



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 May 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:34 P.M., 15 May 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

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Sir Stephen Timms: [\[25137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when she last held discussions with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the sale of arms to Israel.

Alan Mak:

To support her decisions on export licensing to Israel, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade regularly receives advice from the Foreign Secretary and FCDO.

We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and Gaza closely, and all of our export licences are kept under careful and continual review.

■ Department for Business and Trade: ICT

Matt Rodda: [\[25018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the guidance by the Central Digital and Data Office entitled Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published on 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by her Department; and how many red-rated IT systems have been identified since 4 December 2023.

Alan Mak:

The Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO), in the Cabinet Office, has established a programme to support departments managing legacy IT. CDDO has agreed a framework to identify 'red-rated' systems, indicating high levels of risk surrounding certain assets within the IT estate. Departments have committed to have remediation plans in place for these systems by next year (2025).

It is not appropriate to release sensitive information held about specific red-rated systems or more detailed plans for remediation within the Department for Business and Trade's IT estate, as this information could indicate which systems are at risk, and may highlight potential security vulnerabilities.

■ Nuclear Power: Exports

Mark Menzies: [\[24891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking to support the UK nuclear industry to increase exports.

Greg Hands:

The UK has extensive expertise across the nuclear life cycle, from new build, fuel to decommissioning and waste management.

The Department recognises the export potential offered by a growing global market and is working closely with other government departments, our overseas network, and industry to offer a full range of support for UK civil nuclear exports across markets including Japan, France, Central Europe and Ukraine.

This includes UK Export Finance, who can consider a range of options to support overseas sales, including loan guarantees for foreign buyers, working capital, insurance, and bond support products to assist UK suppliers.

■ Universal Service Obligation

Sir Chris Bryant:

[\[25640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact on patients receiving letters from the NHS of changes to the universal service obligation.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, is responsible for ensuring that the universal postal service meets the reasonable needs of customers as well as being financially sustainable and efficient. The Government does not have a role in Ofcom's regulatory decisions.

The Government expects Ofcom to take full account of users' needs, including users of important public services, in assessing the feedback on its recent Call for Inputs.

The Government will consider any recommendations that Ofcom puts forward, but Ministers are not currently minded to introduce new legislation to change the obligations on postal deliveries.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Civil Servants: Redundancy

Martin Docherty-Hughes:

[\[24927\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposed reductions in the number of civil servants on the (a) capacity and (b) efficiency of the Civil Service.

John Glen:

The Prime Minister's announcement of longer term reductions in Civil Service numbers is a reiteration of the policy announced by the Chancellor in October 2023. The longer term reductions will build on the shorter term headcount cap put in place through to March 2025, and the detail of how individual organisations will be affected by the return to pre-pandemic numbers will form a key part of the next comprehensive spending review.

■ Civil Servants: Remote Working

Jim Shannon: [\[24916\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to increase the number of civil servants working from the office.

John Glen:

Research into workplace practices across all sectors was undertaken which confirmed the clear benefits of face to face, workplace based collaborative working, which led to agreement across government for such an approach. That's why I set out the expectation for staff to be in the office at least 60% of the time, and I believe that our senior civil servants need to set an example as leaders.

There are significant benefits from spending time working together in person, either within teams, with colleagues from the same department or – in Government hubs – with colleagues from other departments. These include collaboration, innovation and fostering a sense of community. We know that in particular junior colleagues benefit from having time face to face with senior leaders and that those early in their careers find working face to face with their peers and managers makes them more effective more quickly.

■ Renewable Energy: Exports

Selaine Saxby: [\[25113\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of trends in the level of UK exports in low carbon and renewable sectors since 2015.

Selaine Saxby: [\[25114\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an estimate of the value of UK exports in low carbon and renewables sectors since 2015.

John Glen:

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

A response to the Hon. Lady's Parliamentary Questions of 07/05 is attached.

Attachments:

1. [UKSA Letter](#) [PQ25113_25114 (1).pdf]

■ Veterans: Women

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[24930\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to increase representation of women in veteran support services.

Johnny Mercer:

This Government understands that, whilst the majority of women veterans go on to lead successful post-service lives, and the challenges they face are often the same as for men, the experiences and needs of women are sometimes different.

That is why we are developing the Government's first Women Veterans' Strategy, which will celebrate the successes of women veterans, but will also look at specific challenges they may face, in order to better address their needs.

As well as looking at the experiences of women who have served in the UK Armed Forces, the Strategy will recognise their contribution to society and identify what further tailored support could be provided, which includes considering the accessibility of support services.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Film and Television: Government Assistance**

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[25251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support lower budget film and TV programmes.

Julia Lopez:

The UK Government has a clear plan to grow the creative industries by a further £50 billion and support another 1 million jobs by 2030. This was set out in June 2023 in the Creative Industries Sector Vision, which was accompanied by £77 million of new funding to support the sector's growth.

We are taking steps to support producers of all sizes and the production sector more generally. This includes generous tax reliefs across studio space and visual effects, investing in studio infrastructure, and supporting innovation and promoting independent content through the UK Global Screen Fund.

At Spring Budget 2024, the Chancellor also announced the UK Independent Film Tax Credit. Eligible films with production budgets (excluding marketing and distribution) of up to £15 million will be able to opt-in to claim enhanced Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit at a rate of 53% on their qualifying expenditure.

This is in addition to our long standing interventions supporting the independent television production sector, including the independent productions quota and associated Terms of Trade regime, which have been extremely successful in furthering the diversity of the sector and its output.

■ **Football: Voluntary Work**

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[25254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of the number of volunteers there were in amateur football in (a) 2010, (b) 2019 and (c) 2023.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[25255]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of the number of people that played grassroots sport in England in (a) 2010, (b) 2019 and (c) 2023.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government tracks activity levels through Sport England's Active Lives surveys. Two surveys run annually: Active Lives Adult, and Active Lives Children and Young People. These surveys measure the activity levels of people across England and allows the Government to collect accurate data on what and how much sport and physical activity different groups are participating in. You can find out more about the surveys on [Sport England's website](#).

- 2009/10
- Active People survey - 15.2 million people took part in sport and wider physical activity for an average of at least 30 minutes a week.
- Children and young people - Sport England only started collecting data in 2017.
- 2018/19
- Active Lives Adult survey - 28.6 million took part in 150+ minutes of activity a week.
- Active Lives Children and Young People survey - 3.3 million doing an average of 60+ minutes per day.
- 2022/23
- Active Lives Adult survey - 29.5 million took part in 150+ minutes of activity a week.
- Active Lives Children and Young people survey - 3.5 million doing an average of 60+ minutes per day.

It's important to note that comparing data on a consistent basis across this time is not possible as the methodologies and metrics employed changed to reflect changes in the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidance.

Since 2010, the CMO guidelines on physical activity changed from five separate sessions of 30 minutes of at least moderate intensity physical activity in a week to at least 150 minutes of moderate equivalent intensity physical activity a week. In addition to this, Sport England's remit has extended to include recreational activities and active travel.

Sport England does not record the number of volunteers in amateur football.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme****Martin Docherty-Hughes:**[\[24932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that Armed Forces Compensation payments are processed before applicants die.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence MOD aims to consider all claims under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) as efficiently as possible. Once officials are made aware that an AFCS claimant is terminally ill, their case is afforded top prioritisation across all stages of the consideration and notification process.

Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and are evidence-based, with the majority of evidence-gathering undertaken on the individual's behalf. Complex cases can require extensive Service and medical evidence to be obtained and investigated. Complex cases and all claims for mental health conditions require medical consideration by a Medical Adviser (MA), whose role is to provide advice and guidance based upon pre-existing medical evidence to determine the level of disablement in accordance with the relevant scheme's rules.

■ Armed Forces: Housing**Helen Morgan:**[\[25126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he made of the adequacy of the standard of service accommodation before setting the Defence Infrastructure Organisation budget for 2024-25.

James Cartlidge:

Budgets for defence organisations, including DIO, are being determined as part of the Annual Budget Cycle process.

Currently, 96% of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) meets or exceeds the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

This Government continues to invest significant sums to improve the quality of UK SFA. The Defence Command Paper Refresh committed an additional £400 million over two years. In 2023-24, Defence allocated and spent £220 million to implement damp and mould remediation in approximately 4,000 homes, refurbished c1,000 long term empty homes, provided 3,000 homes with replacement windows and doors, 1,000 homes with replacement kitchens and bathrooms, and upgraded heaters and boilers in 1,500 homes.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment**Luke Pollard:**[\[25349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on armed forces career offices in the last five years.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence has spent an estimated £159 Million on Armed Forces Career Offices (AFCOs) in the period from 2019-20 to 2023-24. This cost excludes the lease and building maintenance costs for AFCOs sponsored by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, and the cost of staffing AFCOs sponsored by the Army.

Armed Forces: Sexual Offences**Martin Docherty-Hughes:**[\[24931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce and (b) prevent sexual harassment and assault of women serving in the armed forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 March 2024 to Question 13252 to the hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood).

<https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2286289/details>

BGI Group**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[24861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the BGI Group (a) has or (b) has ever had contracts with his Department.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence does not have, nor has ever had, contracts with the BGI Group.

Chetwynd Barracks**Luke Pollard:**[\[25051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are based at Chetwynd Barracks.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 January 2024, there were 990 UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Chetwynd Barracks.

Please note the following caveats:

1. The number of UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Chetwynd Barracks can only be provided as at 1 January 2024 in line with Published National Statistics.
2. This figure comprises UK Regular Forces, Gurkhas, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Volunteer Reserve, Serving Regular Reserve, Sponsored Reserve and Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) of unknown origin. University Officer Cadets are excluded. The figure includes both trained and untrained personnel.

3. The figure is based on Service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence – where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.
4. Figures containing Reserve personnel are estimates because the station location data for Reserves has not been fully verified.
5. The figure has been rounded to the nearest 10 to prevent inadvertent disclosure of personal identities. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias.

■ Dishforth Airfield

Luke Pollard: [\[24709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Dishforth Barracks, Thirsk since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Victoria Barracks, Ballater since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Alanbrooke Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Claro Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Queen Elizabeth Barracks since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. Defence Infrastructure Organisation officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ Dishforth Airfield: Repairs and Maintenance

Luke Pollard: [\[24700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Dishforth Barracks in Thirsk for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Victoria Barracks, Ballater for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Alanbrooke Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Queen Elizabeth Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Claro Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. Defence Infrastructure Organisation's officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ DMS Whittington

Luke Pollard: [\[25050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are based at DMS Whittington.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 January 2024, there were 630 UK Armed Forces Service personnel stationed at DMS Whittington.

Please note the following caveats:

1. The number of UK Armed Forces Service personnel stationed at DMS Whittington can only be provided as at 1 January 2024 in line with Published National Statistics.
2. This figure comprises UK Regular Forces, Gurkhas, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Volunteer Reserve, Serving Regular Reserve, Sponsored Reserve and Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) of unknown origin. University Officer Cadets are excluded. The figure includes both trained and untrained personnel.

3. The figure is based on Service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence – where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.
4. Figures containing Reserve personnel are estimates because the station location data for Reserves has not been fully verified.
5. The figure has been rounded to the nearest 10 to prevent inadvertent disclosure of personal identities. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias.

■ **Gaza: Israel**

Martin Docherty-Hughes:

[\[24929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that any evidence of war crimes being committed in Gaza witnessed by UK armed forces surveillance is (a) documented and (b) investigated.

Leo Docherty:

The unarmed UK reconnaissance aircraft are employed solely for the purpose of increasing our chances of locating the hostages.

The UK remains committed to holding perpetrators of war crimes to account, including through our support to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The UK would consider any formal request from the ICC for information and act in accordance with its international obligations under the Rome Statute and through the framework in the ICC Act 2001.

As signatories to the Rome Statute, the Genocide Convention and the Convention on Torture, the UK has a responsibility to investigate and prosecute those who have committed core international crimes.

■ **Gaza: Military Aid**

Martin Docherty-Hughes:

[\[24928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of deploying armed forces personnel to help facilitate the medical evacuation of civilians in Gaza.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence continuously assess medical support options in our response to the Israel/Gaza conflict.

■ **Germany: Tanks**

Mr Ben Wallace:

[\[24009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with his German counterpart on ensuring that collaboration on the Boxer 155mm platform will

not be subject to an export veto by the German (a) federal government and (b) parliament.

James Cartlidge:

I have closely engaged with my German counterpart on the Boxer 155mm project, including consideration of future export prospects. The Prime Minister also discussed the project and the position on exports with Chancellor Scholz ahead of announcing the joint way ahead in Berlin on 24 April. Following the announcement, I also met with Secretary Zimmer in the Ministerial Equipment and Capability Cooperation (MECC) format on 8 May during which we discussed our plans to progress to the next stage of the programme.

■ **Imphal Barracks**

Luke Pollard: [\[24806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Imphal Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Deverell Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Harden Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Fulwood Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Dale Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Clive Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. DIO officials are working with them to produce a consolidated

response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

Luke Pollard: [\[24816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Imphal Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Deverell Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Harden Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Fulwood Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Dale Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[24825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his department has spent on improving service accommodation at Clive Barracks since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. Defence Infrastructure Organisation officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ Ministry of Defence: Graffiti

Sir Michael Ellis: [\[25487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of removing the paint sprayed onto the Ministry of Defence Main Building by protesters on 10 April 2024.

James Cartlidge:

The current estimated cost of carrying out the work needed to restore the Grade 1 listed Ministry of Defence Main Building as a result of the paint sprayed on the walls and windows is £60,000 ex-VAT.

■ MOD Donnington**Luke Pollard:**[\[25053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are based at Parsons Barracks.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 January 2024, there were 120 UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Parsons Barracks.

Please note the following caveats:

1. The number of UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Parsons Barracks can only be provided as at 1 January 2024 in line with Published National Statistics.
2. This figure comprises UK Regular Forces, Gurkhas, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Volunteer Reserve, Serving Regular Reserve, Sponsored Reserve and Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) of unknown origin. University Officer Cadets are excluded. The figure includes both trained and untrained personnel.
3. The figure is based on Service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence – where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.
4. Figures containing Reserve personnel are estimates because the station location data for Reserves has not been fully verified.
5. The figure has been rounded to the nearest 10 to prevent inadvertent disclosure of personal identities. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias.

Luke Pollard:[\[25054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are based at Venning Barracks.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 January 2024, there were 80 UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Venning Barracks.

Please note the following caveats:

1. The number of UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Venning Barracks can only be provided as at 1 January 2024 in line with Published National Statistics.
2. This figure comprises UK Regular Forces, Gurkhas, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Volunteer Reserve, Serving Regular Reserve, Sponsored Reserve and Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) of unknown origin. University Officer Cadets are excluded. The figure includes both trained and untrained personnel.

3. The figure is based on Service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence – where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.
4. Figures containing Reserve personnel are estimates because the station location data for Reserves has not been fully verified.
5. The figure has been rounded to the nearest 10 to prevent inadvertent disclosure of personal identities. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias.

Luke Pollard: [\[25055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at DMS Whittington since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Chetwynd Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Prince William of Gloucester Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Parsons Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his department has spent on improving service accommodation at Venning Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF Brize Norton since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. DIO officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ MOD Donnington: Repairs and Maintenance

Luke Pollard: [\[25045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to DMS Whittington for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Chetwynd Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Prince William of Gloucester Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Parsons Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Venning Barracks for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many maintenance requests have been made at RAF Brize Norton for issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. Defence Infrastructure Organisation's officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ MOD Stafford

Luke Pollard: [\[25330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould from Beacon Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould from Kendrew Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould from St George's Barracks, North Luffenham since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould from RAF Wittering since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould from RAF Digby since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould from RAF Shawbury since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. DIO's officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

Luke Pollard: [\[25340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Beacon Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Kendrew Barracks since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at St George's Barracks, North Luffenham since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF Wittering since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF Digby since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF Shawbury since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. Defence Infrastructure Organisation officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ Prince William of Gloucester Barracks

Luke Pollard: [\[25052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are based at Prince William of Gloucester Barracks.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 January 2024, there were 430 UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Prince William of Gloucester Barracks.

Please note the following caveats:

1. The number of UK Armed Forces Service Personnel stationed at Prince William of Gloucester Barracks can only be provided as at 1 January 2024 in line with Published National Statistics.
2. This figure comprises UK Regular Forces, Gurkhas, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Volunteer Reserve, Serving Regular Reserve, Sponsored Reserve and Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) of unknown origin. University Officer Cadets are excluded. The figure includes both trained and untrained personnel.
3. The figure is based on Service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence – where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.
4. Figures containing Reserve personnel are estimates because the station location data for Reserves has not been fully verified.

5. The figure has been rounded to the nearest 10 to prevent inadvertent disclosure of personal identities. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias.

■ **RAF Cosford**

Luke Pollard: [\[25561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to RAF Cosford for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to Mona Airfield for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to RAF Valley for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to MOD St Athan for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to RAF Halton for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many callouts have been made to RAF High Wycombe for maintenance issues relating to (a) roofing, (b) loss of heating and hot water, (c) electrics, (d) pest control and (e) damp and mould since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. Defence Infrastructure Organisation officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

Luke Pollard: [\[25571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF Cosford since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at Mona Airfield since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF Valley since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at MOD St Athan since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF Halton since April 2022.

Luke Pollard: [\[25580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at RAF High Wycombe since April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information required to answer the hon. Member's questions is held by Ministry of Defence contractors. Defence Infrastructure Organisation officials are working with them to produce a consolidated response which will take some time. I will write to him by early June 2024, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ RAF High Wycombe

Luke Pollard: [\[25579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are based at RAF High Wycombe as of May 2024.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 January 2024, there were 1,940 UK Armed Forces Service personnel stationed at RAF High Wycombe, inclusive of HQ Air Command and UK Space Command personnel.

Please note, UK Forces Service Personnel comprises UK Regular Forces, Gurkhas, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel, Volunteer Reserve, Serving Regular Reserve, Sponsored Reserve, and Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) of unknown origin. University Air Squadron Officer Cadets are excluded. The figure includes trained and untrained personnel.

The figure includes Reserve personnel and is therefore an estimate because the stationed location data for Reserves has not been fully verified.

The figure has been rounded to the nearest 10. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias.

Data has been provided as at 1 January 2024 to align with published Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics.

■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Luke Pollard:

[\[25576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 May 2024 to Question 24112 on Royal Fleet Auxiliary, whether (a) he, (b) the Minister for the Armed Forces, (c) the Minister for Defence Procurement and (d) the Minister for Defence People and Families has taken part in meetings with (i) Nautilus International and (ii) the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary in 2024.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I can confirm that there have been no confirmed Ministerial meetings with these organisations.

■ Russia

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[24857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Russia's threat of a military response following the UK's provision of long-range missiles to Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK provided long range, precision strike conventional weapons so that the Armed Forces of Ukraine may better defend themselves in Ukraine.

The granting of Storm Shadow was in response to Russia's continued brutality and deliberate targeting of Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, and it will help Ukraine restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Ukraine's use of Storm Shadow is the business of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and has successfully put pressure on Russian forces.

The UK, along with other allies, is providing a range of equipment to Ukraine to help it counter Russia's illegal and unprovoked aggression, on the understanding that it will be used in accordance with International Humanitarian Law.

■ War Widow(er)s Recognition Payment

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[24871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the War Widows Recognition Payment Scheme.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[24872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications have been (a) made to, (b) approved by and (c) paid by the War Widows Recognition Payment Scheme.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[24873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) shortest, (b) average and (c) longest time taken is between application to and a payment under the War Widows Recognition Payment Scheme.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[24874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications have been made to the War Widows Recognition Payment Scheme in each month since it was announced.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[24875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff in his Department work on the War Widows Recognition Payment Scheme.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The War Widow(er)s Recognition Payment Scheme has received 330 applications and accepted and paid 209 claims since it was launched on 16 October 2023. Of those, 90 per cent of all claims have been processed and 97 per cent of payments made to those eligible within the published timescales. The Recognition Payment Scheme is delivering effectively to those it was established to recognise.

The shortest time taken between an application being received and a payment being made was 19 working days and the longest 88 working days, with an average of 56 working days.

The below table shows the number of applications made to the War Widow(er)s Recognition Payment Scheme in each month since it was launched on 16 October 2023.

MONTH	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED
October 2023	165
November 2023	86
December 2023	25
January 2024	15
February 2024	22
March 2024	10
April 2024	6
May 2024	1
Total	330

The scheme is administered by a dedicated team of six staff, and application support is available through the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS).

■ Yemen: Military Intervention

George Galloway: [\[24864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse has been of the UK's (a) participation in Operation Prosperity Guardian and (b) military air strikes on Yemen.

Leo Docherty:

The Net Additional Costs of Military Operations will be identified and reported in the Annual Report and Accounts in due course.

EDUCATION

■ School Libraries: Hornsey and Wood Green

Catherine West: [\[25303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of primary schools had a dedicated (a) school library and (b) librarian in (i) 2010, (ii) 2023 and (iii) May 2024.

Catherine West: [\[25304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of primary schools in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency had a dedicated (a) school library and (b) librarian in (i) 2010, (ii) 2023 and (iii) May 2024.

Catherine West: [\[25305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of secondary schools had a dedicated (a) school library and (b) librarian in (i) 2010, (ii) 2023 and (iii) May 2024.

Catherine West: [\[25306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of secondary schools in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency had a dedicated (a) school library and (b) librarian in (i) 2010, (ii) 2023 and (iii) May 2024.

Sir John Hayes: [\[25407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools in have a dedicated (a) library and (b) librarian in (i) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (ii) Lincolnshire.

Damian Hinds:

The department believes that all pupils deserve to be taught a knowledge-rich curriculum that promotes the extensive reading of books and other texts, both in and out of school. School libraries complement public libraries in allowing pupils to do this.

It is for individual schools to decide how best to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils, including whether to employ a qualified librarian. Overall school

funding is increasing by more than £2.9 billion in the 2024/25 academic year compared to the 2023/24 academic year, taking the total to £60.7 billion, which is the highest ever level in real terms per pupil. Many headteachers recognise the important role school libraries play in improving literacy and encouraging pupils to read for pleasure and ensure that suitable library facilities are provided. School libraries can take many forms, with some schools preferring to make books a focus in other ways, including housing them within classrooms.

The department's Reading Framework, updated in July 2023, offers non-statutory guidance for teachers and school leaders, including helpful guidance for schools on how to organise their school library, book corner or book stock to make reading accessible and attractive to readers. Given this autonomy, the department does not collect information on the number of school libraries.

■ Special Educational Needs

Stephen Morgan: [\[25008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of SEND provision in schools in (a) Portsmouth and (b) England.

Stephen Morgan: [\[25009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for SEND services in schools.

David Johnston:

It is the responsibility of local authorities to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all pupils in a local area in mainstream schools and settings for pupils with high needs including special schools and alternative provision (AP).

The department works closely with Portsmouth City Council and Multi Academy Trusts in the area to ensure high-quality provision. In Portsmouth there are five special schools. Of these schools three are rated as outstanding by Ofsted, one is a new school yet to be inspected and one is inadequate, and the department is working with the trust to secure rapid improvement. Several mainstream schools in the city also provide education to children with special educational needs through special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) units and resourced provision.

The last local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission for Portsmouth was in July 2019, and the inspection found that professionals across Education, Health, and Care work well in a joined-up way to promote inclusive practice.

Last year the department published the SEND and AP Improvement Plan. This set out the department's plans to establish a new national SEND and AP system that delivers timely, high-quality services and support in mainstream settings, alongside swift access to more local state specialist settings, where required.

The department is investing £2.6 billion since 2022 to deliver new specialist and AP places and improve existing provision. Together with ongoing delivery of new special

and AP free schools, this funding supports local authorities to deliver over 60,000 new specialist places and improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings.

The department is also increasing high needs revenue funding for children and young people with complex needs to over £10.5 billion this financial year 2024/25 (up 60% over the last five years). Within this total Portsmouth City Council will receive a high needs allocation of over £37 million, which is a cumulative increase of 36% per head over the three years from 2021/22. The extra revenue funding will help with the increasing costs of supporting SEND provision in schools.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Visual Impairment**

Helen Hayes:

[\[24977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the Royal National Institute of Blind People's research entitled Provision under pressure: Gaps in Educational Support for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment in England (2023), published in February 2024; and what steps her Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to ensure that children and young people with vision impairment have equitable access to education.

David Johnston:

The department's ambition is that all children and young people receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) Improvement Plan outlines the government's mission to establish a single, national SEND and AP system, with the proposal to develop national standards a fundamental foundation for this.

This new single national system will set standards on what support should be made available in mainstream settings, including for children with vision impairment. The National Standards will outline the types of special educational provision that should be available, who is responsible for delivering that support, and clarify expectations on mainstream settings and local services. To inform national standards, the department is engaging with stakeholders across education, health and social care, as well as children, young people and their families, this includes members of the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

The department is committed to ensuring a steady supply of teachers of children with vision impairment in both specialist and mainstream settings. To teach a class of pupils with vision impairments, a teacher is required to hold the relevant mandatory qualification for sensory impairment (MQSI). There are currently six providers of the MQSI, with a seventh from September 2024. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) is developing a new occupational standard for teachers of sensory impairment, expected to be available from September 2025. Children and young people with special educational needs have more access to assistive

technology following investment in remote education and accessibility features, which can reduce or remove barriers to learning.

■ Students: Loans

Emma Hardy: [\[24995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the average length of time the Student Loans Company takes to refund people who have made an overpayment on their student loan.

Emma Hardy: [\[24996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with HM Revenue and Customs on the timeframe for refunding student loan overpayment.

Luke Hall:

The Student Loans Company (SLC) has a Service Level Agreement of 28 days to make a refund to people who have made an over repayment on their student loan. Based on telephone requests from January to March 2024, the SLC averaged 8 days from the point the request was received to the point the refund was paid to the borrower's bank account.

Student loans repayments for borrowers resident in the UK are made via HMRC through the UK tax system. Employers deduct repayments each pay period for employees with a student loan when their earnings are above the relevant repayment threshold for that pay period.

Over repayments can occur for a number of reasons, for example the time lag between an employer making a PAYE deduction and HMRC receiving and sending that payment to SLC, which can then confirm that a borrower has paid off their student loan balance. HMRC provides the SLC with student loan repayment information as reported by employers on a weekly basis. For this type of over-repayment, the SLC can automatically make a refund of £5,000 where they are able to verify a borrower's bank account details.

SLC provide borrowers with the option to switch to repayments via direct debit when they are nearing the end of their loan repayments. This prevents overpayments entirely.

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[25637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an estimate of the value of tuition fee repayments that were written off due to lower graduate salary levels between 2020 and 2023.

Luke Hall:

As education is a devolved issue, the following answer concerns the student finance system in England only. The student finance systems of the devolved administrations differ from that of England.

The department makes regular assessments of the expected write-off amount of student loans issued in each financial year. These forecasts are published on GOV.UK.

The headline statistic Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) charge is the percentage of the loans (both tuition and maintenance) outlaid to students in a given financial year, that the government expects to subsidise, i.e. write-off.

Repayments are calculated based on income, not on the amount borrowed. Borrowers earning less than the repayment threshold repay nothing at all, and loans are cancelled at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower. The Student Loans Company will also cancel a borrower's liability to repay a loan if the borrower dies or receives an eligible disability-related benefit and because of the disability is permanently unfit for work. It is not possible to disaggregate the pure impact of salary levels of borrowers (graduates and non-graduates) on loan write-offs.

The latest publication of the student loan forecasts for England was published in June 2023, and will be updated at the end of June 2024. The RAB charge for full-time undergraduate higher education (plan 2) loans issued in the 2022/23 financial year was forecast to be 28%.

Student loan repayments volumes are sensitive to the wider economic environment. Earnings of borrowers (both graduates and non-graduates), interest rates, inflation rates, repayment threshold freezes, policy changes and modelling improvements, all influence the RAB charge forecasts. For these reasons RAB forecasts from the past are not directly comparable year-on-year.

■ Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Munira Wilson:

[\[25589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will list the teacher recruitment and retention schemes that have received notice that funding will be (a) reduced and (b) ended since 1 January 2024.

Damian Hinds:

England currently has the highest number of teachers on record. At the last count there were over 468,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state-funded schools in England, which is an increase of 27,000 (6%) since the School Workforce Census began in 2010.

To make sure the department's teacher recruitment and retention efforts are focussed on where they are needed most and providing best value for taxpayers' money, the department has made some changes to funding allocations. Since January 2024, notice of changes to funding has been sent to the following teacher recruitment and retention partners:

- All providers of Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses and initial teacher training (ITT) providers. The department are continuing to offer funded SKE in

subjects with the greatest sufficiency challenges, including mathematics, physics, chemistry, computing, and languages and are continuing to offer a £175 per week tax-free bursary for eligible candidates to support them on their SKE training course.

- Providers of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) informing them of changes to scholarship eligibility. The department is offering full scholarship funding in all NPQ subjects to teachers and leaders working in schools, and other settings, in the most challenging circumstances and serving more deprived communities. In addition, four NPQ subjects will continue to receive scholarship funding for all teachers and leaders employed at state-funded organisations. These include the NPQ in Headship, the early headship coaching offer, the NPQ in leading primary mathematics and the NPQ for special educational needs coordinators.
- Providers and teacher training applicants informing them of changes to the eligibility criteria for the UK's international relocation payments. These payments will be available to international teachers who teach physics and languages in England.

Since January 2024, notice of non-renewal of funding has been sent to:

- Now Teach informing them that the department will not be renewing their contract when it ends. The career changers programme has, and continues to, support career changers to enter teaching. The department remains committed to continuing to recruit and support career changers into ITT and are now carrying out a review to understand how to best meet the needs of a wider range of career changers.

The department has put in place a range of measures, including bursaries that are worth £28,000 tax-free and scholarships that are £30,000 tax-free, to encourage talented trainees to key subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing. The ITT financial incentives package for the 2024/25 recruitment cycle is worth up to £196 million, which is a £15 million increase on the last cycle.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Caroline Ansell: [\[25293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the retention rate of teachers in coastal communities.

Caroline Ansell: [\[25297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase recruitment of teachers of (a) physics, (b) modern foreign languages and (c) other specialist subjects.

Caroline Ansell: [\[25298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she expects to meet recruitment targets for (a) physics and (b) modern foreign languages at secondary school level.

Damian Hinds:

The department currently has the highest number of teachers on record, with over 468,000 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England. This represents an increase of 27,000 (6%) since the School Workforce Census began in 2010.

The department knows there is further to go to improve recruitment in some subjects. That is why the department has put in place a range of measures, including bursaries worth £28,000 tax-free and scholarships worth £30,000 tax-free, to encourage talented trainees to key subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing. For language subjects, the department is offering bursaries worth £25,000 tax-free and scholarships worth £27,000 tax-free in French, German and Spanish. The department is also continuing to offer bursaries and scholarships to all non-UK national trainees in physics and languages. The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) financial incentives package for the 2024/25 recruitment cycle is worth up to £196 million, which is a £15 million increase on the last cycle.

For the 2024/25 and 2025/26 academic years, the department is doubling the rates of the Levelling Up Premium to up to £6,000 after tax for mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers who choose to work in disadvantaged schools, including in Education Investment Areas. As of 2023, 69% of secondary or special schools in coastal towns are eligible for the Levelling Up Premium, compared to 59% of schools elsewhere in the country. This will support both recruitment and retention of specialist teachers in these subjects and in the schools and areas that need them most.

Coastal communities are also well served by the department's network of Teaching School Hubs (TSHs), which are school-led centres of excellence in professional development, delivering training and support to teachers and school leaders at every stage of their career. The 87 TSHs cover all of England, with 31 hubs currently serving 146 coastal areas across England.

Regarding recruitment targets, simply looking at post-graduate Initial Teacher Training (PGITT) recruitment as an indicator of broader teacher recruitment is misleading as it is not the only route into teaching, nor does it represent the available number of teachers in the workforce. The PGITT target is calculated using the Teacher Workforce Model, which considers a broad range of factors including, but not limited to, projected pupil numbers, historical recruitment performance, teacher retention forecasts, economic factors, and recruitment from other non-ITT related routes such as returners and those teachers that are new to the state-funded schools sector.

Therefore, the PGITT target is not based on the total number of entrants schools' need, but rather on the forecast residual need after accounting for other non-PGITT inflows, such as undergraduate ITT and returners. The department calculates targets on an annual basis, and if retention and entrants from other routes are higher than expected during the time that trainees are applying for and completing their course, this can offset the need to meet the PGITT targets in full.

The department will continue to monitor PGITT and other routes into teaching and have provided targeted support to ensure it recruits and retains sufficient numbers of teachers in all key subjects, including physics and languages.

■ Training

Jonathan Gullis: [\[25096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of using (a) the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and (b) other opportunities within further education colleges to help (i) people to develop skills for the workplace and (ii) deliver local skills improvement plans.

Jonathan Gullis: [\[25097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of supporting youth sector organisations to work with Local Enterprise Partnerships on the implementation of local skills improvement plans.

Luke Hall:

The department recognises the importance of ensuring learners and employees gain all the skills that businesses need to succeed and grow. The need for communication skills and resilience was also a theme that came through strongly in the employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) that were published in August 2023.

Each of the 38 LSIPs are led by a designated employer representative body (ERB), for example a local Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, or other local employer body. This puts employers at the heart of the skills system and supports the government's long-term priority to drive local economic growth by better aligning provision of post-16 technical education and training with local labour market needs.

The department's LSIPs statutory guidance makes clear that a range of national and local bodies and organisations can play an important role in supporting and facilitating the development and implementation of LSIPs. These could include youth sector organisations or schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The department recognises that opportunities provided by these organisations can help young people develop a range of skills that can support them in the workplace, such as resilience, adaptability, creativity, problem solving, decision-making and communication skills.

It is for the designated ERB in each area to determine the most relevant stakeholders to work with to deliver effective solutions to meet employer-identified local labour market needs. However, the department will review the LSIP statutory guidance ahead of the next round of LSIP development.

■ Universities: Finance

Jim Shannon:

[\[24915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming university funding models to reduce dependence on the income of international students.

Luke Hall:

It is important that there is a sustainable system to support students and support higher education (HE) that is responsive to the needs of the labour market and the wider economy, and that is fair to students and fair to taxpayers. The government keeps the higher education (HE) funding system under continuous review to ensure that it remains sustainable and provides many different opportunities for learners to acquire vital skills. Longer-term funding plans for the HE sector will be set out at the next multi-year Spending Review, in line with the approach to long-term public spending commitments across government.

In 2021/22, the total income of the HE sector in England was £40.8 billion, up from £28 billion in 2014/15, including £8.8 billion income from international student fees. Of the £40.8 billion, approximately £16 billion was provided by the government. Over the current spending review period, both the Department for Education and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology are investing £1.3 billion in capital funding to support teaching and research.

The department is proud that the UK is home to some of the world's top universities who benefit from strong international ties, so much so that the UK HE system has educated 58 of current and recent world leaders and has 4 out of the top 10 globally ranked universities. Attracting the brightest students internationally is good for the UK's universities and delivers growth at home.

Education policy is a devolved matter, and different HE funding arrangements apply in the devolved administrations.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Advanced Nuclear Fund

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[25638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an estimate of the percentage of the UK's total energy requirement that will be delivered through the Advanced Nuclear Fund in each of the next ten years.

Andrew Bowie:

The Advanced Nuclear Fund (ANF) is a £385m fund that supports innovation in nuclear energy. It was announced in 2020 and is due to conclude in March 2025. It includes a grant of up to £210m to Rolls Royce SMR Ltd to develop their Small Modular Reactor (SMR) design, as well as other funding for Advanced Modular Reactor (AMR) research and development.

The Government has set out a commitment for SMRs to be operational in the UK by the mid-2030s, and to build an AMR demonstrator by the early 2030s, as part of the wider ambition for nuclear power to provide up to 25% of the UK's electricity by 2050. The ANF promotes innovations that will help to meet these goals, and therefore its contribution to the UK's total energy requirement will be from the mid-2030s.

■ Climate Change Convention: Devolution

Deidre Brock: [\[25244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps she (a) has taken and (b) plans to take with the devolved Administrations to achieve the (i) mission, (ii) goal and (iii) targets of the Paris Agreement 2015.

Justin Tomlinson:

DESNZ works closely with the devolved administrations (DAs) on international climate obligations and reporting to the UNFCCC. DESNZ worked with the DAs on the development of the 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and this year will be seeking their views for the 2035 NDC. This reflects the role the DAs play in the UK-wide drive to decarbonise the economy. DESNZ accredited 20 delegates from DAs to attend COP28 and will accredit DAs delegates to attend COP29.

■ Energy: Debts

Kenny MacAskill: [\[25717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 10 May 2024 to Question 24573 on Energy: Debts, whether any additional sums were previously included in the Energy Price Guarantee to cover (a) bad debt, (b) debt administration and (c) working capital.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Price Guarantee provided a unit rate discount on the price of energy for all households with a domestic gas and/or electricity contract, so within this support structure there was no scope for including additional funding for energy debt.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[25817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the NFU's report entitled Farming for Britain's Future, published in December 2023, what steps his Department has taken to increase confidence within the agricultural industry.

Sir Mark Spencer:

In 2020 we published the Agricultural Transition Plan (ATP), setting out our plan for farmers, allowing them to make business planning decisions with confidence. Since then, we have launched our reforms, aiming to give farmers more choice and

ensuring there are offers available for all farm types and locations. This includes the rollout of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and our Innovation and Productivity schemes such as the Farming Investment Fund (FIF).

We also continue to expand and improve our offers in response to farmers' feedback. Recently, the Government has confirmed farmers will benefit from the improved SFI from July this year, following the announcement by the Environment Secretary Steve Barclay in January. The improved offer includes a 10% increase in the average value of agreements in SFI and Countryside Stewardship (CS); a streamlined single application process for farmers to apply for the SFI and CS Mid-Tier; and around 50 new actions that farmers can get paid for.

Furthermore, to aid the transition, and to give farmers confidence in their choices and the best chance of benefiting from our reforms we are also providing support via the Future Farming Resilience Fund. This fund is designed to provide free business support to farmers and land managers in England during the early years of the agricultural transition.

Lastly, on 14 May 2024 we published our Blueprint for Growing the UK Fruit and Vegetable Sector, which aims to boost production of fresh produce and reduce reliance on imports. This is backed by our new Horticulture Resilience and Growth Offer, where Defra will look to double to £80m the amount of funding given to horticulture businesses when compared to the EU legacy Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme, which will be replaced from 2026 onwards. We are also unlocking the opportunities of gene editing with £15m investment into Genetic Improvement Networks, helping to boost access to more resilient crop varieties, that require fewer inputs and cut farmer costs.

■ Agriculture: Floods

Mark Menzies:

[\[24644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an estimate of the financial cost to farmers of flooding in the last 12 months.

Robbie Moore:

In March, Defra published its [forecasts](#) of Farm Business Income, a measure of profit, for 2023/24. These forecasts reflect changes to price, crop area and yield in 2023, but not the impact of more recent weather events. The results of the 2023/24 Farm Business Survey will be published in autumn 2024.

The recent '[Balance Sheet Analysis](#)' publication highlights that average liquidity in the sector has been consistently improving over the latest five years of data and reached a 10-year high in 2022/23. This indicates that farm businesses have been keeping back funds in recent profitable years to help sustain the business in less profitable periods.

It is too early to make definitive conclusions on the impact of more recent weather events on farm profitability. We have no reliable forecasts of yields, largely as spring planting is still underway. Additionally, for many farmers any financial impact that

arises will not be felt until later in 2024/25. On this basis we continue to work closely with stakeholders to enhance our monitoring of the wet weather and its impact on farms.

In April, Defra opened the Farming Recovery Fund to offset the financial cost to some of the most impacted farm businesses by providing grants of up to £25,000 for uninsurable flood damage.

Damien Moore:

[\[25023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what financial support is available to farmers impacted by flooding who are not eligible for support under the Farming Recovery Fund.

Robbie Moore:

October 2023 to March 2024 was the second wettest six-month period on record in England; recorded rainfall was nearly 60% above the average of the last decade. The impacts on farm businesses are already evident in some sectors and are likely to extend through the year. In recognition of these events, Ministers are in discussions with our stakeholders about what further support is needed.

On 9 April we opened the Farming Recovery Fund, which provides grants of between £500 and £25,000 to eligible farmers affected by the exceptional flooding. The fund provides farmers with support to recover from uninsurable damage caused by the flooding. We have listened and responded to feedback and have already removed the requirement for land affected to be within 150 metres of the main river, which will increase the number of farmers who are eligible.

We are actively reviewing the eligible areas for the Fund in England, including the eligibility within the original nine local authority areas we announced.

■ Agriculture: Land Use

Caroline Ansell:

[\[25300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress she has made on allowing land identified as Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England to be used for food production without financial penalties for farmers.

Sir Mark Spencer:

Locally significant historical and archaeological features identified by local authority Historic Environment officers that could potentially benefit from management under environmental land management schemes are placed on the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (or SHINE).

These irreplaceable features are often only on a part of a parcel and Government does not pay for any action that could cause them damage. Farmers may already be using this land for food production and many of these features are subject to environmental land management scheme actions which either cause no harm or can directly benefit them.

In 2022 we changed the process so that we could allow for the areas containing sensitive heritage features to be separated out from the remaining field area.

We want to ensure that farmers have the maximum opportunities to be able to take part in our schemes and to that end will work with our partners to refine both SHINE data and SFI actions. We also expect to introduce further actions that allow for management of SHINE features under the Sustainable Farming Incentive later in the year.

We will hold a roundtable discussion in due course to address the issues raised.

■ **Agriculture: Pest Control**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[24992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support farmers to adopt (a) integrated pest management and (b) other alternative pest management approaches.

Sir Mark Spencer:

The forthcoming UK National Action Plan on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (NAP) will set out Defra's ambition to minimise the risks and impacts of pesticides to human health and the environment. Within the NAP we will set out our policies to increase the uptake of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) across all sectors.

We have not waited for the publication of the NAP to move forward with work to support sustainable pest management. We introduced new paid IPM actions within the SFI scheme in 2023. Farmers are now paid to complete an IPM assessment and produce an IPM plan; establish and maintain flower-rich grass margins, blocks, or in-field strips; establish a companion crop and move towards insecticide-free farming. Paid actions for precision application of herbicides will be available from this year.

Defra has recently funded a package of research projects that will bring together scientific evidence underpinning IPM to look at ways of further encouraging its uptake. This work will support farmers' access to the most effective IPM tools available and ensure that we understand changing trends in pest threats across the UK.

■ **Cats: Tagging**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[25117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of legal changes requiring the microchipping of cats by 10 June 2024.

Sir Mark Spencer:

We have worked closely with animal welfare and veterinary stakeholders to develop and implement a co-ordinated communication strategy to raise awareness that owned cats over the age of 20 weeks will be required to be microchipped by 10 June

this year. The strategy has included press releases and a visible social media campaign.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: ICT**

Matt Rodda: [\[25015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the guidance by the Central Digital and Data Office entitled Guidance on the Legacy IT Risk Assessment Framework, published on 29 September 2023, how many red-rated IT systems are used by his Department; and how many red-rated IT systems have been identified since 4 December 2023.

Sir Mark Spencer:

The Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO), in the Cabinet Office, has established a programme to support departments managing legacy IT. CDDO has agreed a framework to identify 'red-rated' systems, indicating high levels of risk surrounding certain assets within the IT estate. Departments have committed to have remediation plans in place for these systems by next year (2025). It is not appropriate to release sensitive information held about specific, red-rated systems or more detailed plans for remediation within Defra's IT estate, as this information could indicate which systems are at risk and may highlight potential security vulnerabilities.

■ **Environment: Northern Ireland**

Ruth Jones: [\[25070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Minister for the Environment in the Northern Ireland Executive.

Sir Mark Spencer:

Regular engagement with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs at Ministerial and official level is a priority for the Secretary of State and he will meet Minister Muir at his earliest convenience.

■ **Food: Import Controls**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[24513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of inspection fees on food from (a) Eastern Europe and (b) other countries under the Border Target Operating Model on the cost of food.

Sir Mark Spencer:

Our analysis has shown a minimal impact on food prices and consumers. Our new risk-based model has been designed to minimise costs for traders and consumers. Government analysis estimates the cost of the new model to be £330m per annum overall, across all EU imports. Traders will save around £520m per annum versus the model originally proposed, while the inflationary impacts on food for consumers will be, at most, less than 0.2 percentage points over a 3-year period.

■ Forests and Wildlife: Crime

Ruth Jones:

[\[25071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on implementing the recommendations included in the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime report entitled Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit Report, published in 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

We welcomed the UN Office of Drugs and Crime report and the fact that it recognised the UK's global leadership in fighting wildlife and forestry crime. We invited the UN to undertake this analysis and we are proud to be the first G7 country to request this assessment.

We have carefully considered all the recommendations of the report and they are informing our work to help us build on the positive progress we have already made in tackling wildlife crime. This will include strategic engagement with our partners that have responsibilities where individual recommendations are concerned such as the devolved administrations, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU).

Many of the resourcing recommendations fall outside of Defra's remit but progress has already been made in response to the report. For example, in 2022 Defra more than doubled its funding of the NWCU to £1.2 million for the three-year period from 2022 to 2025, compared to £495,000 in the three years previous. Additionally, Border Force has increased numbers in their team specialising in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

■ Hedges and Ditches: Regulation

Sir Paul Beresford:

[\[24845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance his Department has issued on how the new regulations on hedge cutting apply to commercial hedgelaying.

Sir Mark Spencer:

Subject to Parliamentary approval, the hedge-cutting rules in the Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024 will apply to commercial hedge-laying only where it takes place on agricultural land. The Rural Payments Agency as regulator will provide advice and guidance to all those who will need to comply with these new regulations. Full guidance will also be published on gov.uk.

■ Hunting: Anti-social Behaviour

Ruth Jones:

[\[25069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on rural communities in (a) Wales and (b) England of anti-social behaviour associated with hunting with dogs.

Rebecca Pow:

The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act. Since the introduction of the Act, many hunt organisations across the country have worked hard to adapt their activities towards trail hunting, which is intended to retain important traditions as part of the fabric of rural life without harming wildlife. We recognise it is possible that dogs may on occasion pick up and follow the scent of live foxes. If this occurs, it is the responsibility of the dog owner to control their dog. Those found guilty under the Hunting Act are subject to the full force of the law, and enforcement is an operational matter for the police.

■ **Hunting: Crime**

Ruth Jones: [\[25068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the scale of illegal hunting with dogs in (a) England and (b) Wales.

Rebecca Pow:

Enforcement of the Hunting Act is an operational matter for the police. This is in line with their duties to keep the peace, protect communities and prevent the committing of offences, working within the provisions of the legal framework set by Parliament.

■ **Import Controls: Fees and Charges**

Stella Creasy: [\[24904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of consignments containing high-risk goods which were required to pay the Common User Charge entering the UK from the EU were subject to a physical inspection under the Border Target Operating Model between 30 April and 5 May 2024.

Stella Creasy: [\[24905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of consignments containing only medium or low-risk goods which were required to pay the Common User Charge entering the UK from the EU were subject to a physical inspection under the Border Target Operating Model between 30 April and 5 May 2024.

Sir Mark Spencer:

Our checks are intelligence-led and based on biosecurity risk. It would be inappropriate for us to set out operational details like the exact inspection details from 30 April. Traders should continue to follow the published guidance which sets out BTOM inspection rates.

DEFRA will gradually increase changes in controlled stages to balance biosecurity risk and maintain trade flows whilst minimising disruption at the border.

This will allow the level of goods inspected at the border to be operationally manageable over the introductory stages.

■ Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

Matt Hancock:

[\[24896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to announce the long-term funding solution for internal drainage boards.

Robbie Moore:

Internal drainage boards (IDBs) are mainly funded locally through drainage rates paid directly by agricultural landowners and special levies issued to district or unitary authorities.

Defra and DLUCH are working together to review the funding pressures reported by IDBs and the contributing local authorities, to consider whether any changes to current funding arrangements may be needed in the future.

For the current financial year, the Government has announced a £75 million fund, for IDBs to support agricultural land and rural communities recover from recent flooding events and modernise infrastructure to increase future resilience. In addition, the Government is providing an additional £3 million in grant funding to support local authorities most significantly impacted by the increase in special levies in 2024-25.

■ Pesticides

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[24991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides.

Sir Mark Spencer:

We will publish the National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (NAP) shortly. It will set out Defra's ambition to minimise the risks and impacts of pesticides to human health and the environment and the actions that need to be taken to deliver those goals.

We have not waited for the publication of the NAP to move forward with work to support sustainable pest management. Defra has recently funded a package of research projects that will bring together scientific evidence underpinning Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a sustainable way of managing pests, in order to look at ways of further encouraging its uptake. This work will support farmers' access to the most effective IPM tools available and ensure that we understand changing trends in pest threats across the UK.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[24994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) monitor and (b) ensure compliance with pesticide regulations.

Sir Mark Spencer:

A pesticide may only be placed on the market in GB if the product has been authorised by the GB regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), following a thorough scientific risk assessment, that concludes all safety standards are met. Pesticides that pose unacceptable risks are not authorised. Pesticide authorisations normally set conditions on the use of the pesticide. Pesticide users are also required to have relevant training and for the equipment they use to be tested regularly.

The HSE undertakes compliance and enforcement activities, to ensure that where pesticides are used, they are used safely and in accordance with the law. The supply of professional pesticide products and the use of pesticides in agriculture, horticulture, and parts of the amenity sector is enforced by HSE's Pesticide Enforcement Officers, following a risk-based approach to compliance established under the Official Controls (Plant Protection Products) Regulations 2020.

■ Pesticides: Pollinators**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[24993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of permitted pesticides on pollinator populations in England.

Sir Mark Spencer:

The Government's first priority with regard to pesticides is to ensure that they will not harm people or pose unacceptable risks to the environment.

Defra funds research projects examining the impacts of pesticide use on honeybees and the environment. As part of the National Honey Monitoring Scheme, we fund the analysis of honey samples aimed at assessing levels of pesticides in honey across England, Wales, and Scotland. This provides an estimated level of honeybee exposure to pesticides across different land uses.

In addition, Defra contributes funding to the Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (POMS) which tracks changes in pollinator numbers, including the abundance of bees, hoverflies, and other flower-visiting insects across the UK.

Pollinators are a priority for this government, and we are taking action alongside many partners to implement the National Pollinator Strategy's provisions. The National Pollinator Strategy Action Plan was published in May 2022 and sets out more specifically how we will continue to act to fulfil the vision, aims and objectives of the Strategy, over the period 2021-2024.

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive**Sir Robert Goodwill:**[\[24628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of land covered by applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive was tenanted farmland in the 2023-24 financial year.

Sir Mark Spencer:

Defra does not hold data on which land is tenanted and so the data for the proportion of land covered by applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive which was tenanted farmland in the 2023-24 financial year is not available.

Sir Robert Goodwill:[\[24629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data her Department holds on the proportion of applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive made in the last 12 months in which more than (a) 25%, (b) 50% and (c) 75% of the applicant's holding was focused on uses other than food production.

Sir Mark Spencer:

In the last 12 months data shows that the proportion of all applications to the Sustainable Farming Incentive by the applicant's holding where they focused on uses other than food production is shown in the table below (this includes land that was not in food production previously and regardless to the status of the application).

NOT IN FOOD PRODUCTION	PROPORTION APPLICATIONS
Between 25% and 50%	0.24%
Between 50% and 75%	0.64%
Greater than 75%	3.79%

On the 26 March we introduced a “25% of your holding limit” on 6 SFI actions, these 6 were actions that were designed to operate in tandem with food production – rather than instead of. The 25% limit still provides farmers with the flexibility to incorporate SFI actions into their farming systems and rotations. The majority of the SFI actions are not limited and enable farmers to produce food sustainably. Very few farmers were putting over 25% of their land into these non-food producing actions, however, we decided to act promptly before this became an issue. Industry and stakeholders worked with us on this – and welcomed the move.

■ Tree Planting: Expenditure

Tim Farron:[\[24877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department has spent on tree planting in each year since 2015.

Rebecca Pow:

Data on tree-specific funding is only available from 2020, when the Nature for Climate Tree Programme was established. Since then, Defra has had a capital spend (CDEL) of £232 million on planting trees in England. The spending on tree planting in each year since 2020 is shown below:

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	TOTAL
Total Spend (£m)	17.215	33.569	59.446	122.045	232.275

Additionally, the planting of trees has also been funded by the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Since 2016, £120 million has been claimed under the scheme for planting and managing trees and for managing and enhancing woodlands.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Stephen Morgan: [\[25002\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support international partners with ceasefire discussions between Israel and Hamas.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is doing all it can to reach a long-term solution to this crisis, including by calling for the immediate release of all hostages and continuing to support a deal which would secure a pause in the fighting.

■ Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme

Lisa Nandy: [\[24901\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps he is taking to help ensure female Afghan students can (a) apply for and (b) study through Chevening scholarships.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The FCDO continues to support higher education for Afghans, currently offering Afghan candidates resident outside of Afghanistan in ODA-eligible third countries the opportunity to apply for a Chevening scholarship.

Under the Chevening Scholarship programme, 15 Afghan women were offered scholarships for academic year 2023/24. 12 women accepted the offer and are currently studying in the UK, out of a total cohort of 21.

■ Afghanistan: Non-governmental Organisations

Lisa Nandy: [\[24898\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 2 May 2024 to Question 23469 on Afghanistan: Non-governmental Organisations, when a Minister from his Department last met representatives of non-governmental organisations working in Afghanistan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

FCDO Ministers regularly meet NGOs. The Deputy Foreign Secretary met the Director-General of Geneva Call in March which included discussions on Afghanistan. Last month, he co-hosted a biannual meeting with the CEOs of BOND member NGOs, many of whom work in Afghanistan. UK officials regularly meet NGO partners to discuss the operating context in Afghanistan and to ensure our support is as effective as possible. This includes a regular meeting with NGOs chaired by our Special Representative for Afghanistan as well as meetings organised by the FCDO in the region.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees**Stephen Morgan:**[\[24526\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will take steps with international partners to (a) press Pakistan to stop deportation of Afghan people and (b) develop a longer-term strategy on the situation in Afghanistan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is closely monitoring Pakistan's policy on the deportation of Afghans and ministers have raised it most recently with Pakistan's Minister of Human Rights and Deputy Prime Minister. We are working with a number of international partners, including the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank to ensure Pakistan adheres to its international human rights obligations with respect to those affected. Since September 2023, we have committed £18.5m to the IOM to provide emergency assistance to vulnerable returnees in Afghanistan. We are also grateful for Pakistan's continued co-operation over our Afghan resettlement schemes.

■ Bahrain: Official Visits**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[25364\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether his Department was involved in arranging the meeting between Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and HM the King on 3 May 2024.

David Rutley:

The FCDO was not involved in arranging the meeting referenced between HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and His Majesty The King.

■ Bangladesh and Myanmar: Rohingya**Lisa Nandy:**[\[25485\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what support his Department is providing to the Rohingya in (a) Myanmar and (b) refugees camps in Bangladesh.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is a leading donor to the Rohingya response. We have provided over £45 million in humanitarian assistance in Myanmar and £391 million in Bangladesh to the

Rohingya since 2017. We are the largest donor of water, hygiene, and sanitation facilities in the Internally Displaced Persons camps in central Rakhine State. Despite escalating conflict and ongoing access challenges, we are supporting those most in need through agile local partners. Minister Trevelyan announced a further £12 million and discussed education, training, and employment for the Rohingya with Prime Minister Hasina during her recent visit to Bangladesh on 7-8 May.

■ Brazil: Floods

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[24856\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he plans to take steps to support the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul following recent floods in that area.

David Rutley:

I [Minister Rutley] was saddened to learn of the terrible flooding that has ravaged Rio Grande do Sul. I offered my sincere condolences to all those affected by this tragic incident, including the families of those who have so sadly lost their lives. His Majesty's Ambassador to Brazil has also offered condolences to State Governor Eduardo Leite. Through the Start Fund the UK has supported an allocation of £193,000 to provide humanitarian aid in response to the flooding in Brazil. The Start Fund is a pooled fund to which the UK is a major donor.

■ China: Journalism and Press Freedom

Catherine West:

[\[24984\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what estimate he has made of the number of journalists detained in China; and what steps he is taking to support media freedom in that country.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

There are severe restrictions on media freedom in China, and the situation for journalists is deteriorating. The Government notes Reporters Without Borders' credible estimate that 109 journalists and media workers are currently detained by China.

The Government supports media freedom and the right of journalists to do their job. We consistently raise our concerns bilaterally and multilaterally. For example, at China's Universal Periodic Review in January we called on China to cease restrictions on civil society and independent media, and raised the cases of Sophia Huang Xueqin and Zhang Zhan, among others. I raised human rights concerns with my counterparts during my visit to China in April, and the Foreign Secretary did so when he met China's Foreign Minister in February. British diplomats have also attempted to attend trials of civilian journalists and rights activists in China to demonstrate support.

■ Gaza: Aid Workers**Chi Onwurah:**[\[25496\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 8 May 2024 to Question 24458 on Gaza: Aid Workers, whether it is his policy that there should be an independent inquiry into the killing of the British aid workers by the Israeli Defence Forces.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

As set out in the answer to Question 24458, we are carefully reviewing the initial findings of Israel's investigations into the killing of World Central Kitchen aid workers and welcome the suspension of two officers as a first step. Their inquiry so far has highlighted failures in deconfliction processes and the unacceptable conduct of the IDF personnel involved. This must never happen again.

■ Gaza: Aid Workers and Civilians**Stephen Morgan:**[\[25000\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps he is taking to help ensure Israel takes steps to protect civilians and humanitarian aid workers in Rafah.

Stephen Morgan:[\[25001\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make diplomatic representations to his Israeli counterparts to ensure the Rafah crossing remains open and the flow of aid continues.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We remain deeply concerned about the prospect of a military offensive in Rafah. Over half of Gaza's population, including 600,000 children, are sheltering in the area, and the Rafah crossing is vital to ensure aid can reach the people who so desperately need it.

Entry points for humanitarian aid, including Kerem Shalom, must be reopened quickly to allow aid in. Israel must facilitate immediate, uninterrupted humanitarian access in the south, especially the entry of fuel, and ensure the protection of civilians and safe passage for those who wish to leave Rafah.

We are clear that we would not support a major operation in Rafah unless there is a very clear plan for how to protect people and save lives. We have not seen that plan so, in these circumstances, we would not support a major operation in Rafah.

The fastest way to end the conflict is to secure a deal which gets the hostages out and allows for a pause in the fighting in Gaza. We must then work with our international partners to turn that pause into a sustainable, permanent ceasefire.

■ Gaza: Fuels**Stephen Morgan:** [\[25004\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps he is taking to help ensure there is a continued supply of fuel into Gaza, in the context of Israel's closure of both the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We have been clear that entry points for humanitarian aid, including Rafah and Kerem Shalom, must be reopened quickly to allow aid in. Israel must facilitate immediate uninterrupted humanitarian access in the south, including the entry of fuel, and ensure protection of civilians and safe passage for those who wish to leave Rafah.

The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has pressed these points with the Israeli Government.

■ Gaza: Internally Displaced People**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[25711\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on evacuation routes for Palestinians displaced from eastern Rafah.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

As I told the House last week, Israel must facilitate immediate, uninterrupted humanitarian access in the south, especially the entry of fuel, and ensure the protection of civilians and safe passage for those who wish to leave Rafah.

We have been clear that we would not support a major operation in Rafah unless there is a very clear plan for how to protect people and save lives. We have not seen that plan so, in these circumstances, we would not support a major operation in Rafah.

The Foreign Secretary and I continue to press these points with our Israeli counterparts.

■ Gaza: Israel**Stephen Morgan:** [\[24999\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he plans to make representations to his Israeli counterpart against the military operation in Rafah.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We are clear that we would not support a major operation in Rafah unless there is a very clear plan for how to protect people and save lives. We have not seen that plan so, in these circumstances, we would not support a major operation in Rafah.

Stephen Morgan: [\[25003\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support the freedom of the press reporting on the Israel Hamas war in Gaza.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We recognise the valuable role of journalists operating on the ground in Gaza, providing important coverage of the conflict in incredibly challenging circumstances. On 5 December, the UK supported a joint statement of the Media Freedom Coalition expressing concern over the repercussions for the safety of journalists and access to information due to the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. We continue to call for the protection of journalists and media workers.

■ **Ghassan Abu-Sittah****Patrick Grady:**[\[24950\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with the Government of (a) Germany and (b) France on the refusal of entry to their country of Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah, Rector of Glasgow University; and if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of such refusals.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

I have not made representations on this matter to either the French or German Authorities.

■ **Hong Kong: Freedom of Expression****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[25440\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the ruling by the Appeal Court in Hong Kong on the banning of the song entitled Glory to Hong Kong.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are concerned about the erosion of rights and freedoms in Hong Kong, including freedom of speech, which is guaranteed under the Sino-British Joint Declaration. As the then Foreign Secretary said in the foreword to the January - July 2023 Six-monthly Report, "the Hong Kong authorities have extended the application of the National Security Law beyond genuine national security concerns...to use legal routes to suppress the song 'Glory to Hong Kong'". I raised the deterioration of rights and freedoms in Hong Kong with Christopher Hui, Hong Kong Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury on 24 April during my visit to China.

■ **Hong Kong: Visits Abroad****Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[25446\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the visit by the Minister for the Indo-Pacific to Hong Kong on relations with China.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In line with the Government's "protect, align, and engage" approach to China, as set out in the Integrated Review Refresh, the I raised a number of issues important to the UK national interest with Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury,

Christopher Hui during my visit to Hong Kong in April. This included the prosecution of British national Jimmy Lai, the enactment of further national security legislation (Article 23), and concerns over transnational repression against BN(O)s in the UK. Issues of mutual and global interest were also discussed, alongside areas of disagreement or concern.

■ Indo-Pacific Region: International Cooperation

Catherine West: [\[24981\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Australian national defence strategy on the UK's cooperation with (a) Australia (b) other partners in the Indo-Pacific.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK and Australia are close partners and we welcome Australia's inaugural National Defence Strategy. As set out in the Integrated Review Refresh, the UK is committed to and strategically focussed on the Indo-Pacific. Our partnership with Australia is an important part of this, and we regularly discuss Indo-Pacific collaboration at senior official and ministerial levels, including at the recent Australia-UK Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN) in Adelaide in March. We work closely with Australia as members of the Commonwealth, Five Eyes, the G20 and the UN, and we regularly discuss defence matters.

■ Lebanon: Politics and Government

Lisa Nandy: [\[24900\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support (a) governance reform and (b) humanitarian delivery in Lebanon.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is supporting Lebanon's caretaker government's efforts to implement much-needed reforms. This is the only way to rebuild the confidence of the international community, stop more Lebanese falling into poverty and set the country on a path to sustainable economic progress. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Lebanon in February, he reaffirmed the UK's commitment to Lebanon's stability. Since 2013 we have provided over £680 million in humanitarian and development assistance. Our funding addresses basic humanitarian needs, including access to healthcare, water, sanitation and shelter. We also support coordination of partners to optimise delivery, including in the conflict-affected south.

■ Sebastien Lai

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[25445\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he plans to meet (a) Sebastien Lai and (b) his international legal team.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Foreign Secretary and I last met with Sebastien Lai on 12 December. We are in regular contact with Sebastien Lai and members of Jimmy Lai's international legal team and continue to provide support.

■ South America: Food Supply**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[24862\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps his Department is taking to support people facing food insecurity due to El Niño in (a) Colombia, (b) Ecuador, (c) Peru and (d) Bolivia.

David Rutley:

The FCDO is a significant contributor to global humanitarian pooled funds which are activated to respond to a humanitarian crisis such as those caused by El Niño. This includes the UN Crisis Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Red Cross Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and the NGO Start Fund. The UK is providing expertise through a multi-year Government-to-Government Agreement with Peru to support the reconstruction of the country's public service facilities following severe damage caused by El Niño flooding in 2017 and supporting Peru through the Start Fund and Save the Children in its humanitarian response to flooding caused by heavy rainfall and high sea temperatures in northern Peru in March this year. Since June 2023, the Start Fund has also provided £140,000 to support NGO responses to the health, water and food security impacts of drought in Colombia. These responses targeted assistance to thousands of people across the region.

■ South East Asia: Shipping**Catherine West:**[\[25515\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 8 May 2024 to Question 24277 on South China Sea: Shipping, how much funding has been provided to maritime training programmes in Southeast Asia in each of the last five financial years.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Prior to November 2022, the FCDO's approach to maritime security in Southeast Asia focussed on diplomatic engagement including legal dialogues. In November 2022, the FCDO launched the Southeast Asia Maritime Security programme funded by the Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and spent in total £0.17 million in financial year (FY) 2022-23. In FY 2023-24, the programme invested £0.8 million on capacity and capability building projects with regional partners to strengthen their capacity on maritime law and security. In FY 2024-25, the programme has been allocated up to £3.5 million to continue delivering similar projects through the new Integrated Security Fund (ISF).

■ Sudan: Arms Trade**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[25639\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the UN Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime on Darfur.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

There is a UN Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime on Darfur, which the UN renewed in March 2023. There is also a longstanding bilateral UK arms embargo in place for the whole of Sudan. In our engagement with international partners as well as in our regular statements at the UN Security Council, the UK continues to emphasise the importance of refraining from actions that prolong the conflict. We will work closely with the US, as penholders on the UN Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime on Darfur, on its renewal by September 2024.

■ Tuberculosis: Health Services**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[25557\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps his Department is taking with its international partners to help ensure that people living with tuberculosis have access to healthcare.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25558\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps his Department is taking to help achieve the commitments made in the 2023 TB High-Level Meeting Political Declaration by 2028.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is a leading donor to the fight against tuberculosis. Our £1 billion replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria will provide TB treatment and care to more than one million people between 2023 and 2025. We are a leading funder of TB research, including through the TB Alliance and also invest in improving access and affordability for key TB products and testing innovative approaches to providing TB services. These investments contribute to achieving the commitments made in the TB High Level 2023 political declaration, including supporting people to have access to appropriate healthcare.

■ UNRWA**Sir Stephen Timms:** [\[25138\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 7 May 2024 to Question 24566 on UNRWA: Finance, when he plans to complete his careful consideration of Catherine Colonna's final report, UNRWA's response and the ongoing UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

As set out in the answer to Question 24566, the UK will set out its position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of Catherine Colonna's final report,

UNRWA's response and the ongoing UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation.

■ **Water: Sri Lanka**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[25529\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support Sri Lankan authorities to manage local water supplies near the Chunnakam power plant.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are aware of the challenges Sri Lanka faces around water management and quality, particularly by communities in the Northern Province. A number of public bodies in Sri Lanka, including the National Water Supply and Drainage Board, have conducted tests into water quality in Chunnakam, after concerns were raised by local communities. The British High Commission Colombo regularly meets a range of stakeholders in the Northern Province to hear from them on their concerns and experiences. The UK supports the International Water Management Institute to improve water management and quality in Sri Lanka. We will continue to engage with the authorities in support of clean water provision.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[25530\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support the Sri Lankan authorities to meet UN sustainable development goal six on clean water and sanitation.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government supports programmes to improve water management and quality in Sri Lanka in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal six and the International Development White Paper's commitment to water, sanitation and hygiene services that are reliable, resilient, and inclusive. Through our work with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), an international water management research organisation, the UK funds programmes to provide solutions to increasing water scarcity in Puttalam and Kilinochchi as well as implement community wetlands management systems that improve water management and quality across Sri Lanka.

■ **Western Sahara: Humanitarian Situation**

Ian Byrne:

[\[24839\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the humanitarian situation in Western Sahara.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 10 May 2024]: The UK is committed to the promotion of respect for International Humanitarian Law worldwide. The UK continues to monitor the humanitarian situation in Western Sahara, and remains concerned about the humanitarian situation facing Sahrawi refugees in the camps in Tindouf, which the UK provides humanitarian assistance to via our contributions to UN bodies such as the

World Food Programme. The UK has consistently supported Security Council Resolutions which note "with deep concern the continued hardships faced by Sahrawi refugees and their dependency on external humanitarian assistance, and further noting with deep concern insufficient funding for those living in Tindouf refugee camps and the risks associated with the reduction of food assistance".

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Rachael Maskell:

[\[23896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will undertake a review of her strategy on alcohol use through a harm reduction approach.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Government takes a wide-ranging approach to reducing alcohol related harms. Several aspects of the Department's work to address alcohol related harms already follows a harm reduction approach. These include the UK Chief Medical Officers' low-risk drinking guidelines, which recommend that people moderate their drinking to 14 units a week, and guidance from England's Chief Medical Officer for healthcare professionals, on the consumption of alcohol by young people. The National Health Service's Better Health campaign aims to motivate people to take steps to improve their health, including in relation to alcohol use, and the NHS Health Check provides an opportunity for general practitioners to offer advice to reduce alcohol use, if appropriate.

In relation to treatment, the Department is committed to promoting access to alcohol services through our drug strategy. The upcoming UK clinical guidelines for alcohol treatment will include a chapter on taking a harm reduction approach within alcohol treatment, which outlines a flexible service approach. The Department, in partnership with the devolved administrations, will publish these guidelines later this year.

■ Anaemia: Women

Jim Shannon:

[\[24914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to improve diagnosis of anaemia in women.

Andrea Leadsom:

There is information available from NHS Choices to support the identification of symptoms related to anaemia, which advises individuals to seek general practitioner (GP) advice should they experience those symptoms.

GPs exercise their clinical judgement with support from relevant guidance to arrange appropriate tests and investigations that may lead to a diagnosis, such as blood tests to assess the full blood count, which may highlight indicators of anaemia. The

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's Clinical Knowledge Summaries website also provides guidance on testing and treatment of all types of anaemia.

■ Asthma: Death

Rachael Maskell:

[\[25266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to end deaths from asthma.

Andrew Stephenson:

In the initial report, Major conditions strategy: case for change and our strategic framework, the Department developed a strategic framework on how our approach to health and care delivery can evolve to improve outcomes and better meet the needs of 6 major health conditions, including those with chronic respiratory disease (CRD). As part of the overall strategy for CRD management, we have incentivised primary care, through the general practice contract, to monitor and provide support for those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma, including through annual reviews, a personalised action plan, appropriate inhaler optimisation and advice on smoking cessation.

NHS England published the NHS Long Term Plan in 2019, which set out the commitments and objectives for the National Health Service for the next 10 years, in relation to CRD. NHS England is working with a range of partners to improve outcomes across the care pathway. This includes supporting local systems to offer NHS funded tobacco treatment services, building on the £2.3 billion investment in additional diagnostic capacity and the establishment of Community Diagnostic Centres; working with key partners to introduce a range of resources and measures that promote high quality and low carbon inhaler use; publishing a National Bundle of Care for Children and Young People with Asthma to support local systems with the management of asthma care and; widening and making access to specialist care through the delegation of specialist asthma services to ICB commissioning responsibilities.

NHS England is also focused on making more respiratory-specific data available to all regions and systems, ensuring there is greater consistency in the use of data and metrics to enable meaningful comparison, and to identify areas that may need additional support for improvement. NHS England also looks forward to the publication of the updated National Institute for Health and Care Excellence asthma guideline later this year and will promote and support its implementation.

■ Asthma: Digital Technology

Rachael Maskell:

[\[25268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help patients with the technological management of asthma.

Andrew Stephenson:

There are a range of technologies available to help people manage their asthma. It is important that people are given the necessary support to use technology in managing their conditions, provided these tools have strong levels of evidence, and appropriate regulatory approval, for instance the UK Conformity Assessment, the Conformité Européenne, or compliance with the NHS Digital Technology Assessment Criteria. NHS England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) are exploring the potential for the platforms for the digital self-management of asthma to be evaluated, although this is dependent on the technology readiness level, which would require good levels of evidence and appropriate regulatory approval. Guidelines developed jointly by the NICE, the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network, and the British Thoracic Society to harmonise the recommendation from each organisation are ongoing, and have an expected publication date of 30 October 2024.

■ **Asthma: Health Services****Rachael Maskell:**[\[25265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of access to (a) specialist care provision and (b) review for asthma patients.

Andrew Stephenson:

Fewer than 5% of all people with asthma have severe asthma or uncontrolled asthma. For these people, systematic assessment by a specialist multidisciplinary severe asthma team has been shown to improve patient outcomes, for instance with a reduction in exacerbations and oral corticosteroids use, a reduction in health care utilisation, and an improvement in quality of life, regardless of the use of biologic drugs.

Severe asthma services form part of NHS England's specialised commissioning responsibilities. Specialised respiratory services are subject to joint commissioning or delegation to integrated care boards from April 2024, which will support integrated pathways between specialised and non-specialised services. Recent work contributed to by NHS England, to support capacity within specialised severe asthma services, included the development of a severe asthma toolkit and an Accelerated Access Collaborative on improving pathways for identification and management of patients with severe asthma. Regular asthma reviews, at least annually, are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence within its guideline on the diagnosis, monitoring, and chronic management of asthma.

The provision of annual asthma reviews is one of the indicators within the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) for general practices in England. The objective of the QOF is to improve the care patients are given by rewarding practices for the quality of care they provide to their patients, based on several indicators across a range of key areas of clinical care and public health. The latest published data for 2022/23 shows that 62.9% of people on the asthma register received a review in the past 12 months.

This has steadily increased since 2020/21, the earliest date from which data is available, as this is when the indicator definition was updated. Further information on the public health profile of patients with asthma is available at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/ASthma%20review#page/4/gid/1/pat/159/par/K02000001/ati/15/are/E92000001/iid/93790/age/314/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>

■ Asthma: Research

Rachael Maskell:

[25267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she is taking steps to promote asthma research through the use of (a) data and (b) AI.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department funds research on health and social care through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including asthma. The NIHR Respiratory Translational Research Collaboration has a dedicated asthma theme which includes research on diagnostics, monitoring, and digital health interventions to manage asthma. The NIHR has further encouraged research using data science and artificial intelligence approaches through the Artificial Intelligence in Health and Care Award, jointly funded with NHS England and the NHS Accelerated Access Collaborative since 2020.

We also note that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE's) guideline committee made several recommendations on diagnosing and monitoring asthma, and for managing chronic asthma when the 2017 guideline was published. A further new recommendation for research was made when the guideline was updated in 2020. It is therefore possible that the NICE will make further recommendations for research when its updated asthma guideline is published later this year.

■ Breast Cancer: Screening

Colleen Fletcher:

[24934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the take-up rate was for breast cancer screening in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last two years.

Andrew Stephenson:

NHS Breast Screening Programme statistics are available at the NHS Digital website's Breast Screening Programme page:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/breast-screening-programme>

■ Cancer: North West**Damien Moore:**[\[25546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress she has made on increasing access to cancer screening in the North West.

Andrew Stephenson:

NHS England North West has carried out significant work to improve access to cancer screening in the area, including: insight work into cervical screening, which has highlighted some issues, resulting in the piloting of potential solutions; a breast mobile site review being carried out, with findings and recommendations to be shared with trusts to act upon; five bowel and seven breast providers have been trained to use data to develop a Health Equity Audit, which will be submitted at the end of June 2024, with funding being offered to providers to design, develop, implement, and evaluate an intervention to reduce inequalities and barriers experienced by a population group they have identified in their Health Equity Audit; and funding being provided for Improving Uptake in Screening Officers, working to support non responders to take up the offer of breast screening.

■ Cancer: Research**Claire Hanna:**[\[25101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has given to the potential merits of increasing the level of funding for research into (a) pancreatic cancer and (b) other cancers with lower survival rates.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is proud to invest £1.3 billion per year on health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was over £121.8 million for 2022/23, and more is spent on cancer than any other disease group. Our investments in cancer, including rare and less survivable cancers such as pancreatic cancer, are pivotal to informing efforts to improve cancer prevention, treatment, and care.

As part of our commitment to driving more and better research into less survivable cancers, the Government awarded £2 million to new interdisciplinary research teams tackling hard to treat cancers via the Medical Research Council's two-day cancer sandpit strategic funding opportunity in 2023, which focused on technological innovation for understanding cancers, including pancreatic cancer, with the poorest survival rates.

The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome applications for research into any aspect of human health, including pancreatic cancer and other cancers with lower survival rates. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality, rather than against specific disease funding allocations. We would welcome more applications from researchers working on pancreatic cancer prevention, treatment, and care.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services

Navendu Mishra:

[\[25093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help improve specialist services for patients diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Andrew Stephenson:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning specialist myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), services that meet the needs of their population, subject to local prioritisation and funding. The process of commissioning services should take into account best practice guidance, such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance on ME and CFS diagnosis and management, published in October 2021.

In October 2023, the British Association of Clinicians in ME/CFS published the ME/CFS National Services Survey. This report provides insight into the services being delivered for adults, children, and young people with ME and CFS. The Department published *My full reality: an interim delivery plan for ME/CFS* in August 2023, which sets out a number of actions to improve the experiences and outcomes for people living with the condition, including better education of professionals and improvements to service provision.

Alongside the publication of the interim delivery plan, we ran a public consultation to build a picture of how well the interim plan meets the needs of the ME and CFS community, and to understand if there are any gaps where further action may be necessary. The Department is currently analysing over 3,000 responses to the consultation, and will publish a summary of the consultation responses in due course. Those consultation responses, along with continued close engagement with key stakeholders, will drive the development of the final cross-Government ME/CFS Delivery Plan, which will be published later this year.

■ Community Diagnostic Centres: Osteoporosis

Wes Streeting:

[\[24497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community diagnostic centres are providing bone density scans.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 8 May 2024]: As of May 2024, 19 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) are providing bone density scans, also known as DEXA scans. A total of 35 CDCs are planning to provide these scans in 2024/25.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[24607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) his Department and (b) the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has received data from

AstraZeneca on the potential serious adverse effects of its covid-19 vaccine for a small number of recipients.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 8 May 2024]: The Department has not directly received data from AstraZeneca regarding potential adverse effects of their COVID-19 vaccine Vaxzevria, as it is not the appropriate body to receive this information. It instead relies on the expert advice of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

All vaccine manufacturers have a legal responsibility to mitigate risk and monitor the safety and performance of vaccines throughout the product lifecycle. This includes a legal responsibility to transmit reports of suspected adverse reactions received directly to the MHRA. Following the MHRA's receipt of the first Yellow Card reports of suspected thrombosis and associated thrombocytopaenia associated with the Vaxzevria vaccine in February 2021, AstraZeneca provided the Commission on Human Medicines' Vaccine Benefit Risk Expert Working Group an analysis of the age stratified risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine. This was assessed by the Commission on Human Medicines, with the Patient Information updated to state the risks of these events.

■ **Dental Services: Norfolk**

James Wild:

[\[24155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which dental practices in Norfolk have been accepting new NHS patients since 1 March 2024.

Andrea Leadsom:

Our Dentistry Recovery Plan, backed by £200 million, will make dental services faster, simpler, and fairer for National Health Service dental patients. It will fund approximately 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment. A New Patient Premium is supporting dentists to take on new patients and since the end of January, nearly 500 more practices have said they are open to new patients. No estimates are currently available on the number of new patients seen by dental practices in Norfolk but we are committed to evaluating the impacts of the measures included in our plan, and we will publish monthly data on progress once this is available. The Find a Dentist website allows people to see which practices in their area have said they are accepting new patients which is available here: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ **Euthanasia**

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[25227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made a cost benefit analysis of the implementation of assisted dying.

Helen Whately:

No cost benefit analysis has been made of the implementation of assisted dying.

■ Food: Labelling

Jo Gideon:

[25098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to page 15 of the report by Bite Back entitled Fuel us don't fool us, published in 2024, what steps he is taking to prevent the food industry from targeting children; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring manufacturers to remove (a) child-appelling features and (b) misleading health claims from unhealthy products.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Government is committed to working with businesses to ensure we create the conditions for a healthier nation, and we are considering the recommendations from Bite Back's report, Fuel Us, Don't Fool Us. We are committed to addressing childhood obesity by implementing an ambitious programme of measures. These include restricting the location of foods high in fat, salt, or sugar in shops and online, which came into force on 1 October 2022. These restrictions will have the single biggest impact on reducing children's calorie consumption and are expected to accrue health benefits of over £57 billion, and provide the National Health Service savings of over £4 billion over the next 25 years.

On 1 October 2025, the volume price promotion restrictions will come into force, restricting volume price promotions such as three for two offers on less healthy products. The Government will simultaneously introduce a United Kingdom wide 9:00pm television watershed for products high in fat, salt, or sugar, and a restriction of paid-for advertising of these products online. We continue to work with industry on the Food Data Transparency Partnership in co-developing voluntary reporting requirements for food businesses to demonstrate the healthiness of their sales.

■ General Practitioners

Dr Dan Poulter:

[23843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent GPs worked in the NHS in England in each financial year since 2009-10.

Andrea Leadsom:

The information requested is publicly available and can be accessed here:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/general-and-personal-medical-services/30-september-2023>

and

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/general-and-personal-medical-services/2004-2014-as-at-30-september>

■ General Practitioners: Finance**Marsha De Cordova:****[25042]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the share of NHS funding for general practice.

Andrea Leadsom:

The NHS Long Term Plan committed to increasing investment into primary medical and community health services, as a share of the planned total National Health Service revenue spend across five years, from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Investment in general practice (GP) has grown in each of the last five years and in 2021/22, the latest year for which data is available, we saw a 7.14% growth in investment, compared with 2020/21. The full report is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/investment-in-general-practice-in-england-17-18-to-21-22/>

The Delivery Plan For Recovering Access to Primary Care, published by NHS England on 9 May 2023, recognised the benefits of moving care closer to home, and supported the vision set out in Dr Claire Fuller's stocktake report, Next steps For Integrating Primary Care. This is backed by a major new investment into primary care services, with up to £645 million over two years to expand the services offered by community pharmacies, helping to take the pressure off GPs, and providing patients with more options for care.

■ General Practitioners: Overseas Students**Marsha De Cordova:****[25044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential merits of introducing a guaranteed permanent residence for international medical graduates qualifying as GPs.

Andrea Leadsom:

We recognise the important role that international medical graduates play in helping to grow the general practice (GP) workforce, and the barriers that they can face upon successful completion of GP Specialty Training. We have introduced an additional four months for these doctors at the end of their visa, which will allow newly qualified international GPs who wish to work in the United Kingdom with the time they require to find employment following completion of their training. Having invested in National Health Service training for these GPs, they should continue working in the sector by securing employment with a GP with a visa sponsorship licence.

■ General Practitioners: Staff

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[25043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help grow the GP workforce.

Andrea Leadsom:

We remain committed to growing the general practice (GP) workforce, and the number of doctors in GPs. There were 4,282 more headcount, or 2,709 full time equivalent, doctors working in GPs in March 2024, compared to March 2019. The Government is working with NHS England to increase the GP workforce in England. This includes measures to boost recruitment, address the reasons why doctors leave the profession, and encourage them to return to practice.

We have increased the number of GP training places, and 2022 saw the highest ever number of doctors accepting a place on GP training, a record 4,032 trainees, up from 2,671 in 2014. Under the NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan, the number of training places will rise to 6,000 by 2031/32, with the first 500 new places available from September 2025.

■ Gonorrhoea

Peter Gibson:

[\[25072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the levels of Gonorrhoea recorded; and what steps she is taking to reduce it.

Peter Gibson:

[\[25073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the current levels of syphilis recorded; and what steps she is taking to tackle it.

Andrea Leadsom:

Both gonorrhoea and syphilis have returned to, and exceeded, the high levels reported in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2021 and 2022, gonorrhoea increased in all age-groups, with the largest rise among young people aged 15 to 24 years old. Over the same period, infectious syphilis increased among gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men, and heterosexuals.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) conducts comprehensive surveillance of sexually transmitted infections and supports local authorities and sexual health services in using this data to inform sexual health service delivery. The UKHSA is undertaking work with partner organisations to identify the best use of existing and emerging preventative interventions, to address the increase in gonorrhoea and syphilis.

■ Health Services

Karin Smyth:

[\[25656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure that integrated care boards take into account a) clinical, b) patient and c) provider experience when commissioning specialised services.

Helen Whately:

NHS England's delegation agreement with the integrated care boards (ICBs) requires each ICB to establish effective, safe, efficient, and economic arrangements for the commissioning of delegated specialised services, with particular reference to statutory obligations relating to health and care bodies, such as the triple aim.

The delegation agreement supports these responsibilities, including following all relevant legislation, guidance, and good practice. In commissioning delegation specialised services, ICBs must: consider how they can meet their legal duties to involve patients and the public in shaping the provision of services; work with local communities, under-represented groups, and those with protected characteristics; consider how they can address health inequalities; assist in the development of national standards, including service specifications and clinical commissioning policies; support the development of local clinical leadership and expertise in respect of specialised services; support specialised clinical networks and clinical reference groups, including participating in development and agreement of the annual plan for relevant clinical networks; and work with providers as commissioners of specialised services, including management of contracts and the annual contracting round, financial management, and working with providers on identification and management of any issues relating to quality of services.

Appropriate oversight and assurance arrangements are in place to assure the commissioning capability and capacity of ICBs, and so that NHS England, as the accountable commissioner, has the right mechanisms where support or intervention is needed, regardless of whether a service is retained by NHS England or falls within scope of delegated commissioning arrangements.

Karin Smyth:

[\[25657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of progress in the development of a clinical analytical service for specialised commissioning.

Helen Whately:

Commissioners of Specialised Services have access to the analysis of clinical data via their regional business intelligence teams, or the nationally commissioned Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) service provision.

Routine reporting can be accessed via the National Commissioning Data Repository, and more focused analytics can be performed across commissioning and clinical datasets collected by NHS England. NHS England has developed 181 Specialised Services Quality Dashboards alongside service specifications, which provide

additional data to monitor the quality of services and maintain clinical registries ranging from bowel cancer to pulmonary hypertension. The full list is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/clinical-audits-and-registries>

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

Damien Moore:

[\[25547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress her Department has made on reducing waiting lists for planned care in the North West.

Andrew Stephenson:

Cutting waiting lists for elective care is one of this Prime Minister's top priorities. The Delivery Plan for Tackling the COVID-19 Backlog of Elective Care outlines how the National Health Service will bring down waiting times across all elective services. To support this plan and tackle waiting lists the Government plans to spend more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to drive up and protect elective activity. We are making good progress on tackling the longest waits, to ensure patients get the care they need when they need it.

In July 2022, the NHS successfully met the first target in our plan to virtually eliminate waits of over two years, excluding patients waiting by choice or due to complex specialties. The NHS then worked hard to deliver the next ambition to eliminate waits of 18 months or more. Thanks to the incredible work of NHS staff, NHS England's official statistics show that as of March 2024, we have virtually eliminated waits of over 18 months.

Referral to Treatment (RTT) waiting times data is published monthly by NHS England:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/>

■ HIV Infection: Drugs

Peter Gibson:

[\[25354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that PrEP is available in all parts of the UK.

Andrea Leadsom:

We remain committed to achieving equitable provision of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, geographic area of residence, or socio-economic background. The HIV Action Plan Implementation Steering Group (ISG) published a roadmap in February 2024 to help guide efforts to improve access, uptake, and use of PrEP amongst key population groups at significant risk of HIV in England. An implementation working group of key delivery partners is being set up, which will monitor progress on actions and report back to the ISG.

Devolved administrations are responsible for developing and implementing their own public health strategies. Colleagues in England meet regularly with their counterparts in the devolved administrations, to share information and best practice on our response to HIV, including provision of PrEP.

Our commitment to PrEP as part of a combination approach is emphasised by our investment in the successful rollout of PrEP across England, where PrEP is routinely available in specialist sexual health services since March 2020, and we invested more than £34 million in PrEP in 2020/21 and 2021/22. PrEP funding has now been included within the Public Health Grant (PHG) since 2022/23, and funds appointments and testing in sexual health services, whilst NHS England covers the costs of the drug itself. The PHG is funded at £3.6 billion for 2024/25.

■ HIV Infection: Health Services

Peter Gibson:

[\[25353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department is taking steps to identify people that have been diagnosed with HIV but are not accessing treatment.

Andrea Leadsom:

As part of the HIV Action Plan, we are committed to ensuring adequate support for those diagnosed and living with HIV. The most recent monitoring and evaluation report of the HIV Action Plan, published by the UK Health Security Agency, shows that in 2022, 76% of adults first diagnosed with HIV in England were linked to HIV care within two weeks, 87% within one month, and 93% within three months. This is an improvement compared to 2019.

NHS England's specification for adult HIV services states that these services must have a policy describing how they aim to ensure retention in care, and re-engage those lost to care. A subgroup, Retention and Re-engagement in Care Task and Finish Group, of the HIV Action Plan Implementation Steering Group (ISG) is providing advice on increasing the number of people retained and re-engaged in care and receiving effective medical care, which will be considered by the ISG in due course.

As part of the HIV Action Plan, the NHS England HIV opt-out testing programme in emergency departments has identified 384 people previously diagnosed with HIV but who disengaged from care in the first 21 months, providing opportunities to re-engage those individuals in care. Given its success, the Department has recently committed an additional £20 million for new research, which will involve an expansion and evaluation of the programme in 47 additional emergency departments in local areas with high HIV prevalence, across England.

■ Hospices: Children

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[25226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will extend the Children's Hospice Grant beyond 2024–25.

Helen Whately:

NHS England has renewed the Children and Young People hospice funding for 2024/25, again allocating £25 million for children's hospices, using the same prevalence-based allocation approach as previously used. We are currently considering the future of this funding stream beyond 2024/25.

■ Hospices: Finance

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[25324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the funding model for hospices.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[25325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she is taking steps to support hospices with rising costs.

Helen Whately:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for determining the level of National Health Service-funded palliative and end of life care, including hospice care, locally, and they are responsible for ensuring that the services they commission meet the needs of their local population. As part of the Health and Care Act 2022, the Government added palliative care services to the list of services an ICB must commission, which will ensure a more consistent national approach, and support commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care.

The majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by NHS staff and services. However, we also recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices, play in providing support to people at end of life, and their families. Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding hospices receive is dependent on many factors, including what other statutory services are available within the ICB footprint. Charitable hospices provide a range of services which go beyond that which statutory services are legally required to provide. Consequently, the funding arrangements reflect this.

The Department, alongside key partners, and NHS England will continue to engage with stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices on an ongoing basis, in order to understand the issues they face, including that of future funding pressures. The Department is in ongoing discussions with NHS England about oversight and accountability of National Health Service palliative and end of life care commissioning.

The Government recognises the difficult economic context that organisations such as hospices face, which is why we made the decision to provide additional funding to help deliver non-consolidated pay awards to eligible staff employed by non-NHS organisations, including some hospices. Funding has been made available for over 27,000 staff in non-NHS organisations to receive the two non-consolidated awards agreed as part of the Agenda for Change pay deal. Eligible organisations will receive their funding as soon as practically possible, following the receipt of their invoice.

■ Infectious Diseases

Catherine West: [\[25520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the report by Mahon, M.B. et al. entitled A meta-analysis on global change drivers and the risk of infectious disease, published in Nature on 8 May 2024.

Maria Caulfield:

In December 2023 the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published the Health Effects of Climate Change report, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-health-effects-in-the-uk>

This report details the potential risks and impacts of climate change on human health. The UKHSA will continue to work closely with other departments and agencies, to assess emerging evidence on drivers of infectious diseases, to inform future health policies.

■ Integrated Care Systems: General Practitioners

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring each integrated care system to establish alert systems for general practice.

Andrea Leadsom:

NHS England instructs integrated care boards (ICBs) to ensure tools are in place to understand demand, activity, and capacity levels in primary care. It is for ICBs to work with practices to determine appropriate local escalation processes for periods of increased demand, and many practices have already agreed such processes with their ICBs, specifically tailored to local needs.

■ Joint Replacements: Post-operative Care

John McDonnell: [\[25606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of psychological support for post-surgical orthopaedic infections.

Maria Caulfield:

We have made no such assessment. Anyone experiencing mental ill health as a result of a post-surgical orthopaedic infection should speak to their general practitioner, or refer themselves to their local NHS Talking Therapies service.

■ Lung Cancer: Diagnosis**Sir John Hayes:**[\[24852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department is taking steps to assess the level of regional variation in the detection of lung cancer.

Andrew Stephenson:

Targeted Lung Health Checks have been implemented in the most deprived areas of England, where people are four times more likely to smoke and are therefore at higher risk of lung cancer. This has resulted in greater numbers of lung cancer being detected in these areas than previously. The programme will be converted to a Targeted Lung Cancer Screening Programme and fully rolled out in all regions by 2030.

■ Magnetic Resonance Imagers**Wes Streeting:**[\[17633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the announcement at page 34 of the Spring Budget 2024, HC 560, published on 6 March 2024, on upgrading more than 100 MRI scanners with AI, what the average time taken for patients to receive relevant test results is; and if she will make an estimate of the average time for such results to be received when the new scanners are in use.

Wes Streeting:[\[17634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.20 of Spring Budget 2024, HC 560, if she will publish the modelling used to estimate the number of patients that will be impacted by the proposed upgrading of 100 MRI scanners.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 14 March 2024]: The Department does not hold data on the average time taken for patients to receive relevant Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) test results. The Department is, therefore, unable to make an estimate of the average time for such results to be received when the new scanners are in use. The National Health Service expects that upgrading one MRI scanner with Artificial Intelligence (AI) acceleration software will lead to an average of 3.71 additional patients being scanned per day in addition to the current average of 24 scans a day.

The table below provides the figures which estimate that upgrading 100 MRI scanners will mean 130,000 additional patients receive an MRI test each year.

ADDITIONAL TESTSPER UPGRADED SCANNER (HOURLY)	ADDITIONAL TESTS PER UPGRADED SCANNER (DAILY)	ADDITIONAL TESTSPER UPGRADED SCANNER (WEEKLY)	ADDITIONAL TESTS PER UPGRADED SCANNER (ANNUAL)	SCANNERS UPGRADED	ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY (ANNUAL)
0.31	3.71	26	1,300	100	130,000

MRI AI acceleration software enables scan acquisition time to be reduced, in turn enabling scans to be delivered in shorter time frames and therefore improving the time taken for patients to receive a test result from the point of referral. This is currently supporting the achievement of optimal levels of throughput to be achieved in 80 trusts, where 216 scanners have been upgraded.

■ **Medicine: Education**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[25505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will hold discussions with the (a) Medical Schools Council and (b) British Medical Association on the effectiveness of preference-informed allocation for foundation placements for medical graduates.

Andrew Stephenson:

The UK Foundation Programme Office (UKFPO) manages the national application process for the UK Foundation Programme, on behalf of the four statutory education bodies for the United Kingdom. The UKFPO changed the allocation process for the programme this year to a Preference Informed Allocation method. This consisted of applicants being given a computer-generated rank, and removed the requirement for them to sit the Situational Judgement Test. This change was based on engagement with stakeholders, including the Medical Schools Council, and the British Medical Association.

When confirming the move to the new system last year, the UKFPO set out that once implemented, it would be kept under constant review, to make sure it is working well for applicants. The UKFPO has confirmed that 75% of applicants received their first choice of programme this year, a 4% increase on last year.

■ **Mortality Rates**

Wes Streeting:

[\[24685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason there was an increase in death rates among 20-44 year olds in 2023 from 2019.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 8 May 2024]: Data published by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities provides recent estimates of excess mortality in England by age group. Estimates for 20 to 44 year olds are not available, but data are published for those aged 25 to 49. These show that in 2023, deaths in this age group were 3%

lower than expected. The number of expected deaths is based on the trend in mortality rates for this age group in the 5 years before 2023. This baseline excludes periods with particularly high numbers of deaths from COVID-19.

This estimate for excess mortality in 2023 reflects, in part, an increase in mortality for this age group over the preceding 5 years. However, official estimates of mortality rates for this age group have not been published. The Office for National Statistics have also not yet released final mortality data or mid-year population estimates for 2023.

■ NHS England: Complaints

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[23364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS England South West Complaints Team plans to provide a substantive response to the complaint made by the hon. member for Christchurch on behalf of a constituent under reference 2312-2050136; for what reason there has been no response to the complaint from the South West dental commissioning team; and what the contact details are for the person in charge of that team.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 29 April 2024]: I thank the hon. Member for Christchurch for bringing this matter to my attention. NHS England has advised that the trust has received the hon. Member's correspondence, and will respond in due course. In July 2023, the responsibility for primary care complaints, including dentistry, moved to local integrated care boards.

■ NHS: Standards

Daisy Cooper:

[\[25355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she plans to take to ensure those that don't have access to the internet can respond to the 10 year review of the NHS constitution.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department is committed to supporting people from all backgrounds in accessing the NHS Constitution consultation. We would encourage those without internet access to utilise resources on offer at some public spaces, including libraries and community centres, to support their response. The easy read consultation, which will be launched imminently, will provide an option for the consultation to be printed and sent to the Department. More widely, the Government has taken steps to ensure households across the United Kingdom are able to access fast, reliable mobile and broadband services to support their full participation in society.

■ Obesity: Children

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[24936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of trends in childhood obesity levels in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each of the last three years.

Andrea Leadsom:

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) collects data on children aged four to five years old, who would be in reception, and 10 to 11 years old, who would be in year 6. It provides detailed trend data on children's weight status, including childhood obesity. While data is not available at a constituency level, it is available at a local authority, regional, and national level. The following table shows the obesity prevalence from the NCMP in Coventry, the West Midlands, and England, for 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23:

AREA	CHILDREN AGED FOUR TO FIVE YEARS OLD				CHILDREN AGED 10 TO 11 YEARS OLD			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Coventry	11.7%	15.2%	10.4%	9.8%	25.3%	30.2%	26.7%	25.6%
West Midlands	11.2%	16%	11.3%	10.1%	23.9%	28.4%	26.2%	25.2%
England	9.9%	14.4%	10.1%	9.2%	21%	25.5%	23.4%	22.7%

Note: the data for 2019/20 was collected before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data shows that the prevalence of obesity in children aged four to five years old has decreased since the increase seen in 2020/21, during the COVID-19 pandemic. For children aged 10 to 11 years old, prevalence has decreased, but it still remains higher in 2022/23 compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20, for the West Midlands and England. For Coventry, however, prevalence in 2022/23 is similar to pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20.

■ Osteoporosis: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[24912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to improve waiting times for treatment for osteoporosis patients.

Andrew Stephenson:

Our aim is that 95% of patients needing a diagnostic check receive it within six weeks, by March 2025. As of April 2024, there are 160 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) currently operational that have delivered over seven million additional tests since July 2021. Some of these CDCs will offer bone density scans, also known as

dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) scans, which can be used to diagnose or assess patients' risk of osteoporosis. There are 22 CDCs already providing DEXA scans across England, as of March 2024.

From 2022/23 to 2024/25, the Government is spending more than £11.3 billion to support elective recovery and tackle long waiting times, which could deliver nine million more checks and procedures to help support patients with conditions like osteoporosis.

■ Palliative Care

Peter Gibson:

[R] [\[25584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to collect data on people admitted to hospital for palliative care in order to understand the (a) demand and (b) needs for palliative care.

Helen Whately:

NHS England collects data on the number of people admitted to hospital with a palliative care diagnosis. However, this does not clearly indicate the reason for admission. The following table shows the numbers of patients identified as being admitted to hospital and having a palliative care diagnosis, for each of the past five years:

YEAR	PALLIATIVE CARE DIAGNOSIS
2018/19	94,000
2019/20	98,052
2020/21	98,736
2021/22	102,032
2022/23	102,795

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Medical Treatments

Kate Osborne:

[\[25370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people who require enzyme replacement therapy receive that medication in a timely manner.

Kate Osborne:

[\[25371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has had recent discussions with pharmaceutical companies on ensuring adequate supplies of (a) enzyme replacement therapy and (b) other related medications.

Kate Osborne:

[\[25591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of enzyme replacement therapy.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are aware of the supply issues with the three enzyme replacement therapies, Creon 10,000 gastro-resistant capsules, Creon 25,000 gastro-resistant capsules, and Nutrizym 22 capsules. These are due to manufacturing and active pharmaceutical ingredient constraints. The Department will be issuing updated guidance to healthcare professionals regarding treatment of patients while there is a disruption to the supply of these pancreatic enzyme replacement therapies. We are having regular conversations with the suppliers of these products to help drive the resolution of these issues as quickly as possible, for example by expediting orders and increasing forecasts. We are also working with specialist importers to source unlicensed imports from abroad.

Whilst we can't always prevent supply issues, we have a range of well-established tools and processes to mitigate risks to patients. These include close and regular engagement with suppliers, use of alternative strengths or forms of a medicine to allow patients to remain on the same product, expediting regulatory procedures, sourcing unlicensed imports from abroad, adding products to the restricted exports and hoarding list, use of Serious Shortage Protocols, and issuing National Health Service communications to provide management advice and information on the issue to healthcare professionals, so they can advise and support their patients.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Research

Caroline Lucas:

[\[24633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding the (a) National Institute for Health and Care Research and (b) UK Research Institute has provided for Parkinson's research in each of the last five years.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government's responsibility for delivering Parkinson's disease research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Between the financial years 2019/20 and 2023/24, the Department of Health and Social Care, via the NIHR, funded Parkinson's research projects to a total value of £12.9 million of programme spend.

As well as funding research itself, the NIHR invests significantly in research expertise and capacity, specialist facilities, support services, and collaborations, to support and deliver research in England. Collectively this forms the NIHR's infrastructure. The NIHR's infrastructure enables the country's leading experts to develop and deliver high-quality translational, clinical, and applied research into Parkinson's disease. For example, in the financial year 2022/23, the NIHR Clinical Research Network

supported 114 studies related to Parkinson's disease. UKRI spent over £66 million on research into Parkinson's disease between the financial years 2019/20 and 2023/24. The following table shows the breakdown of spend on Parkinson's research for the NIHR and UKRI, each year from 2019/20 to 2023/24:

	NIHR PROGRAMMES	UKRI	TOTAL
2019/20	£2,470,000	£18,200,000	£20,680,000
2020/21	£2,180,000	£11,970,000	£14,160,000
2021/22	£2,620,000	£13,010,000	£15,640,000
2022/23	£2,570,000	£11,890,000	£14,470,000
2023/24	£3,030,000	£11,060,000	£14,090,000
Total	£12,900,000	£66,150,000	£79,060,000

■ Smoking

Alexander Stafford:

[\[25393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an estimate of the number of hospital admissions for issues related to cigar smoking in the last (a) 12 months, (b) five years and (c) 20 years.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[25394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an estimate of the number of hospital admissions for issues related to the taking of snuff in the last (a) 12 months, (b) five years and (c) 20 years.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[25395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an estimate of the annual cost to the NHS of (a) cigar smoking and (b) snuff taking.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is responsible for approximately 80,000 deaths a year in the United Kingdom, and causes around one in four UK cancer deaths. It also costs our country £21.8 billion a year, and puts a huge burden on the National Health Service. The latest estimates from Action on Smoking and Health put the cost of smoking to the NHS at £1.9 billion a year.

All tobacco products are harmful. Tobacco smoke from cigars leads to the same types of diseases as cigarette smoke. Research has shown that using smokeless tobacco raises the risk of both mouth and oesophageal cancer. Data from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' Smoking Profile showed that in 2019/20 there were an estimated 448,031 smoking attributable hospital admissions, but we cannot differentiate by the type of tobacco.

As such, the Department does not hold data on the annual costs to the NHS of cigar smoking and snuff taking, nor data on the number of hospital admissions for issues related to cigar smoking or snuff taking in the last 12 months, five years, or 20 years.

■ Steroid Drugs

Dame Andrea Jenkyns: [\[25275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the long term prescribing of topical corticosteroids.

Andrew Stephenson:

In 2021 the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency conducted a review and concluded that, when used appropriately, topical corticosteroids are a safe and effective treatment, and they continue to monitor the safety of these products. No further assessment has been made.

When making prescribing decisions for their patients, clinicians are expected to take into account best prescribing practice, in this case on the use of topical corticosteroids, alongside local commissioning decisions. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made a number of recommendations on the use of topical corticosteroids in guidelines, on topics such as atopic eczema in under 12-year-olds, and psoriasis.

It is for the general practitioner or other responsible clinician to work with their patient and decide on the best course of treatment, with the provision of the most clinically appropriate care for the individual always being the primary consideration.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists

Rachael Maskell: [\[25260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of surgical hubs on trends in waiting times for elective care.

Andrew Stephenson:

Several external evaluations of the impact of Elective Surgical Hubs are currently ongoing, and supported by NHS England. The University of York is carrying out a comprehensive evaluation funded by the National Institute of Healthcare Research.

The Health Foundation's Improvement Analytics Unit has also conducted a quantitative assessment of the impact of surgical hubs, with the results to be published later this month. The Health Foundation's analysis will indicate the impact surgical hubs have had on the number of procedures undertaken and whether they have increased day-case rates and reduced lengths of stay, all of which supports elective recovery, and reductions in waiting times for elective care.

HOME OFFICE**■ Anti-social Behaviour: Lancashire****Mark Menzies:**[\[24893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Operation Centurion on anti-social behaviour in Lancashire.

Chris Philp:

Last year the Government launched the Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan>) ensuring the police, local authorities and other relevant agencies have the tools they need to tackle anti-social behaviour.

As part of the Plan, we funded an increased police and other uniformed presence to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, targeting hotspots. Initially we worked with 10 police force areas, including Lancashire Constabulary which received £1,050,000. Data received from pilot forces showed from July 2023 to the end of January 2024 over 100,000 additional hours of anti-social behaviour-focused patrols were delivered across pilot areas in England and Wales. This led to an increase in enforcement activity which included almost 800 arrests, around 2,000 stop and searches and nearly 1,000 uses of anti-social behaviour tools and powers.

Following the success of the pilots, we have extended this approach to every police force in England and Wales from April. Lancashire will receive £1,713,512 for the hotspot programme tackling areas of high incidents of both anti-social behaviour and serious violence.

■ Asylum**Sir John Hayes:**[\[24851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers awaiting decisions has his Department been unable to locate or contact since January 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

This information is not routinely published and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Asylum: Republic of Ireland**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[24248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there are (a) formal and (b) informal arrangements between the UK and Republic of Ireland governments on the (i) provision of biometric and other data on asylum seekers and (ii) removal of asylum seekers from the Republic of Ireland to the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Irish Department of Justice for information sharing to preserve and enhance the operation of the Common Travel Area. This enables data sharing about asylum seekers.

We have no legally binding agreement with Ireland on the return of asylum seekers. In 2020, we agreed operational arrangements which allow for the return and readmission of asylum seekers where this is agreed by both participants. Ireland has not returned anyone to the UK under these arrangements, and we have only returned one person.

Andrew Bridgen:[\[24920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have been returned to the UK from Ireland since 2016.

Tom Pursglove:

Prior to leaving the EU, the UK participated in the Dublin Regulation which allowed us to return third country nationals to other Member States, using the first safe country principle. Our statistics on Dublin III transfers are published online and can be found here: ([Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

Following our departure from the EU, we agreed to an operational arrangement with Ireland which allows for the return and readmission of asylum seekers. Ireland has not returned anyone to the UK under these arrangements.

Andrew Bridgen:[\[24921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many requests have been made by the Irish government for the UK to accept an asylum seeker since 2016.

Tom Pursglove:

Prior to leaving the EU, the UK participated in the Dublin Regulation which allowed us to return third country nationals to other Member States, using the first safe country principle. Our statistics on Dublin III returns requests are published online and can be found here: ([Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

Following our departure from the EU, we agreed to an operational arrangement with Ireland which allows for the return and readmission of asylum seekers. We do not routinely publish any statistics regarding the returns requests made under our operational arrangements.

■ Asylum: Syria**Claire Hanna:**[\[25722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what routes are available for Syrians in Lebanon seeking asylum in the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

The UK has a proud history of providing protection for those who need it through a number of safe and legal routes. However, there is no provision within our

Immigration Rules for someone to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge. Whilst we sympathise with people in many difficult situations around the world, including people from Syria, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

The UK continues to welcome refugees and people in need through our existing global resettlement schemes which include the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship and the Mandate Resettlement Scheme.

Claire Hanna: [\[25723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his asylum policies of the treatment of Syrians in Lebanon by the Lebanese government.

Tom Pursglove:

Our assessment of the situation for Syrian nationals is set out in the relevant country policy and information notes which focus on conditions within Syria and are available on the [Gov.uk website](#).

There are no plans to produce a country policy and information note on Syrian nationals in Lebanon at this time.

■ **Deportation: Rwanda**

Navendu Mishra: [\[25094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people his Department has identified for deportation to Rwanda in (a) Stockport and (b) Greater Manchester.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Home Office does not routinely publish information on detention activity at a regional level.

The first illegal migrants set to be removed to Rwanda have now been detained, following a series of nationwide operations. We will not be providing a running commentary on operational activity.

■ **Gender Based Violence**

Anneliese Dodds: [\[25020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) evaluate and (b) review the violence against women and girls strategy.

Laura Farris:

The ambitious cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy set out a series of measures to help ensure that women and girls are safe everywhere - at home, online, at work and in public. This was followed by a

complementary Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, published in March 2022. So far, we have completed 69% of the commitments across both strategy documents.

Delivery is overseen by a cross-Government VAWG Ministerial Steering Group (VAWG MSG). The last VAWG MSG took place on 1st May and was chaired by the Home Secretary. Part of the meeting focused on accelerating delivery of the remaining strategy commitments.

Many of our interventions are funded through grants awarded to third parties. These grants are actively monitored with recipients providing regular monitoring and end of financial year reports.

We are assessing the overall impact of measures set out in the strategies against the ambition to increase support to victims and survivors and bring more perpetrators to justice.

Our long-term ambition is to reduce the prevalence of violence against women. This is monitored via the published crime statistics, which include police recorded crime and Crime Survey for England and Wales data, as well as via other published criminal justice agency data. The latest data can be found here: [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/crime-and-justice/crime-in-england-and-wales).

Estimates from the 2022/23 CSEW showed that 5.1% of adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the previous year ([Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-prevalence-and-victim-characteristics)). This was a statistically significant decrease compared with the year ending March 2020 (6.1%), a year largely unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the same period, the prevalence of sexual assault and stalking has remained stable with no statistically significant changes.

■ Police: Maternity Leave

Navendu Mishra:

[25095]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will (a) undertake a review of maternity leave entitlement for Police Officers and (b) update police regulations to reflect the outcome of that review.

Chris Philp:

The Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) and Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) consider and make recommendations to the Government on the pay, allowances, hours of duty and leave for police officers.

The Home Secretary's remit letters, published on 20 December, do not ask the PRRB and SSRB to review maternity leave entitlements. However, the Government will give very careful consideration to any commentary or recommendations the Review Bodies may make on the current entitlements.

■ Shoplifting

Jim Shannon:

[24917]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to protect retailers from shoplifting.

Chris Philp:

Since 2010 our communities are safer, with neighbourhood crimes including burglary, robbery and theft from the person down 48% and overall violent crime down 44%, and more police officers on the streets than in 2010.

However, there has been a worrying rise in shoplifting and violence towards retail workers, which we are taking action to address. The Government's plan – "[Fighting Retail Crime: more action](#)" was launched on 10 April. It includes a new standalone offence for assaults on retail workers, which will be introduced via the Criminal Justice Bill, currently before Parliament.. We are working with police and businesses to roll out the latest facial recognition to catch these perpetrators; championing good practice to design out crime; and making it easier for retailers to report crime.

We will also legislate through the Criminal Justice Bill, to introduce a presumption towards electronic monitoring as part of a sentence served in the community for those who repeatedly steal from shops.

The Government's action plan builds on the police-led [Retail Crime Action Plan](#), launched in October 2023, which includes a commitment to prioritise police attendance at the scene where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured and can only be done by police personnel. Additionally, where CCTV or other digital images are secured, police will run this through the Police National Database to aid efforts to identify prolific offenders or potentially dangerous individuals. Early indications suggest that there has been improved police attendance at the retail crime incidents prioritised. This has been echoed by major retailers.

Police forces across England and Wales have also committed to pursuing any available evidence where there is a reasonable chance it could lead them to catching a perpetrator and solving a crime and this includes shoplifting. These are substantial operational policing commitments, which I am overseeing delivery of through the National Retail Crime Steering Group.

■ Visas: Seasonal Workers

Tim Farron:

[24879]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have worked under the poultry Seasonal Worker visa scheme in each year since 2021.

Tim Farron:

[24880]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applicants have secured a Seasonal Worker visa in each year since 2019.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance visas in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on the number of grants of Seasonal Worker visas is published in table Vis_D02 of the [Entry clearance detailed dataset](#). Data on visa grants by occupation can be found in table Occ_D02, of the [Sponsored work visas by occupation and industry](#) dataset. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook.

The latest data relates up to the end of December 2023.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION■ **All-party Parliamentary Groups: Diplomatic Service****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[25200\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will make it its policy that former Ambassadors and High Commissioners may not work in the Secretariats of APPGs on countries to which they were accredited.

Sir Charles Walker:

[Holding answer 14 May 2024]: The Commission does not control or regulate All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs).

The Committee on Standards put forward recommendations which were approved by the House on 19 July 2023. This included the provision that groups are not permitted to have a secretariat either provided or funded by a foreign government. The Committee made no recommendations about the role of former Ambassadors or High Commissioners.

■ **All-party Parliamentary Groups: National Security****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[25197\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps the Commission is taking to ensure that secretariats of All-Party Parliamentary Groups do not pass sensitive information to foreign governments.

Sir Charles Walker:

[Holding answer 14 May 2024]: The Commission does not control or regulate All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs).

The rules for APPGs are approved by the House. The [Guide to the APPG Rules](#) by the Committee on Standards makes clear that each group's Chair and Registered Contact is responsible for ensuring that if any person or organisation provides a secretariat or support service, that person or organisation is aware of and complies with the rules of the House. Members of the House are subject to the provision in the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament that "Members must only use

information which they have received in confidence in the course of their parliamentary activities in connection with those activities, and never for other purposes”.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards may investigate allegations of a breach of the Code of Conduct and the associated APPG Rules, and he may report to the Committee on Standards any findings from such an investigation.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[25198\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, with reference to paragraph 8 of the Eighth Report of Session 2022-23 of the Committee on Standards, All-Party Parliamentary Groups: final proposals, HC 228, published on 5 April 2023, what steps the Commission is taking to tackle the risk of improper (a) access and (b) influence by foreign actors through APPGs.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[25199\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, with reference to paragraph 17 of the Eighth Report of Session 2022-23 of the Committee on Standards, All-Party Parliamentary Groups: final proposals, HC 228, published on 5 April 2023, what steps the Commission is taking to ensure that Secretariats of APPGs (a) are not funded by and (b) do not receive benefits from foreign governments.

Sir Charles Walker:

[Holding answer 14 May 2024]: The Commission does not control or regulate All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs).

The Committee on Standards put forward recommendations which were approved by the House on 19 July 2023. These included the following provisions which are now contained within the APPG rules:

- a) groups are not permitted to have a secretariat either provided or funded by a foreign government.
- b) a group's officers must undertake due diligence as to whether a foreign government is the eventual funder of a secretariat or other benefit. If a group receives a benefit (other than a secretariat) from a foreign government, this is permissible but must be registered.
- c) for groups receiving over £1500 in benefits in a calendar year, the group shall publish an annual report explaining its work and a due diligence statement in relation to foreign government funding.

As the Committee recommended, the Parliamentary Security Department and the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards on 20 September 2023 issued guidance on due diligence. That guidance was emailed to all APPG Chairs and is available here: [Guide to the rules on All-Party Parliamentary Groups - UK Parliament](#)

There is no ban on the receipt of benefits from foreign governments, but such benefits must be registered.

■ Parliament: LGBT+ People

Sir John Hayes:

[\[25410\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the cost to Parliament was of (a) events, (b) activities, (c) merchandise and (d) other associated costs relating to Pride Month 2023.

Sir Charles Walker:

In 2023, in support of LGBT+ people in Parliament, the House Administration approved a request from ParliOut to spend £375.00 for 50 Pride registration spaces, £439.20 for Pride T-shirts, and £62.93 for Pride flags. Any interested passholders can participate, including Members of both Houses, their staff and staff of both Houses.

Supporting members of the House Administration who wish to participate in Pride is a way the Administration demonstrates its commitment to one of its four values: inclusion.

ParliOut is the workplace equality network (WEN) for LGBT+ people in Parliament. As the networks are bicameral, their expenditure is split 70% by the House of Commons and 30% by the House of Lords.

■ Parliamentary Estate: Telephone Systems

John Spellar:

[\[25405\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, for what reason the Polycom phone system malfunctioned on 9 May 2024.

Sir Charles Walker:

I am sorry that the right hon. Member and all colleagues continue to experience inconvenience in telephony services which are currently below standard. The latest issue with handsets underlines the need for the solution which the Parliamentary Digital Service is implementing later this year.

Polycom devices need to communicate with an external supplier to register the device and make/receive calls. Each device communicates with one of two external servers. One of the servers experienced issues on Thursday 9 May and any device that attempted to connect to this server was impacted by the outage. Polycom phones communicating with the working server did not experience an outage.

The first report the Digital Service received of handsets not working was at 12.13pm on Thursday 9 May. The team declared a major incident shortly afterwards and service was restored at 9.46am on 10 May.

The Voice Programme is upgrading and replacing the existing telephony infrastructure and when implemented, handsets will have 99.999% reliability of connecting.

JUSTICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Sir Edward Leigh:****[902803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to support the victims of crime.

Laura Farris:

The Government is committed to supporting victims of crime.

The Victims and Prisoners Bill, which is currently in Report stage of the second House, introduces measures to better serve victims and the public, through improving victims' experiences of the Criminal Justice System. The Bill places the overarching principles of the Victims' Code into primary legislation and places a statutory duty on relevant agencies to provide services in accordance with the Victims' Code, unless there is a good reason not to. The Bill sets up new oversight mechanisms to monitor and improve Code compliance through new mandatory data collection. There will be a series of consequences in place for bodies that do not comply with the Code, delivered by new local and national oversight mechanisms, with robust independent scrutiny by the Victims' Commissioner.

The Government recognises the importance of services which support victims, and so the Bill also introduces a duty on Police and Crime Commissioners Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards to collaborate when commissioning support services for victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and serious violence in England. Alongside this, the government has quadrupled funding for victims' support services in cash terms since 2009/10. This includes funding to increase the number of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers to around 1,000 by 2024/25, a 24/7 Rape Support Helpline, and an improved Homicide Support Service.

In addition to supporting victims directly, the Government is committed to making sure the punishment fits the crime. The average custodial sentence has increased by around 50% since 2010 and serious offenders now spend a higher proportion of their sentence in custody.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Ipsos MORI****Emily Thornberry:****[25193]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 18 July 2023 to Question 193876, when he plans to publish the (a) content from the deliverables, (b) details of the experiment and (c) findings from the survey conducted by Ipsos Mori.

Mike Freer:

The work under the contract with procurement reference 336036/1227987 was delayed due to difficulties with finding a survey design that would accurately answer the research question, and eventually the contract expired before a workable design was agreed.

The department is continuing to work to finalise a revised research design. The survey has not yet been conducted but the expectation is that results will be available later this year.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Council Housing: Mould

Stephen McPartland: [\[24907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support is available for tenants in dispute with local authorities on damp and mould issues.

Jacob Young:

It is unacceptable for anyone to have to live in damp and mouldy conditions. Damp and mould can have a serious impact on the health of tenants. That is why the Secretary of State wrote to all providers of social housing, including local authorities, setting out his expectations that they go further than the letter of the Decent Homes Standard and have particular regard to damp and mould. He also wrote to local authority chief executives and council leaders making it clear they must take action to resolve poor housing conditions in their area.

Social housing tenants of local authorities who are unsatisfied with their landlord's response to their complaint on damp and mould can raise their issue with the Housing Ombudsman. Our new guidance on damp and mould can also be accessed by tenants at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/damp-and-mould-understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-for-rented-housing-providers>.

We have committed to introducing 'Awaab's Law', which will set requirements for social landlords to investigate and fix hazards such as damp and mould in social housing. Our consultation on Awaab's Law closed on 5 March and we will bring forward secondary legislation to bring this into force as soon as practicable.

We have also given local authorities strong legal powers to use where privately rented or housing association houses or flats are in a seriously dangerous condition, including through damp and mould.

■ First Time Buyers: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher: [\[24941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to support first-time home buyers in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Colleen Fletcher: [\[24942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the level of home ownership in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry in each of the last three years.

Lee Rowley:

DLUHC publishes estimates of first-time buyer numbers as part of the English Housing Survey. See Chapter 3 and Annex 3.2 in: [English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023: headline report - GOV.UK](#). The Government does not hold data that is specific to (a) the Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

The Government has a range of schemes available to help improve access to home ownership, including First Homes, Shared Ownership, Right to Buy, the Mortgage Guarantee Scheme and the Lifetime ISA. We have also doubled the threshold for Stamp Duty and expanded First Time Buyers Relief.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention**Theresa Villiers:**[\[25641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what decisions were made following his Department's meeting with Barnet Council on remediation of fire defects caused by timber and UPVC cladding on 3 May 2024.

Theresa Villiers:[\[25642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether provisions were made in the Right to Buy scheme to ensure that the people purchasing their homes are made aware of potential fire safety defects.

Theresa Villiers:[\[25643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes that are affected by the same fire safety issues caused by (a) timber and (b) UVC cladding that have been identified in the London Borough of Barnet.

Theresa Villiers:[\[25644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of conservation area planning restrictions on (a) residential cladding materials and (b) fire safety remediation and mitigation measures.

Lee Rowley:

We are aware of the action being taken by Barnet Council and continue to engage closely with them on the steps they are taking, following the Moss Hall Grove fire in June 2023. Department and Building Safety Regulator officials met with Barnet Council representatives on 10 April and visited the impacted buildings on 3 May. I look forward to meeting my Rt Hon Friend soon to discuss further.

■ Leasehold: Service Charges**Stephen McPartland:** [\[24908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help leaseholders in properties which are of no value due to remediation costs on service charges.

Lee Rowley:

Qualifying leaseholders in relevant buildings are protected in law from all costs associated with the remediation of unsafe cladding. For non-cladding building safety defects there are protections for leaseholders in relevant buildings with a qualifying lease.

This means that for the majority of qualifying leaseholders, their maximum cap for non-cladding remediation and interim measures is £15,000 in Greater London (or £10,000 elsewhere in England). In addition, all leaseholders in relevant buildings benefit from qualifying lease status for their principal residence.

■ Service Charges**Stephen McPartland:** [\[24906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to introduce a cap on service charges.

Lee Rowley:

I refer my Rt Hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [24536](#) on 8 May 2024.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Broadband****Sir Chris Bryant:** [\[25182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many premises were able to access a gigabit-capable broadband connection in each constituency in the period between March 2019 and March 2024.

Julia Lopez:

Constituency-level statistics detailing the percentage of premises with access to a gigabit-capable connection over this period are available from the independent website [Think Broadband.com](https://www.thinkbroadband.com).

As of March 2024, over 81% of premises across the UK are able to access a gigabit-capable connection, up from just 6% in March 2019.

■ Broadband: Suffolk Coastal**Dr Thérèse Coffey:** [\[24909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what proportion of households in Suffolk Coastal constituency had access to broadband speeds of over (a)

10 mbps and (b) 30mbps in (i) 2010 and (ii) the most recent period for which data is available.

Julia Lopez:

30 Mbps coverage: According to Thinkbroadband, as of May **2024**, almost **98% of premises** in the Suffolk Coastal constituency have access to broadband **speeds greater than 30 Mbps**. This is much higher than the **17.5%** coverage reported in **2010**.

10 Mbps coverage: According to Ofcom's Spring 2024 Connected Nations report, based on data as of **January 2024**, over **98% of premises** in the Suffolk Coastal constituency have access to broadband **speeds greater than 10 Mbps**. This is higher than the **90%** coverage reported in **June 2016**. We do not have earlier breakdown data for 10 Mbps coverage.

Gigabit coverage: According to Thinkbroadband, as of May **2024**, almost **59%** of premises in the Suffolk Coastal constituency have gigabit connectivity. This is much higher than the **1%** coverage reported in **2010**.

To extend gigabit-capable coverage further, in June 2023 we announced that a Project Gigabit contract had been awarded to the supplier CityFibre. This contract has a value of over £100 million, covering 79,500 hard-to-reach premises in Suffolk that would otherwise miss out on a gigabit-capable connection. The first connections are expected to be made this summer and we expect the contract to be completed by December 2028.

■ **Internet: Gender Based Violence**

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[25021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she plans to bring forward a code of practice regarding violence against women and girls online.

Saqib Bhatti:

The Online Safety Act (OSA) gives online user-to-user services and search service providers new safety duties. They will need to take steps to tackle illegal content and protect children. The major social media platforms – known as 'Category 1 services' in the Act – will also be required to take steps to enforce their terms of service and offer user empowerment tools. As the regulator for the OSA, Ofcom will set out steps providers can take for their different duties in codes of practice and guidance. This will include steps for content which disproportionately affects women and girls.

Ofcom will also produce guidance summarising all the measures it has recommended in its different codes of practice and guidance that will protect women and girls. This guidance will ensure it is easy for platforms to implement holistic and effective protections for women and girls, across their various OSA duties.

■ National Security Online Information Team**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[25714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which topics she has approved for sustained monitoring by the National Security Online Information Team.

Saqib Bhatti:

NSOIT remit and function is to tackle the greatest national security risks facing the UK from mis and disinformation. It is specifically tasked with looking at threats posed by foreign states, risks to elections and understanding how AI and deepfakes can be used by hostile actors to spread mis and disinformation narratives which are aimed at UK audiences. This remit is kept under regular review.

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: Food****Sir John Hayes:** [\[25634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what his Department's policy is on the procurement of (a) food and (b) drinks produced in Britain for use in its canteens and restaurants.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scotland Office does not manage any canteens or restaurants and does not procure any food or drinks for use in canteens or restaurants.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Fuels****Fabian Hamilton:** [\[24860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to help sustainable aviation fuel producers meet levels of demand from airlines.

Anthony Browne:

The Government is supporting the development of a UK SAF industry to increase the supply of SAF in the UK.

We will introduce our SAF Mandate from 2025, which will secure demand, supporting investor confidence in UK SAF projects. It will incentivise the supply of SAF through the provision of tradable certificates with a cash value.

Thirteen projects have been awarded a share of £135m through the Advanced Fuels Fund, supporting them to reach commercial scale. Once at operational scale, funded projects could produce over 700,000 tonnes of SAF yearly. We have established a UK SAF Clearing House, which helps to remove barriers to new fuels coming to market.

We are also consulting on options to provide UK SAF producers with a revenue certainty mechanism, which will help provide greater certainty of future revenue and attract investment in commercial scale SAF plants within the UK.

Kenny MacAskill:

[25077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using (a) the (i) detritus and (ii) cut offs from timber products and (b) the waste from Whisky distilling in the manufacture of sustainable aviation fuel.

Anthony Browne:

[Holding answer 14 May 2024]: Through the SAF Mandate the government will reward eligible SAF with certificates to incentivise its supply. Only SAF from waste and residue will be eligible. Wastes and residues from many industries have the potential to produce SAF. SAF developers can submit new materials to be assessed by the Department to decide if eligible. Many have already been assessed, including forestry wastes and residues from the whisky production process, from which some specific materials have already been deemed eligible.

■ **Driving Tests: Waiting Lists**

Louise Haigh:

[25659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time was in weeks for a DVSA practical driving test in (a) Great Britain, (b) England, (c) each region and (d) each driving centre in April (i) 2024, (ii) 2023 and (iii) 2022.

Guy Opperman:

The attached spreadsheet WPQ 00015074 shows the average waiting time in April 2024, 2023 and 2022 for a car practical driving test, broken down by:

- Great Britain
- England
- each region/zone
- each driving centre

Attachments:

1. [Average waiting times for practical driving tests](#) [Copy of Attachment for WPQ 00015074.xlsx]

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Fabian Hamilton:

[24859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take steps to increase the provision of fast chargers for electric vehicles.

Anthony Browne:

The Government and industry have supported the installation of over 61,000 publicly available charging devices. This is a 44% increase on last year. There are now more than 10,000 rapid charge points available.

ChargeUK members have committed to investing more than £6 billion in developing and operating charging infrastructure before 2030.

Going forward, the Government's £381 million Local EV Infrastructure Fund is already supporting local authorities to deliver tens of thousands of local chargepoints and the £70 million Rapid Charging Fund pilot will future-proof electrical capacity at strategic locations

■ M4

Kerry McCarthy: [\[25186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) South Gloucestershire Council and (b) National Highways on the delivery of M4 junction 18A.

Guy Opperman:

The Department and National Highways recognises the creation of a proposed new Junction 18A on the M4 to the northeast of Bristol as a priority for South Gloucestershire Council and other local stakeholders. I know the Department and National Highways look forward to working with South Gloucestershire Council on suitable proposals.

■ Railways: Industrial Disputes

Stephen Morgan: [\[25674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when (a) he and (b) the Minister of State for Rail last met with ASLEF to discuss industrial action.

Huw Merriman:

Negotiations must take place between the employer, which the Rail Delivery Group has done on behalf of the train operators, and the trade union over its dispute. The Government has no role in these negotiations and discussions. We remain committed to supporting the parties in the resolution of industrial action and the Secretary of State and I have previously met with all the rail unions to help facilitate discussions with the rail industry. ASLEF is the only trade union in a national level dispute, and we continue to urge them to put the industry's offer to its members so that their dispute can be settled. On 13 May I met with ASLEF. I am also due to meet the RMT on 20 May.

■ Transport: North of England

Michael Fabricant: [\[25627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his planned timetable is for (a) sharing the guidance on network north local transport fund with local authorities and (b) announcing the funding allocations for the first two years.

Huw Merriman:

The Department will provide advice for local transport authorities shortly on the scope, process and accountability framework for the new funding, to ensure that local authorities can develop delivery plans to make the most of it.

■ Transport: West Midlands**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[24933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has provided for transport projects in (a) the West Midlands and (b) Coventry in each of the last three years.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has spent £8.4 billion on transport in the West Midlands region over the last three years, improving connectivity, shortening journey times, reducing congestion, and transporting people and goods.

Figures are not available at the level of individual local authorities. However, in Coventry, recent Government investment includes;

- £27.5m Local Growth Fund towards the completed North South Rail & Coventry Station Masterplan delivering improved capacity and accessibility at the station. Opened March '22.
- West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) awarded £50m for Coventry to become the UK's first All Electric Bus City, with all buses – replaced with electric buses, plus charging infrastructure.

Coventry also stands to benefit from allocations to West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) including

- An additional £2.5m for road surfacing as part of Network North.
- £1.05bn City Regional Sustainable Transport (CRST) Settlement 5-year allocation.
- £104m for 2022-25 to deliver bus improvements through their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- £30m (March 2022) Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) funding towards hydrogen buses and infrastructure across the region.

TREASURY**■ Banking Hubs: Rural Areas****Mark Menzies:**[\[24892\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of banking hubs in helping to ensure access to banking facilities in rural communities.

Bim Afolami:

It is important that all customers, wherever they live, should have appropriate access to banking and cash services and the government monitors this situation closely.

Following recent discussions with the UK high street banks, UK Finance confirmed 225 Hubs will be announced by the end of 2024. Participating high street banks have also committed to improving Hubs by standardising the services available between firms, ensuring that customers do not require their own digital device to bank, trialling both a 'customer liaison service' and Saturday openings. The banks have agreed to keep services under review to ensure their effectiveness for all customers.

Banking Hubs are recommended by LINK and delivered by Cash Access UK, according to criteria set by industry. The Government does not intervene in these decisions. If a Hub is not available, rural communities can bank via the Post Office, which allows personal and business customers to carry out everyday banking services at 11,500 branches across the UK. The Post Office is also required to ensure that 95% of the total rural population across the UK is within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office.

■ Money Laundering: Convictions**Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[25131\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many individuals have been convicted for breaches of the Money Laundering Regulations in each of the last five years.

Nigel Huddleston:

The majority of businesses supervised by HMRC are compliant and play an important role in our financial system.

Those who fail to comply with the Money Laundering Regulations leave themselves, and the UK economy, open to attacks by criminals. HMRC takes a robust approach to non-compliance and uses a wide range of measures to tackle those who breach the regulations, including civil penalties as well as criminal prosecutions.

HMRC does not publish the data of the number of prosecutions under the Money Laundering Regulations but details of other supervisory sanctions applied can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/businesses-not-complying-with-money-laundering-regulations-in-2018-to-2019/businesses-that-have-not-complied-with-the-regulations-2023-to-2024>

■ Self-assessment: Maladministration**Luke Pollard:**[\[25577\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 8 May 2024 to Question 24560 on Self-assessment: Maladministration, how many self assessment forms for the tax year 2023-24 were sent in April 2024; and what the cost was for (a) printing and (b) postage.

Nigel Huddleston:

This information is not available in the public domain. HMRC are aware that some customers who normally file their Self Assessment (SA) tax returns online have received a paper SA. These were sent in error, and customers who were expecting to file online should continue to do so. HMRC have written to everyone affected to apologise for the confusion and to reassure them that they do not need to take any action other than to file their return, which they can still do online, by the 31st January 2025.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Equal Pay: Ethnic Groups****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[25712\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had discussions with employers on the (a) public reporting of ethnicity pay gaps and (b) inclusive early talent pipelines.

Maria Caulfield:

As part of the government's ambitious Inclusive Britain action plan, we published comprehensive guidance in April 2023 for employers on how they can measure, report on and address any unfair ethnicity pay gaps within their workforce. We have engaged with employers and representative bodies in both developing and promoting the new guidance.

We have also worked with employers to deliver other relevant actions in Inclusive Britain including:

- Updated guidance for employers on positive action in the workplace, published last April, on how to widen opportunities in a way that is consistent with equalities legislation.
- The report by the independent Inclusion at Work Panel, published on 20 March, on how to achieve fairness and inclusion in the workplace.
- Introducing a voluntary in-work progression offer for low paid Universal Credit claimants, a disproportionate number of whom are from an ethnic minority background.
- Measures to increase the number of young ethnic minorities in apprenticeships.

■ Gender Based Violence**Theresa Villiers:**[\[902870\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on tackling gender-based violence in other countries.

Kemi Badenoch:

The department works closely with the Foreign Secretary on many issues, including tackling violence against women and girls in other countries.

The UK is a global leader on action to address conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and has committed £60m since the launch of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative(PSVI) in 2012.

We have also put forward the first ever UK nomination to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Professor Shazia Choudhry, whose academic work focuses on violence against women and girls.

Women: Business**Caroline Ansell:**[\[902874\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help increase the number of female-led businesses.

Kemi Badenoch:

In March 2024, the government announced the launch of the Invest in Women Taskforce. Its mission is to make the UK the best place in the world to be a female founder. Since its launch, the Taskforce members have been working with the private sector to begin raising its fund for female founders. This seeks to increase the proportion of investment going to all-female founder teams – which has been stuck at 2% for the past decade.

Women: Employment**Christine Jardine:**[\[902873\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Government support for women experiencing misogyny in the workplace.

Maria Caulfield:

Misogyny is unacceptable in any workplace.

This Government has committed to protect workers from misogyny through a robust legal framework, we made that clear in our response to the Women and Equalities Committee's Misogyny in Music report, published in April.

We also supported the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 which received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023. This will strengthen protections for employees against workplace sexual harassment.

Working Hours: Gender**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[902872\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of a four-day working week on gender equality.

Maria Caulfield:

The government routinely considers the implications of evidence from a range of sources when assessing policies on working practices. The government has no plans to implement a four-day week but has recently introduced the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.

The Act makes changes to the right to request flexible working to better support employers and employees to agree flexible working arrangements that work for everyone.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Carer's Allowance: Employment**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of Carer's Allowance are in paid employment.

Mims Davies:

Data from the Family and Resources Survey 2022/23 shows there were 150,355 households in receipt of Carer's Allowance in the UK that also had someone in paid employment. This data is available on Stat-Xplore [here](#).

■ Children: Maintenance

Ashley Dalton: [\[25127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many child maintenance cases were moved from collect and pay to direct pay in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

Ashley Dalton: [\[25128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many child maintenance cases were moved from collect and pay to direct pay where the child maintenance service was aware of domestic abuse in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

Ashley Dalton: [\[25129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what his planned timetable is for laying secondary legislation to implement the Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act 2023.

Paul Maynard:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) operates 2 service types: Direct Pay and Collect and Pay. In Direct Pay cases, the CMS provides a maintenance calculation and issues a payment schedule, but the payments are arranged privately between the receiving parent and the paying parent. In Collect and Pay, the CMS collects the maintenance from the paying parent and transfers it to the receiving parent.

Since Direct Pay was introduced, the CMS has made several improvements to how the service operates. The importance of full and on-time maintenance payments is

emphasised in all cases and the CMS will notify parents at the start of every case, and at each annual review, what to do if their arrangement breaks down.

The CMS also sends SMS messages to all receiving parents using the Direct Pay service to remind them to contact the CMS if their maintenance arrangement is not working. My Child Maintenance Case, which is a parent's online service account with the CMS, also reminds parents to check their bank account for receipt of direct payments and encourages digital reporting of any missed payments.

If a Direct Pay arrangement breaks down, the case will be moved to Collect and Pay where the CMS collects the money from the paying parent and transfers it to the receiving parent. Further enforcement action can also be taken if parents continue to fail to pay.

Government takes the issue of domestic abuse extremely seriously and recognises that domestic abuse often continues and can worsen after separation, which can have detrimental impacts on the welfare of children.

The CMS has procedures in place to ensure victims and survivors of domestic abuse can use its services safely. Of 29,000 new applications to the CMS in the quarter ending December 2023, 56% of applications were exempt from the application fee, largely on the grounds of domestic abuse.

The CMS recognises that domestic abuse can take many forms including physical, emotional, or financial abuse, violent or threatening behaviour and coercive control and has procedures in place to ensure domestic abuse cases are handled appropriately.

For parents using the Direct Pay service, the CMS can act as an intermediary to facilitate the exchange of bank details to help ensure there is no unwanted contact between parents and can provide information on how to set up bank accounts with a centralised sort code, which reduces the risk of a parent's location being traced. CMS caseworkers will also signpost, where needed, to suitable domestic abuse organisations, if domestic abuse is raised or suspected.

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the CMS. Latest statistics are available up to [December 2023](#), with statistics for the number of child maintenance cases moved from collect and pay to direct pay shown in 'Table 4: Service Type Changes, Great Britain, October 2015 to December 2023' of the [National tables](#).

The information requested in relation to how many child maintenance cases were moved from collect and pay to direct pay where the child maintenance service was aware of domestic abuse in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023, is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 28 June 2023 following a Private Members Bill that had full Government support. We announced a consultation early 2024 to seek views on how the CMS collects and transfers maintenance.

On 8 May, the Department published a public consultation, Improving the Collection and Transfer of Payments, which follows the Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act 2023 receiving Royal Assent. The consultation proposes to remove the Direct Pay service completely, which will go further than the measures set out in the Act and provide the same level of protection for all parents.

The consultation closes 31st July 2024. The Government will then carefully consider the feedback and a response will be published.

To find out more information go to: Child Maintenance: Improving the collection and transfer of payments - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Correspondence

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the address to which to submit pre-action correspondence to his Department changed from DWP Legal Advisers to the Treasury Solicitor in January 2024.

Paul Maynard:

The relevant pre-action protocol continues to require, as it did before 1st January 2024, that pre-action correspondence be sent to the place where the decision was made, i.e. to the address on the letter notifying the decision. Once a claim is issued, service should be on the Treasury Solicitor.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department has taken to communicate to benefits advisers the change of address to which to submit pre-action correspondence relating to his Department.

Paul Maynard:

The relevant pre-action protocol continues to require, as it did before 1st January 2024, that pre-action correspondence be sent to the place where the decision was made. There has therefore been no change to communicate.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pieces of pre-action correspondence relating to his Department have been (a) received by the Treasury Solicitor and (b) responded to since 1 January 2024.

Paul Maynard:

The Department responds to a range of correspondence badged by the sender as “pre-action”, sent into a variety of offices across DWP. These are handled on a case-by-case basis. It does not currently collect data that can answer the question asked, and nor is there a requirement for it to do so.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time is between pre-action correspondence relating to his Department being (a) received by the Treasury Solicitor and (b) responded to in the latest period for which data is available.

Paul Maynard:

The Department responds to a range of correspondence badged by the sender as “pre-action”, sent into a variety of offices across DWP. These are handled on a case-by-case basis. It does not currently collect data that can answer the question asked, and nor is there a requirement for it to do so.

Department for Work and Pensions: Equality**Neil O'Brien:** [\[25560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2024 to Question 17024 on Department for Work and Pensions: Equality, how many people work in the (a) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing and (b) specialist equalities team.

Paul Maynard:

In the EDIW team, part of the wider HR function on the 1st May there were 25 people.

As of the 13th May 2024, there is a headcount of 29 people on the Customer Accessibility, Standards and Assurance (CASA) team driving forward changes as part of continuous improvement. The team is developing an assurance framework and a clear set of standards to support the change process in the department.

Disability**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[25033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to recommendation 90(a) of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' Report on follow-up to the inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, advance unedited version published on 22 March 2024, whether he is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to (a) consult (i) disabled people and (ii) representative organisations on the national disability strategy and (b) otherwise involve those stakeholders with the strategy.

Mims Davies:

The National Disability Strategy (NDS) was published in 2021, bringing together an ambitious and comprehensive set of commitments across Government and setting out the long term vision to improve disabled people's daily lives.

The Cabinet Office Disability Unit (DU) continues to engage with disabled people and their representative organisations to deliver the outstanding commitments in the NDS and now also the Actions in the Disability Action Plan, via its systematic stakeholder engagement framework. The framework has been designed to ensure that voices across the disability sector (disabled people and their communities, disabled people-

led organisations, charities, and business leaders working on accessibility and inclusion) are meaningfully considered throughout the development, implementation and evaluation of the DU's work, from the earliest possible opportunity.

■ Employment Schemes

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress his Department has made on the roll out of the Back to Work Plan.

Jo Churchill:

We are making good progress delivering the Back to Work plan. For example, in April we published a call for evidence on fit note reform and on May 7th announced the 15 areas that will pilot our new WorkWell service.

■ Employment Schemes: Greater London

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of devolving employment support services to (a) London boroughs and (b) the Mayor of London.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the English Devolution Trailblazer deeper devolution deals, the Department of Work and Pensions have agreed with Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities to test a new approach to design of future Contracted Employment Programmes including co-design and a delegated delivery model, aligned with the Combined Authorities geographical footprint.

We will evaluate the impacts and outcomes of this new approach to further understand the opportunities and risks involved, before considering the Department's approach to future contracted employment programmes.

Full details of the 'Trailblazer' deals can be found here:

[Greater Manchester Combined Authority Trailblazer deeper devolution deal - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[West Midlands Combined Authority: "Trailblazer" deeper devolution deal - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Employment: Ethnic Groups

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[25713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the prevalence of discrimination towards young ethnic minorities seeking employment.

Mims Davies:

Employment statistics show the ethnic minority employment rate at 68%, up 9.2 percentage points on the same quarter in 2010, with 5.4m people from an ethnic minority background in employment which is a record high.

The Department supports people to move into employment by providing access to a range of mainstream services and bespoke programmes that are designed to be flexible to individual needs. We also take targeted action where there is a high ethnic minority employment gap and work with partners, employers, and specific sectors to improve opportunities for all.

The Youth Offer provides individually tailored Work Coach support to young people aged 16 to 24 who are claiming Universal Credit. This support includes the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Employability Coaches for young people with additional barriers to finding work, and Youth Hubs across Great Britain. This was expanded in 2023 to include additional young people on Universal Credit not currently searching for work, including young parents and carers.

In April 2023, the Government's Equality Hub published updated [guidance](#) for employers on how to use the positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010. This is to help people who share a particular protected characteristic overcome barriers and to level the playing field.

■ Employment: Young People**Marsha De Cordova:****[25329]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to support (a) young disabled Londoners and (b) young black Londoners into employment.

Mims Davies:

Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group so access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time, is key.

The Government therefore has an ambitious programme of initiatives to support disabled people and people with health to start, stay and succeed in work. These include: Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies; the Work and Health Programme; Access to Work grants; Disability Confident; a digital information service for employers; Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres; increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres; increasing access to Occupational Health; and expanding the Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care programme.

Building on this, we announced significant additional investment during the 2023 fiscal events. Alongside the delivery of our existing initiatives, we are now focused on delivering this package which includes: introducing Employment Advisors into MSK services; a new voluntary employment programme called Universal Support (US) which will provide wraparound support to 100,000 people a year once fully rolled out; WorkWell in approximately 15 pilot areas to provide light touch work and health support; exploring new ways of providing individuals receiving a fit note with timely access to support through our call for evidence launched on 19 April 2024; and

establishing an expert group to advise on a voluntary national baseline for Occupational Health provision.

The Department for Work and Pensions Jobcentre youth offer provides a range of options to those seeking employment, including young Black Londoners. Additionally, we are taking targeted action where there is a high ethnic minority employment gap. The DWP Youth Offer provides individually tailored work coach support to young people aged 16 to 24 who are in the Universal Credit Intensive Work Search group. This includes the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Employability Coaches for young people with additional barriers to finding work, and Youth Hubs across Great Britain.

■ Job Creation: West Midlands

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[24935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to support job creation schemes in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry and (c) the West Midlands.

Jo Churchill:

DWP supports people across the country to move into and progress in work and is committed to reducing economic inactivity. We want everyone who can work to be able to find a job, progress, and thrive in the labour market, whoever they are and wherever they live. The Department delivers comprehensive employment support including through face-to-face time with work coaches in our Jobcentres and via more intensive contracted employment programmes.

Our Employment Advisor team are working with employers to generate employment opportunities for all residents across Coventry. By working with local stakeholders such as Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Coventry City Council and WMCA, we are encouraging employers to think more widely in their workforce planning activity through devolution projects such as the Job Rotation Pilot and other local initiatives to help employers grow their businesses whilst recruiting through a more inclusive approach for example through Disability Confident.

Recent recruitment campaigns across the retail sector include B&M and Iceland. Particular focus is ongoing with the logistics sector including Halfords, Menzies, Co-op and Tesco.

■ Medical Certificates: Mental Illness

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[25187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of plans to reform the fit note process on people with mental ill health.

Mims Davies:

Good work is good for health. We know that good work can positively impact people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. We also know that tailored work and health

support can help break down the kinds of barriers that can make finding and staying in a job more difficult for those with mental health conditions.

In 2023, 24% of fit note episodes had a known diagnosis and of those, 33% are for mental and behavioural disorders. We are reforming the fit note process so that it starts with an assessment of what someone can do with the right support, rather than what they cannot. This builds on the £795m investment we made at Autumn Statement for additional funding over five years for mental health services to help support people with mental ill health to gain and/or retain employment, as well as our successful Employment Advisers in NHS Talking Therapies programme, which is now being rolled out across England.

Our ambition is to bring together preventative healthcare and employment systems to support people who are at risk of falling out of work or who have already fallen out of work due to ill health. We continue to work with stakeholders including mental health organisations and those with lived experience, to co-develop this policy, this includes seeking insight and evidence via a public [call for evidence](#).

This work is an essential part of the Government's ambition to improve health outcomes, and help people get access to the support they need to return to, remain and thrive in work.

■ Pensioners: Widowed People

Damien Moore: [\[25543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support widowed pensioners to manage their finances.

Damien Moore: [\[25544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support pensioners to manage their finances.

Paul Maynard:

The Government recognises that people face important decisions about how to use their pension savings and ensures everyone has access to free, impartial pension guidance through the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS).

Pension Wise, a service delivered through MaPS' MoneyHelper brand, can help anyone over 50 understand their options for accessing their Defined Contribution pension pots. After entering retirement, ongoing guidance is available through the MoneyHelper website, hotline and webchat. This ranges from budget planners and retirement-specific benefits, to long-term care and debt support.

MoneyHelper also provides support for people who need help with their money matters when someone has died, including specific guidance on pensions and bereavement. This includes how to register a power of attorney.

Furthermore, in November 2023 the Government, in the response to the 'Helping savers understand their pension choices: supporting individuals at the point of access' consultation, signalled its intent to place duties on all trustees of occupational

pension schemes to offer a decumulation service to support their members with decisions around accessing their pension savings. This includes offering a range of products at an appropriate quality and price.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were waiting for a decision on their PIP application on 1 April 2024.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were waiting for a decision on their PIP application on 1 March 2024.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were waiting for a decision on their PIP application on 1 January 2024.

Mims Davies:

The number of outstanding PIP cases on the 1 of January 2024 was 263,000. Claims are considered outstanding when the claim has been registered but a decision has not yet been made by a Case Manager on whether to award PIP.

Data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) decisions after January 2024 cannot be shared as the information is intended for publication at a future date. In line with National Statistics protocols, the department does not make any indication of the statistics public ahead of release.

Notes:

- Source: PIP Atomic Data Store;
- Figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000;
- Figures are for England and Wales only;
- These figures include claims made under normal rules and special rules for terminal illness and include both new claims and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to PIP reassessment claims.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure accurate understanding among (a) claimants and (b) benefits advisers of Personal Independence Payment in relation to being a benefit linked with the extra costs of disability not employment status.

Mims Davies:

DWP raise awareness and understanding of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), for those who may be entitled, using a variety of methods:

Comprehensive information is provided on Gov.UK, and it is made clear that you can claim PIP even if you're working, have savings or are getting most other benefits.

Meetings take place with various Disability Groups and external stakeholders where PIP is often a topic for discussion. Any presentations or Q&A sessions make it clear that PIP is there to support anyone who may be impacted by a disability or health condition and is not restricted by employment status.

We have also produced a series of useful video guides on PIP, hosted on YouTube. Links to the videos can also be accessed via Gov.UK.

The department has taken steps to raise awareness of PIP amongst Work Coaches, who frequently interact with claimants who have health conditions and disabilities. As part of their routine induction and training Work Coaches are provided with an overview of PIP. They are encouraged to signpost potential applicants to information on Gov.UK rather than discuss eligibility criteria.

For DWP colleagues working on other benefits the approach is the same. If anyone enquires about PIP they are signposted to information on Gov.UK.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[25040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of PIP to cover the extra costs incurred by people with a disability.

Mims Davies:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on the 14th of May to PQ[24769](#).

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is designed to help with the extra costs arising from long-term ill health and disability and is paid regardless of income and irrespective of whether someone is in work. PIP can also be paid in addition to other benefits the individual may receive, for example Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance, and can provide a passport to additional support through premiums or additional amounts.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Cancer

Chloe Smith:

[\[24886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the impact of proposed changes to Personal Independence Payment on people living with (a) cancer and (b) the long-term side effects of cancer treatment.

Mims Davies:

Modernising Support for Independent Living: The Health and Disability Green Paper looks at different options to reshape the current welfare system so that we can provide better targeted support to those who need it most. We are considering these options through our 12-week consultation which was published on Monday 29 April and will close on Monday 22 July at 11:59pm. Any possible impacts on people living with cancer and people living with the long-term side effects of cancer treatment will be considered as necessary.

There will be no immediate changes to PIP, or to health assessments. All scheduled PIP assessments and payments will proceed as normal, and claimants should continue to engage as usual and provide any necessary information or updates regarding their circumstances.

We encourage everyone to respond to the consultation which can be found [here](#), so that we are able to hear from as many disabled people, people with health conditions, their representatives, and local stakeholders as possible on these important issues.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Carers

Caroline Lucas: [\[24888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of unpaid carers receiving Carer's Allowance are caring for someone who receives Personal Independence Payment.

Caroline Lucas: [\[24889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many unpaid carers receiving Carer's Allowance are in receipt of Personal Independence Payment.

Mims Davies:

The latest readily available statistics from November 2023 show 145,156 unpaid carers were claiming Carer's Allowance in England and Wales were also receiving Personal Independence Payment. This data is available on Stat X-plore [here](#).

These statistics show 486,123 people in receipt of Carer's Allowance in England and Wales were caring for someone in receipt of a Personal Independence Payment, which was 54% of the Carer's Allowance in receipt caseload.

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

Caroline Lucas: [\[24890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of his proposed changes to the Personal Independence Payment on unpaid carers and their eligibility to receive Carer's Allowance.

Mims Davies:

Modernising Support for Independent Living: The Health and Disability Green Paper looks at different options to reshape the current welfare system so that we can provide better targeted support to those who need it most. We are considering these options through our 12-week consultation which was published on Monday 29 April and will close on Monday 22 July at 11:59pm. Any possible impacts on unpaid carers and their eligibility to receive Carer's Allowance will be considered as necessary.

There will be no immediate changes to PIP, or to health assessments. All scheduled PIP assessments and payments will proceed as normal, and claimants should

continue to engage as usual and provide any necessary information or updates regarding their circumstances.

We encourage everyone to respond to the consultation which can be found [here](#), so that we are able to hear from as many disabled people, people with health conditions, their representatives, and local stakeholders as possible on these important issues.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Employment

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Personal Independence Payment claimants are in a form of paid employment.

Mims Davies:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on the 2nd of May to PQ [24056](#).

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of people receiving the personal independence payment are in paid employment.

Mims Davies:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on the 2nd of May to PQ [24056](#).

■ Poverty

Alison McGovern: [\[24903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to update the baseline year for absolute poverty.

Jo Churchill:

There are currently no plans to update the baseline for absolute poverty.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress his Department has made on the Health Transformation Programme.

Mims Davies:

The Government is committed to continuously improving support for disabled people and people with health conditions, including through the Health Transformation Programme which is modernising Health and Disability benefit services to create a more efficient service and a improved claimant experience, reducing the time it takes to process a claim and improving trust in our services and decisions.

The department has started to publish HTP management information (MI). On 19 December 2023, the department published the first in a new series; publication of this MI will continue quarterly in line with the PIP Official Statistics release schedule. This can be found [here](#).

The Programme published its Evaluation Strategy on 25th May 2023 [here](#).

The National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee published reports in 2023 on the Health Transformation Programme.

[Transforming health assessments for disability benefits \(nao.org.uk\)](https://nao.org.uk)

[Revising health assessments for disability benefits \(parliament.uk\)](https://parliament.uk)

■ Unemployment: Young People

Marsha De Cordova: [\[25328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of youth unemployment (a) in London and (b) per London borough in each of the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

The information requested on youth unemployment is published and available [here](#).

The small sample sizes of the boroughs means that the latest survey-based trends in youth ILO unemployment across the year are not robust. However, Claimant Count administrative data for 16-24 year olds for London and all the boroughs for the last twelve months is available.

■ Universal Credit: Employment

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people in the Universal Credit (Limited Capability for Work) group are in a form of paid employment.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[24972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Universal Credit claimants in the limited capability for work and work related activity group are in some form of paid employment as of May 2024.

Jo Churchill:

The latest available statistics are shown in the following table.

Number of people on Universal Credit Health caseload on 14 December 2023 by stage, and those with employment earnings in the UC assessment period

STAGE OF UC HEALTH	PEOPLE ON UC HEALTH	WITH EMPLOYMENT EARNINGS	PERCENTAGE WITH EMPLOYMENT EARNINGS
Live fit note (Pre-wca)	271,675	49,541	18%
Limited capability for work	347,472	47,486	14%

STAGE OF UC HEALTH	PEOPLE ON UC HEALTH	WITH EMPLOYMENT EARNINGS	PERCENTAGE WITH EMPLOYMENT EARNINGS
Limited capability for work and work-related activity	1,355,441	84,907	6%
Total	1,974,587	181,931	9%

Source: [Stat-Xplore](#) and DWP People on UC and UC Health Caseload datasets

Notes:

1. Statistical disclosure control has been applied to avoid the release of confidential data. Totals may not sum due to the disclosure control applied.
2. People on UC health are a count of the number of people on UC Health Caseload on the second Thursday of the month.
3. An individual on Universal Credit on the second Thursday of the month will be recorded as in employment if they have employment earnings within the Universal Credit assessment period which spans the count date. They may not be in employment precisely on the count date. Employment for this measure is defined as being employed as an employee. It does not include self-employment.
4. These figures are derived from data underlying published information, but this analysis has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard and so should be treated with caution.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ **Solar and protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land**
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Claire Coutinho):
[\[HCWS466\]](#)

Food security is an essential part of national security. This Government is fully committed to delivering robust UK food security and recognises its paramount importance to our national security. This is reflected in our commitment to maintain the current level of food we produce domestically. Heightened geopolitical risk has brought this into sharper focus and we think it is more important than ever that our best agricultural land is protected and our food production prioritised.

Similarly, we have seen our energy security threatened following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine with the government spending over £40bn to pay up to a half of people's energy bills. We are combatting this by racing ahead with deployment of renewable energy; nearly half of our electricity today is produced from renewables which is up from only 7 percent in 2010. Solar power is a key part of the Government's strategy for energy security, net zero and clean growth. This position was reinforced in the new National Policy Statement (EN-3), published in January this year, which stated that "*Solar also has an important role in delivering the government's goals for greater energy independence and the British Energy Security Strategy states that government expects a five-fold increase in combined ground and rooftop solar deployment by 2035 (up to 70GW)*".

Government recognises that, in some instances, solar projects can affect local environments which may lead to unacceptable impacts for some local communities. The planning system is designed to balance these considerations against the need to deliver a secure, clean, green energy system for the future.

Protecting the Best Agricultural Land

The new National Policy Statement that we published in January makes clear that "*applicants should, where possible, utilise suitable previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land. Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land avoiding the use of "Best and Most Versatile" agricultural land where possible.*" The Government in Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan clarified that while "*solar and farming can be complementary*" developers must also have "*consideration for ongoing food production.*"

Nevertheless, in balancing both the need for energy security and food production, we are concerned that as large solar developments proceed at pace, more of our 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) land could be used for solar PV instead of food production. I am

therefore setting out further detail about how our policy on balancing these competing priorities is intended to be applied.

As is outlined in the National Policy Statement, the starting position for solar PV developers in taking forward Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects is that applicants should seek to minimise impacts on the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) and preferably use land in areas of poorer quality.

The National Policy Statement can also be a material consideration in determining applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and is broadly consistent with the approach to agricultural land in the National Planning Policy Framework which states that “ *Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. The availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside the other policies in this Framework, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development* ”.

This means that due weight needs to be given to the proposed use of Best and Most Versatile land when considering whether planning consent should be granted for solar developments. For all applicants the highest quality agricultural land is least appropriate for solar development and as the land grade increases, there is a greater onus on developers to show that the use of higher quality land is necessary. Applicants for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects should avoid the use of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land where possible.

For Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, including those already in the system, the National Policy Statement and from today this WMS are likely to be important and relevant considerations in the decision making process. The Government will keep under review the evidence base underpinning the National Policy Statement published in January.

Addressing Cumulative Impacts

While the total area of agricultural land used for solar is very small, and even in the most ambitious scenarios would still occupy less than 1% of the UK's agricultural land, we are increasingly seeing geographical clustering of proposed solar developments in some rural areas, such as in Lincolnshire. When considering whether planning consent should be granted for solar development it is important to consider not just the impacts of individual proposals, but also whether there are cumulative impacts where several proposals come forward in the same locality.

In parallel, my Department will be expanding the Renewable Energy Planning Database to include additional information on the types of agricultural land used by existing solar projects and those in the planning pipeline. This will enable us to carefully monitor the use of land by renewable projects in all regions of the UK.

Improving Soil Surveys

The Government has heard concerns about the perceived inaccuracy and unfairness of soil surveys undertaken as part of the planning process for solar development. The Government will address this by supporting independent certification by an appropriate certifying body, subject to relevant business case approval, to ensure Agricultural Land Classification Soil Surveys are of a high standard, requiring surveyors to demonstrate meeting an agreed minimum requirement of training/experience. We will also seek to ensure consistency in how data is recorded and presented, so that reports on agricultural land classification are consistent, authoritative and objective.

Supporting solar on rooftops and brownfield sites

Finally, I want to highlight that increasing the deployment of rooftop solar remains a priority for Government. The installation of qualifying energy-saving materials, including solar panels, in residential accommodation and buildings used solely for a relevant charitable purpose currently benefits from a zero rate of VAT until March 2027, at which point they will qualify for the reduced rate of VAT at 5%. At the Autumn Statement 2023, the 100% First Year Allowance for main rate plant and machinery assets, and the 50% First Year Allowance for special rate plant and machinery assets, including solar panels, were made permanent. These measures complement the business rates exemption for eligible plant and machinery used in renewable energy generation and storage introduced in 2022.

This year, UK Government launched a new package of measures to support British farming. Under the second round of the Improving Farm Productivity grant, between £15-25 million was made available for the installation of rooftop solar and other equipment to help farms reduce fossil fuel use, improve their energy resilience, and accelerate progress towards net zero.

We also unlocked a key barrier for large-scale commercial rooftop solar, including on farm buildings, through changes to permitted development rights (PDRs) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Concurrently, we introduced a new PDR allowing for the installation of solar canopies in non-domestic car parks.

We will shortly be delivering the Future Homes Standard which will set the energy performance of new homes and is due to come into force in 2025. Our consultation proposals setting out the proposed technical detail of the standard demonstrated the effectiveness of rooftop solar in reducing energy bills for consumers with solar panels. For non-domestic buildings, the Future Buildings Standard consultation proposed significant amounts of rooftop solar which is also expected to drive the use of solar power on warehouses and commercial buildings.

Additionally, social housing and the public sector both offer excellent opportunities to fit solar on homes and reduce bills. As such, we plan to explore further how to ensure that social landlords can provide solar to their tenants, and work across government to help schools, colleges, hospitals, and other buildings to supply themselves with solar power.

Further information on these initiatives will be set out in the upcoming joint government/industry Solar Roadmap.

I am making this statement with support from my Rt. Hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Sudan and El Fasher Update

Deputy Foreign Secretary and Minister of State (Development and Africa) (Mr Andrew Mitchell):

[\[HCWS465\]](#)

A year ago, the Sudanese people were plunged into a brutal and needless conflict. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continue to inflict terrible violence and harrowing suffering on their people.

The conflict in Sudan has resulted in a country-wide humanitarian catastrophe. 24.8 million people, 51% of the population, are in desperate need of assistance. Nearly five million people are at risk of famine with estimates that we could see half a million to one million excess deaths. The crushing food insecurity that millions of Sudanese people are facing continues to be exacerbated by access constraints imposed by the warring parties.

Nearly nine million people have been displaced. In a visit to Chad at the end of March, I saw first-hand the harrowing consequences of the conflict, not only for those who have fled to escape violence and hunger, but also on neighbouring states who have so admirably stepped up to help those in desperation, feeling across the border seeking a safe haven.

El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, is currently the centre of escalating tensions between the RSF, SAF and armed groups. Whilst the RSF have not yet launched their widely-expected offensive against the city, there have already been devastating violence and dire humanitarian impacts. As highlighted in a recent report by Human Rights Watch, we have already seen from events in El Geneina last year the terrible violence that the RSF and their allies inflict.

Villages surrounding the city have been razed to the ground and continued airstrikes have resulted in civilian areas being caught in the crossfire. Last weekend, two children and a number of caregivers were killed after a bomb fell near the Medecins Sans Frontieres-supported Babiker Nahar Paediatric Hospital, in El Fasher. Reports have suggested that ethnically-motivated attacks by the RSF and allied militia against non-Arab communities are taking place in villages west of El Fasher. The UK-funded Centre for Information Resilience has also verified fire damage to 32 settlements around El Fasher in April. Humanitarian partners have raised serious concerns about the imminent threat to the civilian population in El Fasher, which includes more than 1 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); consisting of civilians displaced by the conflict in Darfur 20 years ago, and those who have fled their homes in the last nine months from other parts of Darfur. The city is now entirely cut off from water, food and fuel supplies.

In April, the UK led negotiations at the UN Security Council (UNSC) to deliver a press statement, urging the warring parties to de-escalate in El Fasher and comply with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. We also called for a closed UNSC consultation on the situation. On 2 May, I publicly called upon the RSF and SAF to protect civilians and spare Sudan from their wilful destruction and carnage. The UK will continue to do all we can to bring a sustainable end to the conflict. This is the only way that the abhorrent violence currently taking place in El Fasher, as well as across Sudan, will stop.

Indeed, we continue to pursue all diplomatic avenues to achieve a permanent ceasefire, and we welcome plans to restart talks in Jeddah, jointly led by the US and Saudi Arabia. We urge the region to refrain from actions that prolong the conflict, and to engage positively with peace talks.

As part of our diplomatic efforts to achieve peace in Sudan, we speak to all parties. We have used our exchanges with the warring parties strongly to condemn atrocities they have perpetrated and to demand that their leadership makes every effort to prevent further atrocities in territories they have captured or threatened to capture; as well as to press the need for improved humanitarian access.

On 15 April, I announced a package of sanctions designations, freezing the assets of three commercial entities linked to the warring parties. We will continue to explore other levers to disrupt and constrain the sources of funding that both warring parties are using to sustain themselves.

At the Security Council in March, where the UK is penholder on Sudan, we used the opportunity of the OCHA White Note on the risk of conflict-induced famine to highlight its warning that the obstruction of humanitarian access is resulting in the starvation of the Sudanese people. Using starvation as a method of warfare is prohibited by international humanitarian law.

Our ongoing partnership with the Centre for Information Resilience is also vital in documenting reported atrocities, and preserving and sharing evidence, so that those who are alleged to have committed these horrific acts can be brought to justice. We are committed to ensuring there is no impunity for human rights abusers, no matter what it may take to hold them to account.

On 15 April, my Noble Friend Lord Benyon attended the international humanitarian conference for Sudan in Paris where donors pledged 2.03 billion euros to Sudan. To meet the growing need in Sudan, UK aid to the country, including Darfur, will nearly double to £89 million this financial year.

Finally, we will keep working to ensure that the voices of Sudanese civilians are heard: whether that is the survivors and witnesses of human rights abuses; the brave Sudanese NGOs, women's rights organisations and activists helping their communities; or those trying to develop a political vision for Sudan's future. UK technical and diplomatic support has been instrumental in the establishment of the anti-war, pro-democracy Taqaddum coalition, led by former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, and we will continue to support Taqaddum's development.

One year on from the beginning of the conflict, we must maintain international pressure on the warring parties to stop this senseless war, for troops to return to their barracks and for civil society to have the space to pursue a political track to return peace and build security through all parts of Sudan.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Update of Gamete Donation Regulations

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Women) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy) (Maria Caulfield): [\[HCWS467\]](#)

In a parliamentary debate on 23 October 2023, I announced the Government's intention to update the UK's gamete donation regulations. The first change would allow people living with HIV with an undetectable viral load to donate their gametes. The second change would update the definition of partner donation to include female same-sex couples, therefore reducing costs for those undergoing reciprocal IVF.

Today, we will lay the necessary regulations to make these changes, which will benefit patients across the whole of the UK, supported by scientific advice from the Advisory Committee for the Safety of Blood Tissues & Organs.

Firstly, this will allow people living with HIV to donate their gametes to family, friends and known recipients provided that:

- They have a sustained viral load of less than 200 per millilitre ('undetectable viral load');
- They have been receiving antiretroviral treatment for at least 6 months prior to donation; and
- The recipient knows of their HIV diagnosis and provides informed consent.

These changes will benefit hundreds of couples, including same-sex male couples using a surrogate where one or both have HIV, and those seeking known donation from a friend or relative with HIV. This legislative update reflects the advances made in preventing HIV transmission through fertility treatments and is a significant step in further reducing stigma around HIV.

Prior to donation, people living with HIV will undergo a series of tests to ensure their gametes are safe to donate. There is currently a requirement for a post donation HIV test for sperm donations, which is not clinically necessary due to the pre-donation tests. We were unable to rectify this issue in this Statutory Instrument without causing significant delays. Our priority is enabling people living with HIV to donate their gametes and start a family, and I will look to bring further legislative changes to remove this requirement in due course.

Secondly, the regulations will include an updated definition of partner donation. Under current rules, female same-sex couples hoping to conceive via reciprocal IVF must first

go through screening for additional infectious diseases and genetic diseases, which can cost over £1,000. Heterosexual couples are not required to undergo this testing.

This legislation will seek to rectify this disparity in testing requirements and therefore lower costs for treatment. Reciprocal IVF is an increasingly popular way for female couples to have families and this change will help many more couples to afford this treatment.

We hope that these changes will help to create a fairer health system by removing barriers to accessing fertility care, in line with our commitments in the Women's Health Strategy.