



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 28 February 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:48 P.M., 28 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

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Business: Floods

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[14838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the guidance sent by the Director of the Grant Delivery Directorate to councils on 10 November 2023, with the subject Flood Recovery Framework Schemes Operational Guidance - Business Recovery Grant, Storm Babet 19-25 October 2023, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) removing the reference to businesses that have made no efforts to seek appropriate insurance and (b) reopening that scheme.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Flooding Recovery Framework is based on a set of long-established principles including, in the case of the Business Recovery Grant, that:

"Funding should not be used to reward poor business practice (e.g. if a business has made no efforts to seek appropriate insurance....)."

Whilst there are no immediate plans to change the scheme eligibility criteria or to re-open the activation for those impacted by Storm Babet, it is worth noting that the Business Recovery Grant does not operate in isolation but as part of a package of support including business rates relief for SMEs.

■ Horizon IT System: Compensation

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[14183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will take legislative steps to require Fujitsu to compensate the sub-postmasters impacted by the Horizon IT System.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The extent of Fujitsu's culpability for the scandal will not be clear until the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry reports. However, Ministers have made clear that the taxpayer should not have to meet all the costs of the scandal. In the light of such comments – which have attracted widespread public support – Fujitsu have recently apologised publicly for their role in the scandal and have accepted that they have a moral obligation to contribute to its costs. The Government welcomes these statements and will continue to discuss matters with Fujitsu.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Blood: Contamination****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[15424\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the number of people that would be eligible for compensation under the terms of the recommendations of the second interim report of Infected Blood Inquiry, published on 5 April 2023, in Kingston upon Hull North constituency.

John Glen:

The Statistical Expert Group, established by the Infected Blood Inquiry, has provided valuable insight into the numbers of infections from blood and blood products in the UK between 1970 and 1991 and subsequent survival rates. However, this information is not available by Parliamentary constituency. There is also considerable uncertainty over the number of people, especially those affected, who might be eligible under Sir Brian Langstaff's recommendations. Therefore I am not able to provide a substantive response to the right Honourable Lady's question on her constituency. On 22 January, an expert group formally began work to provide technical advice to the Cabinet Office. This work will inform the Government's response to the Inquiry's final report.

■ Cabinet Office: Recruitment**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[5332\]](#)

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

Alex Burghart:

[Holding answer 11 December 2023]: The information is not centrally held in the form requested. Government external expenditure will include Civil Service fast stream, public appointments, workforce planning, and on training and development.

Identifying spending specifically on using consultancies to recruit temporary or permanent staff could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Civil Servants: Early Retirement**Sir John Hayes:**[\[14793\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department holds on how many civil servants have taken early retirement since 2020.

John Glen:

From 1 January 2020 to 31 January 2024, there have been 12,313 Civil Servants who have taken early retirement.

■ Civil Service: Cost Effectiveness**Pat McFadden:** [\[15262\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his speech at the Institute for Government's Annual Conference 2024, published on 23 January 2024, what steps the Minister of State Without Portfolio in the Cabinet Office has undertaken to identify inefficiencies.

Pat McFadden: [\[15263\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his speech at the Institute for Government's Annual Conference 2024, published on 23 January 2024, with whom the Minister of State Without Portfolio in the Cabinet Office has held meetings on identifying inefficiencies.

Pat McFadden: [\[15264\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what meetings the Minister of State without Portfolio in the Cabinet office has held since her appointment.

John Glen:

Ministers regularly meet with department officials and external stakeholders. Details of Ministerial meetings with external organisations and individuals are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

The Minister without Portfolio's unique role allows her to work across government, supporting the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for the Cabinet office, to identify where our public sector delivery is inhibited by bureaucracy and inefficiencies. The Minister's overarching aim is to ensure that the provision of public services delivers the best possible value for the taxpayer.

Further information on the Minister without Portfolio's role can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/esther-mcvey>.

■ Defence Fire and Rescue Service: Workplace Pensions**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[14969\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to tackle pension irregularities in the Defence Fire Rescue Project.

John Glen:

The Cabinet Office, acting as the Civil Service Pension Scheme Manager, has met on a number of occasions with representatives of Unite the Union (Unite), Capita Land Services and MyCSP to discuss issues surrounding Pensionable Pay for members of the Defence Fire and Rescue Services that were transferred to Capita Fire and Rescue. The work is expected to be completed no later than July 2024.

■ Prime Minister: Recruitment

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[5330\]](#)

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

Alex Burghart:

[Holding answer 11 December 2023]: The Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 28th February 2024, Official Report, PQ 5332.

■ Stonewall: Finance

Sir John Hayes:

[\[14795\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data his Department holds on the public bodies that have provided grants to Stonewall since 1 January 2019.

Alex Burghart:

The Cabinet Office does not centrally hold information on grants or other funding issued by public bodies to third party organisations.

The Government is currently undertaking a review into Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) expenditure and activity across the Civil Service, to ensure value for taxpayers' money.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Badminton and Tennis: Rural Areas

Sir John Hayes:

[\[14796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to support the provision of (a) tennis and (b) badminton courts in rural areas.

Stuart Andrew:

Supporting grassroots sport is a key government priority and we recognise the role of high quality accessible facilities in encouraging people to take part in sport and ensuring participation rates continue to grow. Our new strategy 'Get Active' sets out our 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. Building on their 12 local delivery pilot areas, Sport England is expanding their place-based work so that at least 75% of their investment is committed to areas with the lowest levels of physical activity and social outcomes, including rural areas.

Since 2020, Sport England has invested over £17 million in projects which facilitate participation in grassroots badminton.

In partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), the Government is currently renovating public park tennis courts across England, Scotland, and Wales. Between 2022 and 2024 the UK Government has invested £21.9 million, with a further £8.4 million from the LTA Tennis Foundation.

This funding will bring around 3,000 courts in local parks up to playable standard by September 2024. Since the start of the programme, over £100,000 has been invested in South Holland and the Deepings constituency, with four tennis courts at Ayscoughfee Gardens renovated and improved directly as a result of investment from the Programme.

■ **BetIndex: Insolvency**

Keir Mather: [\[9719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering financial compensation to people affected by the collapse of BetIndex.

Stuart Andrew:

The collapse of BetIndex Ltd, the operators of the novel gambling product Football Index, had a significant impact on former customers, and we recognise the frustration and anger that this has caused. As a result, the Government announced an [Independent Review, conducted by Malcolm Sheehan KC](#), which looked at how the company had been regulated and identified lessons learned for various agencies. These recommendations have since been implemented.

Company liquidation proceedings are ongoing, and former customers will be considered among the creditors as company assets are divided.

■ **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Software**

Pat McFadden: [\[15426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding her Department and the predecessor Department (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on software updates to legacy computer systems in each of the last three financial years.

Julia Lopez:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has no legacy infrastructure and or Computer systems, all services have been transformed as part of the initial transformation programme undertaken in 2021. We therefore do not hold data within the scope of this request.

■ **Leisure Centres: Rural Areas**

Sir John Hayes: [\[14794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to support leisure centres in rural areas.

Stuart Andrew:

The government recognises the importance of ensuring public access to leisure centres and swimming pools, as swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy. The responsibility for providing this access lies at Local Authority level, and the Government continues to encourage Local Authorities to support leisure provision. In 2023/24, the Government has also provided over £60 million to support operating costs and help improve energy efficiency of facilities in all areas of England through the Swimming Pool Support Fund.

In order to deliver on our ambitions, set out in the sport strategy Get Active, we need a rich and varied facilities offer across the country, including in rural areas. This requires partners from across the public and private sectors to work together to ensure that provision is accessible, sustainable and reflects the needs of the community.

DEFENCE■ **Afghanistan: Refugees****John Healey:**[\[14808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the maximum occupancy per housing unit is for people temporarily housed in Service Family Accommodation in the UK under the ARAP Scheme.

James Heapey:

The Ministry of Defence uses the Housing Act 1985 (space standard) when allocating ARAP eligible persons to Temporary Service Family Accommodation (SFA). The maximum occupancy per house therefore varies accordance to number of bedrooms available, and the ages of the eligible persons in each family.

On average, there are currently six people (including children) housed in temporary SFAs (excluding Temporary Reception, Staging and Onward Moving sites) across the United Kingdom.

■ **Armed Forces: Cadets****Neil O'Brien:**[\[14707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many young people were members of (a) air, (b) sea and (c) army cadet units in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The below table shows cadet strengths at 1 April each year since 2010.

	ALL SEA CADET CORPS	ARMY CADET FORCE	ALL AIR TRAINING CORPS
1 April 2010	8,310	46,990	33,560

	ALL SEA CADET CORPS	ARMY CADET FORCE	ALL AIR TRAINING CORPS
*1 April 2011	12,910	44,890	35,210
1 April 2012	13,860	45,110	35,750
1 April 2013	13,740	43,860	33,490
1 April 2014	13,630	41,040	33,590
1 April 2015	13,710	41,370	33,370
1 April 2016	14,100	39,760	32,860
1 April 2017	14,000	38,810	31,190
1 April 2018	14,100	38,080	31,610
1 April 2019	14,540	37,670	32,850
1 April 2020	14,670	37,410	32,760
1 April 2021	13,220	34,080	26,300
1 April 2022	13,580	33,300	26,040
1 April 2023	13,730	38,180	31,420

*From 1 April 2011, Sea Cadet Corps figures include juniors (10-11 year olds) whereas they were previously excluded.

Annual statistics on the strength of Ministry of Defence sponsored cadet forces for 2016 – 2023 are published on gov.uk at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-sponsored-cadet-forces-statistics-index

Statistics on the strength of community cadet forces as at 1 April each year can be found at Table 1 in the latest publication's accompanying MS Excel spreadsheet.

Cadet statistics prior to 2016 were published in the UK reserve forces and cadets strength reports on gov.uk at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/strength-of-the-uk-reserve-forces-index

■ Armed Forces: Counter-terrorism

John Healey:

[14805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the armed forces have been referred to the Prevent Scheme for what reasons since 2019.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

A breakdown of referrals by category is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Armed Forces: Equality**Richard Drax:**[\[14585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to review the potential impact of the number of (a) diversity, (b) inclusion and (c) gender-based initiatives on morale in the Armed Forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Secretary of State has ordered a review of all equality, diversity and inclusivity policies across the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence to ensure that all those who are willing and able to serve our nation are able to freely do so in an environment which is welcoming to all, but that no policy distracts from the priority of defending our nation and being able to fight our enemies in a more dangerous age.

We will only meet current and future security challenges and threats if all our people, regardless of background, are confident that their efforts, skills and experience are properly recognised, and they are able to achieve their full potential.

■ Army Reserve**Alexander Stafford:**[\[14734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the size of the Army Reserves.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Army is continuing to work on optimising the Army Reserve, which will have a structure of 30,100 under Future Soldier plans.

Alexander Stafford:[\[14736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many army reservists are mobilised for service with the regular army.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As per the official National Statistics there were 798 Mobilised Army Reserves as at 1 October 2023.

■ Army Reserve: Recruitment**Alexander Stafford:**[\[14735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase recruitment to the Army Reserves.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

There are several measures in place to increase recruitment into the Army Reserves including a new marketing campaign, increased focused on specific units, financial incentives and the Recruit Bounty Scheme.

Alexander Stafford: [\[14739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential benefits of the re-establishment within the army reserves of in-unit recruiting.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Army Reserve continues to utilise in-unit recruitment and this has never ceased to happen.

■ Army Reserve: Territorial Army**Alexander Stafford:** [\[14740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will return the Army Reserves to its historic name "the Territorial Army".

Dr Andrew Murrison:

There are no plans to change the name of the Army Reserve back to the Territorial Army.

■ Army Reserve: Training**Alexander Stafford:** [\[14737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of collective training for army reservists.

Alexander Stafford: [\[14738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much training army reservists receive with the regular army.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Collective Training is a central element of training progression for all elements of the Army including the Army Reserve. It provides the opportunity to exercise skills in a wider context, to ensure units are current and competent, and to assure their readiness. Collective training has always been, and remains, a part of the training experience for the Army Reserve.

The Army Reserve routinely exercises with the Regular Army. The annual two week exercise undertaken by Army Reserve units will be woven into wider Regular Army training exercises wherever this is feasible.

This year, the Army is seeking to deploy c.650 Army Reservists on the largest Reserve Collective Training exercise in a number of years, Exercise RHINO HEART.

■ Cyprus: Greece

Sammy Wilson:

[\[13959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on the number of Greek troops that are stationed in southern Cyprus; and whether any personnel from the Greek (a) military and (b) intelligence community are hosted in the sovereign base areas of (i) Akrotiri and (ii) Dhekelia.

James Heapey:

Further to the written answers to Questions 8179, 80904, and 80905, we do not propose to release details of any non-UK personnel participating in current or future operational activities in the Sovereign Base Areas. We do not hold information regarding the size of any Greek deployment in the Republic of Cyprus, this would be a matter for the Hellenic Armed Forces. We do not comment on intelligence matters.

Attachments:

1. Cyprus: Military Bases [8179 - Cyprus Military Bases.docx]

■ Defence: Industry

Lee Anderson:

[\[14159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 18 of the Defence Command Paper 2023, what criteria his Department has developed for determining cases in which there is an essential national security requirement for certain industrial capabilities to be available onshore within the UK.

James Cartlidge:

The 2023 Defence Command Paper reinforces a key message of the 2021 Defence and Security Industrial Strategy: the need for our investment decisions to take into consideration any implications for the UK's Operational Independence.

Our considerations include identifying the industrial capabilities required to support and upgrade in-service equipment (including manufacture of the most critical components); the ability to conduct military operations as we choose; and, the ability to respond to urgent operational requirements arising during operations.

■ EU Defence Policy

Alyn Smith:

[\[14941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Air Power Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith:

[\[14942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Arctic Command and Control Effector and Sensor System Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's CBRN Defence Training Range Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Counter Battery Sensors Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Cyber and Information Domain Coordination Center Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Deployable Modular Underwater Intervention Capability Package Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Essential Elements of European Escort Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Cyber Academia and Innovation Hub Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's EUFOR Crisis Response Operation Core Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Global RPAS Insertion Architecture System Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems – MALE RPAS (Eurodrone) Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Training Certification Centre for European Armies Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Future Medium-size Tactical Cargo Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Harbour and Maritime Surveillance Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Integrated Multi-Layer Air and Missile Defence System Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Joint EU Intelligence School Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Maritime Unmanned Anti-Submarine System Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Next Generation Small RPAS Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's ROLE 2F Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[14960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Special Operations Forces Medical Training Centre Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Counter Unmanned Aerial System Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Timely Warning and Interception with Space-based Theater Surveillance Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Airborne Electronic Attack Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle / Amphibious Assault Vehicle / Light Armoured Vehicle Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Surveillance as a Service Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Cyber Ranges Federations Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Defence of Space Assets Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Electronic Warfare Capability and Interoperability Programme for Future Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Beyond Line of Sight Land Battlefield Missile Systems Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Military Partnership Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Attack Helicopters TIGER Mark III Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what criteria his Department uses to assess whether the UK would seek to participate in Permanent Structured Cooperation projects.

Alyn Smith: [\[15182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European High Atmosphere Airship Platform – Persistent Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Capability Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Military Space Surveillance Awareness Network Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Secure Software defined Radio Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the European Union Network of Diving Centres Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Future Short-Range Air to Air Missile Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Helicopter Hot and High Training Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Integrated Unmanned Ground Systems 2 Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Main Battle Tank Simulation and Testing Center Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Materials and components for technological EU competitiveness Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's One Deployable Special Operations Forces Tactical Command and Control Command Post for Small Joint Operations Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Rotorcraft Docking Station for Drones Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Strategic Air Transport for Outsized Cargo Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Anti-Torpedo Torpedo Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Automated Modelling, Identification and Damage Assessment of Urban Terrain Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Common Hub for Governmental Imagery Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Critical Seabed Infrastructure Protection Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Deployable Military Disaster Relief Capability Package Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Energy Operational Function Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Collaborative Warfare Capabilities Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Radio Navigation Solution Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Defence Airlift Training Academy Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Medical Command Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's European Patrol Corvette Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Geo-meteorological and Oceanographic Support Coordination Element Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Integrated European Joint Training and Simulation Centre Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Integrated Unmanned Ground System Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Maritime (semi) Autonomous Surface Vehicle Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Next Generation Medium Helicopter Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Robust Communication Infrastructure and Networks Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith: [\[15758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Small Scalable Weapons Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

Alyn Smith:

[\[15759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of participating in the EU's Strategic C2 System for CSDP Missions and Operations Permanent Structured Cooperation project.

James Heappey:

Our priority is to finalise entry into the PESCO Military Mobility project **before considering involvement in other projects**. However we continue to assess that the EU's existing 'third country' terms of participation for PESCO projects, involving capability development or procurement, place significant restraints on UK involvement in other PESCO projects.

We continue to constructively engage with the EU to ensure its initiatives are complementary to NATO and supportive of meaningful third country participation.

■ **Israel: Air Force**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[13623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2024 to Question 12729 on Israel: Air Force, on what dates those flights (a) arrived and (b) departed British territory; where those flights landed; and what those flights were carrying.

James Heappey:

It is standard practice for the Ministry of Defence to routinely authorise requests for limited numbers of allies and partners to overfly the UK and use UK air bases. For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the MOD does not offer comment or information relating to foreign nations' military aircraft movements or operations.

■ **Israel: Military Aircraft**

Patrick Grady:

[\[13372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason Israeli military planes have used UK airports on each occasion since 7 October 2023.

James Heappey:

It is standard practice for the Ministry of Defence to routinely authorise requests for limited numbers of allies and partners to overfly the UK and use UK air bases. For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the MOD does not offer comment or information relating to foreign nations' military aircraft movements or operations.

■ **Military Bases**

Maria Eagle:

[\[15219\]](#)

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, published on 20 July 2023, for what reason there was a constructive loss in relation to the Army Basing Programme.

James Cartlidge:

Several proposed projects under the Army Basing Programme were subject to initial assessment but did not proceed further. The costs incurred through assessment of these requirements are subject to write-off as Constructive Losses.

■ **Military Bases: Aviation****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[14190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2024 to Question 12864 on Military Bases, what (a) information and (b) assurances his Department requests from international partners on (i) military-registered and (ii) civil aircraft under the diplomatic flight clearance policy.

James Heappey:

The Diplomatic Flight Clearance policy, which applies to all state-operated flights, is a robust process. The UK is clear that the nature and purpose of this activity must be set out, whereupon the UK will decide whether or not to grant permission to utilise UK air bases.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Buildings****Maria Eagle:**[\[15220\]](#)

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, published on 20 July 2023, for what reason there was a constructive loss in relation to the Near Zero Energy Building project.

James Cartlidge:

Single Living Accommodation at Bovington was initially due to be constructed under the Near Zero Energy Building (NZEB) project. Part way through design the contractor went into administration.

Due to the delayed in-service dates, increase in proposed costs, and changes in technology making new designs more innovative, the project was no longer considered to offer value for money.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Equality****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[14548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on equality, diversity and inclusion (a) events and (b) training in the last 12 months.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

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

■ Ministry of Defence: Expenditure

Maria Eagle: [\[15218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to p.120 of his Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023, HC 1468, published on 20 July 2023, for what reason there was a constructive loss in relation to Project Doubtfulness.

James Cartlidge:

I am withholding information on Project Doubtfulness for operational security reasons.

Maria Eagle: [\[15221\]](#)

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, published on 20 July 2023, for what reason there was a loss in relation to Project Bodywork.

James Cartlidge:

Project Bodywork was cancelled in February 2021 due to a failure to meet critical design requirements.

■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

John Healey: [\[15217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to respond to Question 12255 on Defence Reform Review tabled by the hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne on 31 January 2024.

James Cartlidge:

I responded to the right hon. Member on 23 February 2024.

■ National Service

Mark Logan: [\[14972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of a system of national service for young people.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Defence purpose is to protect the people of the United Kingdom, prevent conflict, and be ready to fight our enemies. To support this, the Services offer their recruits high-quality training, both vocational and in softer skills such as teamwork and the ability to function under pressure. These recruits are volunteers, however, and the Government has no current plans to reintroduce National Service or any form of conscription.

Since 1963, it has been the policy of successive Governments that the best way of providing for the defence of our country is by maintaining professional Armed Forces which are staffed by volunteers. The demanding nature of defence today is such that we require highly trained, professional men and women in our Regular and Reserve Armed Forces, fully committed to giving their best in defending our country and its allies.

■ NATO: Military Exercises

Andrew Gwynne: [\[13527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many NATO-led (a) exercises and (b) operational deployments the armed forces participated in in each year since 2015.

James Heappey:

Additional time is required to access this information from the Ministry of Defence archives. I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[14819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the breakdown is of armed forces capabilities deployed to Poland as part of NATO exercise Steadfast Defender 24.

James Heappey:

STEADFAST DEFENDER 24 will see the British Army deploy two brigade combat teams and a 3* corps headquarters to Poland, as part of Exercises BRILLANT JUMP, POLISH DRAGON, and IMMEDIATE RESPONSE. This equates to around 4,000 personnel and 2,000 pieces of equipment across the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, 7th Light Mechanised Brigade Combat Team as the core of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (Land), and 12th Armoured Brigade Combat Team. Across Europe, an additional 3,500 theatre enablement personnel will deploy to enable port operations, cross continent force flow, and sustainment of UK forces for the duration of the exercises. There are no maritime or air capabilities deployed to Poland as part of STEADFAST DEFENDER 24.

■ Navy: Marketing and Social Media

Julie Elliott: [\[15274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the Royal Navy spent on (a) above the line marketing and (b) marketing on (i) tiktok, (ii) facebook and instagram, (iii) snapchat and (iv) X, formerly twitter, in each financial year since 2017-18.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Royal Navy (RN) has spent the following overall sums on marketing with social media platforms since Financial Year 2017-18:

YEAR	SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING SPEND
2017-18	£423,990
2018-19	£784,161
2019-20	£1,626,458
2020-21	£1,824,316
2021-22	£1,615,263

YEAR	SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING SPEND
2022-23	£1,682,000

The breakdown of spend by individual platform is commercially sensitive and it would therefore be inappropriate to provide this level of detail.

In accordance with advice from the Government Communication Service, the RN does not currently use the TikTok platform.

■ Northern Ireland: Air Force and Navy

Andrew Rosindell: [\[14493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to increase the presence in Northern Ireland of the (a) Royal Navy and (b) RAF.

James Heapey:

There is no immediate plan to expand the footprint of either the Royal Navy or Royal Air Force in Northern Ireland.

■ Republic of Ireland: Defence

Andrew Rosindell: [\[14494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with his Irish counterpart on improving bilateral military cooperation.

James Heapey:

The Secretary of State for Defence has not met with his counterpart, the Irish Minister of Defence, however, I met with Minister Burke (Minister of State at the Department of Defence with responsibility for EU Affairs) on 30 November 2023. Defence and Security Co-operation with Ireland is conducted under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2015.

■ Sloane Helicopters: Contracts

Emily Thornberry: [\[14510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2023 to Question 4104 on Sloane Helicopters: Contracts, what is the value of the contract extension agreed between his Department and Sloane Helicopters to cover the period from the expiry of the previous Rotary Wing Command Support Air Transport Helicopter Service contract on 30 September 2023 and the start of the new contract with procurement reference 412734/1312240 on 1 December 2024.

James Cartlidge:

To release the value of this contract extension could prejudice my Department's and our commercial partner's commercial interests for a future competition for the Rotary Wing Command Support Air Transport Helicopter Service contract. The value of the

contract let under the future competition will be published as part of the Contract Award Notice which will be available on Contracts Finder.

■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

John Healey: [\[13891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2024 to Question 12510 on Ukraine: Military Aid, if he will publish a breakdown of the allocation.

James Heappey:

As in previous years, we expect the £2.5 billion to cover a broad range of support to Ukraine including rapid procurement and gifting of equipment, development of international capability coalitions and training support through Op INTERFLEX. As previously announced, £200 million of the £2.5 billion will be spent on thousands of military drones for Ukraine. Precise allocations will be decided before the beginning of the next financial year in April.

Alexander Stafford: [\[14741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effectiveness of the Army Reserves' assistance to Ukraine since the start of the Ukraine War.

James Heappey:

The Army Reserve has provided considerable assistance as part of the UK's enduring commitment to Ukraine. Reservists from across the Army Reserve have integrated seamlessly with their Regular counterparts conducting both mobilised and non-mobilised work, reflecting their adaptability to contribute to operational outputs including a variety of specialty areas. This value is aptly demonstrated by Trident Company. Mobilised in 2023, Trident Company is the first Reservist company to help deliver OPERATION INTERFLEX, the UK-based Armed Forces' training programme to develop and prepare Ukrainian recruits.

■ **Veterans: Radiation Exposure**

Dr Thérèse Coffey: [\[14568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what guidance his Department has issued on medal presentation ceremonies for recipients of the nuclear test veteran medal.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 January 2024 to Question 900875 to the hon. Member for the Vale of Clwyd (Dr James Davies).

Attachments:

1. Veterans Support [UIN 900875.docx]

EDUCATION**■ Childcare: Leaflets**

Bridget Phillipson: [\[14849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much her Department has spent on (a) producing and (b) delivering leaflets to households entitled Help for Households, Get help that fits your family, Childcare Choices.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[14850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the cost to the public purse was of delivering government leaflets entitled Childcare Choices: Get the help that fits your family via (a) Royal Mail and (b) other delivery companies.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[14851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the cost to the public purse was of advertising the upcoming extension to funded childcare hours.

David Johnston:

Childcare Choices is an ongoing campaign and costings will be published in the usual way in the department's annual reports and accounts.

■ Department for Education: Information Officers

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[14026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

Damian Hinds:

The department's press and media team is made up of 34.1 full time equivalent (FTE) employees. Roles range from grades Assistant Information Officer (AIO) to Deputy Director (SCS1). Salary bands range from between £32,970 to £34,006 for an AIO and from £75,000 to £117,800 for a Civil Service Deputy Director (SCS1). There is one role at SCS1 level.

The above FTE figure is for the department's press and media team only, which includes social media.

■ Education: Boys

Philip Davies: [\[14829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the educational attainment of white working class boys.

Damian Hinds:

'Working class' is not a characteristic used by the department in monitoring pupil attainment. Disaggregated data at a national level for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 is

available for pupil characteristics by gender, disadvantage, free school meal eligibility, ethnicity, special educational need status and month of birth.

The latest Key Stage 2 data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-2-attainment>.

The latest Key Stage 4 data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance>.

The government has long-standing programmes designed to close the educational attainment gap and improve the education of all children and young people, whatever their background or circumstance.

■ Education: Mental Health

Mrs Helen Grant:

[14027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of making mental health first aid a compulsory component of teacher training.

Damian Hinds:

The department is committed to ensuring that all pupils can reach their potential and receive excellent support from their teachers. The Teachers' Standards set clear expectations that teachers must understand the needs of all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). To be awarded qualified teacher status trainees must demonstrate that they have met all the Teachers' Standards at the appropriate level. This includes the requirement that all teachers must have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils. Early career teachers (ECTs) are also assessed against the Teachers' Standards to pass their induction.

Both the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) and Early Career Framework (ECF) set out the core body of knowledge, skills and behaviours that define great teaching for new teachers and must be incorporated into ITT courses and ECF-based programmes, which includes content on SEND and adaptive teaching. Courses and programmes should be appropriate for the context in which the teacher is or will be working; for some, this will already include content on mental health. It is incumbent on providers to determine the full curriculum, including how to ensure coverage of everything necessary within limited training time.

Following a review of the CCF and ECF in 2023, the updated and combined ITT and ECF (ITTECF) was published on 30 January 2024, for delivery from September 2025. The review paid particular attention to the needs of new teachers when supporting pupils with SEND. There is now significantly more content related to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND. The department has included new content on teachers knowing who to contact to provide support with any pupil mental health concerns.

The department has also committed to offer all state schools and colleges in England a grant to train a senior mental health lead (SMHL) by 2025, enabling them to

introduce effective whole school or college approaches to mental health and wellbeing. This training covers the range of mental health issues likely to be encountered in schools and colleges and the risk factors associated with specific groups. Over 15,100 settings that have claimed a grant so far, including more than 7 in 10 state-funded secondary schools. More information on the grant can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing>.

To expand access to early mental health support, the department is continuing to roll out Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to schools and colleges. These teams deliver evidence-based interventions for mild-to-moderate mental health issues and support SMHLs with their whole school approach. As of April 2023, MHSTs covered 35% of pupils in schools and learners in further education in England, with coverage planned to extend to at least 50% by the end of March 2025.

Mental wellbeing is also part of the statutory Health Education curriculum. For example, pupils are taught to recognise and talk about their emotions, and how to seek support. The department has published a support package on GOV.UK, including content specifically on teaching about mental health and wellbeing.

■ Further Education: Care Leavers

Fleur Anderson:

[14966]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps her Department has taken to support care leavers move into (a) further and (b) tertiary education.

David Johnston:

In 'Stable Homes, Built on Love', the strategy for the reform of children's social care, the department gave a commitment to improve the education, employment and training outcomes of children in care and care leavers by 2027. This can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/650966a322a783001343e844/Childrens_Social_Care_Stable_Homes_Built_on_Love_consultation_response.pdf.

The department set out a number of actions to take this forward, including:

- The national rollout of £24 million of Pupil Premium Plus-style funding to looked-after children and care leavers in 16-19 education, building on an initial £8 million pilot that launched in October 2021. £10 million was allocated to local authorities in the 2023/24 financial year, with a further £14 million to be allocated in 2024/25.
- Developing an accreditation scheme for higher and further education providers that will set core standards for the support offered to care experienced students, helping increase participation and improve outcomes for this cohort. The department has previously published guidance for higher education providers on how they can ensure care leavers have the support they need to access, and succeed at, university. This can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-to-guide-he-providers-on->

[improving-care-leavers-access-and-participation-in-he/principles-to-guide-higher-education-providers-on-improving-care-leavers-access-and-participation-in-he.](#)

- Increasing the Apprenticeships Care Leavers' Bursary from £1,000 to £3,000, from August 2023, to provide greater financial security for care leavers choosing apprenticeships. This recognises that care leavers face higher living costs than their peers as they often live independently at a younger age and may not have a wider familial network for support.
- Increasing funding for the care leaver covenant by 30% in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to extend its reach and impact. Over 450 organisations have now signed the covenant, including John Lewis, Amazon and Sky, offering employment and other opportunities to support care leavers' transition to independent living.

In addition to the bursary, the department pays businesses and training providers £1,000 for every care leaver apprentice they employ or train. Employers and providers are free to use their additional funding wherever needed to support their apprentices, including contributions to travel or childcare costs, or the provision of additional mentoring.

■ International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: Higher Education

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the number of higher education institutions that have not adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

Robert Halfon:

Last week's report by the Community Security Trust highlights the unprecedented increase in antisemitic incidents in higher education. All antisemitism is abhorrent and universities should have robust systems in place to deal with incidents of support for unlawful antisemitic abuse and harassment. This government takes antisemitism extremely seriously and is deeply concerned about the growth in incidents on campus since 7 October 2023. This is completely unacceptable. The department will not tolerate unlawful harassment or the glorification of terrorism. A link to the report can be found here:

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

The government has formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. The department is pleased to see that as of 21 February 2024, 245 providers in England have adopted the definition, including the vast majority of universities. While adoption of the IHRA definition is not compulsory for universities, as they are autonomous, the department continues to strongly encourage providers to adopt the definition for universal clarity on what constitutes antisemitic behaviour. However, the department recognises that the IHRA definition alone is not enough. That's why the department is working to introduce the tackling antisemitism quality seal. This is a framework of measures that will allow universities to demonstrate support for Jewish students and staff. This

quality seal is part of the package resulting from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement announcement of an additional £7 million over three years to tackle antisemitism in education.

The Quality Seal is an award for universities demonstrating exemplary standards in addressing antisemitism. It encompasses policies related to communication with Jewish students, training programs, and robust complaint processes. The department has invited bids from capable organisations to implement this initiative. The deadline for bids is 7 March 2024 and the department aims to appoint a contractor in April 2024. A Tackling Antisemitism Champion, respected by both the Jewish community and higher education sector, will be appointed to help universities meet these standards and strengthen universities' ability to deal with the rising levels of antisemitism on campuses. Additionally, funding allocated for combating antisemitism in education will support universities in achieving the required benchmarks.

■ Multi-academy Trusts: Charities

Ian Paisley:

[\[14075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing multi-academy trusts to be registered as charities rather than exempt charities.

Damian Hinds:

There are no current plans to review the charity status of academy trusts. All academy trusts are exempt charities under paragraph 8 of Schedule 3 to the Charities Act 2011. Exempt charities benefit from the same tax advantages as registered charities and have the same obligations to comply with tax and charity law.

Further information about how academy trusts operate as exempt charities can be found in the department's advice on 'exempt charities and the role of the Secretary of State as Principal Regulator' on GOV.UK, which is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b935aed915d4147621457/Academies_as_exempt_charities_FINAL3.pdf.

The department requires a high level of accountability and transparency of all academy trusts. Their status as companies, charities and public sector bodies means they are all subject to rigorous accountability systems.

■ Music: Teachers

Sir Chris Bryant:

[\[15234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average wage of teachers in music education hubs was in the latest period for which data is available.

Damian Hinds:

Music Hubs cover every area of England and are made up of partnerships that support, deliver and enable children and young people to access music education within a local area. These partnerships are co-ordinated by a Hub Lead Organisation (HLOs) which is responsible for the funding and governance of the Hub. As the

fundholder and accountable body for the Hub programme, Arts Council England (ACE) oversees the management of Music Hubs including payments, monitoring the risk to investment and monitoring the performance of Hubs. The department provides the funding for the grant award to HLOs each year.

The terms and conditions of staff is the responsibility of either the HLO or any other music service or equivalent organisation working in partnership with the HLO and for whom they hold grant funding. HLOs also need to apply ACE standard grant terms and conditions, including in relation to the workforce.

ACE collects and publishes workforce information on an annual basis and this is published on the ACE Hub Data Dashboard which is available on their website here: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/MusicEducationHubs/music-education-hubs-survey-and-data#t-in-page-nav-2>.

The workforce dashboard for 2021/22 shows that the number of permanent staff (full-time or part-time) across all areas of England is 6,588. The number of staff employed on a contractual basis is 1,665 and the number of self-employed or freelance staff is 3,104. ACE does not collect information on the type of contract or average wage or income of staff, including teachers.

■ Overseas Students

Paul Blomfield: [\[14852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of ending funding for the UK Council for International Student Affairs on the adequacy of support available to international students.

Robert Halfon:

The government appreciates the significant economic and cultural contribution that international students make to UK higher education.

The government remains committed to the ambitions set out in its International Education Strategy, including the aim to host 600,000 international students in the UK per year by 2030. The government is proud to have met this ambition two years running.

Universities also offer a range of dedicated support to their international students before they arrive in the UK, on arrival and during their studies. Organisations such as the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and the British Council continue to provide information to international students entering the UK.

■ Schools: Construction

Bridget Phillipson: [\[14036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an estimate of the number of (a) elements of school estates currently in use and (b) open schools containing at least one such element which were constructed using the block and beam method of concrete construction in (i) each local authority area and (ii) England.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[14037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had reason to revise her (a) assessment of the safety of the block and beam method, (b) assessment of the safe operating life of the block and beam method and (c) advice to schools where the block and beam method was used as part of the construction method for any part of the building since 25 October 2022.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[14040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether guidance is available to schools on the management of (a) buildings and (b) building elements made from block and beam concrete.

Damian Hinds:

Academy trusts, local authorities, and voluntary-aided school bodies are responsible for collecting and recording information about their buildings and ensuring they are safe, well-maintained and comply with relevant regulations. The department supports schools and colleges on how this should be done in the Good Estate Management for Schools guidance, which is available on GOV.UK.

Departmental officials have regular discussions with relevant professional bodies and leading material specialists to ensure that they are aware of any emerging evidence regarding the safety of construction materials used in the education estate. The department does not hold a central register of construction types used in the education estate.

Schools: Defibrillators**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[14219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on ensuring that every school in (a) Stoke-on-Trent, (b) Kidsgrove and (c) Talke has a defibrillator.

Damian Hinds:

On 17 July 2022, the department announced that it would be ensuring all state-funded schools in England had access to an automated external defibrillator (AEDs).

In July 2023, the department confirmed that the defibrillator programme had successfully completed the rollout of over 20,000 defibrillators to almost 18,000 schools, ensuring that all state-funded schools in England have access to this life saving first-aid equipment. This includes schools in Stoke-on-Trent, Kidsgrove and Talke.

More information about this programme is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-children-get-access-to-life-saving-defibrillators>.

■ Schools: Greater London**Feryal Clark:****[14407]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London received school improvement grants in (i) 2010-2017 and (ii) 2017-2023; how many grants were received in each period; and what the total amount for each school was in each period.

Damian Hinds:

Departmental records show that:

(a) In the Enfield North constituency, no schools received or benefited from specific school improvement grants between 2010 and 2017. Between 2017 and the end of December 2023, 11 schools (c.21%) received or benefited from those specific school improvement grants.

(b) In the London Borough of Enfield, four schools (c.3%) received or benefited from specific school improvement grants between 2010 and 2017. Between 2017 and the end of December 2023, 23 schools (c.19%) received or benefited from specific school improvement grants.

(c) In London, 157 schools (c.4%) and nine academy trusts received or benefited from specific school improvement grants between 2010 and 2017. Between 2017 and the end of December 2023, 290 schools (c.10%) and 35 academy trusts received or benefited from specific school improvement grants.

The following specific grants have been included in this analysis:

- Regional Academy Growth fund (RAGF) 2016/2017
- Multi-academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund (MDIF) 2018/2019
- Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF) - 2019 to date
- Strategic School Improvement Capital Budget (SSICB) - 2016 to date
- Environmental Improvement Grant (EIG) - 2016 to date
- Emergency Strategic Improvement Fund (ESIF) - 2017 to date
- School Improvement offer (SI) - 2018 to 2020
- Trust and School Improvement offer (TSI) – 2021 to date

The department has limited this analysis to state-funded schools or establishments. The department has also included grants allocated for sponsored academy conversions as a result of government intervention between 2010 to date, as well as grants for transferring academies between academy trusts between 2012 to date, because these grants may include elements for school improvement activities.

This analysis has been limited to these grants as they can be quantified for some of the time periods requested. The department's policy of retaining financial records for seven years limits access to data before the 2016/17 financial year. Older data

included in this analysis may be incomplete. Other grants by the department may contribute less directly to wider school improvement. In addition, many of these and other grants are allocated via academy trusts or other organisations and so schools may benefit indirectly without being the designated recipient from the department. Finally, not all grant programs have been operational throughout the entire 2010 to 2023 period.

For a summary of the grants awarded, please refer to Tables 1a-1c attached. For detailed grant awards to schools, where available, please see attached Tables 2a-2c.

■ Schools: Mobile Phones

Munira Wilson:

[\[14964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's guidance on mobile phones in schools, published on 19 February 2024, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the guidance on the number of children using mobile phones in school.

Damian Hinds:

The department assessed the different approaches to managing the use of mobile phones in schools in the 'School Snapshot Survey: Winter 2019'.

This showed that 48% of secondary schools permitted regulated use of mobile phones at specific points during the school day and that only 16% had outright bans.

In March 2023, 15% of school leaders and 53% of pupils reported that mobile phones were used in lessons when they were not supposed to. Mobile phone use in lessons when not permitted can have an impact on the learning time for all pupils in the class and lead to online bullying, distraction and classroom disruption.

The publication of the 'Mobile phones in schools' guidance has the potential to impact pupils using phones in all schools where strict policies have not yet been effectively implemented.

■ Schools: Northumberland

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[14844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the safety of school buildings in Northumberland; and what recent steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of those buildings.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[14845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the safety of school buildings in Somerset; and what recent steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of those buildings.

Damian Hinds:

It is the responsibility of those running schools, such as academy trusts and local authorities, to ensure their schools are safe and well-maintained. The department has

allocated over £15 billion since 2015 for keeping schools safe and operational, including £1.8 billion committed this financial year. This funding is informed by consistent data on the school estate. In addition, the School Rebuilding Programme will transform buildings at over 500 schools across England.

When the department is made aware of a significant issue with a building that cannot be managed locally, the department provides additional support on a case-by-case basis.

Departmental officials have regular discussions with relevant professional bodies and leading material specialists to ensure that they are aware of any emerging evidence regarding the safety of construction materials used in the education estate.

■ State Education and Private Education: Pupils

Neil O'Brien: [\[14939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of pupils in (a) secondary and (b) primary education were in (i) independent and (ii) state schools per local authority in England in each year since 2010.

Neil O'Brien: [\[14940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on the number and proportion of (a) secondary and (b) primary school pupils are in independent schools in each local authority in (i) England, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland.

Damian Hinds:

As education is a devolved matter, the department only holds this information for schools in England. The department publishes annual figures on the number of pupils in different types of schools in England, which is accessible at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2022-23>.

Additionally, the department publishes data which shows the number of pupils in state-funded primary and secondary schools in each local authority from January 2016 to January 2023, which is accessible here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/b8a00d3a-301f-4997-e472-08dc32b112d8>.

The publication does not distinguish between primary and secondary independent schools. However, a broad definition based on the age range of the pupils catered for can be applied.

The department has also published data showing the ages of pupils at independent schools in each local authority from January 2016 to January 2023, which is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/04f0b5e2-a007-4817-e471-08dc32b112d8>. To note, pupils aged between four and ten are usually in primary school and pupils aged between eleven and nineteen are usually in secondary school.

Prior to 2016, the department published the number of pupils by local authority and phase of school but this did not include the breakdown by pupil age. Data showing the total number of pupils in state-funded primary and secondary schools and independent schools in each local authority is accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers>. This data does not allow for age breakdowns to be used to estimate what proportion of the independent school pupils were primary or secondary age.

■ Transform Schools (Stoke)

Jonathan Gullis: [\[14222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools in Stoke-on-Trent were built under a private finance initiative (PFI) contract with Transform Schools (Stoke) Limited.

Damian Hinds:

The Stoke Local Authority school private finance initiative (PFI) contract was signed in the year 2000 and covers 88 schools in the area. The contracts were commonplace from 1998 to 2009. The department recognises that some schools with PFI contracts face higher costs.

From the information provided by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the department understands that the 13 schools listed in the attached PDF were built under the PFI contract with Transform Schools (Stoke) Limited (TSSL). The department is also aware that other schools covered by the same contract received various levels of refurbishment. Stoke-on-Trent City Council will hold the detail relating to this.

Attachments:

1. 14222_table [14222_table.pdf]

Jonathan Gullis: [\[14348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding the Government has given to (a) schools in Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Transform Schools (Stoke) Ltd in relation to the PFI contract between Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Transform Schools (Stoke) Ltd in each of the last 10 years.

Damian Hinds:

The Stoke Local Authority school private finance initiative (PFI) contract was signed in the year 2000 and covers 88 schools in the area. The contracts were commonplace from 1998 to 2009. The department recognises that some schools with PFI contracts face higher costs.

No payments are made by the department directly to Transform Schools (Stoke) Ltd in relation to the Stoke PFI contract. All payments under this PFI contract to Transform Schools (Stoke) Ltd are made by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Departmental funding for the Stoke PFI contract is sent via other organisations, rather than directly to schools, and for each of the last ten years is set out in the table attached.

Attachments:

1. 14348_table [14348_table.pdf]

Jonathan Gullis:[\[14349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools in Stoke-on-Trent are included in the PFI contract with Transform Schools (Stoke) Ltd.

Damian Hinds:

The Stoke Local Authority school private finance initiative (PFI) contract was signed in the year 2000 and covers 88 schools in the area. The contracts were commonplace from 1998 to 2009. The department recognises that some schools with PFI contracts face higher costs.

Information on the Stoke-on-Trent schools in the PFI contract with Transform Schools (Stoke) Limited was provided by the local authority and can be found in the attached PDF.

Attachments:

1. 14349_table [14349_table.pdf]

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Health and Safety****Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[15106\]](#)

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

Graham Stuart:

The Department empowers its managers to work with their team members to plan and agree their workload and ways of working, allowing for flexible, hybrid and collaborative working. The Department works with the Government Property Agency to provide a variety of work settings within its offices, including workstations, meeting rooms and collaborative workspaces. Department buildings are risk assessed to give a safe and healthy working environment for staff, and where required, specialist work equipment and software is provided. This allows staff to adapt and manage their workloads, working times and work equipment to best suit their activities.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Software**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[15440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much funding her Department and the predecessor Department has (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on software updates to legacy computer systems in each of the last three financial years.

Graham Stuart:

The Legacy Risk Assessment will be prepared and submitted to Cabinet by the end of the current Financial year.

■ Energy: Prices

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[15400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress her Department has made on the fairness and affordability review on consumer energy bills.

Amanda Solloway:

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

We are continuing to support households with the cost of living past April 2024. In the Autumn Statement the Government announced the biggest increase to the National Living Wage, which will benefit around 2.7 million workers and is worth £1,800 to a full-time worker. We also announced an increase to benefits of 6.7% which is worth around £470.

■ Offshore Industry: Biodiversity

Paul Blomfield:

[\[15055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill on the global biodiversity framework.

Graham Stuart:

The UK is committed to implementing the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework which aims to halt and reverse global biodiversity loss and contains a target to protect at least 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030.

The UK has a comprehensive legal framework of environmental protection measures for offshore oil and gas activities. Section 12 of the Impact Assessment published alongside the Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill sets out how the environmental principles of the Environment Act have been considered in the development of this Bill.

■ Renewable Energy: Finance

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[15414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much funding has been allocated for the Contracts for Difference : Allocation Round 6.

Andrew Bowie:

The Budget Notice for Allocation Round 6 of the Contracts for Difference Scheme is due to be published by 13 March 2024. The Government seeks to set the budget at a level that supports competition and delivers on the deployment and value for money objectives of the scheme.

■ Solar Power: Land Use**Alicia Kearns:** [\[15490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether her Department plans to introduce a national monitoring system to track land being developed for ground mounted solar.

Andrew Bowie:

The Department has no current plans to introduce such a system.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Air Pollution****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[14205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will provide additional funding to organisations that increase awareness of how people can protect themselves from air pollution.

Robbie Moore:

The grant has been running since 1997 and regularly funds projects aimed at increasing the awareness of the impacts of air pollution. Around £53 million has been awarded across almost 500 projects through the Air Quality Grant scheme since 2010. Projects have included anti-idling campaigns around schools, raising awareness about the impacts of domestic burning, and measures to encourage active travel.

■ Air Pollution: Ethnic Groups**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[14206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the impact of (a) incinerators and (b) air pollution on (i) Black and (ii) Asian communities.

Robbie Moore:

The Government recognises there is more to do to protect all people in our society and the environment from the effects of air pollution. This is why we are taking the significant and wide-ranging action to drive improvements to air quality as set out in our Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. This action is supported by the Environment Act 2021, which makes sure that local authorities have the necessary powers to tackle emissions collaboratively in their local area to improve air quality. Through the Act we also introduced two new targets for fine particulate matter, the pollutant most damaging to human health, setting a maximum annual mean concentration target and a population exposure reduction target. This dual-target approach will improve public health for all by tackling the highest concentrations whilst ensuring all areas benefit from continuous improvement. We continue to support local authorities in England to take action in their communities through the

Local Air Quality Grant, which has awarded around £53 million to almost 500 projects since 2010

With regards to incinerators, in England all large waste incinerators cannot operate unless issued with an environmental permit by the Environment Agency (EA). The EA will only grant a permit if they are satisfied that the proposal would not give rise to any significant pollution of the environment or harm to human health, irrespective of the location of the plant. The EA also consults the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) on every permit application they receive. The UKHSA's position relating to incineration is that modern, well-run and regulated municipal waste incinerators are not a significant risk to public health

Under their permit, the operator must comply with the Best Available Techniques (BAT) conclusions for waste incineration. These BAT conclusions were reviewed and updated in 2019, introducing new standards which deliver an improved level of environmental protection. This includes even lower Emission Limit Values (ELVs) for oxides of nitrogen, particulates, sulphur dioxide, hydrogen chloride, dioxins and a number of other pollutants. All environmental permits for existing waste incinerators were reviewed and updated by the compliance deadline of 3rd December 2023 to reflect these new standards.

■ **Air Pollution: Health Education**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[14208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take additional steps to increase public awareness of how people can protect themselves from the impacts of air pollution.

Robbie Moore:

The Government is undertaking a comprehensive review of how we communicate air quality information to ensure members of the public, and vulnerable groups in particular, have what they need to protect themselves and understand their impact on air quality. This review is being undertaken by the Air Quality Information Systems steering group; the group's recommendations will be published summer 2024.

■ **Air Pollution: Poverty**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[14207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the impact of air pollution on people in poverty.

Robbie Moore:

The Government recognises there is more to do to protect all people in our society and the environment from the effects of air pollution. This is why we are taking the significant and wide-ranging action to drive improvements to air quality as set out in our Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.

This action is supported by the Environment Act 2021, which makes sure that local authorities have the necessary powers to tackle emissions collaboratively in their

local area to improve air quality. Through the Act we also introduced two new targets for fine particulate matter, the pollutant most damaging to human health, setting a maximum annual mean concentration target and a population exposure reduction target. This dual-target approach will improve public health for all by tackling the highest concentrations whilst ensuring all areas benefit from continuous improvement.

We continue to support local authorities in England to take action in their communities through the Local Air Quality Grant, which has awarded around £53 million to almost 500 projects since 2010.

■ **Animal Welfare (Electronic Collars) (England) Regulations 2023**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[14526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the Leader of the House on the timetable for laying the necessary motion to bring into force the draft Animal Welfare (Electronic Collars) (England) Regulations 2023.

Mark Spencer:

The Government remains committed to introducing a ban on the use of e-collars. We will pursue new regulations to deliver this commitment on a revised timeline. Decisions will take place in the usual manner.

■ **Farmers: Mental Health Services**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[15508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help support farmers with their mental health and wellbeing.

Mark Spencer:

Defra recognises the vital work the charity sector is already doing to support farmers who are struggling to cope with the pressures of farming. Initiatives include in-person counselling support for farmers, crisis helplines, online services, mental health training for the farming sector and other outreach events designed to reach more farmers in need. Defra also established the Farmer Welfare Forum to bring together England's largest farming welfare organisations to ensure that Defra is fully informed on farmer wellbeing challenges.

The Prime Minister recently announced that Defra is exploring options to work with and support charitable organisations over the next 12 months. A share of £500,000 will be awarded to a number of farmer welfare charities to support their vital work in 2024/25. The main objective is to partner with charities that focus on farmer wellbeing, particularly those that help farming people struggling with stress, anxiety and/or depression and are in the most remote or hard to reach areas.

In addition, we are already providing expert business support to farmers under the Farming Resilience Fund. One of the key required outcomes for the Resilience Fund

is that farmers' mental health and wellbeing are supported, where required. Some delivery providers are offering this support from in-house experts and others are signposting support available from specialist external services. The Resilience Fund runs until March 2025 and any Basic Payment Scheme recipient in England is eligible to receive support. Further information is available on the GOV.UK website.

■ Fly-grazing

David Simmonds:

[\[14319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support local authorities (a) manage and (b) care for neglected horses that have been left to fly-graze.

Mark Spencer:

The Control of Horses Act 2015 provides powers for landowners, land occupiers and local authorities to deal with horses placed unlawfully on any land, public or private (including equine abandonments). The 2015 Act allows for action to be taken quickly where horses are placed on land without the land-owner's permission. If no owner can be identified within four working days, options include rehoming, either privately or via charities, or offering the horses for sale.

Local authorities are responsible for compliance with the legislation and its enforcement. Enforcement will vary according to location, depending on local priorities. We therefore encourage all interested parties to work together at local level to use the available powers to address the problem of abandoned horses.

The Government considers that the relevant legislation and guidance in place provides the right safeguards and powers in respect of protecting equine welfare. We remain committed to working with enforcement agencies and other interested parties to ensure issues of horse abandonments or neglect are effectively addressed.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Bahrain: Demonstrations

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[15479\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make representations to his Bahraini counterpart on the (a) arrest and (b) raid on the house of Sayed Hashim Neama Al-Wadaei on 22 February 2024, in the context of his mother's arrest for protesting during the 2023 Bahrain Grand Prix; and if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of these events.

David Rutley:

The FCDO has been made aware of the alleged incidents, and we continue to encourage the Government of Bahrain to meet all of its human rights commitments. We also encourage those with specific concerns to raise them directly with the appropriate Bahraini oversight body.

■ Development Aid**Fleur Anderson:**[\[14965\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent steps his department has taken to improve the efficiency of UK aid programmes with regards to (a) reducing poverty and (b) increasing prosperity

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Last November, the UK published the International Development White Paper which set out our agenda to re-energise progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including the central aim of eliminating extreme poverty. To this end, the UK has committed to spend at least 50 per cent of our bilateral ODA in the Least Developed Countries by 2030.

Our goal, as set out in the White Paper, is to help countries transform the productivity of their economies at a pace sufficient to meet the needs of their growing populations, mobilise investment, provide quality jobs and deliver quality public services for their citizens.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Health and Safety**Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[15112\]](#)

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

David Rutley:

The FCDO designs work and workplaces to adapt to the needs of individuals where practicable, noting our UK and international presence. Work is underway to review the accessibility of all our global estate, to ensure it is fit for purpose, accessible and safe. The majority of our estate has flexible, ergonomic workplaces which should accommodate most individuals' requirements. Where individuals require workplace adjustments, specialist equipment or a review of their working arrangements, we have a dedicated function responsible for assessing and assisting these colleagues. FCDO sites provide colleagues with a range of supportive working environments, including desks, collaborative working spaces and meeting rooms.

■ Gaza: Development Aid**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[15374\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 20 February 2024 to Question 13839 on Gaza: Development Aid, how much and what proportion of the Overseas Development Aid for the Occupied Palestinian Territories was spent in Gaza in each year since 2012.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer given on 20 February 2024 to Question 13839, the answer can be found on the Q&A web pages on <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-08/13839>.

Since 2012, the UK has provided £805 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), including work in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Key programmes such as humanitarian relief, support to economic development and employment, and essential services delivery for Palestinian refugees have worked in all parts of the OPTs and operate flexibly between different areas in order to have the most impact. We are therefore unable to provide a firm breakdown of spend between the different parts of the OPTs.

We trebled our aid commitment this financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in and open more crossings. 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 to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

■ Gaza: Hospitals**Stephen Morgan:**[\[14716\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a field hospital in Gaza.

Stephen Morgan:[\[14718\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has held discussions with his counterparts in the Middle East on the potential merits of temporarily evacuating children with urgent medical needs in Gaza to provide those children with emergency medical treatment.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

There is much we can do in the region, for example, helping in the field hospitals that have been established, helping to send medical teams to referral hospitals in the region and supporting organisations such as Medical Aid for Palestinians.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it.

Our commitment to trebling aid to Gaza still stands. 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 to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**[\[14822\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help provide humanitarian support at the Rafah crossing.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza. Our focus must be on practical solutions that save lives. We trebled our aid commitment this financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in and open more crossings. Israel must take steps, working with other partners including the UN and Egypt, to significantly increase the flow of aid into Gaza including allowing prolonged humanitarian pauses, opening more routes into Gaza and restoring and sustaining water, fuel and electricity.

The Foreign Secretary discussed the urgency of getting significantly more aid into Gaza to alleviate the desperate situation with Prime Minister Netanyahu last week. We have reiterated the need for Israel to open more crossing points into Gaza, for Nitzana and Kerem Shalom to be open for longer, and for Israel to support the UN to distribute aid effectively across the whole of Gaza. The Foreign Secretary has also appointed a Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, who is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

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.

■ Gaza: Israel**Dan Carden:**[\[14371\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of civilian infrastructure that has been destroyed in Gaza since 7 October 2023.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. We continue to press these points in engagements with Israeli counterparts and international partners, including during the Prime Minister's call with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 15 February.

We are deeply concerned about the impact of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) operations on the civilian population in Gaza.

As the occupying power in Gaza, Israel has to make sure that humanitarian aid, including food, water and shelter, is available to people in Gaza.

As we have said, we want to see 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.

The international community will need to make a massive effort to deliver a reconstruction plan for Gaza.

■ Myanmar: Bilateral Aid

Fiona Bruce: [\[15434\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using the bilateral aid allocated to the Myanmar-UK Health Partnership programme to (a) support and (b) protect (i) nurses and (ii) healthcare workers targeted by the Junta regime in Myanmar.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government remains committed to assisting nurses and healthcare workers in Myanmar. The Myanmar-UK Health Partnership has supported Myanmar health workers to establish pop-up clinics and provided crucial training to develop capacity in opposition-held areas. It supplies doctors and nurses in Myanmar with web-based learning materials and has provided more than 3,000 nurses with nursing training. The programme has also supported the provision of direct services through digital methods, such as telemedicine services. The programme is designed to ensure that Myanmar's population can access healthcare services despite access constraints, while reducing the risks to health workers.

■ Myanmar: Rohingya

Fiona Bruce: [\[15431\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the funding his Department has provided to NGOs to help support Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Fiona Bruce: [\[15432\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the funding his Department provided to the International Organization for Migration for healthcare projects for the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Fiona Bruce: [\[15433\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the funding his Department has provided to healthcare projects for Rohingya and other Muslim minorities in the Rakhine state.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has provided over £30 million in humanitarian and food security support for the Rohingya and other Muslim communities in Rakhine state since 2017, reaching over 160,000 Rohingya people, and is the largest donor of water, sanitation and

hygiene services to Rohingya Internally Displaced Persons camps in central Rakhine. The UK also works to provide essential health services to approximately 3.3 million people in Myanmar, including in Rakhine, through a multilateral programme with the International Organisation for Migration. FCDO programmes undergo an annual review of effectiveness, using a results framework. These are published to the Development Tracker website [<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk>].

■ Nigeria: Conflict Prevention

Jim Shannon: [\[15068\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria programme on religious conflict in the Middle Belt.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Intercommunal violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt has a devastating effect on faith and non-faith communities. The root causes of this intercommunal violence are often complex and include competition over resources and disruption to traditional ways of life created by environmental degradation, in addition to religious factors. The Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria programme (SPRING) will support Nigeria to address the root causes of conflict in the Middle Belt, including natural resource management challenges. The programme will aim to help 1.5 million women and men benefit from reduced violence in their communities and support 300,000 people to better adapt to the effects of environmental degradation.

■ Palestinians: Internally Displaced People

Dan Carden: [\[14920\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he is taking diplomatic steps to help prevent the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Government firmly rejects any suggestion of the resettlement of Palestinians outside of Gaza.

Gaza is Occupied Palestinian Territory and will be part of a future Palestinian state. We support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

We want the fighting to stop now. 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.

■ Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment

Andy Slaughter:

[\[15421\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications of his policies of the (a) number of executions, (b) reported increase in the number of women executed, (c) execution of people who were juveniles at the time of their alleged crimes and (d) offences which resulted in the imposition of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in 2023.

David Rutley:

The UK strongly opposes the death penalty in all countries and circumstances. The UK raises the use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia through a variety of interlocutors. The Minister for the Middle East and Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, continues to regularly raise the death penalty with the Saudi authorities, particularly where there are allegations regarding people who may have been juveniles at the time of their alleged crimes. Additionally, in January, the UK also recommended the total abolishment of the juvenile death penalty in Saudi Arabia at the UN Human Rights Council.

■ Saudi Arabia: Human Rights

Andy Slaughter:

[\[15419\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make representations to his Saudi counterpart to support the implementation of his Department's recommendations at Saudi Arabia's Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council.

David Rutley:

Saudi Arabia remains an FCDO Human Rights Priority Country. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, regularly discusses human rights with the Saudi authorities, including the Saudi Vice Foreign Minister and the Saudi Ambassador in London. The UK submitted three recommendations at Saudi Arabia's recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Lord Ahmad has made representations to the Saudi Authorities regarding all UK recommendations both prior to and following the UPR, including with the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, Dr Hala Al-Tuwaijri, on 31 January. We will continue to engage with the Saudi authorities, particularly the Human Rights Commission, about the implementation of our recommendations.

Andy Slaughter:

[\[15422\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made representations to his Saudi counterpart on the use of (a) judicial and (b) non-judicial travel bans on (i) prisoners of conscience released from prison and (ii) family members of peaceful activists in that country.

David Rutley:

We raise human rights with the Saudi authorities at all levels, including ministerial channels. The UK highlighted concern about the use of travel bans in the most recent Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report. We continue to monitor individual cases, including those pertaining to freedom of expression, and will continue to raise concerns with the Saudi authorities.

■ **Shell: Nigeria****Clive Lewis:**[\[15307\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled UK National Action Plan on implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: progress update, published in May 2020, whether he has had recent discussions with Shell on (a) tackling legacy oil pollution in the Niger Delta and (b) its adherence to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in Nigeria.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Government has consistently supported the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and is clear that we expect UK businesses to comply with all applicable laws; identify and prevent human rights risks; and behave in line with the UNGPs. The UK Government regularly discusses with Shell the importance of action to address the risks of pollution from oil production in the Niger Delta. We continue to support initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of oil and gas production in Nigeria, including encouraging the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project to meet the needs of the communities affected by pollution.

■ **Social Rented Housing: EU Nationals****Catherine West:**[\[14273\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2024 to Question 12419 on Social Rented Housing: EU Nationals, what guidance the Government has issued to people with (a) pre-settled status and (b) settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme to determine whether they have equal treatment protection in matters of housing under the (i) Withdrawal Agreement, (ii) EEA-EFTA Separation Agreement and (iii) Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement.

Leo Docherty:

The consultation by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on reforms to social housing allocations continues to be open.

Guidance will be issued in due course, including with respect to eligibility under the proposed UK connection test.

■ Sudan: British Nationals Abroad

Paul Bristow:

[14438]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department is taking steps to help support British citizens in Sudan to return to the UK in the context of the recent telecoms blackout.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Due to the security situation the British Embassy in Sudan has temporarily closed. The consular support we can provide is severely limited as we have no in-person presence. However we continue to provide tailored remote consular assistance to British nationals still in Sudan, communicating through our telephone consular helpline, Travel Advice updates and consular teams. British nationals who require assistance can call us 24/7. We call on Sudan's warring parties to restore vital communications and internet services.

■ Syria: Earthquakes

Julian Sturdy:

[14854]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what support his Department is providing to Syria following the earthquake in that country last year.

David Rutley:

In 2023, the UK committed up to £43 million to support the response to the earthquakes in Northwest Syria and Turkey, including £28 million for Syria. The UK also committed up to £150 million to support Syrians at the Brussels Pledging Conference in June 2023. In financial year 2022/23 UK aid in north west Syria supported the provision of over 203,000 health consultations and nutrition support to over 27,000 women and children.

Since 2012, the UK has spent over £3.8 billion to provide lifesaving and life-sustaining assistance to those in need, both inside Syria and to refugee hosting countries.

■ Western Sahara: Humanitarian Situation

Jeremy Corbyn:

[R] [14783]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to help stop breaches of international humanitarian law in Western Sahara.

David Rutley:

The UK is committed to the promotion of respect for International Humanitarian Law worldwide. With regard to Western Sahara, we strongly support the work of Staffan de Mistura, Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General, and welcomed his September 2023 visit to the region, including to Western Sahara, and we continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process and monitor progress.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Accident and Emergency Departments: HIV Infection**

Judith Cummins: [15090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to continue opt-out testing for HIV in emergency departments.

Judith Cummins: [15091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding HIV opt-out testing to (a) GP surgeries and (b) other clinical settings.

Andrea Leadsom:

As part of the HIV Action Plan, NHS England has expanded opt-out HIV testing in 34 emergency departments in local areas in England with extremely high HIV prevalence, as well as the whole of London, including some areas with high HIV prevalence. This programme began in 2022 and is funded by NHS England until the end of March 2025. In the first 21 months, the programme has preliminarily identified 685 people newly diagnosed with HIV and 384 people previously diagnosed with HIV, but not in care.

Given the success of the programme, the Department has committed an additional £20 million for new research, which will involve an expansion and evaluation of opt-out blood borne virus testing, including HIV, in 47 additional emergency departments in local areas with high HIV prevalence across England. Funding will support 12 months of testing for each emergency department, to begin in April 2024, but it is at the discretion of individual sites when the testing will commence.

Decisions on whether to continue offering opt-out HIV testing in emergency departments in local areas with high and extremely high HIV prevalence will be based on the outcomes of the current opt-out HIV testing programme and research project, as well as available funding.

There are currently no plans to assess the merits of opt-out HIV testing in general practice (GP) or other clinical settings, but HIV testing is already offered and recommended in some circumstances in a range of clinical settings, including GP surgeries, in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's testing guidance. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng60/chapter/Recommendations#offering-and-recommending-hiv-testing-in-different-settings>

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Judith Cummins: [15093]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help introduce optimally staffed alcohol care teams in hospitals with high rates of alcohol dependence-related admissions.

Andrea Leadsom:

The NHS England alcohol programme aims to establish optimal Alcohol Care Teams (ACTs) in acute hospitals to improve the care provided to people who have alcohol-use disorders, mainly those who are alcohol dependent. NHS England has nationally funded the rollout of ACTs in areas of greatest need, alongside the commissioning of a quality improvement network, research evaluation, and a range of direct implementation support initiatives.

■ Asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease**Jim Shannon:****[15060]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle (a) health inequalities and (b) social deprivation for people with (i) asthma and (ii) chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is undertaking several actions related to the causes of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and to tackle health inequalities and social deprivation faced by people with those conditions.

Firstly, the Government is undertaking a comprehensive review of how we communicate air quality information to ensure members of the public, and vulnerable groups in particular, have the information they need to protect themselves and understand their impact on air quality. This review is being undertaken by the Air Quality Information Systems steering group, with the group's recommendations being published in summer of 2024.

Furthermore, the Government is committed to reducing air pollution from all forms of transport, including PM2.5, the most harmful pollutant to human health. The Environmental Improvement Plan sets out transport measures that will help reduce emissions of air pollutants as we approach a decarbonised transport system. Our transport decarbonisation plan will deliver improved air quality from reduced tailpipe emissions as we move towards a fully electrified vehicle fleet. Alongside this, we are investing in cutting-edge research to understand how to better measure and control brake and tyre emissions, including from zero tailpipe emission vehicles.

The Government also has a wide range of initiatives to support disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work. These include work to further join up employment and health systems, including rolling out Employment Advice in NHS Talking Therapies, expanding the Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care initiative, and reforming Occupational Health provision.

Finally, the NHS England's Core20Plus5 approach has been developed to support integrated care systems to reduce inequalities. The approach focuses on improving cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory, maternity and mental health outcomes in the poorest 20% of the population, along with ethnic minorities and inclusion health groups.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Chesterfield**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[14840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the availability of appointments for adults to receive a full diagnostic assessment for ADHD in Chesterfield; and if she will take steps to reduce waiting times for this service.

Maria Caulfield:

Information provided by the Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) indicates that waiting times for adult attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments in Derby and Derbyshire are currently approximately 208 weeks.

We expect ICBs to make appropriate provisions available to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including ADHD assessment services, in line with relevant clinical guidelines.

In respect of diagnostic assessments for ADHD, the Chesterfield, Derby and Derbyshire ICB is taking actions to reduce waiting times and ensure access to pre and post assessment support, including working as part of an NHS England regional ADHD task and finish group to progress region-wide initiatives.

The ICB will be developing a local adult ADHD pathway, continuing to explore improvements to adult pre and post diagnostic support, developing a waiting list triage model, and providing targeted engagement for people who are on the assessment waiting list.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs**Alistair Strathern:**[\[15510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of shortages in supplies of (a) Elvanse 30mg and (b) other ADHD medication on the wellbeing of people with an ADHD diagnosis.

Andrew Stephenson:

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

The Department has been working closely with the respective manufacturers and some issues have now been resolved. However, we know that there continue to be disruptions to the supply of some other medicines, including Elvanse 30 milligram, which we have been informed should be largely resolved by April or May 2024.

We understand how frustrating and distressing medicine shortages can be. While we cannot always prevent supply issues from occurring, the Department has a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they arise and help mitigate risks to patients. We work with the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England the devolved administrations, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory

Agency and others operating in the supply chain to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when supply issues arise. If any patient is concerned about their treatment, they should discuss this with their clinician at the earliest opportunity.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Mental Health Services

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[14839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data her Department holds on the average waiting time for adults to receive a full diagnostic assessment for ADHD in each commissioning area.

Maria Caulfield:

There is, at present, no single, established dataset that can be used to monitor the national waiting times for the assessment and diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Although the data requested is not held centrally, it may be held locally by individual National Health Service trusts or commissioners.

We are exploring options to improve data collection and reporting on ADHD assessment waiting times, and to help improve access to ADHD assessments in a timely way and in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines. The National Institute for Health and Care Research has commissioned a research project to provide initial insights into local ADHD assessment waiting time data collection. NHS England is also currently scoping a national programme of work on ADHD.

■ Baby Care Units

Dan Carden:

[\[14914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of the level of accommodation provision for parents of babies in neonatal care.

Andrew Stephenson:

NHS trusts are expected to follow the guidance on Maternity Care Unit accommodation, as set out in Health Building Note 09-02. The building note sets out that partners and other supporters should be made to feel welcome, and their presence should be a key consideration in designing facilities for birth. There should be overnight accommodation for partners either within the rooms, or within or close to the unit.

NHS England published the Three-Year Delivery Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Services in March 2023. The delivery plan included a commitment to undertake a review of maternity and neonatal estates against the recommendations in the Health Building Note 09-02, and this year NHS England will conduct a survey of the condition of the maternity and neonatal estate.

■ Cardiovascular Diseases

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[15416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2023 to Question 1604 on Cardiovascular Diseases, what her planned timetable is to respond to the report from the Government Champion for Personalised Prevention's taskforce on cardiovascular disease.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is considering the recommendations of the Government Champion for Personalised Prevention, and information on the next steps will be provided in due course.

■ Dental Services

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[15132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an estimate of the number of patients who have not seen a dentist in the last two years; and how many additional appointments does she expect her dentistry recovery plan to provide.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 26 February 2024]: We want to encourage all professionals to commit more of their time to National Health Service work and to work in areas of the country with a low provision of NHS dental care, which is why we have brought in the Golden Hello scheme, which will deliver over 400,000 appointments.

The Dentistry Recovery Plan will make dental services faster, simpler and fairer for patients and will fund approximately 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment. The plan sets out a number of actions which will improve access for patients, by helping the sector to recover activity more quickly, address underlying issues, and set out the action needed for longer term reform of the system.

We have also announced that we will raise the minimum units of dental activity (UDA) value to £28. This will mean that almost 1,000 contracts will see an uplift to their UDA rate this year, supporting them and making treatment of NHS patients more sustainable.

■ Dentistry: Bournemouth East

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[15417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of number of NHS dentists in Bournemouth East constituency.

Andrea Leadsom:

In 2022/23, 349 dentists in the Dorset Integrated Care Board performed National Health Service work. This is equivalent to 44.9 dentists per 100,000 population. The Dentistry Recovery Plan will make dental services faster, simpler and fairer for

patients and will fund around 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment.

The plan sets out a number of actions which will improve access for patients, by helping the sector to recover activity more quickly, including the introduction of a New Patient Payment Premium of up to £50 for each new patient. This is on top of the funding dental practices already receive for delivering that care. We will further incentivise dentists to do more NHS work by raising the minimum Units of Dental Activity rate to £28. As part of the Dentistry Recovery Plan, we will launch a new Golden Hello scheme for dentists who want to move to those areas which persistently struggle to attract dentists into NHS work.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Health and Safety

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[15111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department designs workplaces that can adapt to the needs of the individual. The majority of our estate has modern, flexible, ergonomic workplaces which should accommodate most individuals' requirements. The Department has a comprehensive offer to ensure that individuals who may have additional requirements are not disadvantaged, can realise their potential, and have appropriate workplace adjustments in place.

■ Diabetes: Disadvantaged

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[15139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she is taking steps to promote collaboration between (a) the NHS, (b) community organisations and (c) health experts to tackle diabetes health inequalities.

Andrew Stephenson:

The NHS Diabetes Programme (NDP) develops policies and provides leadership and support to integrated care boards (ICBs), to improve diabetes care and outcomes. The NDP routinely engages with people with firsthand experience of diabetes, sector stakeholders, and health experts in order to inform policy, and seeks input from a broad range of communities to support development of projects that aim to tackle variation and inequalities.

The NDP collaborates extensively with Diabetes UK, who conducts research with people who have lived experience of diabetes on behalf of the programme, for specific projects, and participates in the programme's decision making at a board level. The NDP has also collaborated with Diabetes UK's Tackling Inequality Commission, which engaged with communities, community organisations, and health experts. A report was released of the findings in November 2023.

The National Health Service statement on information on health inequalities sets out a description of the powers available to relevant NHS bodies to collect, analyse, and publish information, and the views of NHS England about how those powers should be exercised. The following diabetes metrics are included: the care process delivery, measuring variation between the percentage of people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes receiving all eight care processes, reported by deprivation and ethnicity; and the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, measuring variation between the percentage of NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme referrals from the most deprived quintile and the percentage of the type 2 diabetic population from the most deprived quintile.

ICBs and other NHS bodies will be required to include in their annual reports for 2023/24 and 2024/25, information that shows they have exercised their functions in accordance with the NHS legal statement. They will also need to publish reports on the information collected, how the data has been used to guide action, and summarise the inequalities it reveals.

The NDP ensures local health care systems, including those with rural communities, can benchmark and identify inequalities in diabetes care and outcomes through National Diabetes Audit data that contains demographic information such as age, deprivation, and ethnicity. Examples of the data can be found in the National Diabetes Audit Dashboards. The NDP also allocates funding to support the costs of diabetes clinical lead posts in local health systems, with a key priority of supporting improvement in addressing health inequalities at the local level.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[15140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she is taking steps to promote research on diabetes health inequalities in rural communities.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including diabetes and health inequalities.

■ Fluoride: Drinking Water

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[14905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria were used to determine the location of water fluoridation schemes.

Andrea Leadsom:

Decisions on existing water fluoridation schemes in England were determined by the relevant National Health Service or local authorities responsible at the time they were introduced, in agreement with the water undertaker and focussed on reducing tooth decay. The Government's proposal to expand water fluoridation in the North East, subject to a public consultation to begin early this year, is based on large inequalities in oral health, existing feasibility studies, and water company experience operating such schemes.

■ HIV Infection: Health Services

Judith Cummins:

[\[15088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she is taking steps to ensure that living well with HIV is prioritised in local commissioning by integrated care boards.

Andrea Leadsom:

HIV services are open access, and any adults with a diagnosis of HIV can self-refer. Any service diagnosing HIV in adults can refer to any specialised HIV service provider.

As set out in the NHS England Roadmap, adult specialised HIV inpatient and outpatient services have been identified by NHS England as key areas for greater integrated care systems (ICS) leadership and integrated care boards (ICBs). Integrating the commissioning of HIV treatment services with ICBs will allow local systems to simplify and strengthen HIV care pathways with other services through effective local partnerships, including psychosocial support and mental health services, for a more holistic approach to care.

The Service Specification for Adult HIV services (2013) sets out the standards of care that HIV providers are expected to meet. Services are expected to support people living with HIV to live well by collaborating with other health, social care, and community providers. Since most people living with HIV on suppressive antiretroviral therapy have a near normal life expectancy and may develop additional needs associated with an increased risk of other long-term conditions, providers are expected to ensure that people have access to relevant screening and assessment for long-term conditions, and are sign-posted to non-HIV services where appropriate.

ICBs are responsible for developing a plan for meeting the health needs of the population, managing the National Health Service budget, and arranging for the provision of health services in the ICS area.

■ Hypotension: Older People

Feryal Clark:

[\[14975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help improve treatment for individuals aged over 65 with low blood pressure in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield, and (c) London.

Andrea Leadsom:

Integrated care boards in London are responsible for arranging healthcare services that meet the needs of their local populations, including for patients over the age of 65 years old in the Enfield North Constituency, the London Borough of Enfield, and London.

The NHS Health Check, offered every five years to eligible people aged 40 to 74 years old, aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and kidney disease, and some cases of dementia. People can also now have their blood pressure tested

in many community pharmacies and over 7,500 pharmacies have delivered nearly two million blood pressure checks in just over two years, and we are working with NHS England to expand this service by investing up to £50 million over this and next year. In both services people will be referred to their general practice for further assessment and clinical treatment if required, including those with low blood pressure. Further information on the management of hypotension, low blood pressure, is available at the following website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/low-blood-pressure-hypotension/>

■ **Income Support: Disability**

Clive Lewis: [\[15464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 1 February 2023 to Question 133573 on Income Support, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of the minimum income guarantee on the (a) living standards and (b) quality of life of disabled people.

Clive Lewis: [\[15465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the level of the minimum income guarantee on (a) the quality of life of disabled people and (b) local authority budgets.

Helen Whately:

The minimum income guarantee (MIG) will increase in line with inflation, by 6.7%, from 6 April 2024. The revised rates were published in the 2024 Local Authority Circular on 9 February. The MIG rates are reviewed annually. No specific assessment has been made, nor is there one planned, on the impact of the level of the MIG on the quality of life of disabled people and local authority budgets.

■ **Junior Doctors: Pay**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[14762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will increase the pay of junior doctors; and when she next plans to meet their representatives to discuss pay.

Andrew Stephenson:

Junior Doctors have already received a pay uplift of up to 10.3% for 2023-2024.

When industrial action is called, the Government's priority is supporting the National Health Service to prepare for that action and keep patients safe. On that basis, my right hon. Friend will not meet with the British Medical Association Junior Doctors Committee when strike action has been called.

■ **Mental Health Services: Veterans**

Steve McCabe: [\[14451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many veterans in the West Midlands accessed Op COURAGE in the last year.

Steve McCabe: [\[14452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2024 to Question 11561 on Mental Health Services: Veterans, if she will take steps to collaborate with non-Five Eyes nations to identify additional best practices for providing mental health support to veterans.

Steve McCabe: [\[14453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2024 to Question 11562 on Social Services: Veterans, if she will take steps to introduce veteran-aware training for social care teams in local authorities.

Steve McCabe: [\[14454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many veterans received mental health support last year.

Steve McCabe: [\[14455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress she has made on increasing the accessibility of Op COURAGE for veterans since its inception.

Maria Caulfield:

Since 2017, NHS England has expanded the services available to veterans with the introduction of the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) in 2017, followed by the Complex Treatment Service (CTS) in 2018 and the High Intensity Service (HIS) in 2020. The commissioning of each of these services led to the introduction of the overarching name Op COURAGE.

From 1 April 2023, a new integrated Op COURAGE service has been operational. This new service has brought together the previously three separate mental health services for veterans into a single service to make it easier for veterans to access the support they need when they need it.

Between January 2023 and December 2023, there were 6,524 referrals into Op COURAGE. In the same period, there were 568 referrals from general practices within a West Midlands integrated care board. It is possible that a veteran has had more than one referral into the service.

Veterans can also choose to use Talking Therapies and other mental health services commissioned by NHS England. Between January 2023 and December 2023, there were 20,485 veteran referrals into Talking Therapies services.

In 2021, the Government committed an additional £2.7 million to March 2025, to expand Op COURAGE following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from Afghanistan.

In January 2024, NHS England launched a national campaign to raise awareness of Op COURAGE and encourage veterans struggling with their mental health to seek help from the service. The campaign will run until March 2024.

As well as the National Health Service-commissioned Op COURAGE service, the Government is providing an additional £10 million to support the Veterans' Places,

People and Pathways Programme to increase support to a significant community of vulnerable veterans throughout the UK and enable the programme to become self-sustaining.

The Principal Social Work Network for Adults across England meet on a regular basis to review all aspects of social work practice and training underpinned by statutory and policy guidance which includes the needs of the Veterans community.

NHS England is the commissioner of Op COURAGE and other mainstream mental health services. NHS England has engaged with international counterparts on best practice on tackling veterans' mental health issues and will continue to collaborate in this way to ensure the services in England reflect best practice and evidence-based learnings in the commissioning of bespoke services for veterans.

■ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Paul Bristow:

[R] [\[15202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's evaluation processes complement the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's International Recognition Procedure.

Andrew Stephenson:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for the processes that it uses, in the development of its recommendations on new medicines. The NICE will continue aiming to publish guidance on new medicines within 90 days of the receipt of a United Kingdom marketing authorisation, and is working closely with the Department, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, industry, and system partners to ensure that it is able to make timely recommendations on new medicines licensed through the International Recognition Procedure.

■ NHS 111: Dental Health

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[13013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many calls NHS 111 received about dental (a) pain and (b) other problems in each of the last five years.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 8 February 2024]: The attached table shows the number of calls received by NHS 111 for patients with dental symptoms for each year from 2019/20 to 2023/24, broken into symptom groups, as well as the yearly and sum total of calls for patients with dental symptoms.

It is not possible to tell from this table how many calls the National Health Service received specifically about dental pain, but in the last five years there have been just under 4.8 million calls to NHS 111 resulting in a disposition of dental symptoms. The majority of these calls, four million, were regarding toothache without a dental injury.

Attachments:

1. Table of NHS 111 Dental Health Calls [Table of NHS111 Dental Health Calls for PQ13013 (1).docx]

■ NHS: Carbon Emissions**Sarah Owen:**[\[15198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance her Department issues for NHS Trusts on carbon reduction planning; and if she will publish guidance for trusts on offsetting carbon emissions.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Health and Care Act (2022) empowered NHS England to issue statutory guidance on decarbonisation to National Health Service trusts and integrated care Boards. The following guidance has been issued through that power: Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service report, which sets a Net Zero target of 2040 for the NHS carbon footprint, and covers offsetting; and the Net Zero Supplier Roadmap, which aims to decarbonise NHS procurement.

All 212 NHS trusts have Green Plans in place setting out how they will meet the ambitions set out in this guidance. The Government continues to provide significant financial support to this work, including investing over £800 million in grant funding through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

■ NHS: Disclosure of Information**Rachael Maskell:**[\[14628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she is taking steps to record the number NHS staff who have reported detrimental treatment as a result of whistle-blowing.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England does not record this information centrally, in the format requested. The majority of complaints and concerns raised would be made to the employing National Health Service trust or NHS employer, and not to NHS England directly. I feel strongly that the NHS must support and welcome all staff to speak up. It is the duty of a health practitioner to speak up whenever they are concerned.

In response to a recommendation of the Sir Robert Francis' Freedom to Speak Up Review in 2015, we established an independent National Guardian to help drive positive cultural change across the NHS, so that speaking up becomes business as usual. The National Guardian also oversees a network of local Freedom to Speak Up Guardians across all trusts in England. The National Guardian has also issued guidance and training on how to speak up. NHS England has developed an updated model of the Freedom to Speak Up policy, which they expect all NHS organisations to adopt by 31 January 2024.

Claire Hanna:

[\[14982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of whistleblowing procedures for health workers with concerns about patient safety.

Maria Caulfield:

I feel strongly that the National Health Service must support and welcome all staff to speak up. It is the duty of a health practitioner to speak up whenever they are concerned. Over the last decade, the Government and our system partners have delivered major initiatives in response to recommendations made to the Department. Our focus has been on making progress and this approach has improved governance, delivered more robust regulation, enabled staff to speak up more freely, protected whistleblowers, and changed the way patient safety is approached in the NHS.

The data submitted by the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians provides invaluable insight into the implementation of the Freedom to Speak Up policy, which is reported quarterly to the National Guardian's Office. Over 100,000 cases have been raised with Freedom to Speak Up Guardians since 2017.

Whilst there is more to do to remove detriments, there are signs that the improvements to speaking up are valued, for example, over 25,000 cases were brought to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians throughout 2022/23, a 25% increase on the previous year. 19% of cases reported in 2022/23 involved an element of patient safety or quality, up from 18.8% in 2021/22.

■ Nurses: Students

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[15375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to increase the number of students enrolling in nursing higher education courses.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[15376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she has had with officials in the Department for Education on steps to support student nurses.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are working closely with NHS England, the Department for Education, and universities, to ensure everyone who wants to pursue a rewarding healthcare career in nursing, has the support and opportunities to do so.

To support students training in clinical roles, we provide eligible students with a grant of at least £5,000 a year through the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF). This includes additional incentives for priority specialisms, such as mental health, with further funding available depending on personal circumstances. The Government continues to widen access to nursing careers through blended learning and apprenticeship routes. Apprenticeships provide an alternative route for people to earn

as they learn and we now have a complete apprentice pathway for nursing, from entry level to postgraduate advanced clinical practice.

The number of applicants to nursing degrees continues to outstrip the places on offer. Nursing training places are competitive, and lead to an attractive and important career in the National Health Service. There are record numbers of nurses now working in the NHS, and the first ever NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, backed by over £2.4 billion, will add 24,000 more nurse and midwifery training places by 2031.

HOME OFFICE

■ **A20: Road Traffic Offences**

Mr Louie French:

[\[14990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will have discussions with the Metropolitan Police on publishing data on the number of (a) speeding fines and (b) notices of intended prosecution for speeding since 1 December 2023 in the section of the A20 eastbound near Sidcup with a temporary speed limit.

Chris Philp:

No discussions are currently planned between the Home Secretary and the Metropolitan Police on this matter.

Enforcement of speed limits is an operational matter for local Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, taking into account the specific local problems and demands with which they are faced.

If there are problems with the issue of speeding tickets then the matter can initially be raised with the Metropolitan Police, MOPAC and TfL as the authority responsible for the road in question.

■ **Animal Experiments: Cosmetics**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[15028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many animal testing licences for chemical substances used as cosmetic ingredients were for substances used exclusively in cosmetics between 2019 and 2022.

Chris Philp:

Between 2019 and 2022, the Government granted one licence authorising animal testing for chemicals used exclusively as ingredients in cosmetic products, for the purposes of worker or environmental safety under chemicals (REACH) regulations.

I can confirm that, following the Government's ban of 17 May 2023, no animal testing is being conducted, nor will any testing be authorised, of chemicals that are exclusively intended to be used as ingredients in cosmetics products.

■ Asylum: Deportation**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[15423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2024 to Question 14503 on Asylum: Deportation, for what reason it would be disproportionately expensive to provide information on the number of flights cancelled; and if he will make it his policy to collect information on the number of flights cancelled in future.

Michael Tomlinson:

We are determined to remove those with no right to remain in the UK – including dangerous foreign criminals.

All spending is carefully scrutinised to make sure that every pound of taxpayers' money is spent in the most effective way.

The Government's efforts to facilitate entirely legitimate and legal returns of people who have entered the UK illegally are often frustrated by late challenges submitted hours before the flight.

These claims are often baseless and entirely without merit but are given full legal consideration which can lead to removal being rescheduled, this, in some instances, leads to cancellation costs.

The information requested in PQ14503 on cancellation reasons, with specific reference to the costs recorded on page 193 of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, would require a manual reconciliation of the individual cases against financial records to see if a cancellation cost was levied. This could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

[Home Office annual report and accounts: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118111/2022-23-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf).

■ Asylum: Portland Port**Richard Drax:**[\[14873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of claimed conversions to Christianity by people resident on the barge in Portland Port on their asylum applications.

Tom Pursglove:

All asylum and human rights claims, including those based on religion or belief, and regardless of where or how a person might be accommodated while in the UK, are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations.

Detailed Home Office policy guidance provides a framework for considering asylum claims, including those based on religious conversion, and all caseworkers receive extensive training before making such decisions.

Those found not to need protection are refused, and the decision can be subject to legal challenge, where appropriate, either via appeal to the independent courts, or

through a judicial review, depending on the decision in question. Once appeal rights are exhausted, they are liable for removal and enforcement action is pursued where necessary.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Stephen Kinnock:

[15649]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of its policy on removing asylum seekers from the UK to Rwanda on the number of (a) English Channel crossings in small boats by asylum seekers and (b) asylum seekers undertaking small boat crossings in the next two years; and on what evidential basis the policy was introduced.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Home Office is committed to ending people smuggling, and the Migration and Economic Development Partnership between the UK and Rwanda is part of a suite of measures aimed at dismantling the business model of organised crime gangs.

The Ministerial direction letter (April 2022) can be found here:- [Letter from Matthew Rycroft to Rt Hon Priti Patel \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Aviation: Passengers

Julie Elliott:

[15272]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many general aviation flights landed at UK airports without providing advance passenger information in each year since 2015.

Tom Pursglove:

Given our commitment to protecting the UK from harm, I am unable to share exact breakdowns on what flights submitted Advanced Passenger Information on security grounds. This is on the basis that the figures can reveal operational practices that could be exploited to evade border controls.

Border Force performs checks on passengers arriving at the UK border and risk-based intelligence led checks on goods, enabling interventions against those known or suspected to pose a risk to the national interest.

■ Counter-terrorism: Human Rights

Daisy Cooper:

[15370]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the report entitled The Prevent duty and its chilling effect on human rights published by Amnesty International in November 2023.

Tom Tugendhat:

Prevent plays a vital role in tackling radicalisation, seeking to intervene early where somebody is at risk of becoming a terrorist or supporting terrorism. Participation in Prevent does not result in a criminal record.

Sir William Shawcross carried out an Independent Review of Prevent, which was published on 8 February 2023. Government accepted all 34 recommendations.

We have now implemented 30 of the recommendations within one year of publication, and we are making rapid progress on delivering the remaining four.

Prevent is entirely compatible with human rights. It is a key part of the UK's Counter Terrorism Strategy, and it is right that we continue to keep the public safe.

■ Economic Crime**Alun Cairns:**[\[14855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to ensure that the constraints placed on Departments by the Civil Service headcount cap will not have a negative impact on resourcing for the delivery of commitments made in the Economic Crime Plan.

Tom Tugendhat:

Through the Spending Review and the new Economic Crime Levy we are providing additional funding to tackle Economic Crime of £400 million up to the end of 2024/25.

The headcount cap announced by the Chancellor applies to the overall size of the Civil Service, excluding the devolved administrations. Policing, including Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) who are a major recipient of additional Economic Crime investment, are out of scope.

As part of the process, the Government will identify risks, and ensure this is implemented in a way which preserves frontline service delivery, business critical activity and key Government priorities.

This is not a recruitment freeze, but rather about stopping unchecked growth overall and moving towards a leaner and more efficient Civil Service workforce.

■ Hate Crime: Criminal Records**Sir John Hayes:**[\[14798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will hold discussions with police forces on removing non-crime hate incidents from people's records.

Sir John Hayes:[\[14799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of non-crime hate incidents have been recorded by police forces since the new code of practice was announced in March 2023.

Chris Philp:

As provided for in the Police, Crime, and Sentencing Act 2022, in 2023 the Government introduced the statutory Non-Crime Hate Incidents Code of Practice on the Recording and Retention of Personal Data in order to make the processes surrounding the recording and retention of personal data more transparent and subject to stronger safeguards. The new code came into effect on 3 June 2023 and applies to police forces across England and Wales.

Whilst recognising the operational importance of NCHI recording for the police in protecting vulnerable people and communities from harm, the code clarifies that the police should only record NCHIs when it is necessary and proportionate to do so and not simply because someone is offended.

The College of Policing also updated its operational guidance for the police, known as 'Authorised Professional Practice' (APP), to ensure that its guidance on NCHI recording aligns with the code.

Prior to the code and updated APP coming into effect, the College communicated with forces about the changes introduced by the code and revised APP. The College also developed an e-briefing pack on NCHIs which is available to forces. It is for individual police forces to ensure that they comply with the law and must have regard to the statutory code of practice and all the relevant operational guidance.

The Home Office does not collect data from forces on the number of NCHIs recorded by the police. The data collected from the police balances policy needs and the burden on forces.

■ Hate Crime: Research**Caroline Lucas:**[\[14835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2024 to Question 12970, what options he is considering.

Laura Farris:

We are in the process of developing options for publication.

■ Home Office: Disclosure of Information**Feryal Clark:**[\[14979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he has taken to support his Department's staff who act as whistleblowers.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has clear, well established Whistleblowing policy and process arrangements. Responsibility is shared between HR, which owns the policy, and HO Security & Investigations, who run the Nominated Officer network.

As the link between the individual raising the concern and the organisation, the Nominated Officers oversee the management of Whistleblowing cases and help the

employees with raising their concern by providing advice independent from individual's management chain.

In addition to Nominated Officers and the whistleblowing team, other internal channels of support available to individuals throughout the process include:

- the confidential whistleblowing helpline;
- Line managers
- the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- Home Office employee networks

The department operates several routes for employees to raise concerns, including a hotline, an inbox for emails and online form which ensures that individuals can remain anonymous if required. To ensure anonymity, all concerns are recorded centrally with the identity of the individual raising the concern not recorded alongside their concern.

The Home Office *Raising a Concern including Whistleblowing* policy is regularly promoted and referenced on the staff intranet and internal communication channels reminding staff of the routes available to raise concerns and signposting the support available to those individuals who raise a concern.

■ Home Office: Public Relations

Feryal Clark: [\[14977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much his Department spent on press and public relations in each financial year since 2019-20.

Chris Philp:

Communications spend is set out in the annual report [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). It is not possible to isolate spend on press and public relations.

■ Police: Members

Feryal Clark: [\[14978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance his Department issues to police forces on responding to correspondence from Members of Parliament.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not provide guidance to police forces in relation to responding to correspondence.

Chief Constables and democratically elected Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for ensuring that correspondence is handled in line with their internal policies and guidelines.

■ Sikhs: Safety

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[15142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment the Government has made of potential impact of the security situation for the Sikh community in North America on the safety of the Sikh community in the UK.

Tom Tugendhat:

The UK Government holds the British Sikh community in the highest esteem. British Sikhs are an important and vibrant part of our society and make an enormous contribution to British life. We are firmly committed to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief and being a strong voice internationally in defence of this fundamental right.

We are in close touch with our US and Canadian partners about the allegations they have raised. It is vital that we allow independent investigations to run their course. It would be inappropriate to comment on, or pre-determine, their conclusions at this time.

The Government continually assesses potential threats to individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety. Wherever we identify such threats, we will use all measures, including through our world leading police and intelligence services, to mitigate risk to individuals.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Airports

Sir John Hayes:

[\[14797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were caught attempting to enter the UK illegally through (a) airports and (b) airfields in each year since 2019.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Home Office publishes statistics on detected irregular arrivals to the UK in the 'Irregular migration to the UK statistics' release on gov.uk.

Data on people who have arrived in the UK as 'Inadequately documented air arrivals' are included in table Irr_01 of the '[Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)', with the latest data up to the end of September 2023.

The Home Office does not publish the requested data in any further breakdowns.

JUSTICE

■ Administration of Justice

Wayne David:

[\[15409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to assess the potential vulnerability of people prosecuted under the single justice procedure.

Mike Freer:

The Government does not intervene in individual cases, including Single Justice Procedure (SJP) cases, which are a matter for the independent judiciary.

SJP is used by a number of approved prosecutors. It is a more proportionate way of dealing with straightforward, uncontested, summary-only non-imprisonable offences. The prosecuting body cannot choose this route for any case which falls outside of these criteria. SJP also cannot be used in cases where a defendant pleads not guilty.

Where a guilty plea is submitted, defendants are able to enter mitigating circumstances, if they wish, alongside their guilty plea, to be considered by the magistrate dealing with their case. Cases where defendants have not responded to a notification that they are being prosecuted may also be dealt with under the SJP.

For prosecutors, guilty pleas and any entered mitigation are available on the system for them to review as soon as the plea is received online, or as soon as scanned into the system if received by post, however, prosecutors are not required to view this.

Often the defendants' circumstances and any potential vulnerability are not known until they provide their mitigation. Any mitigation provided under SJP is considered by the magistrate in the same way that it would be in open court. Although prosecutors decide whether to offer defendants the option of having their case dealt with under the SJP, magistrates may refer a case to open court if they think that would be more appropriate rather than continuing under the SJP.

The mitigation provided sometimes suggests that the prosecution may not be in the public interest; a magistrate can then adjourn the case and ask the prosecution to review the mitigation. Alternatively, the magistrate can reduce the penalty imposed and even deal with the case by way of a conditional or absolute discharge. Guidance for magistrates on mitigating factors is provided in the sentencing guidelines.

Support channels are also available to defendants who require clarification of information and processes ranging from web chat or telephone assistance to more intensive face-to-face assistance.

The Government keeps all policies under review and listens to feedback from stakeholders on how they are working.

Wayne David:[\[15410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of cases under the single justice procedure were not progressed to prosecution because they were deemed to not be in the public interest due to the vulnerability of defendants in each year since 2021.

Mike Freer:

Whilst information on the number of Single Justice Procedure (SJP) cases withdrawn or dismissed is available, we do not hold information on the number of prosecutions not progressed due to not being in the public interest due to the defendants' vulnerability.

Wayne David:

[\[15411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of cases under the single justice procedure were stopped by magistrates as not being in the public interest in each year since 2021.

Mike Freer:

Magistrates have no powers to stop a prosecution on the grounds that it is not in the public interest. A magistrate can refer a case back to the prosecutor and request that they review their decision to prosecute. We do not hold any data on the number of times that this occurs. Alternatively, the magistrate can reduce the penalty imposed and even deal with the case by way of a conditional or absolute discharge. Guidance for magistrates on mitigating factors is provided in the sentencing guidelines.

Wayne David:

[\[15412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) support and (b) information is available to defendants who are prosecuted under the single justice procedure if they believe their prosecution is not in the public interest.

Mike Freer:

It is down to the prosecutor to decide whether the prosecution is in the public interest. The defendant can seek independent legal advice if they wish to.

There are several safeguards built into the Single Justice Procedure (SJP) process to ensure a defendant's fair trial rights are protected. Defendants retain the right to request a court hearing at any point before their case is considered by a magistrate under the SJP. SJP is available where they waive that right, either expressly, or by failing to respond to the notice, but only in circumstances where the court has first satisfied itself that the relevant documents were served on the accused.

HMCTS provides support channels to defendants who require clarification of information and processes in relation to the SJP ranging from web chat or telephone assistance to more intensive face-to-face assistance via our Courts & Tribunals Service Centre and the 'We Are Group' which provides digital support, advice and support.

■ Courts

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make it his policy to expand the use of Nightingale courts.

Mike Freer:

Nightingale courts have provided necessary additional court capacity since the pandemic, and we announced on 16 February that 20 of these courtrooms will remain open in 2024. Our assessment is that this is the appropriate level of provision required to deliver swifter justice.

The locations chosen to remain open in England and Wales have been identified where they will help reduce the number of local outstanding cases, support

maintenance projects by hearing cases when nearby locations are temporarily closed or to make full use of judicial capacity in court areas where there are more judges available.

Our primary focus is to maximise the use of our existing estate and our investment of £220 million in the two years to March 2025 to maintain and modernise our buildings will improve resilience and availability. We will continue to monitor our operational requirements, and should further additional capacity be required, we will consider a range of options including Nightingale courts.

■ Debt Collection

Dr Jamie Wallis: [\[14962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the need for debt enforcement companies to have (a) clear complaints procedures and (b) accessible avenues available for people trying to resolve a problem.

Mike Freer:

This government strongly supports the Enforcement Conduct Board's work, as an independent oversight body for enforcement companies, to develop standards for enforcement work and processes for handling complaints. The Enforcement Conduct Board will ensure that the rules are being followed and that those facing enforcement action are treated fairly.

■ Juries: Catering

Catherine West: [\[14910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will issue guidance to courts on ensuring adequate food and drink facilities for jurors.

Mike Freer:

The jury trial is a critical safeguard to the fairness of criminal proceedings in the Crown Court, and as such jurors are of integral importance to the system.

Jurors are advised in information sent to them before they come to court about the court to which they are being summoned, including the available facilities at the court and in the local area, and also that they are welcome to bring a packed lunch.

During a trial or before selection, jurors are free to leave the court to get refreshments during the lunch break.

Arrangements for deliberation vary due to differences in local arrangements and are subject to judicial direction in any particular trial, but usually jurors are advised to bring a packed lunch (either in person the day before or by email/text message) if the trial is approaching its end and they are likely to go into deliberation the following day.

Jurors can claim a daily amount from the court towards food and drink costs. There does not appear to be the need for any further, central, guidance – which in any event would be difficult to prescribe at a national level, given that the available facilities and local arrangements will legitimately vary across different court centres.

■ Prison Officers: Crimes of Violence

Grahame Morris:

[15435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been successfully prosecuted for attacks on prison officers with razors in the last year.

Edward Argar:

Data on how many prisoners have been successfully prosecuted for attacks on prison officers with razors in the last year could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Grahame Morris:

[15436]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information does his Department collect on the method of attack used against prison officers following an assault.

Edward Argar:

We publish statistics on the number of total assaults, broken down by type of weapon, as part of our Safety in Custody statistics. Table 3.10 at this link includes figures for assaults by weapon:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b0e9f0f2718c0014fb1c2a/safety-in-custody-assaults-dec-22.xlsx>.

The categories in the linked table above are what the MoJ collects on the method of attack.

We also hold data broken down by victim of these assaults, which we hold for staff, including for prison officers only.

Please note that assaults on staff are a subset of all assault incidents. Some assault incidents may be recorded as both a prisoner-on-prisoner assault and an assault on staff. Therefore, a breakdown of incidents involving weapons may also include some incidents where a weapon was used to assault a prisoner, but a staff member was also assaulted during the incident without the use of a weapon. It would not be possible to differentiate these incidents and produce a table of incidents where a weapon was used to assault a staff member, without review of the free text describing each incident

■ Prisons: Bribery

Ruth Cadbury:

[15449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were (a) charged and (b) convicted of bribing prison staff in the last five years.

Edward Argar:

The vast majority of prison staff are hardworking and dedicated. A minority of staff engage in corrupt activity which is often as a result of conditioning and manipulation by prisoners.

HM Prison & Probation Service has a zero-tolerance policy on corruption, and take appropriate action to the small number of staff and prisoners who break the rules. Our £100 million Security Investment Programme, aimed at reducing crime in

prisons, including reducing the number of staff being manipulated and conditioned by prisoners, is ongoing. This includes increased resource to pursue corruption, as well as established a new 'Prevent' function, aimed at building staff resilience against corruption.

The Counter Corruption Unit data setup is based on corrupt staff and whilst prisoner details are recorded, we are not able to access this without checking individual records. It would be at a disproportionate cost to check individual records to provide an answer to this question.

■ Prisons: Civil Disorder

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[15085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times operation tornado was used in each prison in 2023, broken down by each prison it was used in.

Edward Argar:

Operation Tornado is a national mutual aid plan by which prisons support one another in the event of a serious incident or occurrence requiring a reinforcement of staff. Operation Tornado is employed by HMPPS for three main reasons:

- In response to a serious incident requiring a reinforcement of staff.
- In response to other events or crisis requiring additional staff, who may not necessarily need to be Tornado trained.
- To aid the transfer of prisoners in the event of a serious incident or the threat of one (with the GOLD commander's agreement).

The information requested can be found in the table(s) below. For every other prison the total was 0.

DEPLOYMENTS OF OPERATION TORNADO IN PRISONS IN 2023 BY PRISON

HMP Downview	1
HMYOI Feltham (A)	2
HMP Lowdham Grange	2
HMP Portland	1
HMP Stocken	1
HMP Stoke Heath	1
HMP Wandsworth	1
HMYOI Werrington	2
HMYOI Wetherby	2

■ Prisons: Drugs

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[15448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how often were drug-dogs used to search prison staff in the last 48 months.

Edward Argar:

Searches may be carried out randomly, or may be undertaken in response to intelligence received.

As the requested information is not collated centrally, it could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

■ Prisons: Finance

Dan Carden:

[\[14915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the financial impact of outsourcing in prisons.

Edward Argar:

In June 2019, the Ministry of Justice put in place the Prison Operator Services Framework to manage a pipeline of operator competitions for new build prisons, and existing private prisons as they expire. To date, eight operator competitions have been conducted via the Framework, with five contracts awarded and a further three due to be awarded in 2024.

The aim of all operator competitions is to secure an operator to provide high quality, sustainable, and value for money custodial and maintenance services that are safe, decent, secure, and rehabilitative.

In each competition, bidders are required to set out detailed, high quality, value for money prison specific proposals that must meet minimum quality and financial thresholds. Bids are evaluated against clearly defined quality and financial criteria and a public sector comparator.

All operator competitions have delivered savings and provided additional added value when compared against the public sector comparator.

■ Reoffenders: South West

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[14823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce reoffending rates in (a) Bournemouth East constituency and (b) the South West.

Edward Argar:

The Prison and Probation service in the South West published their joint Reducing Reoffending Plan for 2022–25 on 9 August 2021, which sets out our priorities to reduce reoffending, prevent victims and keep communities safe. Both the Plan and the Annual Update for 2023 update can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regional-reducing-reoffending-plans>.

Alongside taking forward the priorities in the regional Reducing Reoffending Plan, Dorset Probation, which includes Bournemouth East, is engaged with the local Community Safety Partnership which brings together key partners in the area to work together to reduce crime and offending.

■ Sexual Offences: Criminal Proceedings

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[14841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases of (a) rape and (b) serious sexual offences are outstanding 12 months after the accused was charged.

Laura Farris:

Our published data includes the number of cases outstanding at the court from the point of crown court receipt rather than charge. As of Q3 2023, there were 667 adult rape cases and a further 2,019 cases of sexual offences (excluding adult rape) that had been outstanding at Crown Courts in England and Wales for 12 months or more.

We recognise that lengthy waiting times can be particularly difficult for victims of rape and other serious sexual offences who wish to see justice done and move on with their lives. We are doing everything we can to address the outstanding caseload. We are taking action to maximise capacity and hear more cases so we can minimise the impact on victims. As part of this, we are:

- Funding another year of unlimited sitting days in the Crown Court to allow courts to work at full capacity for a third year in a row.
- Recruiting up to 1,000 judges across all jurisdictions to secure enough capacity to sit at the required levels in this year and beyond.
- Continuing to use 20 Nightingale Courtrooms throughout 2024 to provide additional capacity for all jurisdictions.
- Investing £220 million for essential modernisation and repair work of our court buildings across the next two years.

We are also ensuring that all victims of rape and sexual offences are well supported throughout their engagement with the criminal justice system. This includes delivering our 24/7 helpline service for victims of rape and sexual violence; quadrupling victim support funding by 2024/25, up from £41 million in 2009/2010; and increasing the number of Independent Sexual and Domestic Abuse Advisors by 300 to nearly 1,000.

These actions have been delivered as part of our Rape Review Action Plan, which included ambition to return the number of adult rape cases reaching court to 2016 levels. This ambition was hugely stretching, as 2015 and 2016 marked the years where adult rape prosecutions and convictions were at their highest recorded levels.

We have exceeded this ambition well ahead of schedule. Across July - September 2023 we recorded 665 Crown Court receipts for adult rape, exceeding our original 2016 ambition of 553 by 20%. In practice, this means we have more than doubled the number of adult rape cases reaching court compared to when the Rape Review was

first commissioned (2019). The number of people prosecuted for rape is 32% higher than in 2010.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Batteries: Storage

Sir Gavin Williamson:

[\[15271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a restriction on battery storage facilities being built within 500 metres of residential areas.

Lee Rowley:

I refer my Rt Hon Friend to my answer to Question UIN [6137](#) on 18 December 2023.

■ Children: Homelessness

Mike Amesbury:

[\[14929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to (a) provide access to (i) mental health support, (ii) social services and (iii) recreational activities for and (b) otherwise address the needs and vulnerabilities of homeless children.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[14930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps her Department is taking to (a) minimise the time spent in temporary accommodation by homeless children and (b) support the transition of such children into long-term accommodation.

Felicity Buchan:

Temporary accommodation has to be suitable taking into account of relevant needs, requirements and circumstances of the homeless person and their household, including any children. The provision of support to households placed in temporary accommodation is essential to ensure that they can continue to enjoy a reasonable quality of life and access the range of services they need. In formulating their homelessness strategies, housing authorities 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.

Government is committed to reducing the need for temporary accommodation by preventing homelessness before it occurs. That is why we are investing more than £1 billion through the Homelessness Prevention Grant over three years, giving councils the funding they need to prevent homelessness as well as helping households move out of temporary accommodation into settled homes. As set out previously, Government has also been clear that the long-term use of B&B accommodation for families is inappropriate and unlawful and we are determined to stop this practice.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Health and Safety**Chris Stephens:** [R] [15108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 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.

Simon Hoare:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities designs work and workplaces to enable staff to work effectively, safely and comfortably. Where individuals have particular needs, the Department provides suitable adjustments.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Software**Jonathan Ashworth:** [15441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding his Department has (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on software updates to legacy computer systems in each of the last three financial years.

Simon Hoare:

Details of departmental spend are published online.

■ Help to Buy Scheme: Greater London**Ruth Cadbury:** [15086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of raising the existing cap of £450,000 for homes bought in London under the help to buy scheme.

Lee Rowley:

The Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme closed to new customers on 31 October 2022.

■ Housing: Bexley**Sir David Evennett:** [15223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many residential buildings have registered with the Cladding Safety Scheme in (a) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency and (b) Bexley Borough as of 22 February 2024.

Lee Rowley:

As of 26 February 2024, 2 residential buildings located in the Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency have registered with the Cladding Safety Scheme; and in the wider Bexley borough, a further 3 residential buildings have registered with the Cladding Safety Scheme.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Tamworth Borough Council**Sarah Edwards:**[\[15513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2024 to Question 11923 on Levelling Up Fund: Tamworth Borough Council, for what reason this visit was categorised as political rather than ministerial.

Jacob Young:

Visits are categorised as political if they are organised via political channels and not funded from official resource.

■ Local Government Finance: Chadderton**Jim McMahon:**[\[15127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much provisional funding has been allocated to the Chadderton Town Board; and when that board is required to (a) meet and (b) confirm its investment plan to Government.

Jacob Young:

Details of the Government's Long Term Plan for Towns are available [here](#).

■ Local Government: Corruption**Navendu Mishra:**[\[15799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2024 to Question 13613 on Local Government: Corruption, for what reason this information is not held centrally.

Simon Hoare:

The Government does not hold investigation data on local authorities.

■ Members: Correspondence**Gareth Thomas:**[\[15402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 31 January 2023 from the hon. Member for Harrow West on the funding of the Inter Faith Network.

Lee Rowley:

A response to the Hon Member's letter was issued by my Hon Friend Baroness Scott on 28 February 2024.

■ Parking: Private Sector**Beth Winter:**[\[15378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his planned timetable is for publishing a new private parking code of practice.

Beth Winter: [\[15379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of backdating the new private parking code of practice to 7 February 2022.

Beth Winter: [\[15380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the Private Parking Code of Practice establishing grace periods during which a parking charge notice may not be levied.

Beth Winter: [\[15381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring private parking providers to take (a) drivers' and (b) passengers' disabilities into account when (i) levying parking charge notices and (ii) considering appeals for parking charge notices.

Beth Winter: [\[15382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of monitoring the (a) accessibility and (b) effectiveness of the appeals process for fines issued by private parking providers.

Jacob Young:

The Government is taking action to improve the regulation of the private parking industry and is committed to working with both consumer and industry groups to ensure the code comes into effect as quickly as possible. The Government has no plans to back date the code to 7 February 2022.

The Code will ensure the best possible protection for motorists and parking companies alike, for this reason it will require a need for a grace period to be in place at the end of a permitted parking period.

The Government is aware of the concerns being raised regarding the existing appeals services. Alongside the introduction of the new Private Parking Code of Practice, the Government will be establishing a new, second stage appeals service which is straightforward to use and accessible to all. We will monitor the effectiveness of the new service and take action to make improvements where necessary.

Additionally, operator staff will be required to undergo relevant training.

■ Property Development: Architecture

Andrew Rosindell: [\[15239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department provides guidance to local authorities on conformity of new building developments with the traditional architectural aesthetics of the locality of those developments.

Lee Rowley:

The Government is committed to ensuring the planning system creates more beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. The National Design Guide sets out the ten characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. Local councils can use this guidance to inform local policy and guidance to define what good design means in their local area.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduces a requirement for local planning authorities to produce a design code for the whole of their area. Design codes will be prepared locally, reflect the local context and be based on effective community involvement, so that local people have a real say in the design of new homes and neighbourhoods. The National Model Design Code sets out a process for developing local design codes that reflect local context and community preferences including the identity of places and buildings.

Refugees: Ukraine**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[15505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support Ukrainian refugees living in the UK.

Felicity Buchan:

As set out previously, local authorities will continue to receive a tariff payment to support our Ukrainian guests. Sponsors are also eligible for an 'Thank You payment' of £350 per month for the first 12 months of a Ukrainian guest's stay in the UK and £500 thereafter.

We recognise through engagement with guests, other government departments, local councils, VCS organisations and sponsors that English is one of the main barriers to employment, so we announced £11.5 million in the Spring Budget 2023 to fund intensive English language courses and employment support for up to 10,000 eligible individuals under the Ukraine visa schemes.

This programme provides free online English lessons and employment support to Ukrainian arrivals to help them improve their job prospects.

Rented Housing: Disability**Catherine West:**[\[14909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that disabled people have access to specialised homes in (a) the private sector and (b) social housing.

Jacob Young:

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that local authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community, including people with disabilities and reflect this in their local plan. Alongside this, my Department, DHSC and the NHS provide capital grant funding to

help subsidise the delivery of new supply of supported housing including for disabled people.

Local housing authorities have a statutory duty to provide home adaptations for people who satisfy a needs assessment, eligibility criteria and a means test. They also have powers to provide adaptations for those that do not qualify under the duty. Government funding helps adapt around 50,000 homes annually, with the majority (90%) of adaptations being level access showers, stair lifts, or ramps. Government funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant has more than doubled, rising from £220 million in 2015-16 to £625 million for 2024-25.

■ Shared Ownership Schemes

Steve McCabe: [\[15008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to amend the shared ownership scheme to prevent residents paying fees to (a) extend their lease and (b) sell their part of the property.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [13515](#) on 22 February 2024.

■ Social Rented Housing: Mould

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[15148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps he has taken to tackle (a) mould and (b) damp in social housing.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[15149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the extent of (a) mould and (b) damp in social housing.

Jacob Young:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [11180](#) on 30 January 2024. The Government is committed to halving the number of non-decent rented homes by 2030 and we are clear that everyone deserves to live in a home that is decent, safe and secure.

■ Temporary Accommodation

Mike Amesbury: [\[14928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support local authorities to provide appropriate temporary accommodation to (a) survivors of domestic abuse, (b) people with complex needs and (c) other vulnerable groups.

Felicity Buchan:

If homelessness cannot be prevented or relieved the local authority may owe the applicant the main duty to accommodate people who are homeless through no fault

of their own, are eligible for assistance, and have a 'priority need'. This primarily includes those with children or a vulnerability, including disability or mental ill-health. The Homelessness Code of Guidance, to which local authorities must pay regard, contains advice for assessing vulnerability.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 gives those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority.

Temporary accommodation is an important way of ensuring no family is without a roof over their head. Local authorities must ensure temporary accommodation is suitable and should keep the suitability of accommodation under review. Between 2022 and 2025 we are investing over £1 billion into the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which funds local authorities to work with landlords to prevent evictions and offer financial support for people to find a new home and move out of temporary accommodation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[901656\]](#)

Whether he has had discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I understand my Hon. Friend's keen interest in this matter and was pleased to meet with her to discuss this in October. As she is aware, this is a devolved matter.

Following the restoration of the institutions, I would recommend that she engage with the Finance Minister in Northern Ireland to ask what consideration she has given to this issue.

■ **Business: Northern Ireland**

Andrew Selous:

[\[901654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential impact of the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly on trends in the level of business investment in Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

Since our department hosted the Northern Ireland Investment Summit in September, we have seen significant investment announcements including from IceMos technology, Ocula technology, and Vertiv. With that in mind, I think it is in everyone's interests - regardless of position on the constitutional question - for everyone to maintain a singular focus on attracting investment into Northern Ireland.

■ Childcare: Northern Ireland**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[901653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has had discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on trends in the level of childcare funding in Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

I welcome the recent debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly on childcare and the cross-party support for a childcare strategy to be delivered.

Whilst childcare in Northern Ireland is devolved, the UK Government is keen to see this work progressed so that parents are able to balance childcare alongside their work. Northern Ireland has already received the Barnett consequentials of childcare funding in England.

The UK Government has provided the NI Executive with a significant £3.3 billion package, including money to stabilise, which will support progress for key services.

■ Defence: Northern Ireland**Gavin Robinson:** [\[901655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on support for the defence industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

I am in regular discussion with ministerial colleagues regarding growth and investment, including the defence industry in Northern Ireland. The Government is committed to improving how Northern Ireland is integrated into the UK defence industry network as part of our plan for growing the economy, showcasing the skills, industry expertise and infrastructure that are thriving in Northern Ireland.

■ Midwives: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:** [\[15061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has had discussions with the Department of Health in Northern Ireland on increasing the number of student midwives in Northern Ireland.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

This is a devolved matter for the Northern Ireland Department of Health and the Department for the Economy who are responsible for higher education policy in Northern Ireland.

Now that the Northern Ireland Executive has been restored, I look forward to Northern Ireland Ministers taking action on Northern Ireland's public services, including health, in order to deliver better outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland.

■ **Veterinary Medicine: Northern Ireland**

Dame Nia Griffith:

[\[901658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure the continued availability of veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland beyond 2025.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Government's priority is to secure a long-term sustainable solution on veterinary medicines. To that end, the Government's priority is to pursue such a solution through discussions with the EU, as well as preparing for safeguards in all scenarios. We will be setting up a Veterinary Medicines Working Group shortly to help us with this.

In the meantime, we have put in place a grace period arrangement until the end of 2025 which supports continuity of supply to Northern Ireland.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Appointments**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[14864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many full-time equivalent staff in her Department work on public appointments.

Andrew Griffith:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology employs approximately 4 full-time equivalent staff in a central team working on public appointments for the Department's Public Bodies, and approximately 0.25 full-time equivalent staff in a team which supports appointments to the Departmental board. These numbers do not include the work of many other colleagues who are required to support and contribute to the public appointments process from across the Department.

■ **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Software**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[15442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding her Department and the predecessor Department has (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on software updates to legacy computer systems in each of the last three financial years.

Andrew Griffith:

The accounting systems track IT spend, but do not capture the level of detail to readily identify spend on Infrastructure or legacy systems. Determination of legacy IT will require more work, the Legacy Risk Assessment will be prepared and submitted to Cabinet by the end of the current Financial year. Currently, within our centrally managed Digital function, there is no legacy IT of any material size or value so spend in the last 3 years for legacy software patching would be zero.

TRANSPORT■ **Aviation: Passengers**

Julie Elliott: [\[15273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many fines the Civil Aviation Authority imposed on airlines for carrying passengers without correct documents in each year since 2015.

Anthony Browne:

None – this would be outside the scope of regulations overseen by the CAA.

■ **Department for Transport: Software**

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[15443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on software updates to legacy computer systems in each of the last three financial years.

Anthony Browne:

Most of the systems within the Department for Transport and its agencies operate on the basis of updates being provided within the licence costs. As such, there is no specific budget or spend for updates.

The Department for Transport employs the Legacy IT Assessment Risk Framework, a standardised methodology designed by the Central Digital and Data Office, to assess the risks associated with legacy digital technology assets across His Majesty's Government. The highest category of risk within the framework is known as 'red-rated'. This approach enables the Department for Transport to generate a prioritised overview of our legacy technology, clearly highlighting assets that necessitate remediation plans and the allocation of suitable funding for implementation.

At present, DfT(c) and its executive agencies have no red-rated systems and so we are providing a nil return.

■ **East Coast Main Line: Fares**

Stephen Morgan: [\[15332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with LNER on their simpler fares trial.

Huw Merriman:

Department officials engage regularly with the LNER team on the trial and we will carefully consider the results before taking decisions on any wider extension.

■ High Speed 2 Line

Stephen Morgan:

[\[15333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 24 of his Department's publication entitled Network North: transforming British transport, CP 946, published on 4 October 2023, what the evidential basis is for the statement that the new plan for HS2 will result in nearly doubling capacity up to 250,000 seats per day across the primary long-distance operator on the West Coast Main Line and Phase 1.

Huw Merriman:

The estimated increased seat capacity across the primary long-distance operator on the West Coast Main Line and HS2 set out in the Network North publication was based on illustrative assumptions about the potential services that could run across existing and new infrastructure once HS2 Phase 1 is brought into service.

This assumed 3 HS2 trains per hour running between London and Birmingham with additional capacity at peak hours, and assumptions on potential services which could run north of Birmingham. The latter are now being further refined through work with industry partners.

No final decisions have been made on the train service that will run when HS2 opens. These will be made in due course and be subject to consultation, taking advice from the industry. These considerations will include passenger and freight services available on the West Coast Main Line from released capacity.

■ Motor Vehicles: Ukraine

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[15506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to help support individuals that wish to donate vehicles to Ukraine.

Guy Opperman:

Yes. Whilst the Government does not provide direct assistance to individuals looking to donate their vehicle to Ukraine we are supportive of efforts to make routes to donation available.

Following the Transport Secretary's letter to the Mayor of London on 31 January, the Mayor has now announced vehicles can be donated to Ukraine through TfL's ULEZ scrappage scheme.

This will give ULEZ scrappage scheme applicants the option to donate suitable vehicles to Ukraine instead of scrapping them, and still receive the grant payment.

■ Vans: Electric Vehicles

Bill Esterson:

[\[15438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of changing regulations on the weight of vans during the transition to electric vehicles.

Anthony Browne:

Electric powertrains can make zero emission vans heavier than their petrol or diesel equivalents. To incentivise the uptake of electric vans with a viable payload (weight of goods they can carry), the Department has increased the regulatory weight threshold from 3.5 tonnes to 4.25 tonnes for driver licence and operator licence rules.

The Department has announced plans to further optimise these driver licence rules by removing current conditions for utilising this additional weight allowance. The Government is also reviewing weight thresholds that impact regulations for electric vans in other areas, including roadworthiness testing (MOT) and drivers' hours rules. Safety is a primary consideration in assessing any changes to regulatory weight thresholds.

TREASURY■ **Bank Services****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[15238\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to work with stakeholders to help ensure that people in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency can access physical banking facilities in their local area.

Bim Afolami:

The Government believes that all customers, wherever they live, should have appropriate access to banking and cash services, and is monitoring this issue closely.

Though the closure of bank or building society branches are commercial decisions, it is imperative that firms recognise the needs of all their customers, including those who need to use in-person services.

Guidance from the FCA sets out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. The FCA's guidance is clear that firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and put in place alternatives, where this is reasonable.

UK customers can access banking services through a number of different channels. This includes in branches, Post Offices or Banking Hubs, as well as via telephone banking and through digital means such as mobile or online banking.

The Post Office allows personal and business customers to carry out everyday banking services at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK. Banking Hubs are an initiative which enable customers of participating banks to access cash and banking services in shared facilities. Over 100 Banking Hubs have been announced so far, and the Government hopes to see these Hubs open as soon as possible.

■ Bank Services: Rural Areas

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[15507\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the accessibility of banking services to rural communities.

Bim Afolami:

The Government believes that all customers, wherever they live, should have appropriate access to banking and cash services, and is monitoring this issue closely. It is imperative that firms recognise the needs of all their customers, including those who need to use in-person services.

UK customers can access banking services through a number of different channels. This includes in branches, Post Offices or Banking Hubs, as well as via telephone banking and through digital means such as mobile or online banking.

The Post Office allows personal and business customers to carry out everyday banking services at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK. The Post Office is required by the Department for Business & Trade to ensure that 95% of the total rural population across the UK is within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office.

Banking Hubs are an initiative which enable customers of participating banks to access cash and banking services in shared facilities. Over 100 Banking Hubs have been announced so far, and the Government hopes to see these all open as soon as possible.

■ First Time Buyers: Mortgages

Jim Shannon:

[\[15279\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with major banks on the accessibility of mortgages for first time buyers.

Bim Afolami:

The Government is regularly in contact with mortgage lenders on all aspects of their business, including the provision of finance to first time buyers.

■ Friendly Societies Act 1992

Gareth Thomas:

[\[15214\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Commissioners have been appointed for the Law Commission Review of the Friendly Societies Act 1992; and what the planned timetable is for that review .

Bim Afolami:

The Government is working with the Law Commission and will release further information on the Review of the Friendly Societies Act 1992 and its timeline once the project timetable is confirmed.

■ Mortgages: Misrepresentation

Kim Leadbeater: [\[15211\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has made with the Financial Ombudsman Service on support for people who have been missold a shared appreciation mortgage.

Bim Afolami:

The Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) has received a number of complaints from people who purchased shared appreciation mortgages and are alert to the issues involved.

Any borrower that feels they have been mis-sold a shared appreciation mortgage should bring their complaint to the FOS, which can provide arbitration in such cases.

■ Personal Income

Anneliese Dodds: [\[15340\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what consideration he gave to the potential impact on equalities of increasing to £170,000 the annual income threshold for eligibility for the high net worth individual exemption in the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Financial Promotion) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2023; and whether he had discussions with the Minister for Women and Equalities on the potential impact on equalities of the order.

Bim Afolami:

The changes to the financial promotion exemptions that came into force on 31 January 2024 were subject to a public consultation which closed in March 2022.

However, the Government recognises the concerns that have been raised recently about these changes. I met recently with the angel investing sector and listened carefully to the representations made, and the Government is working closely with the sector to address the concerns raised.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not usually disclosed.

■ Spirits: Excise Duties

Kenny MacAskill: [\[15480\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to take steps to avoid spirits producers forestalling sales to reduce the amount of duty they owe.

Gareth Davies:

As with all taxes, the government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its yearly Budget process.

HMRC published its most recent quarterly alcohol bulletin in November 2023. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/alcohol-bulletin>

The publication contains annual duty receipts from alcohol types, including spirits. The accompanying tables contain historical annual and monthly duty receipts for spirits. The next instalment of this bulletin is due to be published on 29 February 2024.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[15481\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the loss of spirits duty as a result of forestalling in each year since 2015.

Gareth Davies:

Since 2015, the duty rates for spirits have increased twice. Rates first increased in March 2017, with receipts data showing no evidence of forestalling for this uprating.

Alcohol receipts data can be found in the quarterly HMRC alcohol bulletin:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/alcohol-bulletin>

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equal Pay: Gender

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[15336\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many warning notes the Equality and Human Rights Commission sent regarding failure to report gender pay gaps in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019, (d) 2020, (e) 2021, (f) 2022 and (g) 2023.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[15337\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many unlawful act notices the Equality and Human Rights Commission sent regarding failure to report gender pay gaps in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019, (d) 2020, (e) 2021, (f) 2022 and (g) 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2017/18, warning notices regarding failure to report were sent by the Government Equalities Office (GEO), on behalf of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), to 1456 organisations. EHRC also sent warning notices to 100 organisations that they suspected had published inaccurate data.

In 2018/19, the EHRC sent 328 warning notices (300 from the private sector and 28 from the public sector) and sent warning notices to 100 organisations that they suspected had published inaccurate data.

On 24 March 2020, the Government and the Commission announced that enforcement of the Gender Pay Gap Regulations was suspended due to the impact of Covid-19. Therefore no warning notices were issued during the 2019/20 reporting year.

In 2020/21, the EHRC sent 1,369 warning notices (1139 from the private sector and 230 from the public sector).

In 2021/22, the EHRC sent 613 warning notices (547 from the private sector and 66 from the public sector).

In 2022/23, the EHRC sent 732 warning notices (652 from the private sector and 80 from the public sector).

The EHRC has issued no section 21 unlawful act notices to private or voluntary sector employers.

I also provide a link to the Commission's general enforcement procedure for context: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/2021/legal-work-our-litigation-and-enforcement-policy-2019-2022.pdf>

Mr Gregory Campbell: **[15415]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what the Government's timetable is on closing the gender pay gap.

Maria Caulfield:

Under this government the gender pay gap has fallen significantly, with the gap having fallen from 19.8% to 14.3% over the last decade.

In 2017, we introduced world-leading regulations requiring large employers to publish the differences in average salaries and bonuses for men and women every year. This has ensured that employers are aware of their gaps and are taking steps to close them.

We know that reporting is just the first step, but do not believe that setting arbitrary targets or a timetable will help to drive the changes that we all want to see. The causes of the gender pay gap are complex, and the wider societal shifts required to close it will take time.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Software

Jonathan Ashworth: **[15444]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much funding his Department has (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on software updates to legacy computer systems in each of the last three financial years.

Paul Maynard:

DWP Digital supports a number of legacy core IT systems. As well as the run costs of those systems there is also an element of maintenance costs which will include software updates.

The Digital maintenance budgets of the system owners which include the legacy system costs for the last three years is as follows:

	21/22	22/23	*23/24	TOTAL
Maintenance Budget	114,700	83,900	87,200	285,800
Maintenance Spend	80,900	82,000	83,700	246,600

**23/24 spend figures are based on the latest forecast as at Period 9.*

■ Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit: Overpayments

Jim Shannon:

[\[15063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much has been overpaid to (a) Universal Credit and (b) Employment and Support Allowance claimants in each of the last twelve months.

Paul Maynard:

DWP measures its overpayments via annual national statistics published each May.

Latest published figures show that 12.8% (£5,540m) of UC and 3.4% (£410m) ESA was overpaid. These figures include fraud, official error and claimant error.

[Fraud and error in the benefit system: financial year 2022 to 2023 estimates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Employment: Veterans

Steve McCabe:

[\[15009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the impact of the level of employment support for veterans in jobcentres on trends in the number of veterans finding employment.

Mims Davies:

DWP supports people across the country to move into and progress in work through a range of support including face-to-face time with work coaches, job-search advice and more intensive employment programmes.

Veterans were eligible for the Work and Health Program (WHP), through the Early Access Group (EAG), which was on a voluntary basis. Evidence from the participant surveys suggests that the WHP has had some positive impacts on participants' work readiness compared with the control group. This is most evident for voluntary WHP participants relative to their control group. Among both mandatory and voluntary participants, six in ten thought the support received had increased their chances of moving into work.

Veterans will also be eligible for the Universal Support (US) programme which is currently in development. This will be evaluated to provide evidence on the effectiveness of the program for its participants.

The is currently no analysis of veteran's outcomes on Universal Credit (UC). The armed forces marker on UCFS was introduced in 2021. Coverage is not yet at the level required for robust analysis.

■ New Business: Veterans

Steve McCabe: [\[15010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to encourage more veterans to establish businesses in the defence, aerospace and cybersecurity sectors.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given on 20 February 2024 to PQ[13224](#).

The same applies to those looking to start up a business.

■ Poverty: Children

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[15153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to tackle child poverty in large towns and cities.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to reducing poverty, including child poverty, and supporting low-income families. We will spend around £276bn through the welfare system in Great Britain in 2023/24 including around £124bn on people of working age and children.

Working age benefits will increase by 6.7% from April 2024, subject to Parliamentary approval. To further support low-income households, we are also raising the Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents in April 2024, benefiting 1.6 million low-income households.

With over 900,000 vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting parents to move into and progress in work, an approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of parental employment - particularly where it is full-time - in substantially reducing the risk of child poverty. The latest statistics show that children living in workless households were around 5 times more likely to be in absolute poverty after housing costs than those where all adults work.

Our core Jobcentre offer provides a range of options to help people into work, including face-to-face time with Work Coaches and targeted employment support. We will also increase the National Living Wage by 9.8% to £11.44 for workers aged 21 years and over from this April - an annual increase in gross earnings of over £1800 for someone working full-time on the National Living Wage.

■ Universal Credit**Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[15401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many real time information disputes were raised by Universal Credit claimants in the most recent twelve month period for which data is available.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Universal Credit: Veterans**Steve McCabe:**[\[15011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 26 January 2024 to Question 11564 on Universal Credit: Veterans, for what reason the Department did not seek to capture data on the number of veterans that claimed Universal Credit prior to April 2021.

Mims Davies:

Once it became clear that an “identifier” on the Universal Credit system would be the best way to help ensure that veterans and other members of the armed forces community received appropriate help and support, we introduced it as soon as operationally feasible, taking account of other high priority changes required for the Universal Credit systems.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Funding

Minister for Housing and Homelessness (Felicity Buchan):

[\[HCWS297\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House that my Department has today confirmed further funding for three of our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping grants:

- £107 million allocated through the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme;
- £109 million allocated to councils across England as a top up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant to help address Ukraine and homelessness pressures; and
- £6 million allocated to London and across 101 local authorities in England, via the 2023/24 Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures funding, bringing the total of the fund to £10 million.

Taken together with our existing investment this means Government is providing nearly £2.4 billion to tackle homelessness and end rough sleeping between 2022 and 2025. These announcements build on the significant support we have put in through our rough sleeping strategy, [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good](#), and are a further example of our ongoing commitment to end rough sleeping.

We have confirmed today that we are allocating a further £107 million to councils in England through the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme. The Programme aims to increase the supply of high-quality accommodation with accompanying support for people with the longest histories of rough sleeping or the most complex needs and vulnerable young people (aged 18-25) who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping.

This allocation, following a final bidding round, will fund the delivery of 808 homes and three years of support for their occupants. This adds to 1,230 homes funded through the previous four bidding rounds. Meanwhile, we have funded 6,000 homes through the £433 million Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme and housed over 1,090 people through the £42 million Housing First programme. The Government is also providing additional support to house Afghans and others in temporary accommodation through the £1.2 billion Local Authority Housing Fund, which is expected to deliver around 7,000 homes by 2026.

We have also confirmed today that councils in England will receive an additional £109 million in 2024/25 via a top up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant. This funding can be used flexibly – for example, to offer financial support for people to find a new home or to work with landlords to prevent evictions, among other preventative measures, or to provide temporary accommodation.

This funding forms part of the £120 million UK-wide funding announced at Autumn Statement 2023 to help councils address homelessness pressures and support Ukrainian guests who can no longer remain in sponsorship in 2024/25. The remaining funding has been allocated to Scotland (£7.7 million), Wales (£2.6 million) and Northern Ireland (£0.6 million) to help prevent homelessness amongst Ukrainians.

Finally, we have given a further £6 million to councils in England through the Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures funding, which builds on the initial allocation of £4 million announced in January. We know that winter is particularly high-risk for individuals who are sleeping rough, increasing the demand for immediate 'off-the-street' accommodation, and this funding will support councils to create additional off-street capacity and reduce the risk of deaths from exposure to extreme weather. This complements funding already provided to councils through the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25, which totals over £547 million across three years.

The funding announced today forms part of a wider package of support for people who are homeless or sleeping rough, and further demonstrates the Government's commitment to tackle homelessness and end rough sleeping, working in partnership with local government and the voluntary sector to achieve this ambitious aim.

SCOTLAND

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack):

[\[HCWS296\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Scotland Office's intention to seek a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund. The Department requires an advance to meet the Scottish Government's cash requirements pending parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimate 2023-24.

The Scottish Government is operating within its budgets, so this does not represent additional spending. However, an increase in net cash requirement will be sought in the Supplementary Estimate so accessing the Contingencies Fund will allow the Scottish Government to fund this existing spending in the meantime.

The advance will be repaid immediately following approval of the Supplementary Estimate.

Parliamentary approval for additional non-budget expenditure of £703,711,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Scotland Office. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £703,711,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ DWP Estate – Decommissioning of Temporary Jobcentres

Minister of State for Employment (Jo Churchill):

[[HCWS295](#)]

We previously provided updates on decommissioning Temporary Jobcentres; [Expanding Our Services](#) on 23 March 2021, and [Expanding Our Services Update](#) on 21 October 2021. These statements reaffirmed the Department’s commitment to reducing its Jobcentre estate back to pre-pandemic levels by decommissioning the Temporary Jobcentres or the additional space in established Jobcentres in a phased approach, where the increased capacity is no longer needed. The full list of Temporary Jobcentres and their current status can be found [here](#).

As part of this ongoing, phased, approach to decommissioning the Temporary Jobcentres, the Department is today announcing the sixth and latest phase, which consists of decommissioning a further 42 temporary sites or additional space in existing Jobcentres. This latest phase brings the total number of temporary sites announced to date to 182. Details of the sites being decommissioned in this latest phase are listed below.

The remaining 12 sites of the 194 originally opened will be either decommissioned or absorbed into the estate in the coming months and we will individually update all those Members whose constituencies are affected at the time.

The decommissioning of Temporary Jobcentres will not reduce the levels of service, or access to face-to-face appointments. Customers will return to being served by an established Jobcentre and there will be no reduction in the number of Work Coaches supporting customers as a result of the decommissioning.

The Department continues to support and update colleagues in a timely and sensitive manner. We also remain committed to ensuring all relevant stakeholders, unions, organisations and Parliament are engaged and regularly updated on our work. Letters are being sent to each right hon. and hon. Member with changes in their constituency to explain what this means for their local Jobcentre, its staff, and their constituents.

Finally, in conjunction with this carefully planned decommissioning programme, we are looking to improve and upgrade Jobcentres over time. It is important that all those who come to Jobcentres are given the highest level of attention and service.

The 42 Temporary Jobcentres or additional space in existing sites to be formally decommissioned are:

Temporary Jobcentres

TEMPORARY JOBCENTRE LOCATION	ADDRESS
Aberdeen	Unit C and D City Wharf, Shiprow, Aberdeen AB11 5BY
Basingstoke	Centenary House, 10 Winchester Road,

TEMPORARY JOBCENTRE LOCATION	ADDRESS
	Basingstoke RG21 8UG
Birmingham (South)	1 Facet Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham B38 9PT
Blackpool	8 Albert Road, Blackpool FY1 4SW
Bradford	Unit D, Bradford Business Park, Kings Gate, Bradford BD1 4SJ
Chatham	Unit 61A, Dockside Outlet Centre, Maritime Way, St Mary's Island, Chatham ME4 3ED
Coventry	MSU D First Floor, West Orchards Shopping Centre, Smithford Way, Coventry CV1 1QL
Eastbourne	1 Grove Road, Eastbourne BN21 4TW
Edinburgh Waverley Bridge	Unit L23, Waverley Mall, Waverley Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1BQ
Fareham	95 West Street, Fareham PO16 0AQ
Halesowen	60 Whitehall Road, Halesowen B63 3JS
Kidderminster	Unit J2 Crossley Retail Park, Carpet Trades Way, Kidderminster DY11 6DY
Leicester	Pegasus House, 17 Burleys Way, Leicester LE1 3BE
London Barnet	Building 2, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, Barnet N11 1GN
London Cooks Road (Newham)	1-4 Cooks Road, London E15 2PW
London Ilford (Redbridge)	The Exchange, High Road, Ilford, IG1 1RS
London Queen's Park (Brent Wembley)	111-115 Salusbury Road, Queens Park, London NW6 6RG
London Royal Albert Dock (Newham)	Altitude, 14 Lascars Avenue, Royal Albert Dock London E16 2YP
London Woolwich	71-77 Powis Street, Woolwich, Greenwich SE18 6JB
Macclesfield	Unit 2 The Silk Works, Pickford Street, Macclesfield SK11 6JD

TEMPORARY JOBCENTRE LOCATION	ADDRESS
Manchester (Central)	58 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3HZ
Milton Keynes	Phoenix House, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1AW
Norwich	Lower Units 16, 17, 18 and Upper Units 10, 11, 12, Castle Quarter, Norwich NR1 3DD
Peterlee	56 Yoden Way, Peterlee SR8 1AS
Portsmouth	5a Edinburgh Road, Portsmouth PO1 1DE
Slough	4 The Observatory, High Street, Slough SL1 1LE
Solihull	Jago House, 692 Warwick Road, Solihull B91 3DX
Staines upon Thames	100 Church Street, Staines upon Thames TW18 4DQ
Sutton in Ashfield	Broadway, Brook Street, Sutton in Ashfield NG17 1AL

Additional space in established Jobcentres

Additional space will be decommissioned or reabsorbed into the estate and services will continue as usual.

ADDITIONAL SPACE LOCATION	ADDRESS
Ayr (reabsorbed)	Wallacetoun House, John Street, Ayr KA8 0BX
Cambridge (reabsorbed)	Henry Giles House, 73-79 Chesterton Road, Cambridge CB4 3BQ
Horsham (reabsorbed)	Marlborough House, 50 East Street, Horsham RH12 1HN
Lancaster (reabsorbed)	Mitre House, Church Street, Lancaster LA1 1JW
Leamington Spa (reabsorbed)	Brandon House, Holly Walk, Leamington Spa CV32 4JE
London Peckham (Southwark) (reabsorbed)	24-26 Peckham High Street, Peckham, London SE15 5DS

ADDITIONAL SPACE LOCATION	ADDRESS
Shrewsbury (decommissioned)	3rd Floor offices Princess House, 17-19 The Square, Shrewsbury SY1 1YA
Sittingbourne (reabsorbed)	Roman House, 9 Roman Square, Sittingbourne ME10 4BP
Southport (reabsorbed)	Eastbank House, Eastbank Street, Southport PR8 1HE
St Albans (reabsorbed)	Beaver House, 6 Bricket Road, St Albans AL1 3JU
St Helens (reabsorbed)	Gregson House, Central Street, St Helens WA10 1UF
Waltham Cross (reabsorbed)	235 High Street, Waltham Cross EN8 7BA
York (reabsorbed)	1st Floor, 11-17 Monkgate, York YO31 7JZ

The 12 remaining Temporary Jobcentres or additional space in existing sites to be decommissioned or absorbed into the estate in the coming months are:

TEMPORARY JOBCENTRE LOCATION	ADDRESS
Ashton Under Lyne	101 Old Street, Ashton Under-Lyne OL6 6BJ
Birmingham	B1, 50 Summer Hill Road, Birmingham B1 3RB
Bournemouth	580 Tringham House, Deansleigh Road Bournemouth BH7 7DT
Bradford	Aldermanbury House, 2 - 4 Godwin Street, Bradford BD1 2ST
Colwyn Bay	Unit B, Bay View Centre, Sea View Road, Colwyn Bay LL29 8DG
Doncaster	The Blue Building, 39-40 High Street, Doncaster DN1 1DE
Keighley	Unit 1 Hanover House, 49 Low Street, Keighley BD21 3PP
Kings Lynn	30-34 Broad Street, Kings Lynn PE30 1DP
London Barnsbury (Islington)	Unit 1a and 1b, 427 - 429 Caledonian Road, London, N7 9BG

TEMPORARY JOBCENTRE LOCATION	ADDRESS
London Clapham (Lambeth)	Clapham Place, Unit 1, 340 Clapham Road, London SW9 9FA
Preston	Fishergate Shopping Centre, Preston PR1 8HJ
Stafford	30 Greengate Street, Stafford ST16 2HY