to additional visible police patrols, policing interventions delivered through this programme in Enfield have included work to prevent robberies of school pupils and work to target males who were assaulting sex workers.

The government is also taking forward a programme of national activity to drive down knife crime. This includes recent consultation on new legislative proposals, including a ban of zombie-style knives and machetes. The government response was published on 30 August 2023. Following careful consideration of the responses to the consultation, a Statutory Instrument was laid in Parliament on 25 January 2024. Once the legislation has been approved by Parliament, a surrender scheme will be launched this summer to remove these items from our streets and once this has been completed, the manufacture, supply, sale and possession of zombie-style knives and machetes will be outlawed from 24 September 2024. This will cover face to face and online sales.

Additionally, through the Criminal Justice Bill 2023, which is currently progressing through parliament, we are providing more powers for police to seize knives held in private that they believe will be used for unlawful violence, increasing the maximum penalty for the offences of selling prohibited weapons and selling knives to under 18s and creating a new offence of possessing an article with blade or point or an offensive weapon with intent to commit unlawful violence.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[14818]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of responses to correspondence from hon. Members were provided in the name of (a) officials and (b) Ministers in his Department in the latest period for which data is available.

Chris Philp:

MP's correspondence data is not held in a form which allows us to accurately provide a breakdown of how many cases were responded to by Ministers and officials.

■ **Metropolitan Police**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[14007]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help increase public trust in the Metropolitan Police.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office and police leaders are delivering a series of measures to improve police standards and culture. These include forthcoming changes to regulations to strengthen the police vetting process and police discipline system. These changes will make it easier for the Commissioner to remove officers who do not meet the standards expected of them by Londoners.

The Government welcomes the commitment made within the Metropolitan Police's New Met for London plan which seeks to understand the diverse needs of Londoners and address recommendations which HMICFRS have highlighted. This must ultimately include cutting crime and rebuilding trust with communities where the Metropolitan police has committed to putting more officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) into local neighbourhoods.

The Mayor of London is ultimately responsible for overseeing the work of the Metropolitan Police Service and holding the Met Commissioner to account for delivering a professional, efficient and effective service to Londoners.

■ Migrant Workers: NHS

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[14148]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether this Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of proposed increases to the immigration health surcharge on the well-being of migrant workers in the NHS.

Tom Pursglove:

Migrants applying to work in the NHS on the basis of the Health and Care Worker visa are exempt from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS).

Migrants applying on other immigration routes are required to pay the IHS as part of their application. Migrants employed in the NHS on visas other than the Health and Care Worker visa are able to claim reimbursement of the IHS paid for periods employed in the health and social care sectors.

The Home Office undertook an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and an Impact Assessment (IA) alongside the IHS increase. These have been published and can be found at the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-health-surcharge-ihs-equality-impact-assessment-2023/immigration-health-surcharge-equality-impact-assessment-2023-accessible>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/55/impacts>.

■ Migrants: Health Services

Sir Stephen Timms:

[13206]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to case no. GWF066389012, for what reason an applicant who has been granted entry clearance under paragraph 319X of the Immigration Rules or Appendix CNP has been asked to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge despite the application being submitted before 12 April 2023.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[13207]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to case no. GWF066389479, for what reason an applicant who has been granted entry clearance

under paragraph 319X of the Immigration Rules or Appendix CNP has been asked to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge despite the application being submitted before 12 April 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

Applicants who have been granted entry clearance under paragraph 319X on the Immigration Rules or Appendix Child Staying with or joining a Non-Parent Relative (Appendix CNP) for more than 6 months, are required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge which covers the period of leave to enter they have been granted.

Applicants who have been granted entry clearance under paragraph 319X on the Immigration Rules or Appendix Child Staying with or joining a Non-Parent Relative (Appendix CNP) for 6 months or less are not required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge.

■ **Naturalisation**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[14339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what was the average time taken to process a naturalisation application in each of the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

The Secretary of State's Home Department publishes data on the processing of applications for British citizenship on the Gov.uk website. We do not publish data on average processing times for naturalisation applications.

The link to the latest Migration Transparency Data can be found here:

[Visas and citizenship data: Q3 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ **Offensive Weapons: Sales**

Mick Whitley:

[\[901632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent the online sale of dangerous weapons.

Chris Philp:

- On 25 January we introduced new legislation to ban zombie-style knives and machetes. This will come in to force on 24 September 2024.
- In the Criminal Justice Bill, legislating for more powers for police to seize knives held in private, increasing maximum sentences for sale of prohibited weapons and underage sales and a new offence of knife possession with violent intent.

■ **Overseas Students: Albania**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[13868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many student visas were issued to Albanian nationals in each year since 2021.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office publishes data on Student visas by nationality in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on the outcomes of Student visas are published in table 'Vis_D02' of the [detailed entry clearance visas dataset](#). Selecting 'Student' from the visa type subgroup filter will output data on Student visas. Nationality and time frames can also be filtered. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates from 2005 up to the end of September 2023.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

Police**Mrs Sheryll Murray:**[\[901634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress he has made on making police services more accessible.

Chris Philp:

- As set out in the Beating Crime Plan, we are investing in the development and delivery of the Single Online Home, a national platform allowing the public to access a range of interactive police services in one place, including details about their neighbourhood police officers and their contact details.
- To ensure that the police know how responsive their local force is to 999 calls, we worked with policing to publish 999 answering times, and in September 2023 I wrote to police forces encouraging the publication of 101 answering time data.

Police: British Overseas Territories**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[13928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has taken steps to provide training to police forces in British Overseas Territories in the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

In the last 12 months, the Home Office in partnership with UK police have delivered training to police forces across the British Overseas Territories.

This includes Multi Agency Gold Incident Command (MAGIC) training, Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) and Identifying Criminal Activity (ICA) courses. We are also working with UK police officers to deliver regional courses such as risk management and intelligence next month.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[13929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will take steps to second UK police officers to the British Overseas Territories.

Chris Philp:

Officials have been working closely with the FCDO and UK policing colleagues as well as our partners across the British Overseas Territories to identify police requirements and support. While there have been and are instances of deploying UK officers (see Annex A), all considerations are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. When UK police officers are not available or not the most appropriate response, retired officers have been contracted into operational or support roles. In addition, UK officers regularly deploy in a training capacity as part of a wider and longer-term HO Overseas Territories Police Strategy.

Annex A: Examples of UK Police Deployments**Turks and Caicos Islands – Devon and Cornwall Police (Sept 21 – Feb 22)**

UK police staff seconded for six months to provide analytical support in relation to serious organised crime.

Anguilla – British Transport Police (Sept 22 – Dec 22)

UK officer seconded to establish an intelligence led policing business model and to improve crime investigation performance and capability.

Montserrat - Suffolk Police (Oct 22- Nov 23)

UK officer seconded for 12 months to develop RMPS capabilities for leadership and demand management.

British Virgin Islands – Dyfed Powys Police (Oct 22 – Apr 23)

UK officer seconded for 6 months to lead the modernisation of the BVIPF Marine Unit capabilities.

Montserrat – Hertfordshire Police (March 2023 – December 2023)

UK officer seconded for 9 months as interim Commissioner of Police. March 2023 – December 2023

Turks and Caicos Islands – South Yorkshire Police (November 2022 – Feb 2023)

UK officer seconded for 3 months to provide investigative support and assist the command team in responding to critical incidents, leadership development and management of local processes and operations.

Falkland Islands – Police Scotland (Oct 23 – Jan 24)

Two officers seconded to provide assistance with leadership stability and assist with transformational work regarding recruitment of new officers to Royal Falklands Islands Police

■ Police: Cheshire

Derek Twigg:

[15016]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of police officers in Cheshire who have taken sick leave have been diagnosed with a mental health condition in each year since 2016.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not collect information on how many and what proportion of police officers who have taken sick leave have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police officers on long term absence, which includes sickness, as at 31 March each year, in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>.

Information on long term absences, by Police Force Area, and the reason for absence, between the years ending 31 March 2007 and 2023, can be found in the 'Absences Open Data Table' here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64ba613a2059dc00125d2782/open-data-table-police-workforce-absence-260723.ods>.

The data are broken down by absence type which includes sickness. However, the reason for sick absence is not collected and as such it is not possible to determine how many police officers on sick absence have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

■ Police: Crimes of Violence

Derek Twigg:

[15015]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers in (a) Cheshire and (b) England have been assaulted in each year since 2016.

Chris Philp:

Data on the number of police officer assaults is collected and published by the Office for National Statistics as part of their quarterly 'Crime in England and Wales' police recorded crime series. This can be accessed here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice>.

Information on the number of police officers assaulted in England and Wales, broken down by Police Force Area, for the year ending 31 March 2013 onwards, can be found in police recorded crime open data table here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65afb470bc0de3000d187340/prc-pfa-mar2013-onwards-tables-250124.ods>.

■ Police: Health Services**Sarah Atherton:****[901628]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he provides guidance to police forces on the prioritisation of day-to-day duties over responding to medical emergencies.

Chris Philp:

- The National Police Chiefs' Council has produced comprehensive guidance for forces on introducing Right Care, Right Person, or RCRP, under which the right agencies should respond to medical emergencies. This often means a health response.
- It is for Chief Constables to determine how they deploy their resource but every English and Welsh force is working to adopt an RCRP approach.

■ Police: Hospitals**Preet Kaur Gill:****[14353]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information his Department holds on the number of total hours police have spent accompanying patients in hospitals in the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not collect information on the total number of hours police have spent accompanying patients in hospitals.

■ Police: Labour Turnover**Derek Twigg:****[15014]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of police officers recruited between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2023 have since resigned in (a) Cheshire and (b) England.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not collect information on the length of service of police officers leaving the police service.

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police officer leavers in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>.

Information on the number of police officer leavers, by Police Force Area, between the years ending 31 March 2007 and 2023, can be found in the 'Leavers Open Data Table' here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64ba76662059dc000d5d27c0/open-data-table-police-workforce-leavers-260723.ods>. The data does not include length of service to identify when the individual joined the police service.

Voluntary resignation rates in both Cheshire and England, at around 3%, are low compared to other sectors.

■ Police: Medals

Theresa Villiers:

[\[13935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to establish a medal for police officers injured on duty.

Chris Philp:

We owe a tremendous gratitude to dedicated police officers for their continued hard work and sacrifice. There is no doubt that police officers who have their service cut short through injury have made, and in many cases will continue to make, an invaluable contribution to the emergency services.

It is right that there are provisions to support police officers who are injured in the line of duty, through the provision of paid leave, the injury benefit scheme and medical retirement where appropriate. Alongside the existing Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, and the King's Police Medal, work is continuing on an appropriate way to mark the contribution of emergency workers and other public servants who are killed while serving the public. The Government has no plans currently to introduce a medal specifically for police officers who are injured on duty.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[14332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to introduce new medal for police injured on duty and discharged from the service.

Chris Philp:

We owe a tremendous gratitude to dedicated police officers for their continued hard work and sacrifice. There is no doubt that police officers who have their service cut short through injury have made, and in many cases will continue to make, an invaluable contribution to the emergency services.

It is right that there are provisions to support police officers who are injured in the line of duty, through the provision of paid leave, the injury benefit scheme and medical retirement where appropriate. Alongside the existing Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, and the King's Police Medal, work is continuing on an appropriate way to mark the contribution of emergency workers and other public servants who are killed while serving the public. The Government has no plans currently to introduce a medal specifically for police officers who are injured on duty.

■ Retail Trade: Crime

Jim McMahon:

[\[15126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of trends in the level of retail crime on convenience store closures in England.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has not made an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the level of retail crime on convenience store closures in England.

I regularly engage with the retail sector through the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) to keep abreast of crime experienced by the sector. The NRCSG meets quarterly and comprises of senior representatives from policing, the retail sector, and retail trade associations including the Association of Convenience Stores and British Independent Retailers Association, alongside Government departments.

All police forces in England and Wales have made a commitment, through the National Police Chiefs' Council's Retail Crime Action Plan, to prioritise police attendance at the scene of retail crime where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured and can only be done by police personnel. This commitment applies to all retailers, including convenience stores, and will help to drive down the level of retail crime.

The Retail Crime Action Plan was launched in October and is published here: NPCC Retail Crime Action Plan

■ Seasonal Workers**Stuart C McDonald:**[\[14330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an assessment of the potential adequacy of protections to ensure that people on the seasonal worker visa scheme who (a) become ill and (b) are injured at work have access to (i) healthcare, (ii) accommodation and (iii) compensation for loss of work.

Tom Pursglove:

Seasonal Workers enjoy the same protections under UK law as resident workers. In addition, Seasonal Workers must receive a minimum of 32 hour's pay each week for each week of their time in the UK.

As part of their duties as Seasonal Worker operators, sponsors provide seasonal workers with information about their rights and how to raise concerns. The Home Office monitors this by interviewing workers and engaging with sponsors to check what information is provided and in what format.

The majority of workers also undertake pre-departure orientation courses, developed by the International Organisation for Migration.

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) also produce and distribute similar material at source of recruitment.

■ Slavery: Greater London

Feryal Clark:

[14422]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help tackle modern slavery in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Chris Philp:

Tackling modern slavery remains a priority for this government. We are committed to stamping out this abhorrent crime, working closely with law enforcement, criminal justice partners, business, civil society and local government to do so.

The UK response is underpinned by the Modern Slavery Strategy 2014 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which has given law enforcement agencies the tools to tackle modern slavery, including maximum life sentences for perpetrators and enhanced protection for victims.

In addition to core police funding, since 2016 we have invested £17.8 million in the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit - a specialist police unit which supports all police forces in England and Wales, including the Metropolitan Police Service, to improve their response to modern slavery by increasing forces' capability to identify and prosecute modern slavery crimes.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MET) also operates a dedicated Modern Slavery and Child Exploitation Team staffed by specialist officers, which plays a vital role in tackling modern slavery across London.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. If a First Responder thinks that modern slavery has taken place, the case should be referred to the NRM so that the relevant competent authority can fully consider the case. This process operates across all of England and Wales.

The Home Office also funds the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) to provide specialist support to adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales. A total of 10,704 adults in England and Wales received support through the MSVCC during the year ending June 2023, the largest number supported for any year since the contract began.

In addition to local child protection procedures and support, the Government has rolled out Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) to two thirds of local authorities in England and Wales. The ICTG service provides an additional source of advice and support for potentially trafficked children, irrespective of nationality or immigration status. ICTGs currently operate in London, including Enfield.

The Devolved Decision-Making Pilot, which aims to test whether determining if a child is a victim of modern slavery within existing safeguarding structures is a better model for making modern slavery decisions for children is being tested in 20 pilot sites across the UK. The pilot has 8 pilot sites in Greater London, covering 10 local authorities, including Enfield Council.

■ Speed Limits: Cameras**Dr Matthew Offord:****[14535]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of fixed speed enforcement cameras in (a) the UK, (b) England and (c) Greater London.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not centrally collect data on the number of fixed speed enforcement cameras in the UK.

■ Tools: Theft**Alex Sobel:****[14431]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help local police forces tackle thefts from tradesmen's vans.

Chris Philp:

The latest Crime Survey for England and Wales data shows neighbourhood crime is down 48% when comparing the year ending September 2023 with the year ending March 2010.

The Home Office is working with the police-led National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) and the Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS) to explore ways to prevent the theft of tools from tradespeople's vans. The NBCC and Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (Secured By Design) have also published crime prevention guidance to help tradespeople prevent theft: [Crime Prevention Guides \(nbcc.police.uk\)](#) and [Secured by Design - Vans & Tool Theft](#).

Following engagement with the Home Office and National Vehicle Crime Working Group, to help reduce the rate of theft of tools from tradespeople's vans, Thatcham Research has agreed to add to their New Vehicle Security Assessment (NVSA), locks and alarms on the back of vans (previously NVSA only covers the cab area of vans) and a motion sensor on the load area of the van.

In addition, through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, a network of vehicle crime specialists has been established involving every police force in England and Wales, to ensure forces can share information about emerging trends in vehicle crime and better tackle regional issues.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Channel Tunnel**Sir John Hayes:****[13869]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were caught attempting to enter the UK illegally through the Channel Tunnel in each year since 2021.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Home Office does not comment on port specific information for security reasons.

The latest published figures on Irregular Migration to the UK can be found at the following link: [Irregular migration to the UK, year ending September 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-september-2023).

■ Vagrancy Act 1824

John Cryer:

[13864]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of repealing the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Chris Philp:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities lead on homelessness and rough sleeping. They reviewed the legislation in relation to rough sleeping and determined that the Vagrancy Act required repeal, they consulted on replacing the outdated Vagrancy Act, undertook extensive engagement and published their response to that consultation.

The Home Office has additionally engaged with police, local authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners and other organisations on this topic.

The Vagrancy Act 1824 criminalises begging and some forms of rough sleeping and the Government agreed in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 to repeal this outdated legislation and replace it with a package fit for modern usage. We outlined those plans in the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan published by this Government in March this year and are now bringing forward these provisions in the Criminal Justice Bill which is currently before Parliament.

As the Government has always made clear, the repeal of the Vagrancy Act will be brought into force once this replacement legislation is in place to ensure local authorities and police have the powers they need to support vulnerable individuals and keep communities safe.

■ Visas: Care Workers

Stuart C McDonald:

[14336]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of care workers on the health and care worker visa are employed by visa sponsors that (a) are and (b) are not registered with the Care Quality Commission as of 14 February 2024.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office does not record or publish data on this matter. However, care workers who are currently sponsored by non-CQC-registered providers will be able to continue working for those providers after the upcoming rules change.

■ Visas: Care Workers and Health Professions**Stuart C McDonald:**[\[14337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department take steps to support workers on the health and care worker visa to find an alternative sponsor in the event that their initial sponsor has its licence revoked.

Tom Pursglove:

UKVI Compliance Command work with local authorities and the Association of Adult Social Care Directors.

Relevant authorities receive prior notification of suspended and revoked sponsors and the numbers of workers affected by a compliance action.

This allows time for authorities to relocate workers with other care providers in the area and ensure continuity of care provision.

UKVI work proactively with authorities in the timing of revocations and, where appropriate, delay revocation and cancellation to allow workers the opportunity to find new sponsors.

■ Visas: Families**Duncan Baker:**[\[901626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his timetable is for announcing further dates on which the minimum income threshold for family visas will increase.

Tom Pursglove:

Net Migration is simply too high. This is why we have set out a package of measures to reduce net migration including bring the Minimum Income Requirement for family visas is in line with the new minimum general salary threshold for Skilled Workers, which is £38,700.

We will raise the minimum income for family visas incrementally, in stages. We intend to lay the family Immigration Rules we intend to lay on 14 March which will set out that from 11 April, we will raise the threshold to £29,000, that is the 25th percentile of earnings for jobs which are eligible for Skilled Worker visas.

■ Visas: Graduates**Deidre Brock:**[\[14160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Migration Advisory Committee will begin work on the Graduate visa review.

Tom Pursglove:

The Migration Advisory Committee have not yet been commissioned to review the Graduate route.

■ Visas: Married People

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[14146]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on implementing the proposed increase in minimum income requirements for spouse and partner visa applications.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[14147]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department invited representations from stakeholders before introducing the proposed changes to the minimum income requirement threshold for (a) skilled worker and (b) spousal visas.

Tom Pursglove:

From 11 April 2024, we will raise the minimum income threshold for Family visas to £29,000, that is the 25th percentile of earnings for jobs which are eligible for Skilled Worker visas. We will incrementally increase the threshold, moving to the 40th percentile (currently £34,500), and finally to the 50th percentile (currently £38,700, and the level at which the General Skilled Worker threshold is set) by early 2025.

The Government will publish an Equality Impact Assessment on this change in due course.

A fact sheet and an impact assessment can be found on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fact-sheet-on-net-migration-measures-further-detail>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/legal-migration-statement-estimated-immigration-impacts/legal-migration-statement-estimated-immigration-impacts-accessible>.

The Government engages regularly with business sectors, including through a number of its advisory groups, when developing its policies and which will continue to strike the balance between reducing overall net migration and ensuring that businesses have the skills they need to support economic growth.

Deidre Brock:

[14161]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans to announce the start date of the new minimum income threshold for spouse visas of £34,500.

Deidre Brock:

[14173]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of Reunite Families UK's report entitled UK family migration rules: spouse / partner migration rules: an initial findings report examining the mental health impact of the rules on children and families, published on 18 December 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

From 11 April 2024, we will raise the minimum income threshold for family visas to £29,000, that is the 25th percentile of earnings for jobs which are eligible for Skilled Worker visas. We will incrementally increase the threshold, moving to the 40th percentile (currently £34,500), and finally to the 50th percentile (currently £38,700, and the level at which the General Skilled Worker threshold is set) by early 2025. The dates of these changes will be set out in due course.

We have reviewed the Reunite Families Report published on 18 December 2023. We will add the findings to our evidence base when formulating future reviews into family immigration policies, including the Minimum Income Requirement.

■ Visas: Skilled Workers**Stephen Farry:****[14204]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance his Department has issued on whether Skilled Worker Visa applicants whose overall band score in the IELTS English Language exam satisfies Home Office requirements but one area is below the minimum requirement can be issued with a visa.

Tom Pursglove:

A migrant must pass all elements of an IELTS test, or one of the other English language tests which are acceptable, at the required level for a Skilled Worker visa. Because English Language is a mandatory requirement, there is no such guidance for migrants who fail to meet that requirement.

Stephen Farry:**[14434]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average processing time was for a skilled worker visa in (a) December 2023 and (b) January 2024.

Tom Pursglove:

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.

The latest data on performance against service standards is published through migration transparency data and can be found at: [Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-transparency-data).

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

JUSTICE**■ Administration of Justice: Speech and Language Therapy****Ruth Jones:**[\[14333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had discussions with the Welsh Government on the adequacy of speech and language therapy training places in the context of demand for those services within the criminal justice system.

Edward Argar:

This department recognises that speech and language therapy is essential to enable the rehabilitation of many in the criminal justice system. It helps to improve communication skills, provide tools for conflict resolution and enable patients to eat and drink safely.

Responsibility for commissioning these services in Welsh prisons sits with the Local Health Boards, as healthcare is devolved to the Welsh Government. Our officials meet regularly with the Local Health Boards and Welsh Government to support and enable the delivery of health and social care in Welsh prisons.

■ Bail: Advisory Services**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[14180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many magistrates' courts had bail information services in January 2024.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[14181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many full-time HMPPS staff were employed to provide bail information services in (a) prisons and (b) courts on 12 February 2024.

Edward Argar:

In January 2024, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) was delivering the Bail Information Service in four magistrates' courts: Blackburn, Cardiff, Manchester and Liverpool.

As of 12 February 2024, there were 31 full-time Bail Information Officers - 26 in prisons and five in magistrates' courts. Of the total, 24 are employed by HMPPS and seven through agencies.

■ Cannabis**Paula Barker:**[\[14292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been prosecuted for possession of cannabis since 1 January 2020.

Gareth Bacon:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on prosecutions for possession of cannabis, covering the period requested and this can be viewed in the following data tool:

- [Outcomes by Offence tool: June 2023](#)

Navigate to 'Prosecutions and Convictions' tab, and use the 'Offence' filter to select '92E.01 Possession of a controlled drug - Class B (cannabis)' and '92E.02 Possession of a controlled drug - Class C (cannabis)'.

Within the pivot tool, you can select specific quarters and years to show the period of interest.

■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service

Alex Cunningham:

[\[14069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the total number of claims sitting with the Tribunals Service was on 9 February 2024.

Mike Freer:

Information about the number of open Tribunal cases administered by HM Courts and Tribunals Service is published quarterly in Tribunal Statistics. The most recent date for which information is available is 31 October 2023: Tribunals statistics quarterly: July to September 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Alex Cunningham:

[\[14070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of claimants appeared before the Tribunals Service as litigants in person in each of the last five years.

Mike Freer:

Information about the number and proportion of litigants in person appearing before Tribunals administered by HM Courts and Tribunals Service is not centrally collated.

However, information specific to the Employment Tribunal only has been published up to 2022/23:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64809037b32b9e000ca96378/Employment_and_EAT_2021_22.ods

Alex Cunningham:

[\[14071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases before the Tribunals Service have waited more than (a) three months, (b) six months, (c) one year and (d) two years.

Mike Freer:

Information about waiting times for Tribunal cases administered by HM Courts and Tribunals Service is not centrally collated in the format requested. However, data on clearance times in the largest jurisdictions is published quarterly in Tribunal Statistics: Tribunals statistics quarterly: July to September 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Magistrates' Courts: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[13871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many outstanding cases there are at (a) Grantham, (b) Boston and (c) Lincoln Magistrates Court.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the Magistrates' workload from Q1 2014 to Q3 2023, in the Magistrates' courts cases received, disposed and outstanding tool. This answer provides a further unpublished breakdown of the information provided in Table M1 of this tool, showing the data by individual court.

As of the end of September 2023, the number of outstanding cases at Boston Magistrates' Court stood at 1,207. This represents a 16% reduction compared to September 2022, when the outstanding caseload stood at 1,441.

As of the end of September 2023, the number of outstanding cases at Lincoln Magistrates' Court stood at 2,536. This represents a 20% reduction compared to September 2022, when the outstanding caseload stood at 3,156.

Grantham Magistrates' Court is closed, and any outstanding cases will have been allocated to other courts.

Ministry of Justice: Information Officers**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[14021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice's 24/7 shared press and media team provides a wide-ranging service to ministers, the department and multiple agencies (including HMCTS, HMPPS, Legal Aid Agency, Office of the Public Guardian and Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority). This includes proactive and reactive media handling, monitoring, planning, media training, event support and speechwriting. It is made up of 35 employees with roles ranging from grades HEO to SCS1. The grade salary ranges between £32,827 - £117,800 - this is departmental salary ranges, not actual salaries.

This figure is for the Ministry of Justice central departmental Press Office and Media team only.

Prisoners' Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[14259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's publication entitled HM Prison and Probation Service Offender Equalities Annual Report 2022-2023, published on 30 November 2023, what assessment his Department has made of the reasons that prisoners self-declaring as Muslim are the lowest proportion of prisoners on Enhanced (initial) Incentives status.

Edward Argar:

The Incentives Policy Framework aims to achieve a fair and effective Incentives Scheme within prisons.

Governors are required to operate prisoner forums to review their local Incentives Scheme. The Incentives Policy Framework outlines that these forums should include staff and prisoners from a range of backgrounds and should aim to include representation from people with all protected characteristics which are present in the local prison. Each forum must be informed of evidence that identifies key incentive data regarding outcomes and any apparent disproportionality.

Where data indicates a disproportionate outcome for prisoners of a certain protected characteristic, Governors must take steps to investigate and explain why these discrepancies exist at a local level. They must then set out what reforms or actions will be taken to address the disproportionality with a time-bound action plan.

■ Remand in Custody

Ruth Cadbury:

[14182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of people who appeared at a magistrates court were remanded in custody in the latest period for which data is available.

Gareth Bacon:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the proportion of defendants remanded in custody at magistrates' courts in England and Wales, in the Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly publication. The latest data available, for year ending June 2023, can be viewed in Chapter 4 of the following report:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65bd02a963a23d000dc82128/criminal-justice-statistics-june-2023.pdf>.

The underlying data behind the report can be found in table Q4_2 in the Overview Tables, which presents the proportions of defendants proceeded at magistrates' court by remand status, between year ending June 2013 and year ending June 2023. The Tables can be found here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65aa38a194c9970013aeba3d/overview-tables-June-2023.ods>.

■ Woodhill Prison: Islam

Ruth Cadbury:

[14257]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the HM Inspectorate of Prisons publication entitled Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Woodhill, published on 28 November 2023, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that Muslim prisoners can access Friday prayers on a weekly basis.

Edward Argar:

Staff and prisoners have been trained together as peace promoters and they run mediation sessions to ease conflicts between groups. These have been working to support all prisoners being able to attend communal worship. Additionally, potential conflicts between groups or individuals are discussed at a weekly Violence Reduction

meeting to manage these risks moving forward. This co-ordinated, partnership approach has resulted in the successful offer of Friday Prayers to all Muslim prisoners at HMP Woodhill since 9 February.

■ Young Offenders: Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Janet Daby:

[\[15160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether prison officers working in the youth secure estate receive training on the needs of young offenders with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Edward Argar:

Prison officers working in the Youth Secure Estate are required to complete an in-depth training scheme prior to entering any secure settings. NHS England delivers training to all new entrants, which covers the Framework for Integrated Care ('SECURE STAIRS'). This equips staff to provide developmentally-attuned, psychologically-informed care including for those with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, centred around comprehensive assessments of young people's needs, to ensure that all needs are identified.

Janet Daby:

[\[15161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment has he made of the adequacy of education provision for young offenders with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder on the secure youth estate.

Janet Daby:

[\[15163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he is taking steps to improve outcomes for young offenders with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in (a) education, (b) safety, (c) care and (d) purposeful activity in the youth secure estate.

Edward Argar:

NHS England is continually improving the processes in place for children and young people in custody including those with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. When they first enter custody, the CHAT assessment tool is used to ensure all health concerns are noted and observed, so that clinical professionals can assess the child or young person's underlying condition and provide any necessary support.

We know the importance of ensuring that time in custody is purposeful, and we are committed to ensuring that children and young people have the necessary and appropriate access to education, skills, and work provision, with a consistent daily programme of activities. We are also committed to providing education and enrichment for those for whom a classroom setting is not appropriate.

Priority is given to ensuring that children and young people in custody are safe. Conflict resolution practitioners work with children and young people to resolve conflict between individuals and groups, and to help them engage in opportunities available in our care.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Building Regulations**

Mike Amesbury: [\[14720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure building control professionals achieve registration before 6 April 2024.

Mike Amesbury: [\[14721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an estimate of how many (a) registered professionals, (b) local authorities and (c) registered building control approvers will cease to be able to undertake a building control function after 6 April 2024.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [14722](#) on 22 February 2024.

■ Business: Floods

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[13997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many businesses applied for a Business Recovery Grant following Storm Babet flooding in October 2023; and how many of those applications were (a) approved and (b) rejected in each local authority area.

Jacob Young:

Local authorities are responsible for delivering the scheme in line with the guidance provided by Department for Business and Trade as administrators of the Business Recovery Grant (BRG) scheme.

■ Council Tax

Derek Thomas: [\[15125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to section 80 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, whether he intends to prescribe any classes of dwelling for which a billing authority may not make a determination to charge a council tax premium.

Simon Hoare:

The Government consulted last year on circumstances where properties should be excepted from the council tax premiums for second and empty homes and will publish its response to the consultation shortly.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Domicile**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[14877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether any non-executive directors employed in his Department are non-domiciled.

Simon Hoare:

Non executive board members are not employees of DLUHC and act in an advisory capacity. Data relating to public appointments are covered by the Public Appointments Privacy Statement found here: <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/privacy>.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Information Officers**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[14013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Simon Hoare:

The DLUHC departmental press and media team is made up of 20 core employees. Roles range from Assistant Information Officer to SCS1 Deputy Director. Salaries are in line with departmental pay bands.

■ **Electoral Register: EU Nationals**

Sir Stephen Timms:

[14780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of EU citizens who will be removed from the electoral roll following the implementation of the Elections Act 2022.

Simon Hoare:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [14299](#) on 23 February 2024.

■ **Evictions: Anti-social Behaviour**

Kate Hollern:

[15083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many (a) people and (b) disabled people were evicted for anti-social behaviour last year.

Jacob Young:

The Ministry of Justice publishes statistics on the volumes of landlord repossessions which can be found [here](#); however, it is not possible to disaggregate this by the characteristics of the individual(s) being evicted or the grounds of the eviction.

■ Homelessness: Urban Areas

Mike Amesbury: [\[14729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to tackle levels of homelessness in urban areas.

Mike Amesbury: [\[14752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities have sufficient resources to provide adequate support services for people experiencing homelessness.

Mike Amesbury: [\[14761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to help tackle homelessness affecting (i) children and (ii) families.

Felicity Buchan:

This Government is committed to tackling homelessness. We are investing over £1 billion in the Homelessness Prevention Grant over three years, including £109 million of the £150 million UK-wide funding this year and a further £120 million UK-wide funding announced at Autumn Statement for 2024/25 to help prevent homelessness.

The provision of support to households placed in temporary accommodation is essential to ensure that they are able to continue to enjoy a reasonable quality of life and access the range of services they need. In formulating their homelessness strategies, councils should consider what arrangements need to be in place to ensure that households placed in temporary accommodation, within their district or outside, are able to access relevant support services.

This funding we provide can be used flexibly by local authorities to help them carry out their statutory duties, for example to work with landlords to prevent evictions and offer financial support for people to find a new home and move out of temporary accommodation. Allocations of the funding to local authorities is based on a formula that reflects the local homelessness pressures in each area and takes account of the different demand and costs.

Further to this, the £1.2 billion Local Authority Housing Fund includes funding for local authorities to obtain better quality temporary accommodation which helps alleviate rough sleeping and homelessness.

Autumn Statement confirmed we will uprate LHA rates to cover the cheapest 30th percentile of local rents, making housing more affordable for private renters in Great Britain who get rent support through their benefits.

■ Housing: Construction

Kate Hollern: [\[15081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many and what proportion of homes that were planned to be built to meet Requirement M4(2) of the

Building Regulations (a) have been completed and (b) did not proceed past the viability stage of planning applications in each of the last two years.

Lee Rowley:

The English Housing Survey collects data on accessibility and adaptations within the home; the most recent report is published online.

New build homes are constructed to meet Building Regulations accessibility standards in force at the time of build; the most recent data on new build home rates was published by Office for National Statistics on 30 January 2024.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that local authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community. It is for local planning authorities to assess local needs, including needs for older people and people with disabilities, and make provision in their local plans.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Disability**

Kate Hollern:

[\[15084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many accessible homes were rented privately last year.

Jacob Young:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Public Lavatories**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[14381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many public toilet facilities there were in (a) Stockport borough and (b) England in (i) 2010 and (ii) 2023.

Simon Hoare:

The department does not collect this data centrally.

■ **Refugees: Afghanistan**

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[14275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the document entitled Afghan homelessness management information: 1 July 2023 to 31 August 2023, published on 19 September 2023, what data his Department has collected from local authorities since that publication; if he will take steps to ensure that local authorities provide that data at regular intervals; and when he plans to publish an update to that publication.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[14276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made a recent assessment of levels of homelessness among Afghan nationals previously housed in bridging accommodation in (a) England, (b) Wales and (c) Scotland.

Felicity Buchan:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities continues to monitor homelessness amongst Afghan nationals previously housed in bridging accommodation, working closely to support local authorities in England so they are able to carry out their duties. As housing is devolved, the Devolved Administrations are responsible for working with councils to monitor homelessness for Afghan households in Wales or Scotland.

The vast majority of Afghans who were in bridging hotels have been supported to move into settled accommodation.

We will continue to support Afghans into settled housing, including through the Local Authority Housing Fund which helps to house Ukrainian and Afghan families in England.

Shared Ownership Schemes: Mid Bedfordshire**Alistair Strathern:**[\[15003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to support shared ownership homeowners in Mid Bedfordshire constituency.

Jacob Young:

Our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme will deliver thousands of affordable homes for both rent and to buy right across the country, including for shared ownership. The Programme is open to bids from registered providers of social housing that wish to deliver new shared ownership homes in the Mid Bedfordshire area.

Sleeping Rough**Mike Amesbury:**[\[14751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to page 29 of his Department's publication entitled Ending Rough Sleeping for Good, published on 3 September 2022, what progress his Department has made on ending rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament.

Mike Amesbury:[\[14755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at reducing rough sleeping; and what steps he is taking to address shortcomings in those initiatives.

Mike Amesbury:[\[14756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is providing additional (a) resources and (b) support to local authorities to help tackle rough sleeping in (i) rural areas and (ii) smaller towns.

Felicity Buchan:

The Government is committed to ending rough sleeping and the latest official rough sleeping statistics show rough sleeping levels are 28% lower than before the pandemic, when Government provided significant funding to support vulnerable rough sleepers from COVID-19. Although we are making good progress delivering our rough sleeping strategy, we also know times are tough for many people and there is no room for complacency. We have now delivered over 5,000 units of accommodation through our Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme. In May 2023, we rolled out the Ending Rough Sleeping Data Framework to support local authorities to make well-informed decisions about commissioning of services that best meet local needs, and measure progress to end rough sleeping.

We have extended our flagship Rough Sleeping Initiative to 2025, with over £547 million funding so that local areas can provide the tailored support needed to tackle rough sleeping in their areas. This includes an additional investment of £47.7 million since RSI 2022-25 was first announced in September 2022 to increase funding for rough sleeping services in local areas with the greatest need. The RSI is funding 300 local authorities around the country including rural areas and smaller towns.

Mike Amesbury:[\[14925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to tackle the impact of rough sleeping on (a) women, (b) LGBTQ+ individuals, (c) people with complex needs and (d) other marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Mike Amesbury:[\[14926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to provide (a) supported housing, (b) wrap-around support services and (c) other long-term housing solutions for rough sleepers.

Mike Amesbury:[\[14927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking with (a) local authorities, (b) charities and (c) community organisations to develop strategies for (i) preventing and (ii) reducing rough sleeping.

Felicity Buchan:

Our *Ending Rough Sleeping for Good* strategy is clear that we need a tailored and person-centred approach to support the varying needs of those sleeping rough. That is why our funding allows local authorities the freedom to design the services and support required in their local areas, including bespoke support to specific vulnerable groups such as women, LGBT individuals, people with complex needs or young people where this is needed. Our Rough Sleeping Initiative, which is supported by over £547 million, funds a range of local schemes around the country including women's only services, bespoke support for young people, and Housing First projects for people with complex needs.

We are also investing £200 million through the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) and £433 million through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation

Programme (RSAP) to deliver homes and support services for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. SHAP includes a focus on young people and people with complex needs.

The Government remains focused on eradicating rough sleeping for good and we continue to work closely with local government, charities, and the private sector to support this ambition.

■ Social Services: Finance

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[14486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to reform the funding system for the delivery of adult social care by local councils.

Simon Hoare:

In 2022, the Government confirmed reforms to the funding formula would not be implemented in this spending review after hearing calls from councils for stability. The Government remains committed to improving the local government finance landscape.

■ Social Services: Greater London

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[14487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the per capita funding for adult social care received by (a) the London Borough of Havering and (b) other Boroughs in East London.

Simon Hoare:

The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 makes available up to £64.7 billion, an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £4.5 billion or 7.5% in cash terms on 2023-24.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Disability

Kate Hollern:

[\[15082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on the number of disabled people living in temporary accommodation.

Felicity Buchan:

The most recent Statutory homelessness statistics (April- June 2023) is available at [Homelessness statistics](#) which includes households that are owed a homelessness duty due to their support needs, including those with a disability.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Standards

Mike Amesbury:

[\[14759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) quality and (b) suitability of temporary accommodation provided to (i) individual people and (ii) families experiencing homelessness.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[14760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the availability of temporary accommodation for local authorities.

Felicity Buchan:

Statutory Homelessness Guidance sets out the steps that local authorities must follow in providing quality and suitable temporary accommodation (TA) to individuals and families. Local authorities must ensure TA is suitable and should keep the suitability of accommodation under review. Housing authorities should, as a minimum, ensure that all TA is free of Category 1 hazards as identified by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

The Local Authority Housing Fund enables councils in England to buy or build housing stock to obtain better quality temporary accommodation for those owed a homelessness duty and provide a lasting affordable housing asset for the future. We recently announced a third round of funding, bringing the total funding to £1.2 billion.

We are pursuing a number of housing reforms – including reviewing the Decent Homes Standard, the Social Housing Regulation Act and Renters (Reform) Bill - which will increase quality and regulation across all housing stock, including temporary accommodation.

■ Warehouses: Greater London

Feryal Clark:

[\[14404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support the warehouse industry in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Jacob Young:

Warehousing is a key part of the country's supply chains, ensuring vital goods are available to businesses and consumers. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.

This includes making provision for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations. Enfield's strategic position provides an important role in delivering economic growth to the area, and delivering the right sort of warehousing and logistical infrastructure is a key part of this.

My department will continue to work with the sector to maximise productivity.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ InterTrade UK

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[15026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the policy paper entitled Safeguarding the Union, published on 31 January 2024, what estimate he has made of when InterTrade UK will be established and fully operational.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Government is working to establish InterTrade UK as set out in the Command Paper, fulfilling our pledge to grow the economy by ensuring that businesses large and small can maximise the full range of East-West trading opportunities.

Implementing the Windsor Framework and the Command Paper are Government priorities. We will undertake to update the House on its progress in due course.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Information Officers

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Northern Ireland press and media team is made up of nine employees. Roles range from Apprentice to Deputy Director and have salaries between £27,000 - £117,800.

This figure is for the Northern Ireland Office central departmental communications team. Team members cover a broad range of communications disciplines including press and media.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence: Copyright

Giles Watling:

[\[14296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of using voluntary collective licensing schemes to enable the licensing of copyright protected material for use in the training of generative AI models.

Saqib Bhatti:

The Government recognises the benefits of collective licensing, in delivering efficient outcomes for users of copyright material, but has made no specific assessment of the

potential merits of collective licensing in relation to the training of AI models. Collective licensing was examined by the working group convened last year to develop a voluntary code of practice on copyright and AI, but no agreement on a way forward was reached between rights holders and AI companies.

The Government will continue to work closely with AI developers and rights holders, including collective management organisations, on these issues and will share a public update soon.

■ **Broadband: Infrastructure**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[13950]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what guidance her Department issues to businesses on erecting telegraph poles for fibre broadband provision in areas where fibre broadband is already available through underground ducts.

Julia Lopez:

We believe that communities benefit enormously from the deployment of high quality digital infrastructure, with all the economic and social benefits it brings. We want to make sure that deployment happens efficiently, but at the same time, in ways that make sure the impact on communities and the environment is taken into account and broad support is maintained for the rollout of this critical infrastructure.

The Government is acutely aware of ongoing concerns about the installation of telegraph poles. On 20 February, the Secretary of State wrote to the Chief Executive of Ofcom regarding the 2003 Regulations, asking them how they could enforce greater infrastructure sharing.

We are actively considering a wide range of measures we can take to address these concerns, and to promote collaborative engagement between operators and communities. I will ensure that interested Members are made aware of any concrete steps my Department takes.

Telegraph poles play an important role in delivering efficient and cost effective coverage and connectivity to communities, particularly in hard to reach areas without costly and disruptive roadworks, or where existing infrastructure cannot be used.

Although permitted development rights allow telegraph poles and lines to be deployed without requiring case-by-case approval from the planning authority, these rights are still subject to certain restrictions and limitations set out in legislation. The Department issues no specific guidance on the permitted development rights for electronic communications.

However, we recognise that care must be taken when choosing where to site telegraph poles; ensuring that any potential disruption to communities is minimised.

That is why there are additional duties and obligations relating to telecommunications installations are included in the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003 ("the 2003 Regulations") which Code Operators are required to comply with, such as requirements for all operators to share apparatus

where practicable, and also to use underground, rather than overground, lines where reasonably practicable, with certain exceptions.

The 2003 Regulations also require that in certain PDR cases, the operator must notify the local planning authority of its intention to deploy certain apparatus, provided that they have no pre-existing equipment in the area. The local planning authority may give written notice of conditions with which they wish the Operator to comply in respect of the installation of the apparatus.

In addition, there is a Code of Practice (The Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice 2016) in place relating to the siting of cabinet and pole installations. It provides guidance on ways operators can ensure these installations are placed appropriately, and that local authorities and communities are engaged with regarding proposed installations. For example, it sets out that where new poles are to be installed the operator should place a site notice to indicate to nearby residents the intention to install a pole, and the proposed location.

As well as the Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice, the Digital Connectivity Portal provides extensive guidance for local authorities and operators to help facilitate broadband deployment, including technical information, and examples of best practice such as early engagement with communities.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[13936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead of 20 July 2023, followed up on 2 August, 25 September, 20 October, 2 November 2023, and 11 January 2024, reference MP79291.

Michelle Donelan:

The Department apologises for the severe delay the Member has experienced in this case. Timely responses to Member's correspondence is a priority for the department, with resources being aligned to ensure the department achieves this in all cases. A full response will be issued to the Member as a matter of urgency.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[14270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when her Department plans to respond to the correspondence of 26 October 2023, transferred to her Department on 7 November 2023 from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston.

Julia Lopez:

The Department apologises for the significant delay in responding to the Member in this instance. A response on the matter was issued on 19th February.

■ Telecommunications: Codes of Practice

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[14266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of making the Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice mandatory.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[14268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 31 January 2024 to Question 11162 on Telecommunications: Infrastructure, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing local authorities to work with operators on broadband roll-out strategy.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[14269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Answer of 15 January 2024 to Question 8091, whether broadband operators are required to consider the impact on (a) communities and (b) the environment in the deployment of infrastructure that falls under Class A(a) of Part 16 of the General Permitted Development Order.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is acutely aware of ongoing concerns about the installation of telegraph poles. On 20 February, the Secretary of State wrote to the Chief Executive of Ofcom regarding the 2003 Regulations, asking them how they could enforce greater infrastructure sharing.

We are actively considering a wide range of measures we can take to address these concerns, and to promote collaborative engagement between operators and communities. I will ensure that interested Members are made aware of any concrete steps my Department takes.

Telegraph poles play an important role in delivering efficient and cost effective coverage and connectivity to communities, particularly in hard to reach areas without costly and disruptive roadworks, or where existing infrastructure cannot be used.

While telegraph poles and lines can be deployed without prior approval under certain conditions (including where poles and service lines already exist in an area, and where it is not practicable to deploy service lines underground), these permitted development rights do not remove any other applicable regulatory requirements and approvals placed on proposed development, such as through Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulations.

The General Permitted Development Order also places conditions on such developments, including that the visual impact of the development on the surrounding area should be minimised as far as practicable, especially for more sensitive areas, such as Conservation Areas.

Although permitted development rights allow telegraph poles and lines to be deployed without requiring case-by-case approval from the planning authority, these rights are still subject to certain restrictions and limitations set out in legislation.

However, we recognise that care must be taken when choosing where to site telegraph poles; ensuring that any potential disruption to communities is minimised.

That is why the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003 (as amended) require that in these cases, the developer must notify the local planning authority of its intention to deploy and can do so 28 days after giving this notice. The local planning authority must, within this period, give written notice of any conditions with which they wish the Code Operator to comply in respect of the installation of the apparatus. Local planning authorities have discretion about how they inform communities and other interested parties about planning proposals. In addition to the Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice, the Digital Connectivity Portal provides extensive guidance for local authorities and operators to help facilitate broadband deployment, including technical information, as well as examples of best practice such as early engagement with communities.

■ **Telecommunications: Infrastructure**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[14267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 31 January 2024 to Question 11162 on Telecommunications: Infrastructure, whether Ofcom has notified her Department of any instances where operators in (a) Birmingham and (b) Birmingham, Edgbaston constituency have not complied with their statutory duties.

Julia Lopez:

My officials are in regular contact with Ofcom to discuss the deployment of telegraph poles and the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003.

My Department has not been notified of any complaints Ofcom received for the Birmingham area or the Birmingham, Edgbaston constituency in particular.

Ofcom can take enforcement action in respect of breaches of the restrictions and conditions contained in the 2003 Regulations if it has reasonable grounds to believe that operators are failing to comply with those requirements when deploying apparatus. As the independent regulator for telecommunications operators, Ofcom will consider the specifics of each case. The Department does not play a role in investigating complaints, or in any potential enforcement process.

It is crucial for Local Planning Authorities to raise concerns with Ofcom, providing as much evidence as possible, so that Ofcom may consider these complaints. Concerned constituents should raise the matter with their Local Planning Authority in the first instance, as this will allow complaints to be raised with Ofcom through the most appropriate channels.

We recognise that care must be taken when choosing where to site telegraph poles; ensuring that any potential disruption to communities is minimised.

I want to reassure the Honourable Member that the Government is acutely aware of ongoing concerns about the installation of telegraph poles. On 20 February, the Secretary of State wrote to the Chief Executive of Ofcom regarding the 2003 Regulations, asking them how they could enforce greater infrastructure sharing.

We are actively considering a wide range of measures we can take to address these concerns, and to promote collaborative engagement between operators and communities. I will ensure that interested Members are made aware of any concrete steps my Department takes.

TRANSPORT

■ **Bus Services: Concessions**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[13916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2024 to Question 11716 on Travel: Concessions, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in (a) the devolved Administrations and (b) the London Assembly on concessionary bus travel.

Guy Opperman:

No.

■ **Department for Transport: Health and Safety**

Chris Stephens:

[\[R\]](#) [\[15109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to comply with principle (d) of schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Anthony Browne:

The Department for Transport adopts smart working principles ensuring its workplaces are designed appropriately for the intended tasks. Each of its offices has a balanced mix of workspaces and considers accessibility for colleagues with additional needs.

Workplace adjustments are used to remove barriers, or disadvantages, enabling anyone with a disability or health condition to do their job. This can be a change to HR-related policies, working arrangements or the equipment provided to do a job.

Office workstations are provided with a varying range of adjustable equipment designed to cater for the majority of individuals.

For operational areas of the organisation, risk assessment processes are in place to assess the varying range of tasks and reduce health and safety risks to our colleagues.

■ Department for Transport: Pacific Computers**Emily Thornberry:** [\[14513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's contract with Pacific Computers Ltd of 9 January 2024, reference TRGA3330, for which of his Department's buildings will the services under that contract be supplied.

Anthony Browne:

As part of the Pacific Computers Ltd (TRGA3330) contract, services can be supplied to all current and potential new Department for Transport sites.

■ Great British Railways: Consultants**Stephen Morgan:** [\[14329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much the Great British Railways transition team has spent on consultants as of 14 February 2024.

Huw Merriman:

As Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) is a temporary organisation set up to design Great British Railways, industry specialists have been brought in via secondments and fixed term appointments, alongside some consultancy support for a range of tasks. Total spending on GBRTT consultancy support from October 2021 to 3 February 2024 was £48.2m. Data on monthly cost for consultants supporting GBRTT is not available up to the requested date as GBRTT hold data in accounting periods rather than calendar months.

■ High Speed 2 Line**Stephen Morgan:** [\[14728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an estimate of the cost to the public purse of managing (a) land and (b) property bought for Phase 2 of the HS2 project in the financial year 2024-25.

Huw Merriman:

Details regarding HS2 budgets for the 2024-25 financial year are still being finalised and will be published in the Main Estimates at the beginning of the next financial year.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Rolling Stock**Stephen Morgan:** [\[14328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many seats HS2 trains travelling between Birmingham and Manchester will have.

Huw Merriman:

No final decisions have been made on the train service that will operate when HS2 opens.

■ Large Goods Vehicles

Martyn Day:

[\[14214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2024 to Question 12854 on Large Goods Vehicles, if he will publish post-trial operation guidance for hauliers not included in the trial; and how those hauliers will have to prepare for implementation of post-trial operations.

Guy Opperman:

The guidance referred to in the previous answer of 9 February 2024 to Question 12854 is applicable to operators who did not take part in the trial of longer semi-trailers (LSTs), as well as to those operators who took part. Steps to be taken by operators who wish to utilise LSTs are set out in that guidance.

■ Motor Vehicles: Insurance

Paula Barker:

[\[14284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will make an assessment of the impact of trends in the level of car insurance premiums on young people.

Guy Opperman:

Department for Transport officials regularly liaise with representatives of the motor insurance industry on a variety of issues such as the cost of insurance.

It is the responsibility of individual motor insurers to set their premiums and the terms and conditions of their policies, and the Government does not intervene or seek to control the market.

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

■ Motorcycles: Carbon Emissions

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[13895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2023 to Question 1424, what plans he has for the L-category licensing regime in 2024.

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[13896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2023 to Question 1424, what progress has he made on reforming the L-category licence.

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[13897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies on L-category licence reform of the MCIA and Zemo Partnership Action Plan Scorecard entitled Action Plan: Realising the Full Potential of Zero Emission Powered Light Vehicles, published in January 2024.

Anthony Browne:

While there are not currently any plans to reform L category licenses, Ministers and officials have met with motorcycle stakeholder representatives to listen to and discuss various motorcycle initiatives, including ideas for reform.

■ Pedestrian Areas: Access**Afzal Khan:**[\[14935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the report by the Local Government Association entitled *The path to inclusive footways*, published on 10 February 2024.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is aware that pavement parking is a challenging and complex issue.

Local authorities are responsible for parking restrictions and already have powers to tackle pavement parking by implementing Traffic Regulation Orders. The Department has consulted on further options to help local authorities outside London tackle this issue and will publish a formal response when final decisions have been taken.

Afzal Khan:[\[14936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that highways funding supports pavement accessibility.

Guy Opperman:

Local highway authorities have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the public highway network in their area, including footways and pavements. In doing so the Department recommends that they follow the advice set out in various guidance documents, which covers topics such as the maintenance and design of pavements, and the use of tactile paving .

The additional £8.3 billion of highway maintenance funding that the Government is providing to all English local highway authorities over the years 2023/24 to 2033/34 will allow them to invest in improvements to their local highway networks, including pavements and footways. Authorities will be expected to detail how this additional funding is being spent, to allow members of the public to hold them to account for this.

■ Railway Stations: Bristol**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[14498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 January 2024 to Question 7296 on Railway Stations: Bristol, whether he is taking steps to reopen St Anne's railway station in Bristol.

Huw Merriman:

The Department is not yet in a position to provide details on next steps for the St Anne's station scheme, but I hope to be able to provide further details in due course.

■ Railways: Anti-social Behaviour

Feryal Clark:

[14410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with rail service providers on tackling anti-social behaviour on railway services in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield, and (c) London.

Huw Merriman:

Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) on the rail network in London and throughout the country is a top priority for the British Transport Police (BTP).

Where ASB hotspots have been identified, BTP implements Problem-solving Plans (PSPs) in partnership with its policing and non-policing partners which target their resources and activity to deal with local issues of concern.

Problem Solving Plans are a structured method used to understand the nature and causes of problems that affect communities and take preventative action in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. The focus is on getting to the root of the problem, identifying who can help (both within and outside of policing) and working together from the outset, along with thinking creatively on how to solve a problem.

Problem-solving Plans currently in place in London include (but are not limited to) Finsbury Park, Croydon, and Victoria.

Enfield is not in BTP's top crime locations for ASB so there is no bespoke Problem-solving Plan in place, but BTP's high visibility officers conduct on-board and station patrols in the local area to reassure passengers and staff, while deterring those who would engage in criminal behaviour.

If passengers see or experience ASB on the rail network, in Enfield, London or across the country they should report this to BTP using their text 61016 service or via the Railway Guardian app. In an emergency, they should always call 999.

■ Railways: Shrewsbury

Daniel Kawczynski:

[15035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the decision by Avanti West Coast to withdraw the daily direct service between Shrewsbury and London after June 2024.

Huw Merriman:

While Avanti will be withdrawing this service due to the very low number of passengers who use it, West Midlands Trains has plans to ramp up the number of trains between Shropshire towns and Birmingham, while Avanti is looking to increase fast services between Birmingham and London. This will bring greater benefits to more passengers in the West Midlands. Furthermore, the Wrexham, Shropshire & Midlands Railway Company has applied to operate services between Wrexham General and London Euston, which would include calling at Shrewsbury and other stations in North Wales and the West Midlands. While it is ultimately a decision for

the Office of Rail and Road whether to approve this application, the Rail Minister has set out his support.

■ **Railways: WiFi**

Stephen Morgan: [\[14727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2024 to Question 11198 on Railways: WiFi, for which train operating companies the quality of wi-fi provision is (a) subject to a minimum service requirement and (b) a key performance indicator.

Huw Merriman:

In general, under the Department's National Rail Contracts and Service Contracts, Wi-Fi quality standards are for train operators to determine. However, South Western Railway has a specific business plan commitment to provide, on an initial trial basis, free super-fast Wi-Fi on certain types of rolling stock between Earlsfield and Basingstoke stations.

Any requirements relating to the provision of Wi-Fi by train operating companies contracted by devolved and local authorities would be a matter for those authorities.

■ **Roads: Animals**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[14533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made a recent estimate of the annual number of wild animals killed on Highway England's roads by discarded refuse.

Guy Opperman:

National Highways (NH) has recently launched its new campaign aimed at reducing litter and any consequential damage to animals on the strategic road network.

The Department does not hold such an estimate figure itself.

■ **Roads: Freight**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[14163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with HM Treasury on potential fiscal steps to support the road haulage industry with increases in its costs.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Transport works with industry stakeholders and across government to address matters impacting the viability of our vital road freight sector. This includes the ministerially chaired Freight Council which brings together senior logistics sector representatives and government officials to consider strategic issues facing the multimodal freight sector, in addition to overseeing delivery of the long-term Future of Freight Plan.

Issues relating to fiscal policy, and its impact on the wider economy, remain a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Like all taxes, the government keeps HGV Vehicle Excise Duty and the HGV Levy under review.

■ Transport: Finance

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[14368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing (a) social tariffs and (b) other forms of financial support for (i) public transport and (ii) car insurance.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is taking action to ensure that public transport is affordable for people across the country. We have made significant investments in public transport to help make services more frequent, more reliable, cheaper and easier to use.

In January 2023, the Department introduced the £2 cap on single bus fares in England outside of London, which has been extended until the end of 2024. The increase to most regulated rail fares will be capped at 4.9% instead of the July 2023 RPI figure (9%) which has historically been used to calculate fares changes. This is set to come into effect on 3 March 2024, so passengers benefit from cheaper fares for longer. A range of railcards is also available which offers discounts to particular groups.

My officials regularly liaise with representatives of the motor insurance industry on a range of issues. However, it is the responsibility of individual motor insurers to set their premiums and the terms and conditions of their policies, and the Government does not intervene in, or seek to control, the market.

The Department also undertakes research to help inform our policy making and gives due consideration to the travel needs, behaviours and experiences of different groups.

TREASURY

■ Banks: Regulation

Philip Davies:

[\[13939\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with the Prudential Regulation Authority on when it will publish its response to Consultation Paper 16/22 on the Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards.

Bim Afolami:

The Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) published its near-final policies on market risk, credit valuation adjustment risk, counterparty credit risk and operational risk in December 2023. The PRA has committed to publishing its final rules for the remaining elements from CP16/22 (credit risk, the output floor, and reporting and disclosure requirements) in Q2 2024.

■ British Gas: Taxation

Charlotte Nichols: [\[14427\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will impose a windfall tax on British Gas.

Gareth Davies:

The government does not change the tax regime selectively for individual companies. The energy price cap, set by Ofgem, ensures that all suppliers charge fair prices on households' energy tariffs, and any profits they make are subject to Corporation Tax.

Following an unprecedented rise in gas prices triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the government has legislated additional taxes on the energy sector. The extraordinary profits of oil and gas companies are subject to a 35% levy until 2028, and electricity generators are subject to a 45% levy until 2028 on their extraordinary returns.

■ Child Benefit

Martyn Day: [\[14429\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of administering Child Benefit as a working age benefit via the Department for Work and Pensions.

Martyn Day: [\[14430\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of administering Child Benefit as a joint claim per household.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government does not have plans to administer Child Benefit as a working age benefit via the Department for Work and Pensions.

Administering Child Benefit as a joint claim per household could mean finding out the incomes and relationships of all Child Benefit claimants. This would pose administrative burdens on households, who do not currently need to provide this information to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and on HMRC.

As with all Government policy, Child Benefit is kept under regular review.

■ Companies: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon: [\[14078\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will have discussions with his counterpart in the Department of Economy on helping to ensure that Northern Ireland is an attractive place for companies to invest in.

Gareth Davies:

The UK Government is committed to promoting Northern Ireland as an attractive place for foreign direct investment (FDI), and we look forward to working closely with the restored Northern Ireland Executive on ensuring that Northern Ireland is an attractive place for companies to invest in.

The Northern Ireland Investment Summit in September 2023 brought together over 100 international investors and businesses, and profiled Northern Ireland's innovative and technological strengths. Northern Ireland has been successful in attracting FDI, particularly in financial services, and Belfast is the world's number one city for FinTech inward investment.

The UK Government is taking steps to improve the investment support offer to foreign investors following the Harrington Review, including making investment ambition a priority across government through the new Ministerial Investment Group, reviewing the grants landscape to make it simple and streamlined for investors, and increasing the resource available to the Office for Investment.

■ **First Time Buyers: Government Assistance**

Claire Hanna:

[\[14225\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will introduce measures in the spring Budget to help first-time buyers.

Bim Afolami:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer will reserve his decision on future support for first time-buyers for Spring Budget 2024.

The Government operates a range of schemes that aim to increase the supply of low-deposit mortgages for credit-worthy households, including first-time buyers, increase the availability of new housing, and stimulate economic growth. These include the Mortgage Guarantee Scheme, which is open until the end of June 2025, as well as First Homes and Shared Ownership through the Affordable Homes Programme. We also help first-time buyers to save for a deposit through the Lifetime ISA and Help to Buy: ISA.

Over 873,000 households have been helped to purchase a home since spring 2010 through government-backed schemes.

■ **Friendly Societies: Misconduct**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[14341\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that the Financial Conduct Authority is able to penalise misconduct by officers of friendly societies.

Bim Afolami:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has the power to prosecute offences by officers under the Friendly Societies Act 1974 and Friendly Societies Act 1992 .

In addition, for friendly societies authorised and regulated to conduct regulated activities under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (FSMA), the FCA has an extensive range of disciplinary, criminal and civil powers to take action against regulated and non-regulated firms and individuals who are failing or have failed to meet the standards it requires.

The FSMA powers are stated in the FCA's Enforcement Guide which can be found here: [Enforcement Information Guide \(fca.org.uk\)](https://www.fca.org.uk/enforcement).

■ Income Tax: Tax Allowances

Alexander Stafford: [14101]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of raising the level of the tax-free Personal Allowance on the economy.

Alexander Stafford: [14102]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will raise the level of the tax-free Personal Allowance.

Nigel Huddleston:

As with all aspects of the tax system, the Government will keep the Personal Allowance under review and any decisions on future changes will be taken by the Chancellor in the context of the wider public finances.

■ Lotteries: Taxation

Neale Hanvey: [14220]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much Lottery Duty has been raised in each year since that duty was introduced.

Gareth Davies:

The annual amount of Lottery Duty receipts by calendar and financial year can be found in Table 1 in the Betting and Gaming Bulletin:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/653bcb80e6c9680014aa9c8d/2023_Sep_Bet_and_Gam_Tab.ods

Neale Hanvey: [14223]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much has been raised from Lottery Duty from National Lottery sales in (a) the UK, (b) Great Britain and (c) Scotland in each financial year from 2014-15 to 2022-23 inclusive.

Gareth Davies:

The annual amount of Lottery Duty receipts by calendar and financial year can be found in [Table 1 in the Betting and Gaming Bulletin](#).

HMRC does not publish Lottery Duty receipts from the National Lottery. However, the information requested was reported by Camelot UK Lotteries Limited on their [website](#).

■ Mortgages: Private Rented Housing

Sir Mark Hendrick: [13898]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in the level of buy-to-let mortgages in arrears in the last three months of 2023.

Bim Afolami:

The path to lower interest rates is through low inflation, and the Government is fully committed to supporting the Bank of England get inflation back down to the 2% target, including by keeping borrowing under control.

While the pricing and availability of mortgages is ultimately a commercial decision for lenders in which the Government does not intervene, our plan is working, and the average offered mortgage rates on 2-year and 5-year fixed rates have now fallen from their peak in Summer 2023.

Buy-to-let mortgage arrears and repossessions remain low. Any buy-to-let borrower who is in financial difficulty should contact their lender as soon as possible to discuss the options available to them. Contacting them will not affect their credit score.

Motor Vehicles: Insurance**Andrew Bridgen:**[\[14081\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to help (a) support people with increases in the cost of motor insurance premiums and (b) ensure there is competition within that industry.

Bim Afolami:

Insurers make commercial decisions about the pricing of insurance based on their assessment on the likelihood and expected cost of a claim. The Government does not intervene in these commercial decisions by insurers as this could damage competition in the market.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the independent regulator and responsible for supervising the insurance industry. The FCA have introduced several reforms, including the Consumer Duty rules, to ensure consumers are treated fairly in regard to pricing.

The motor insurance market has many providers offering a variety of insurance products to suit the needs of customers. The FCA also has a statutory objective to promote competition in the interests of consumers, and, working closely with the Competition and Markets Authority, can enforce against breaches of competition law.

Jonathan Edwards:[\[15045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with the Financial Conduct Authority on the cost of motor insurance.

Bim Afolami:

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors, including the financial services regulators, on an ongoing basis.

Insurers make commercial decisions about the pricing of insurance based on their assessment on the likelihood and expected cost of a claim. The Government does not intervene in these commercial decisions by insurers as this could damage competition in the market.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the independent regulator and responsible for supervising the insurance industry. The FCA have introduced several reforms, including the Consumer Duty rules, to ensure consumers are treated fairly in regard to pricing.

■ National Income: Ukraine

Drew Hendry:

[\[14141\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of ringfencing a proportion of the UK's GDP for aid for Ukraine over the next ten years.

Bim Afolami:

Spending plans for international aid strike an appropriate balance between fiscal responsibility and our responsibility to the most vulnerable. The government is providing a range of economic, humanitarian and defensive military assistance to Ukraine and has pledged almost £12 billion in overall support since February 2022.

The government annually reports all Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligible activity as a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI), and in line with OECD Development Assistance Committee rules. It is important that departments have enough flexibility to respond to emerging pressures and fast-moving events, including crises.

The UK remains committed in our unwavering support for Ukraine against Russia's illegal invasion.

■ National Insurance

Barbara Keeley:

[\[15038\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 19 February 2024 to Question 13692 on National Insurance, for what reason he was unable to provide the information requested.

Nigel Huddleston:

Pursuant to my answer to PQ 13692, HMRC has seen a significant rise in the number of A1 applications and in other National Insurance work which has impacted processing times. The current processing time for A1 certificates is 10 weeks for applications received online. This is an improvement against September 2023 where the processing time was 15 weeks.

■ North Korea: Russia

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[14060\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is taking steps with the Financial Action Task Force against Russia for violating sanctions against North Korea.

Bim Afolami:

The UK's recent joint statement (12 January 2024) is clear that Russia's procurement of North Korean ballistic missiles and their use against Ukraine on 30 December 2023, and 2 January 2024, violate multiple UNSCRs. The provision of such material to Russia by North Korea raises significant proliferation and proliferation financing concerns.

Actively facilitating the circumvention of UNSCR 1718 and violating its prohibitions undermines the global fight against proliferation finance, the UN sanctions regime, and consequently the financial sanctions requirements of the FATF standards. The UK will continue to call out Russia's violation of UNSCRs both at the UN and within the FATF.

Public Sector: Redundancy Pay**Sir Christopher Chope:****[15007]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2024 to Question 12498 on Public Sector: Redundancy Pay, and having regard to the fact that the Whole of Government accounts for the financial years ending 2022 and 2023 will not be published until July 2024 and July 2025, if he will provide the information requested for those years.

Laura Trott:

The Whole of Government Accounts provide the most complete overview of exit payments in any given year. In advance of them, reference can be made to individual departments' Annual Report and Accounts, where information on the usage of exit payments for the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 is available. These can be found online using the following link:

[Annual Report and Accounts for Central Government Departments](#)

Data on exit payments made by Local Authorities between 2014 and 2023 is available under the heading 'exit payments' using the following link: [Statistical Data Sets Local Government Finance](#)

Small Businesses: Loans**Philip Davies:****[13940]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposals in the Prudential Regulation Authority Consultation Paper 16/22 on the Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards on SME lending.

Philip Davies:**[13941]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Prudential Regulation Authority Consultation Paper 16/22 on the Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards published on 30 November 2022, what recent conversations he has had with the Prudential Authority on SME funding.

Bim Afolami:

The PRA is implementing Basel 3.1 as part of the UK's Smarter Regulatory Framework. As part of this, the government has legislated for an accountability framework to ensure the PRA consider the impact of its implementation of Basel 3.1 on the wider impact on UK economic growth, of which SME lending is a vital part. HM Treasury continues to engage with the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) to assess the impact of its Basel 3.1 package on SME lending. The PRA has been clear that its final requirements will be guided by the evidence and that it would 'particularly welcome' evidence on the impact on SME lending so it can get its final proposals right. The PRA has said that it intends to publish its second policy statement in Q2 this year which will finalise the requirements in relation to SME lending

Small Businesses: Strangford**Jim Shannon:**[\[14079\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will have discussions with local authorities in Northern Ireland on the potential merits of allocating additional funding to support SMEs in Strangford constituency.

Bim Afolami:

The allocation of funding to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive. We look forward to working closely with the restored Executive on a wide range of issues, including support for businesses in Northern Ireland.

The UK Government provides tax reliefs benefiting SMEs such as the Annual Investment Allowance and Employment Allowance, supports investment in SMEs through British Business Bank programmes, and offers the Help to Grow: Management training scheme which is delivered through business schools in Northern Ireland.

Tax Avoidance: Bankruptcy**Drew Hendry:**[\[14335\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the compatibility of the issuing of section 684 notices by HMRC with the recommendations of the independent loan charge review led by Sir Amyas Morse.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Loan Charge is targeted at contrived tax avoidance schemes that sought to avoid Income Tax and National Insurance contributions by paying users their income in the form of loans.

In his independent review, Lord Morse recommended that the Loan Charge no longer apply to loans made before 9 December 2010. However, Lord Morse said "HMRC should continue being able to settle and investigate cases prior to this point under their normal powers where they have appropriate grounds, and a legal basis, to do so". The government accepted this recommendation. In line with this

recommendation, HMRC is still seeking to recover the tax due where it had taken the necessary steps in the past to give it the legal basis to do so.

In May 2022, the Court of Appeal said that HMRC could consider using certain provisions in the PAYE system (referred to as 'section 684(7A)(b)') to collect tax directly from the individual who received income through a DR scheme. HMRC using these provisions where appropriate is in line with Lord Morse's recommendation.

■ Taxation

Sarah Olney:

[14168]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of higher rate taxpayers by parliamentary constituency in the last financial year.

Nigel Huddleston:

HMRC's Personal Income Statistics by tax year contain a constituency-level breakdown of taxpayer numbers for the tax year 2020 to 2021. This is the latest outturn data available and can be found in Table 3.15 below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6402022ad3bf7f25f5948f90/Table_3.15_2021.ods

The parliamentary constituency breakdowns published in these statistics are consistent with those used at elections since 2010 and do not contain the new boundaries that will be in place at the next election.

Further breakdowns of this information are not routinely published.

For projection years, HM Revenue and Customs does not publish this information at constituency level.

■ Timesharing: Misrepresentation

Alex Norris:

[14271]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has taken steps with Cabinet colleagues to ensure compensation payments to consumers who were missold timeshares are delivered in a timely manner.

Bim Afolami:

The regulations surrounding the sale of timeshares and credit agreements relating to timeshares provide routes of redress where consumers have been misled.

Firstly, it is an offence under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 for traders to mislead consumers, and it is punishable by a fine up to the statutory maximum enforced by local authority Trading Standards. The regulations provide for the consumer to seek redress through the courts where they have been misled.

Regarding the timeshare market specifically, the Timeshare, Holiday Products, Resale and Exchange Regulations 2010 provide protections for consumers buying

and selling timeshares and other long-term “holiday club” memberships, including provision for consumers to withdraw from their contract.

In cases where a consumer took out a regulated financial product to purchase the timeshare, they may be able to make a compensation claim to the loan provider and may have recourse to Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS).

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) Handbook, which sets out the rules on how the FOS should handle complaints, states that ‘the ombudsman will attempt to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage’. Ensuring timely outcomes is one of the FOS’s main priorities for 2024-25 and it has set itself the target of resolving 90 per cent of cases within 5 months.

■ Treasury: Domicile

Jonathan Ashworth:

[15074]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any non-executive directors employed in his Department are non-domiciled.

Gareth Davies:

Non-executives’ personal data, including those relating to personal taxation or status, are protected by the UK General Data Protection Regulation. Collection of personal data on non-dom status is not routinely collected and is generally not required for making public appointments. If any such data was held it could only be published if doing so was in compliance with data protection law. Non executive board members are not employees of HM Treasury and act in an advisory capacity.

Data relating to public appointments are covered by the Public Appointments Privacy Statement found here <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk>.

■ Treasury: Information Officers

Dr Matthew Offord:

[14011]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

Gareth Davies:

Due to staff turnover, the numbers of staff within the team that support these functions fluctuate but is around 40 people. Roles range from Range C to Deputy Director. Salaries can be obtained from the civil service job site.

Sarah Olney:

[14167]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff in his Department were working in communications roles in each of the last two years.

Gareth Davies:

Due to staff turnover, the number of staff in communications roles in HM Treasury fluctuates, but is generally around 40 people.

WALES

■ Wales Office: Information Officers

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many posts there are for (a) press, (b) media and (c) other communications staff in his Department; and what the salary band is for each post.

David T C Davies:

The Wales Office Communications team is made up of eight employees, two of whom make up the Press and Media team.

Roles range from grades Executive Officer (EO) to Senior Civil Service (SCS1) and have salaries between £27,223 - £28,613 and £75,000 - £117,800.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ STEM Subjects: Employment

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[13893\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to support women to return to their careers in STEM after maternity leave.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government is focussed on ensuring that all women who want to return to work following maternity leave are able to do so. Recent work in this area includes: extending rights to flexible working, enhancing protections from redundancy for new parents, and expanding free childcare entitlements.

We recognise that those who have taken extended time away from the workplace due to caring responsibilities can find it particularly difficult to return to work. Our STEM ReCharge pilot, delivered by expert organisations, Career Returners and STEM Returners, is currently supporting parents and carers back into STEM roles specifically.

The pilot is providing personalised employability support, sector-specific refresh training, and work opportunities to technology and engineering returners in the Midlands and the North of England. It is also providing support and training for STEM employers on supportive returner hiring and inclusive recruitment practices.

The findings of the pilot will help organisations to set up their own returners schemes, tailored to the specific needs of their workforce.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme**

Alex Sobel: [14278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of demand for the Access to Work scheme since October 2023.

Mims Davies:

Information on Access to Work applications is available but to provide it would incur a disproportionate cost.

However, the Access to Work statistics from previous years includes 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](#).

Vicky Foxcroft: [14331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the longest waiting time was to receive approval for an Access to Work application in the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

The case with the longest waiting time to receive approval in the last 12 months was made on 26th January 2023 after 354 working days. This was due to issues with the claimant gathering and returning the supporting evidence needed to verify details of the case before it could be further progressed.

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.

■ Access to Work Programme: Civil Servants

Wendy Chamberlain: [14185]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full time equivalent civil servants his Department employed to administer Access to Work at the end of the month for the 18 months up to and including December 2023.

Mims Davies:

The number of civil servants employed to administer Access to Work at the end of the month for the 18 months up to and including December 2023 were;

July 2022 – 345.61

August 2022 – 339.09

September 2022 – 330.69

October 2022 – 339.69

November 2022 – 337.26
December 2022 – 335.26
January 2023 – 361.52
February 2023 – 398.52
March 2023 – 386.52
April 2023 – 403.42
May 2023 – 406.63
June 2023 – 426.63
July 2023 – 441.50
August 2023 – 464.27
September 2023 – 491.57
October 2023 – 493.85
November 2023 – 495.89
December 2023 – 493.85

■ Carers Allowance and Child Benefit: Parents

Mrs Helen Grant:

[14028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department is taking steps to support the separated parents of children who are not the parent in receipt of (a) child benefit and (b) carers allowance.

Jo Churchill:

The government has a range of policies which support children and families across the tax and benefits system and public services. Independent, free and anonymous benefit calculators are available to help individuals understand what benefits they may be entitled to. [Benefits calculators - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators)

■ Child Maintenance Service

Sarah Green:

[15210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has plans to review the Child Maintenance Service's treatment of income from foreign assets held by paying parents.

Paul Maynard:

To calculate a child maintenance liability, the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) uses gross income information provided by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) for the latest available full tax year. A variation application can be made by either parent to include income from certain assets including property that is subject to tax in the UK.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Domicile**Jonathan Ashworth:** **[15071]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether any non-executive directors employed in his Department are non-domiciled.

Paul Maynard:

Non-Executives' personal data, including those relating to personal taxation or status, are protected by the UK General Data Protection Regulation. Collection of personal data on non-dom status is not routinely collected and is generally not required for making public appointments. If any such data was held it could only be published if doing so was in compliance with data protection law.

Non-Executive Board Members are not employees of the Department for Work and Pensions, and act in an advisory capacity.

Data relating to public appointments are covered by the Public Appointments Privacy

Statement found here: <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/privacy>

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Health and Safety**Chris Stephens:** **[R] [15110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to comply with principle (d) of schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Paul Maynard:

On joining DWP, all members of staff must complete a DSE assessment, which will highlight any special requirements specific to their role. Members of staff are then required to revisit this assessment every 3 years or at any time their circumstances change.

DWP endeavours to provide a contemporary and safe working environment, which meets the requirements of the Approved Documents (Building Regulations) in England and their equivalents in the devolved nations. We also follow the guiding principles of a variety of government specifications e.g. Publicly Available Specification 3000 for 'Smart Working' (PAS300), which recommends the use of a range of different work settings throughout a typical day to encourage movement, collaboration, and wellbeing. As well as the Government Property Agency's Workplace Design Guidance.

The Department also has a Reasonable Adjustment Process for complex needs. This can include changes to the physical environment, alternative working patterns, or changes to work tasks.

Any changes to the way people are expected to work that might introduce significant new risk are identified and their impact considered against existing DWP health and safety policies and procedures.

DWP Health and Safety Impact Assessments are designed to give step by step support to programmes and projects who may introduce new risk. They provide a framework to help identify hazards and who might be harmed and enables DWP to record what needs to be done to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. It is mandatory for use by new programmes and projects with managers consulting with Trade Union representatives during the process.

■ **Employment and Support Allowance: National Insurance Credits**

Neil O'Brien:

[\[14254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Employment and Support Allowance claimants have notified his Department of a shortfall in their National Insurance credits; what estimate he has made of how many such cases there are in total; and how many such cases have been resolved as of 16 February 2024.

Mims Davies:

The Department does not hold the data concerning claimants who have notified the Department regarding a shortfall in their National Insurance Credits. Nor is there data on how many cases of this type have been resolved. All ESA claimants receive Class 1 National Insurance Credits as part of their award. However, if any individuals believe that an error has been made they should contact the DWP.

■ **Government Assistance**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[14687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of trends in the level of demand for local crisis support.

Jo Churchill:

Over £2bn in support has to date been allocated to Local Authorities in England through the Household Support Fund to support those most in need.

Councils continue to have the flexibility to use funding from the Local Government Finance Settlement to provide local welfare assistance.

■ **Guide Dogs**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[14644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of levels of availability of replacement guide dogs on the blind and visually impaired community since the pandemic.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[14645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of waiting times for a replacement guide dog after a previous dog has been retired on the blind and visually impaired community.

Mims Davies:

Guide Dogs UK, as with other assistance dog charities and organisations, is an independent charity and the Government is not directly responsible or accountable for its activities. We are aware of issues around the current shortage of guide dogs since the pandemic, and the previous Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work has had meetings and corresponded with Guide Dogs UK on this issue.

The Disability Action Plan, which was published in early February, sets out the immediate action HMG will be taking in 2024 to improve disabled people's lives, including to improve support for people with assistance dogs and reduce access refusals, as well as laying the foundations for longer term change. It will complement the National Disability Strategy, which sets out our long term vision for disabled people in the UK.

Household Support Fund**Stephen Morgan:**[\[14686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of ending the Household Support Fund on 31 March 2024 on (a) the number of people experiencing destitution, (b) the NHS, (c) social care services, (d) homelessness services and (e) other public services.

Jo Churchill:

The current Household Support Fund runs from April 2023 until the end of March 2024, and the Government continues to keep all its existing programmes under review in the usual way.

Household Support Fund: Greater London**Feryal Clark:**[\[14411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Household Support Fund awards were issued in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London since October 2021.

Feryal Clark:[\[14412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of families received funding from the Household Support Fund in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London since October 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The number of awards is reported by Local Authorities, so data at a constituency level is not available.

Over £2 billion has been allocated to date to Local Authorities in England via the Household Support Fund to help those most in need, including £14,239,973 in the London Borough of Enfield, and £339,357,037 in the Local Authorities that make up Greater London.

The most recent published management information for the Household Support Fund, including numbers of awards by Local Authority can be found at:

[Household Support Fund 3 management information: 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)\(opens in a new tab\)\(opens in a new tab\)](#)

[Household Support Fund 2 management information: 1 April to 30 September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)\(opens in a new tab\)](#)

[Household Support Fund management information: 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Feryal Clark:

[14413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Household Support Fund on levels of child poverty in (a) Enfield North Constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London since October 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Over £2 billion has been allocated to date to Local Authorities in England via the Household Support Fund to help those most in need, including £14,239,973 in the London Borough of Enfield, and £339,357,037 in the Local Authorities that make up Greater London.

The HSF is an intentionally flexible scheme designed to enable Local Authorities to respond to local need. Local Authorities are encouraged through our scheme guidance to consider the needs of households including families with children of all ages.

■ Pension Credit and State Retirement Pensions: Suffolk Coastal

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

[15000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people receive (a) the state pension and (b) pension credit in Suffolk Coastal constituency.

Paul Maynard:

There are currently 30,114 people in receipt of the State Pension in the quarter ending May 2023 in Suffolk Coastal Constituency.

There are currently 1,977 people in receipt of Pension Credit in the quarter ending August 2023 in Suffolk Coastal Constituency.

Figures are published and available via [Stat-Xplore](#)

■ Social Security Benefits: Employment

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[14889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the minimum guaranteed contracted employment hours will be under the chance to work guarantee.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[14890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what his policy is on the use of zero-hours contract under the chance to work guarantee.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[14891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which disability benefits chance to work guarantee will apply to.

Mims Davies:

At Autumn Statement 2023, we announced that we will be introducing a new Chance to Work Guarantee. This will apply to the majority of Universal Credit (UC) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants who have been assessed as having Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity. The Guarantee means that, once introduced, the majority of people in this group will be able to try work without the fear of reassessment, within existing permitted work rules (ESA) and work allowance rules (UC).

■ **Veterans: Digital Technology**

Steve McCabe:

[\[13223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of existing support for veterans to work in (a) AI, (b) robotics and (c) other digital sectors.

Mims Davies:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ[13224](#).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ UK Integrated Security Fund FY 24/25

Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office (Alex Burghart): [\[HCWS291\]](#)

The Minister of State, Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG, has today made the following statement:

"I wish to update the House on the launch of the UK Integrated Security Fund (ISF) announced in the Integrated Review Refresh (IRR) by the Prime Minister on 12 March 2023. The Integrated Security Fund (ISF) will succeed the existing Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) in April 2024.

The ISF is a cross-Government fund developed to tackle the highest- priority threats to UK national security at home and overseas. The ISF will use Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA funding to enable the delivery of National Security Council priorities. It will take an integrated, agile, catalytic, and high-risk approach to find solutions to the most complex national security challenges outlined in the IRR 2023.

Through integrating domestic and overseas national security programming, it will aim to have real-world strategic impact, bring value for taxpayers' money, and demonstrate UK innovation.

The ISF will build on the important work supported by the CSSF. New areas of ISF programming will reflect the priorities set out in the IRR and will add additional priorities, including maritime security, economic sanctions and emerging and disruptive technology such as AI and quantum computing. The ISF has allocated almost £1bn for FY 24/25 bringing some existing economic deterrence and cyber programmes into the single fund. In FY 22/23, the CSSF invested £830m as set out in the CSSF Annual Report FY 22/23.

The report demonstrates how CSSF programmes have delivered clear results. In the Lake Chad Basin region in West Africa data collection, analysis and coordination between the military and police improved the response to the threat from Improvised Explosive Devices to local communities. Violent extremist groups operating globally pose a threat to the UK and to our allies. To counter the increase in the threat of Turkish manufactured converted blank-firing weapons on UK streets, CSSF programmes invested in capacity building and advice resulting in changes to firearms legislation in Turkey. This resulted in a drop in the sales of blank firearms in Turkey and a decrease in imports of blank firearms into the UK.

These examples highlight the Fund's tangible contribution to enhance UK national security through integrated programmes across 12 government departments and agencies, with a presence in over 90 countries and territories."

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Children and Young People's Resettlement Fund****Minister for Housing and Homelessness (Felicity Buchan):****[\[HCWS292\]](#)**

I am pleased to announce eleven projects that have secured funding from the Children and Young People's Resettlement Fund. This £2.5 million fund facilitates projects in England until March 2025 that support young people, aged 21 and under, on the Ukraine, Afghan and Hong Kong BN(O) pathways.

The fund aims to have a positive effect on the lives of children and young people on these pathways by addressing their specific needs and vulnerabilities, including mental health and trauma. The projects will provide support to enable children and young people to recover from traumatic experiences, displacement or resettlement and to integrate into society whilst retaining a connection to their culture.

Projects will be delivered during 2023/24 and 2024/25 and will contribute to our understanding of effective interventions for these young people.

Bids for a share of the funding were open to councils and voluntary organisations by application launched on 27 September 2023. From the 167 applications received, the following eleven organisations will be funded a total of £2.191m:

NAME	AMOUNT
Barnardo's	£300,000
Beacon Family Services CIC	£45,191
Bradford Foundation Trust	£193,116
Catalyst Psychology Community Interest Company	£159,770
HealthProm	£199,700
Hong Kong Well UK	£226,748
International Rescue Committee UK	£234,522
PATH Yorkshire Ltd.,	£298,330
St. Mary's Ukrainian School Limited	£323,725
Stoke-on Trent and North Staffordshire Theatre Trust Limited (New Vic Theatre)	£162,369
Wiltshire Council	£47,602
Total	£2.191m

Close to £290,000 will remain to fund projects commencing next financial year.

Funding will be allocated to the devolved administrations according to the Barnett formula.

TRANSPORT

■ Local Transport update

Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Mark Harper):

[[HCWS290](#)]

I am pleased to inform the House that my Department has today published details of the new £4.7 billion Local Transport Fund dedicated to transport funding across the North and Midlands. The Local Transport Fund delivers on a commitment made in our Network North plan and is paid for by savings from HS2.

As the Prime Minister committed, every pound of the £36 billion that would have been spent on HS2 phase 2 will be invested into transport improvements that benefit far more people, in far more places, far more quickly. Every penny of the £19.8 billion committed to the Northern leg will go to the North and every penny of the £9.6 billion committed to the Midlands leg to the Midlands, with the £6.5 billion saved by our new approach to Euston benefitting the rest of the country.

We are sticking to our plan to level up communities with greater transport links right across the UK for a brighter future. Our plan will ensure millions of people in the North and the Midlands will benefit from better public transport, reduced congestion and upgraded local bus and train stations thanks to the new £4.7 billion Local Transport Fund. £2.5 billion will go to the North and £2.2 billion to the Midlands across the next seven years (2025-2032).

Larger combined authorities in the North and Midlands have already had confirmation of significant extra funding – with a further £8.5 billion increase to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements paid for by HS2. We are extending this successful model to all local authorities in the North and Midlands through the Local Transport Fund, providing the first transport budget of its kind for our smaller cities, towns and rural areas.

This is an historic level of funding for these councils. The new funds can pay for the infrastructure that communities really want: from new roads to new mass transit systems, more EV charge-points or refurbished bus and train stations, to filling in potholes. It will be for locally elected representatives – Councils, working with local MPs, not Whitehall – to decide how to spend this money and they will be accountable to their voters for how they do. The local knowledge of Members of Parliament will be vital, so I am requiring councils to consult their local Members of Parliament before spending this new funding. The funding is available from next year – giving time for councils to develop plans for this unanticipated funding boost.

This announcement builds on our progress of delivering reallocated HS2 spending into new transport schemes across the country. We have extended the national £2 bus fare cap. We announced the first down payment of a £1 billion investment in buses, with £150

million being allocated over the next year across the North and Midlands. We set out details of our new £8.3 billion road resurfacing fund, with the first £150 million already reaching local authorities.

Details of the total funding each local transport authority will receive are published on GOV.UK. The Local Transport Fund is in addition to local transport funding from the last Spending Review and to what local transport authorities were expecting to receive in future. The Government will publish the annual allocations for this fund in due course. To ensure local authorities can make the most of this unprecedented funding, Government will publish advice for local authorities. We will ask local authorities to determine their local transport priorities and develop delivery plans, by Autumn 2024, for projects to be funded by the Local Transport Fund. The Local Transport Fund is predominantly capital. It will include a resource element to ensure local authorities can deliver their plans. We will support local authorities as they develop their plans so that they are ready to deliver improvements with the Local Transport Fund from April 2025.