



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 May 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 16 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

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ War Crimes: Gaza

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[25822\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether she has written to the Prime Minister on Gaza and war crimes since 1 April 2024.

**Victoria Prentis:**

I cannot answer your question as to do so would be in breach of the Law Officers' Convention.

Paragraph 2.13 of the Ministerial Code clearly states that the fact that the Law Officers have advised or have not advised and the content of their advice must not be disclosed outside Government without their authority.

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Export Credit Guarantees

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[25789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 May 2024 to Question 24406 on Export Credit Guarantees, whether (a) a Minister or (b) an official in her Department has unilaterally proposed a 100% guarantee in advance of negotiations with a company.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department of Business and Trade has not unilaterally proposed a 100% guarantee to any company.

#### ■ Horizon IT System: Compensation

**Andrew Bridgen:** [\[25237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what her planned timetable is for providing compensation to sub-postmasters who (a) were wrongfully prosecuted using evidence from the Horizon IT system and (b) have already had their wrongful convictions overturned.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Financial redress for those postmasters whose convictions have been overturned by the courts is managed by the Post Office. As of 24 April 2024, out of the 56 full claims received, offers have been made on 47, with 40 offers accepted.

We encourage those postmasters with overturned convictions who have not yet submitted a claim to do so as soon as possible.

## ■ Royal Mail: Post Office

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[25788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will publish the (a) Master Services Agreement and (b) Mails Distribution Agreement between Royal Mail Group and Post Office Limited signed in January 2012.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

It would not be appropriate for the Government to publish the agreed terms. The Master Services Agreement and Mails Distribution Agreement are commercial agreements that were negotiated by Royal Mail (RM) and Post Office Limited (POL), at arm's length, designed to govern the ongoing relationship between the businesses.

The Master Services Agreement was a transitional document dealing with the separation of POL and RM ensuring POL retained access to certain key functions while it developed its own standalone capabilities appropriate to an independent business.

The Mails Distribution Agreement governs the retail mail and parcels services offered by POL on behalf of RM, including commercial terms.

## ■ Trading Standards

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[25443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will take steps to ensure that Trading Standards have adequate resources to investigate all reports it is provided on the alleged operation of rogue traders.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales are independent from central government and are responsible for determining their resourcing priorities in accordance with the needs of the local electorate.

The majority of Government funding is not ringfenced in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities including those relating to rogue traders.

The Department for Business and Trade provides additional funding through the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) and Trading Standards Scotland (TSS) to prioritise and coordinate national and regional consumer enforcement in England, Wales and Scotland respectively.

**CABINET OFFICE**■ **Cabinet Office: Contracts**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[25808\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Minister without Portfolio's article of 12 May 2024 in The Sunday Telegraph, when his Department is expected to terminate its contract with High Fliers Ltd., procurement reference CSR/187; and whether a notice period will be required under the provisions of Clause 11.3 of that contract.

**John Glen:**

There should be no external EDI spend in the Civil Service unless cleared and authorised by Ministers.

The contract with High Fliers Ltd. is due to expire on 31 August 2024. We do not intend to terminate it early.

■ **Stoll: Housing**

**John Healey:** [\[25749\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the (a) Minister for Veterans Affairs and (b) Minister for Trade Policy has attended any meetings with (i) Stoll Foundation and (ii) Stoll veterans on the sale of Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions and the support provided to residents during the transition period.

**Johnny Mercer:**

I refer my Rt Hon. Friend to the reply given to his question on 8 May 2024 (PQ UIN [23983](#))

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Contracts**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[25809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Minister without Portfolio's article of 12 May 2024 in The Sunday Telegraph, when her Department expects to terminate its contract with Vercida Ltd., procurement reference 103841; and whether a notice period will be required under the provisions of that contract.

**Julia Lopez:**

DCMS's current contract with Vercida is set to expire on 1 October 2024 and continuation of the service will be considered at that point in light of the Cabinet Office guidance.



**DEFENCE****■ Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence: Data Protection**

**Richard Foord:** [\[26020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many national security data breaches were recorded (a) within his Department and (b) by armed forces personnel deployed overseas in 2023.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence is unable to disclose this information for national security reasons.

**■ Armed Forces: Recruitment**

**John Healey:** [\[25751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the contract end date is for the Armed Forces Recruitment Programme.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Service commencement date for the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme is January 2027. Following a transitional period, the contract will run for seven years with the option to extend for an additional three years.

**John Healey:** [\[25752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) original and (b) end date as of 13 May 2024 is for the Recruiting Partnership Project.

**John Healey:** [\[25753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the Recruiting Partnership Project.

**John Healey:** [\[25754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Recruiting Partnership Project has a full-time senior responsible officer.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The original end date of the Army's Recruiting Partnering Project contract with Capita was 11 March 2022 however, following an extension, the current end date is 31 March 2026. In September 2023 the Army commenced discussions with Capita to enact the option of a third-year contract extension until the commencement of the Armed Forces Recruitment Service in 2027.

The contract to 31 March 2024 has cost £886.33 million.

The Senior Responsible Officer for the Recruiting Partnering Project contract undertakes this role alongside other duties.

**■ Clive Barracks**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[24824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are based at Clive Barracks as of 3 May 2024.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

As at 1 January 2024, there were 530 UK Armed Forces Service personnel stationed at Clive Barracks.

Please note the following caveats:

1. The number of UK Armed Forces Service personnel stationed at Clive 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.

**■ HMS Excellent**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was for improvements to service accommodation at HMS Excellent since April 2022.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was for improvements to service accommodation at HMS Temeraire since April 2022.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was for improvements to service accommodation at Horsea Island since April 2022.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was for improvements to service accommodation at the Institute of Naval Medicine since April 2022.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was for improvements to service accommodation at HMS Gannet since April 2022.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service family accommodation in Plymouth since April 2022.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on improving service accommodation at HMNB Portsmouth 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

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[25635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

**James Cartlidge:**

Defence food purchasing contracts incorporate the requirements of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering (GBSF) Services. The GBSF has a focus on animal welfare, the quality and origin of food as well as nutrition advice, and these requirements are embedded within Defence Catering contracts. These contracts permit for local provision of food and/or drink where it is considered appropriate.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Agency Workers

**Maria Eagle:** [\[25777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on temporary agency staff in the 2023-24 financial year.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The figures are currently in the process of being finalised and will be released alongside the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts for 2023-24, which will be published in due course.

**Ministry of Defence: Finance**

**Mr Ben Wallace:** [\[25815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether an annual budget cycle took place for the financial year (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25.

**James Cartlidge:**

The department runs an Annual Budget Cycle (ABC) every year.

**Ministry of Defence: Mental Health Services**

**Maria Eagle:** [\[25775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on mental health services delivered by Defence Primary Health Care within the Defence Medical Service to armed forces personnel in the 2023-24 financial year.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Department spent £24.4 million on mental health services delivered by Defence Primary Healthcare to Armed Forces personnel in the financial year 2023-24.

**Portsmouth Dockyard**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25976\]](#)

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

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

As of 1 January 2024, there were 1,650 personnel based at HMNB Portsmouth. Due to the method used to capture personnel data, this is the most current available figure.

**EDUCATION****Free School Meals**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[26015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will lower the threshold for free school meals qualification.

**Damian Hinds:**

The department has extended free school meal (FSM) support several times and to more groups of children than any other government over the past half a century. As a

result, the greatest ever proportion of children are now receiving free lunches. Over one third of children are now eligible for FSM, compared to one in six in 2010.

However, a threshold must be set somewhere. The department believes that the current eligibility threshold level, which enables children in low-income households to benefit from FSM, while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools, is the correct decision.

The department will continue to keep FSM eligibility under review to ensure that these meals are supporting those who most need them.

## ■ Further Education and T-levels

**Munira Wilson:** [\[25719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, Education, how many and what proportion of students are studying for a level 3 qualification; and whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of students that will begin (a) a foundation T Level and (b) any T Level course for each academic year between 2024 and 2030.

**Luke Hall:**

In 2022, there were 599,000 students aged 16 in education in England. 440,000 students, or 73%, were studying qualifications at Level 3. More information can be found in the 'Participation in education, training and employment age 16 to 18' publication on GOV.UK.

The department does not publish estimates for the number of students that will begin a T Level or T Level Foundation year (TLFY) in each academic year. Over 30,000 students have started a T Level since 2020, and over 16,000 students have started on the TLFY over the first four years. The recently published T Level Action Plan sets out the steps the department is taking to continue to increase uptake over the coming years.

## ■ Mental Health Services and Special Educational Needs: Morley and Outwood

**Dame Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[25278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce the time taken for children to receive (a) SEN assessments and (b) mental health treatment in Morley and Outwood constituency.

**David Johnston:**

The department wants to ensure that Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments, where required, are conducted as quickly as possible, so that children and young people can access the support they need. In March 2023, the government set out its plans to reform and improve the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system through its SEND and alternative provision (AP) Improvement Plan. The plan commits to establishing a single national system that delivers for every child and young person with SEND, so that they enjoy their childhood, achieve good outcomes and are well prepared for adulthood and employment. Wakefield, Leeds, Calderdale and Bradford are in the SEND Change Programme, representing the

Yorkshire and Humber region, to test these reforms. Specifically, these reforms focus on early intervention, improving the quality of EHC plans, streamlining the EHC plan process, reducing conflicts within the EHC plan system through better co-production and ultimately enhancing outcomes for children and young people.

The mental health of children is a national priority for this government and the department recognises that some children will need specialist support for their mental health issues. The department is supporting children and young people nationally, including those in the Morley and Outwood area, in the expansion and transformation of mental health services through an increase in spending through the NHS overall, as well as improved access to early mental health support.

To expand access to early mental health support, the department is continuing to roll out Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to schools and colleges. As of April 2024, MHSTs now covers 44% of pupils in schools and learners in further education in England. The department is extending coverage of MHSTs to at least 50% of pupils and learners by the end of March 2025.

The department has also committed to offering all state schools and colleges a grant to train a senior mental health lead by 2025, enabling them to introduce effective whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. So far 16,700 settings have claimed a grant so far, including more than 8 in 10 state-funded secondary schools.

## ■ School Meals: Processed Food

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[25843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the proportion of ultra-processed foods in school meals.

**Damian Hinds:**

There is no universally agreed definition of ultra-processed foods. The term defines foods by how much processing they have been through rather than their nutritional composition.

The standards for school food are set out in The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014. These regulations are designed to ensure that schools provide pupils with healthy food and drink options and to make sure that pupils have the energy and nutrition they need throughout the school day.

The 'School Food Standards' define the foods and drinks that must be provided, those which are restricted and those which must never be provided. The standards already restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, including crisps, confectionery and high-sugar drinks, as well as low quality reformed or reconstituted foods. They also ensure that the right foods are available for children every day. For example, one or more portions of fruit must be provided every day and at least three different fruits every week.

Compliance with the standards is mandatory for all maintained schools, academies and free schools. School governors and trustees have a responsibility to ensure

compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations.

The department believes that the standards provide a robust yet flexible framework for school food provision. The government continues to keep the standards under review.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Climate Change and Nature Conservation: Devolution

**Deidre Brock:** [25245]

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 integrate (i) climate and (ii) nature plans.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

DESNZ works closely with the Devolved Administrations on climate and net zero issues, including through the Interministerial Group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change which supports effective engagement and collaboration in areas of shared interest between the UK administrations. The group last met on 13 March.

Many UK Government departments play a vital role in delivering carbon budgets, with DEFRA ensuring that nature-based solutions are a core part of Government action to tackle climate change. Integration of climate and nature plans is a matter for my Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

### ■ Climate Change Committee: Business Interests

**Dame Andrea Jenkyns:** [25276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether members of (a) the Climate Change Committee and (b) its Adaptation Subcommittee may (i) hold remunerated positions in businesses that are likely to benefit from energy transition and (ii) have other financial interests that benefit from energy transition.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The CCC's conflict of interest policy and register of interests for its Committee Members and the Chief Executive are available on its website:

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/about/transparency>.

All Committee Members and staff are required to recognise and disclose activities that might give rise to actual or perceived conflicts of interest. This includes both financial and non-financial personal and professional interests.

### ■ Climate Change Convention

**Deidre Brock:** [25651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on policy priorities in advance of COP 29.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

My Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State continues to have ongoing discussions with colleagues concerning Departmental business.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero will continue to lead on international climate policy across Government, working closely with other Departments to raise ambition and drive forward action to deliver on the Paris Agreement at COP29 and at other key international meetings, including the G7 and G20.

**■ Climate Change: Carbon Emissions****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[25833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what outcomes her Department has achieved as part of the UK's 2050 net zero target.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The UK is the first major economy to halve its emissions having cut them by around 53% between 1990 and 2023, more than any other major economy – while also growing the economy by around 80% and recently becoming the fourth largest exporter in the world. Government policy and spending ambitions will support up to 480,000 green jobs in 2030.

This is an enormous achievement by itself but also because we have done this in a pragmatic way - growing our economy and at the same time protecting family finances.

**■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[25739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what her Department's policy is on the procurement of (a) food and (b) drinks produced in Britain for use in its canteens and restaurants.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Department is onboarded to the Government Property Agency (GPA). GPA is the landlord or building manager at the Department's office occupations, where the space is often shared with several other tenant organisations. The Department buys catering services, or a share of, direct from GPA alongside all other building services.

**■ Energy Supply: Communication****Mark Menzies:**[\[24642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will have discussions with energy companies on improving (a) communication with (i) businesses and (ii) households about disruption as a result of energy projects and (b) access to compensation for losses related to such projects.



**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Government engages regularly with energy companies and is committed to delivering the energy infrastructure needed for net zero and energy security, while ensuring that individuals are fairly compensated and brought into the process.

To install infrastructure, network operators often need access to private land and appropriate compensation, covering both the value of land and any losses, must be paid to the landowner. The Government recognises that where compensation cannot be agreed, then challenging this via the Upper Tribunal can be expensive for landowners. Government has established a Taskforce to explore Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms, to help un-block these disputes.

**■ Flats: Energy****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[25894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of prohibiting property management companies from charging commercial energy rates to domestic users in multiple-dwelling developments.

**Amanda Solloway:**

In April we published the response to the call for evidence on domestic customers with non-domestic contracts, aiming to understand the advantages and disadvantages of these arrangements. The responses revealed the complexity of energy supply and contract arrangements, including there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Due to the physical set-up of multiple-dwelling developments, most consumers will remain on non-domestic contracts and will not have individual meters. The Department and Ofgem are addressing some concerns, including raising awareness of the Maximum Resale Price Protection to increase compliance. We will continue engaging stakeholders to determine if further action is necessary.

**■ Housing: Insulation****Kim Leadbeater:**[\[25725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps she is taking to increase levels of home insulation; and what assessment she has made of the potential impact of poor home insulation on health.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is supporting increased levels in home insulation through our 'help to heat' schemes. Evidence of the health benefits of Government insulation schemes is gathered as part of those schemes' evaluations. Recent evaluations show that schemes had a positive impact on general health.

For example, the evaluation of ECO Phase 3 showed 24% of households reported that the measures had a positive impact on the health of anyone within the household. This was higher among households that had someone living there who had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (31%) Details of the evaluation can

be found here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/653f8705d10f3500139a6b2f/eco-evaluation-phases-2t-3.pdf>.

## ■ Insulation

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**

[25727]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when she plans to publish an insulation products strategy.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Heat and Buildings Strategy, published in October 2021, set out our strategic approach to the decarbonisation of buildings, including the role insulation will play to increase thermal comfort and reducing energy demand.

The government engages regularly with insulation manufacturers, and other industry stakeholders, to understand challenges and opportunities in the insulation products supply chain, with the aim of facilitating a more resilient supply chain.

## ■ Temperature

**Catherine West:**

[25521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on preparations for a potential heatwave in summer 2024.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The Department works closely with a variety of stakeholders to ensure cross-sector preparedness in advance of potential risks that may manifest. From a seasonal preparedness perspective as we approach summer 2024, we are confident that, due to the diverse nature of the electricity system and the highly resilient equipment that is used throughout, the risks associated with extreme heat are low and it is unlikely that customers will be impacted. In the highly unlikely circumstance that the risks associated with extreme heat materialise, the most likely impact would be localised electricity disruption, for which electricity network operators have robust plans in place to mitigate.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agricultural Products: Import Controls

**Stella Creasy:**

[25210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of consignments of (a) products of animal origin and (b) plant products that were liable for the common user charge had the correct paperwork in place upon their arrival in the UK 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.

**■ Air Quality Grant Scheme**

**Afzal Khan:** [\[22638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department made an impact assessment before ending the Air Quality Grant Scheme.

**Robbie Moore:**

I had concerns that the Local Air Quality Scheme would not deliver the most positive outcomes for local air quality at this particular time and so I have asked Defra officials to consider redesigning the Scheme in the future, to be able to better deliver those positive outcomes and therefore enhanced value for money for taxpayers.

**■ Energy: Environment Protection**

**Mark Menzies:** [\[24643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on minimising the impact of of new energy projects on local (a) environments, (b) wildlife and (c) rural livelihoods.

**Robbie Moore:**

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a wide range of issues, and Cabinet discussions are considered confidential.

**■ Forests: Commodities**

**Chris Grayling:** [\[24404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward secondary legislation under the Environment Act 2021 on forest risk commodities.

**Rebecca Pow:**

As stated by the Secretary of State at Oral questions on 9 May 2024, we hope to table the legislation later this month.

**■ Furs: Trade****Patrick Grady:** [\[21110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's consultation entitled Fur market in Great Britain, published in May 2021, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the publication of the results of that consultation.

**Sir Mark Spencer:**

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

**■ Horses: Northern Ireland****Carla Lockhart:** [\[22423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions officials in his Department (a) have had and (b) plan to have with their counterparts in Northern Ireland on equine (i) sales and (ii) transport between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[22425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions with relevant stakeholders on equine transport between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

**Sir Mark Spencer:**

The Government engages regularly with Northern Ireland stakeholders and would welcome ongoing engagement with those transporting equines between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Indeed, the Northern Ireland Office's Minister of State, Steve Baker MP, recently met with the Equine and Rare Breeds Society alongside the honourable member during a visit to Northern Ireland to discuss this issue.

As said in PQ 16046, the Movement Assistance Scheme is available to reimburse costs (including veterinary checks) for horses moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, and horses moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain have unfettered access.

**■ Import Controls: Ashford****Stella Creasy:** [\[25211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the average time was between a consignment entering Sevington Border Control Post and leaving following (a) a physical inspection and (b) any other inspection between 30 April and 5 May 2024.

**Sir Mark Spencer:**

Monitoring and enforcing the border controls introduced under the BTOM is undertaken collaboratively on a site by site basis at each point of entry between Defra, Port Health Authorities (part of local authorities), the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Border Force and HMRC, and the Port Operators.

The department considers that this information is operationally - and in the case of Port Operators commercially - sensitive and should be withheld.

**■ Import Controls: Documents****Stella Creasy:**[\[24234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many consignments entering the UK under the Border Target Operating Model have (a) had their documentation checked when entering the UK and (b) not had the correct documentation since 1 February 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.

**■ Textiles: Recycling****Mohammad Yasin:**[\[23261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled The waste prevention programme for England: Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste, updated on 10 August 2023, what progress he has made on developing a pilot Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for textiles; what his planned timetable is for publication of that pilot scheme; and what progress he has made on an impact assessment for non-domestic premises to support the textiles waste hierarchy.

**Robbie Moore:**

The EPR sandbox led by UKFT, and funded by UK Government is using data to explore a system that incentivises circular economy principles across the textiles supply chain. We look forward to the results of this project later this year.

Since publication of Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste we have been engaging with stakeholders across the supply chain to develop the proposals for the consultation and build the evidence base for the impact assessment. The consultation is our priority, but we are open to other suggestions from the industry

about what the most effective interventions could be, including how a potential Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for textiles could work.

We are collaborating with our delivery partner the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) on the Textiles Waste Hierarchy. It will be a comprehensive guide for organisations that will be impacted by the proposals and those who handle used textiles. By including examples of good practice and case studies we hope, once developed, it will help organisations and citizens navigate changes that will reduce textiles waste across the supply chain.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ **British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Companies**

**Dame Margaret Hodge:**

[\[25135\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 2 May 2024 to Question 23506 on British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Companies, whether his Department plans to set a timetable for the introduction of public registers of beneficial ownership in the Overseas Territories.

**David Rutley:**

In December, I [Minister Rutley] laid a Written Statement (HCWS150) that outlined Overseas Territories' commitments and timelines to implement public registers, either public registers accessible to all members of the public or public registers with access predicated on 'legitimate interest'. We are providing technical and financial assistance to expedite implementation in 2024 of these public registers. Where public access is predicated on 'legitimate interest' I have clearly stated to OT Governments the UK's expectation that this will be expansive, including media and civil society, among others, and an interim step to providing access to all members of the public in due course.

### ■ **Darfur: Crimes against Humanity**

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[25441\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the report by Human Rights Watch entitled *The Massalit Will Not Come Home: Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan*, published on 9 May 2024.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK condemns in the strongest terms reported atrocities being committed across Sudan, particularly in Darfur. Reports of ongoing attacks on innocent civilians by militias, particularly the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), have all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing. These acts must stop immediately. The UK continues to pursue all diplomatic avenues to press the warring parties into a permanent ceasefire, to allow unfettered humanitarian access, to protect civilians, and to commit to a sustained and meaningful peace process. Atrocity prevention is one of the pillars of our Sudan

strategy and we analyse the conflict on an ongoing and rolling basis. Our policies are under constant review and the FCDO will ensure we take the policy suggestions detailed in the report into consideration.

## ■ France and Spain: Visas

**Dr Philippa Whitford:** [\[25858\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made recent representations to his (a) French and (b) Spanish counterpart on long-stay visas for UK citizens who need to spend more than 90 days within a given 180-day period in those countries.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides for visa-free travel for short-term visits for each other's nationals. British citizens can travel visa-free and stay for up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period, in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code. This is the standard length of stay that the EU offers to third countries. Whilst the Government would welcome any changes to visa systems which would benefit UK nationals, this is a matter for national governments and parliaments. The Government continues to engage regularly with the European Commission and EU Member States on a range of mobility issues.

## ■ Gaza: Reconstruction

**Lisa Nandy:** [\[24902\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had preliminary discussions with (a) NGOs, (b) partner nations and (iii) the UN on future reconstruction of Gaza's education system.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

Post-conflict recovery and reconstruction must be led by Palestinians, but the international community will also need to play a major collective role in this effort. We are progressing our thinking on all aspects of recovery and reconstruction. We have begun discussions with multilateral and bilateral partners on the financing and coordination of reconstruction.

## ■ Georgia: Elections

**Adam Holloway:** [\[25462\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether (a) he and (b) the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (i) have made and (ii) plan to make representations to their counterparts in Georgia on ensuring free and fair elections in that country.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The UK is committed to supporting Georgia to hold elections that meet international standards. During his March 2023 visit to Georgia, the former Foreign Secretary pledged £500,000 to support election monitoring in Georgia, including £70,000 to support the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for



Democratic Institution and Human Rights mission ahead of elections expected in October 2024. The former Minister for Europe discussed elections with then Georgian Prime Minister Gharibashvili during his visit to Tbilisi on 21 November 2023.

### ■ Georgia: Non-governmental Organisations

**Adam Holloway:** [\[25463\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether (a) he and (b) the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (i) have made and (ii) plan to make representations to their counterparts in Georgia on the treatment of British and international NGOs ahead of elections in the context of the introduction of the foreign agents bill in that country.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The UK is committed to supporting a vibrant civil society in Georgia, which is an essential attribute of a healthy democracy. I [Minister for Europe] discussed this and a range of other issues with the Georgian Ambassador on 17 April and 14 May. In my statement of 14 May, I called on the Georgian Government to withdraw the law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, and also noted my deep concerns regarding the orchestrated intimidation of demonstrators in Tbilisi. Our Ambassador in Tbilisi has also consistently made our concerns clear to the Georgian authorities, most recently to the Prime Minister on 22 April and President on 4 May.

### ■ Haiti: Organised Crime

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[25438\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether his Department will provide support to Haitian police to help tackle the increase in violence from criminal gangs.

**David Rutley:**

The UK remains concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Haiti that exacerbates pre-existing humanitarian and economic crises. On 9 April, the Foreign Secretary announced a £5 million UK contribution to the Multinational Security Support (MSS) Mission, the main role of which is to work in collaboration with the Haitian National Police to tackle gang-related violence.

### ■ Iraq: Turkey

**Andrew Bridgen:** [\[25225\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with his Turkish counterpart on recent Turkish military operations in Sinjar.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The UK recognises Turkey's right to self-defence, while fully supporting Iraq's territorial integrity. We encourage restraint from activity that could lead to loss of civilian life, or damage to civilian infrastructure. We welcome recent high-level engagement between both countries, including President Erdoğan's visit to Iraq on 22 April. As a close NATO ally, we regularly engage Turkey on regional stability. The UK



Ambassador to Turkey discussed this issue with Turkey's Director General for South Asia on 27 March as did the UK National Security Advisor with his Turkish counterpart in London on 11 April.

## ■ Islamic State Khorasan Province

**Sir Robert Buckland:**

[\[25216\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what support his Department provides to Central Asian partners to (a) contain and (b) counter Islamic State Khorasan Province in that region.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Central Asian countries in April 2024, he discussed the threat from terrorist groups in Afghanistan with interlocutors. We regularly engage with our partners in Central Asia to build a shared understanding of the threat emanating from Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and cohere our approaches to tackling the threat.

## ■ Peru: Indigenous Peoples

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[25437\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had recent discussions with his Peruvian counterpart on supporting families from the indigenous Kichwa community of Santa Rosillo de Yanayacu.

**David Rutley:**

The UK Government is aware of the challenges faced by indigenous people and their supporters in the Peruvian Amazon. We monitor the threats that they face, as well as the actions of the Peruvian Government to protect these communities. We regularly engage with indigenous national organisations to discuss human rights and climate initiatives. I [Minister Rutley] visited Peru in October and met with representatives of indigenous groups, including from the Santa Rosillo de Yanayacu community, to hear directly about the challenges, threats and opportunities they face. I also discussed the importance of protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities with my former counterpart, Mr Ignacio Higuera Hare, during the annual UK-Peru High Level Dialogue in October.

## ■ Toomaj Salehi

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[25807\]](#)

To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make representations to his Iranian counter-part on stopping the execution of Toomaj Salehi.

**David Rutley:**

The UK condemns the death sentence of prominent and fearless artist Toomaj Salehi. On May 8 the UK Human Rights Ambassador to the UN in Geneva signed a joint statement calling for Salehi's immediate release and repeating our principled opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances. We have sanctioned 94 Iranian

individuals or entities for human rights violations since September 2022, including the Prosecutor General and Deputy Prosecutor General responsible for Iran's application of the death penalty. We continue to call for Mr Salehi's release, and the release of all those who are unjustly detained by the Iranian regime.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Addictions: Children

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[26016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support her Department is providing to children experiencing addiction issues.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Alcohol or drug dependence is rare in children and young people under the age of 18 years old, although they may be drinking problematically. Children may also experience second-hand harms of parental alcohol or drug dependence. The most effective and sustainable approach to reducing alcohol and drug harms in children is by giving them the best start in life, the best education possible, and keeping them safe, well, and happy.

Statutory guidance on relationships, sex, and health education requires all primary and secondary school pupils to be taught the key facts and risks of alcohol and drug use, as well as how to manage influences and pressure, and keep themselves healthy and safe. The Department has worked with the PSHE Association to develop the lesson plans on alcohol and is currently commissioning an update of the resources to be published later this year. Current resources are available at the following link:

<https://pshe-association.org.uk/drugeducation>

Through the cross-Government Drug Strategy, the Department has allocated £532 million of additional funding through to 2024/25, to support improvements in alcohol and drug treatment, including facilitating 5,000 more young people into age-appropriate treatment by 2024/25. Local authorities can also invest their allocation in options from a menu of interventions, some of which include strengthening the services available to children and families.

The Government also has an information and advice service called Talk to FRANK, which aims to reduce alcohol and drug use and its harms, by providing awareness to young people, parents, and concerned others. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

## ■ Alcoholic Drinks and Smoking: Health Services

**Andrew Bridgen:**

[\[25222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of treating (a) smoking related illnesses and (b) alcohol related illnesses in the last 12 months.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Tobacco is uniquely harmful, with no safe level of smoking, and no other consumer product that kills two thirds of its long-term users. It causes one in four cancer deaths, including 70% of lung cancer cases, and takes approximately 80,000 lives every year. The latest estimates from Action on Smoking and Health put the cost of smoking in England at over £21 billion. This includes an annual £18 billion loss to productivity through smoking related lost earnings, unemployment, and early death, as well as costs to the National Health Service and social care of £3 billion.

The Department estimated the annual cost of alcohol consumption to the NHS to be £4 billion in 2021. The previous estimate published alongside the Government's 2012 Alcohol Strategy was updated to reflect inflation. The Department has begun a review of existing methods and evidence to update this estimate. The estimated costs of alcohol and smoking related illnesses to the NHS were not designed to be compared, and are based on different methods, data sources, and time periods.

## ■ Alcoholic Drinks: Public Health

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[25842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring the labelling of alcohol products with consumer health information.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Clear and accurate alcohol product labelling is crucial to ensuring consumers have access to essential information about the products they are purchasing, whilst also promoting transparency, responsible consumption, and safety.

Current alcohol labelling guidance recommends that health information, including pregnancy warnings, a drink driving warning, and the Chief Medical Officer's weekly limit guidance, are included on the label for alcohol products. It is also a legal requirement to display alcohol by volume (ABV) labelling on drinks above the 1.2% ABV threshold.

The Department has recently consulted on updating labelling guidance for non-alcoholic and low alcohol products. This consultation closed on 23 November 2023, and the consultation response will be published shortly.

**■ Breast Cancer: East Midlands****Sir John Hayes:** [25146]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the take-up rate for breast cancer screening was in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) the East Midlands in each of the last five years.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

NHS Breast Screening Programme statistics are available at the following link:

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

**■ Cancer and Joint Replacements: Health Services****John McDonnell:** [25607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the holistic care approach for cancer (a) care and (b) delivery to (i) prosthetic infection and (ii) other clinical conditions.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department has not made a formal assessment of the merits of expanding the holistic approach, used for cancer, to prosthetic infection and other clinical conditions, however the National Health Service is working towards a holistic approach in infection prevention and control, and in long-term conditions. This includes improving perioperative care for surgical clinical care pathways, including for prosthetic infections, whereby patients receive proactive, personalised support to optimise their health before surgery.

The NHS works hard to deliver care to meet people's needs as far as possible, given this can have a significant impact on their experience and quality of life. Cancer Alliances across England are working to ensure that every person receives personalised care and support from cancer diagnosis onwards. This involves holistic need assessments to ensure people's physical, practical, emotional, and social needs are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity. It also involves accessible information about emotional support, coping with side effects, financial advice, getting back to work, and making healthy lifestyle choices, before, during, and after treatment.

**■ Colonoscopy****Navendu Mishra:** [25999]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 April 2024 to Question 21865 on Bowel Cancer: Greater Manchester, what is the average waiting time to receive (a) an appointment for a coloscopy and (b) the results from a colonoscopy in (i) England, (ii) Greater Manchester and (iii) Stepping Hill Hospital.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Statistics on diagnostics waiting times via modality for England, and at commissioner and provider levels, is publicly available and can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-data-2023-24/>

**■ Defibrillators****Layla Moran:****[25679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of access to defibrillators.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

To improve survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest cases, the Government launched a new £1 million one-off fund that will expand community access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs). The grant was made available from September 2023.

We estimated 1,000 new defibrillators would be provided by the fund, with the potential for this to double, as most applicants would be asked to match the funding they receive partially or fully. To date, the grant has successfully delivered 2,000 AEDs.

Research has shown that those in the most deprived areas of England had to travel over one kilometre to their nearest accessible, nonstop service public access defibrillator, which tended to be 99.2 metres further away than in the least deprived areas.

Applications for AEDs are selected in line with criteria to provide AEDs where there is greatest need. The criteria include remote communities with extended ambulance response times, places with high footfall and high population densities, hotspots for cardiac arrest including sporting venues and venues with vulnerable people, and deprived areas.

**■ Dental Services: Weston-super-Mare****Caroline Lucas:****[25203]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 8 May 2024 in response to a question from the hon. Member for Weston Super Mare, which the 500 dental practices referred to are; and how many of those practices were registering NHS patients on 8 May 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 as of 8 April 2024, nearly 500 more practices have said they are open to new patients, compared to the end of January 2024. The Find a Dentist website allows people to see which practices have said they are accepting new patients, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

No estimates are currently available on the number of new patients seen by dental practices since the New Patient Premium scheme was introduced, 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.

### ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Correspondence

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[25782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2024 to Question 9340, when she plans to respond the correspondence of an East Londonderry constituent of 16 June 2023 on water fluoridation policy; and for what reason a response has not yet been provided.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

The Department received the hon. Members' correspondence of 16 June 2023, and, with apologies, responded on 16 January 2024. We have resent the response to the hon. Member on 15 May 2024.

### ■ Diabetes: Nicotine

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[25872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential relationship between nicotine and type II diabetes.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Studies have shown that smokers are 30% to 40% more likely to get type 2 diabetes than people who don't smoke. Smoking can also make managing the condition more difficult, because high levels of nicotine can lessen the effectiveness of insulin. Such studies have focussed on the impact of nicotine contained within cigarettes, rather than alternative nicotine delivery methods, and the National Health Service recommends that smokers with diabetes should try to quit.

As stated during the Tobacco and Vapes Bill Committee on 14 May 2024, the Department is currently exploring research options to address these evidence gaps in the short, medium, and longer term. I will be setting out further details on this very soon.

### ■ Food: Advertising

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[26014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to protect children from unhealthy food and drink marketing.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

The Government is committed to working with businesses to ensure that we create the conditions for a healthier nation, and we are implementing an ambitious programme of measures to tackle childhood obesity. On 1 October 2022, the Government introduced legislation to restrict the location of foods high in fat, salt, or sugar in shops and online.

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, also on 1 October 2025. We continue to work with industry on the Food Data Transparency Partnership, to co-develop voluntary reporting requirements for food business to demonstrate the healthiness of their sales.

The Government, through its focus on prevention, is committed to improving the oral health of our young children through the Smile for Life programme, so that they have good habits by the time they start primary school.

**■ Food: Packaging****Paul Blomfield:**[\[25204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to stop child friendly packaging being used to advertise unhealthy food to children.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

The Government is committed to working with businesses to ensure that we create the conditions for a healthier nation, and we are implementing an ambitious programme of measures to tackle childhood obesity. On 1 October 2022, the Government introduced legislation to restrict the location of foods high in fat, salt, or sugar in shops and online. 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, also on 1 October 2025. We continue to work with industry on the Food Data Transparency Partnership, to co-develop voluntary reporting requirements for food business to demonstrate the healthiness of their sales.



**■ Health Services****Karin Smyth:** [25500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of joint commissioning on the 59 specialised services approved by the NHS England Board in February 2023.

**Karin Smyth:** [25501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Annex A of the NHS publication entitled Specialised Commissioning – update on specialised services for delegation, published on 28 March 2024, whether she plans for the 32 specialised services retained by NHS England from April 2025 to be (a) delegated or (b) retained in perpetuity.

**Karin Smyth:** [25502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of delegating specialised services to Integrated Care Systems on continuity of care for patients.

**Karin Smyth:** [25503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of delegating specialised services to Integrated Care Systems on patient outcomes.

**Karin Smyth:** [25504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what engagement commissioning hub teams looking at specialised commissioning have with commissioning support units.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 May 2024]:* The nine joint committee arrangements arose from a robust process, which included a readiness assessment, the Pre-Delegation Assessment Framework, made between integrated care boards (ICBs) and NHS England regional teams, followed by a National Moderation Panel and final decision taken by the NHS England Board. The NHS England Board papers for February 2023, December 2023, and March 2024 are available respectively at the following links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/board-2-feb-23-item-7-delegation-of-spec-comm.pdf>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/specialised-commissioning-2024-25-next-steps-with-delegation-to-integrated-care-boards/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/specialised-commissioning-update-on-specialised-services-for-delegation/>

The process concluded that a transitional year of joint commissioning would offer the most secure and stable transition towards delegation. NHS England is working



alongside ICBs to ensure that delegation agreements are in place, including ensuring appropriate collaborative arrangements are developed to support ICB commissioning of specialised services. These arrangements will be monitored by NHS England through its assurance processes for specialised services.

On 28 March 2024, the NHS England Board approved the recommendation that the 32 specialised services listed in Annex A of Item 7 of Specialised Commissioning: update on specialised services for delegation, would be retained by NHS England.

Regardless of delegation status, NHS England will remain the accountable commissioner for the entire portfolio of specialised services, and as part of this role, will monitor the effectiveness of delegation and the lists of services. It should be noted that NHS England does have the ability to bring a service back under national commissioning control, under the safeguards put in place to support delegation.

All specialised services, whether retained or delegated, must comply with nationally developed standards, including service specifications and clinical commissioning policies. ICBs will be able to use specialised services funding to transform and develop services and pathways across their core and specialised responsibilities, to improve quality of care and equity of access and value, whilst also complying with national standards.

Whilst delegation is not an end in itself, moving to ICB-led commissioning supports a focus on population health management across whole pathways of care, and gives ICBs the powers they need to improve the quality of services, tackle health inequalities, and ensure best value. NHS England set out in detail the benefits of greater ICB involvement in the commissioning of appropriate specialised services in the Roadmap for Integrating Specialised Services within Integrated Care Systems, and subsequent board papers. This roadmap is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/PAR1440-specialised-commissioning-roadmap-addendum-may-2022.pdf>

These plans have been developed in close collaboration with NHS England's regional teams, ICBs, specialised service providers, clinicians, and patients, and represent the outcome of a thorough assessment of ICB system readiness, and a comprehensive analysis of services to determine their suitability and readiness for more integrated commissioning. During 2024/25, specialised services commissioning teams will remain employed by NHS England. NHS England has a framework for commissioning support, and accesses a range of services from commissioning support units. For example, data and business intelligence, and programme and project management expertise and resources.

## ■ Health Services: Training

Ian Byrne:

[26002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department made an impact assessment of ending new registrations by secondary care staff to the NHS

Practitioner Health Programme before taking that decision; and whether she plans to reinstate this support.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[26003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the mental health of (a) doctors and (b) the wider NHS workforce.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[26004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the NHS Practitioner Health Service in safeguarding the mental health of NHS professionals.

**Ian Byrne:** [\[26005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with the Chief Executive of NHS England on the renewal of funding for the NHS Practitioner Health Programme; and whether she plans to continue funding that programme beyond 31 March 2025.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The mental health and wellbeing of the National Health Service workforce is of paramount importance. My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Chief Executive of the NHS understand and sympathise with the concerns raised last month, in relation to the future of the NHS Practitioner Health service. They took swift action to ensure that it will continue to provide a full service to doctors and senior managers during 2023/24, whilst a review is carried out. This was confirmed by NHS England on 15 April 2024.

NHS England is reviewing the service as part of a wider review of its mental health and wellbeing offer to staff. They are working collaboratively with regions and integrated care systems to agree the best approach to providing mental health support for staff, including outreach for the workforce. They will confirm future arrangements once this review has been completed.

## ■ Hospitals: Air Pollution

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[25435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to measure the air quality of (a) hospitals and (b) hospital car parks.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The policy around outdoor air quality measurement is led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This data is publicly available and used by National Health Service trusts, and NHS England. NHS England has set out a range of measures to reduce trusts' impact on outdoor air quality, as part of its commitment to achieve Net Zero for direct NHS emissions by 2040. Specific actions are set out in its Net Zero Travel and Transport Strategy, Net Zero Estates Delivery Plan, and Clinical Waste Strategy, which are available respectively at the following links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/net-zero-travel-and-transport-strategy/>

<https://www.ipaget.nhs.uk/media/588250/Estates-Net-Zero-Carbon-Delivery-Plan.pdf>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-clinical-waste-strategy/>

The NHS's guidance on indoor air quality is set out in the NHS technical memorandum 03-01: Specialised ventilation for healthcare premises, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/specialised-ventilation-for-healthcare-buildings/>

## ■ IVF: LGBT+ People

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[25984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what her planned timetable is for the implementation of the Women's Health Strategy; and whether she plans to help tackle disparities in access to fertility services for LGBTQ+ couples.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Women's Health Strategy is a 10-year strategy. On 17 January 2024, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, set out our priorities for implementing the Women's Health Strategy in 2024. This statement is available at the following link:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-01-17/hcws192>

Improving access to fertility treatment is a priority in the Women's Health Strategy. On 15 May 2024, we laid a Statutory Instrument to update the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act to allow gamete donation for people with HIV, who have an undetectable viral load. It will also eliminate additional screening costs for female same sex couples undertaking reciprocal, or shared motherhood, in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment. This is part of wider work to improve access to IVF for everyone, and ensure same-sex couples have the same rights as a man and woman when accessing fertility treatment.

## ■ Joint Replacements: Post-operative Care

**John McDonnell:**

[25604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle post-operative infections in the context of (a) an ageing population and (b) trends in the number of joint replacement operations.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The UK Health Security Agency manages a national surveillance programme, the Surgical Site Infection (SSI) Surveillance Service, which enhances the quality of patient care by providing hospitals with a framework for collection and comparison of their rates of SSI against national benchmarks. This information is used to review and

guide clinical practice to reduce the risk of infection following surgery. Hip and knee replacements are two of the 17 categories of surgery under surveillance by hospitals. Surveillance in at least one orthopaedic surgical category per quarter, per financial year is mandatory for all National Health Service hospitals undertaking orthopaedic surgery, with hip and knee replacements being the most numerous.

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[26018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of transitioning from CAMHS to adult mental health services on the support provided to young people.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, local health systems have been tasked with delivering a comprehensive offer for zero to 25 year-olds to ensure young adults receive appropriate mental health support, regardless of their age or diagnostic profile.

Between the ages of 16 to 18 years old, young people are more susceptible to mental illness, undergoing physiological change and making important transitions in their lives. The structure of the National Health Service's mental health services often creates gaps for young people undergoing the transition from children and young people's mental health services to appropriate support, including adult mental health services. The new approach to young adult mental health services for people aged 18 to 25 years old will better support the transition to adulthood.

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Stockport**

**Navendu Mishra:** [\[26001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 April 2024 to Question 20454 on Mental Health Services: Stockport, what the average financial spend was per child and young person supported; and what the average number of contacts was per child and young person supported.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Data from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 shows the average cost per contact is £333, and that then Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust received over 8,000 referrals, with a 96% acceptance rate. This is only for the children and young people's mental health service provided by Pennine Care in Stockport. There may be other services and support, but to collate this would exceed the appropriate limit.

### ■ **Mental Health: Children**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[26017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support her Department is providing to families of children with poor mental health.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Every Mind Matters website and the National Health Service website both contain helpful advice for parents and carers of a child or young person with poor mental health. This includes signposting to a number of voluntary organisations offering support and information.

Family members of children with poor mental health, who feel they themselves need psychological support, should speak to their general practitioner, or can self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies online. Details are available on the NHS website.

In addition, NHS England is developing a new waiting time measure for children and their families and carers to start receiving community-based mental health care within four weeks of referral. NHS England began publishing this new data in 2023, to improve transparency and drive local accountability.

**■ Nicotine: Products****Rachael Maskell:**[\[25873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish guidance on the safe use of nicotine pouches.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

While there is currently limited research and evidence into the harms and use of nicotine pouches, they are never recommended for children. Nicotine, the active ingredient in pouches, is a highly addictive drug, and we have a duty to protect children and young people from potential harms. Advice on the harms of nicotine can be found on the Talk to Frank website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/nicotine>

That is why, through the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, we are proposing to introduce age of sale restrictions of 18 years old for nicotine pouches, ban free samples to under 18 year olds, and introduce new packaging, flavours, and point of sale display restrictions.

Whilst the use of nicotine pouches is currently low among adults, it is increasingly popular with younger male audiences. We will continue to monitor the use of these products and update public health guidance and messaging accordingly.

**■ Pharmacy: Prescriptions****Wes Streeting:**[\[24687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the number and proportion of prescriptions that were written by pharmacists in each of the last five years.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

*[Holding answer 8 May 2024]:* The National Health Service does not currently commission prescribing services from community pharmacists but pharmacists working in other NHS settings, including general practices, can prescribe on the NHS.

The following table show the total number of items prescribed, the number of items prescribed by a pharmacist, and the percentage this equates to in terms of overall prescribing in England, in each of the last five years:

| YEAR | TOTAL NUMBER OF ITEMS | ITEMS PRESCRIBED BY A PHARMACIST | PERCENTAGE OF ITEMS PRESCRIBED BY A PHARMACIST |
|------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 2019 | 1,118,845,270         | 22,089,868                       | 1.97%  |
| 2020 | 1,122,769,640         | 30,824,967                       | 2.75%  |
| 2021 | 1,128,633,578         | 36,145,631                       | 3.20%  |
| 2022 | 1,162,723,444         | 40,701,768                       | 3.50%  |
| 2023 | 1,203,435,207         | 45,713,123                       | 3.80%  |

Source: NHS Business Services Authority

The number of pharmacists that are independent prescribers is increasing. From 2026 all newly qualified pharmacists will be prescribers and we are upskilling the current workforce. NHS England are piloting services with varying models to evaluate how this could work in future clinical services in community pharmacy. In future, prescribing in community pharmacy has the potential to unlock more clinical services in community pharmacy, taking further pressure off general practice.

## ■ Thalassaemia: Medical Treatments

### **Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[25665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she has had with NHS England on the introduction of (a) gene therapy and (b) other new treatments for patients with thalassaemia.

### **Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department regularly discusses a range of issues with colleagues in NHS England related to patient access to new medicines. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) makes recommendations for the National Health Service on whether all new medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS, based on an assessment of their costs and benefits. The NICE's appraisal of the gene therapy, exagamglogene autotemcel, for treating transfusion-dependent beta-thalassaemia is currently paused, to allow the company and NHS England to enter into commercial and managed access discussions.

In November 2023, NHS England published a clinical commissioning policy that recommends that allogeneic haematopoietic stem cell transplantation for adult transfusion dependent thalassaemia should be routinely commissioned.

## HOME OFFICE

■ **Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme****Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[\[25141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much has accrued to the Exchequer from money recovered by public bodies using powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 through (a) unspent asset recovery incentivisation scheme receipts and (b) receipts above the annual cap on Home Office receipts through the asset recovery incentivisation scheme in each financial year from 2017-18 to 2022-23.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

(A) It is the responsibility of individual agencies participating in the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme to send any unspent funds back to HMT directly, who hold this information.

(B) Table 1 provides the amount of receipts above the ARIS cap for each financial year from 2017/18 to 2022/23. Receipts that surpass the cap are sent from the Home Office to HM Treasury and go into the Consolidated Fund.

Table 1: Receipts above the ARIS cap, financial years 2017/18 to 2022/23

| FINANCIAL YEAR | VALUE OF RECEIPTS THAT ARE ABOVE THE ARIS CAP ( <sup>1,2</sup> ) |
|----------------|--|
| 2017/18        | £0   |
| 2018/19        | £0   |
| 2019/20        | £0   |
| 2020/21        | £0   |
| 2021/22        | £62m   |
| 2022/23        | £30m   |

Notes

1. Figures are not adjusted for inflation.

Figures are based on funds remitted to HM Treasury.

■ **Asylum: Hotels****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[25783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an assessment of projected trends in the number of hotels being used as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers between 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.



**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute and accommodation needs are kept under continuous review. Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation (including in contingency hotels and other contingency accommodation) is published in table Asy\_D11 here: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets). Data is published on a quarterly basis.

■ **Asylum: Palestinians**

**Joanna Cherry:** [25862]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Palestinians who were living in Gaza before 27 October 2023 have been granted the right to enter the UK.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not available in the requested format.

■ **British Nationality: Applications**

**Layla Moran:** [25918]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the longest waiting time is for a decision on a British citizenship application as of 13 May 2024.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office does not routinely comment on individual cases. Published data regarding naturalisation applications can be found in the migration statistics which are published quarterly: [Visas and citizenship data: Q4 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/visas-and-citizenship-data-q4-2023).

■ **Edinburgh Airport**

**Kenny MacAskill:** [25990]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 May 2024 to Question 24833 on Edinburgh Airport, whether a (a) treaty and (b) formal agreement between the UK and USA is required before any commercial deal.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [25991]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 May 2024 to Question 24833 on Edinburgh Airport, what progress he has made on concluding a formal (a) treaty and (b) agreement between the UK and USA.

**Tom Pursglove:**

A treaty covering a formal agreement to allow the US to operate pre-clearance on UK soil would be required before it could be operated at a UK airport. However, pre-clearance also requires a commercial agreement between the UK airport operator and the US authorities for this to be advanced beyond the discussions that have already taken place.



**■ Firearms: Licensing**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of upgrading the National Firearms Licensing Management System database.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential introduction of a medical marker on GP records for people in possession of a gun certificate.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance his Department has provided to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services on the performance of firearms licensing divisions within police forces.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his expected timetable is to publish his Department's response to its consultation on firearms licensing.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government received a wide range of views in response to last year's consultation on firearms licensing. We are carefully considering all the comments received before publishing our response, which will set out what action we intend to take to further strengthen the controls on firearms. I cannot give an exact timescale for publication but I expect this to be shortly.

The Home Office worked with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England to introduce a digital firearms marker, which is placed on GP patient records. The digital marker enables the doctor to advise police if a firearm certificate holder begins to experience a medical condition which could affect their suitability to possess firearms, so that the police can review whether the person remains suitable. The digital marker has been rolled-out to GP practices since May 2023 and the Home Office is working with the DHSC and NHS England to obtain monitoring data about operation of the marker across the country.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services currently plans to carry out a thematic inspection of police firearms licensing arrangements in its 2024-25 inspection programme. The Home Office will assist the Inspectorate with any guidance or information it requires ahead of the inspection.

Work is underway with the police on a programme of work to improve reliability of the National Firearms Licensing Management System, including establishing links with the Police National Database.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[25958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans to respond to his Department's consultation entitled Firearms licensing: a consultation on recommendations for changes made to the Home Office.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government received a wide range of views in response to last year's consultation on firearms licensing.

We are carefully considering all the comments received before publishing our response, which will set out what action we intend to take to further strengthen the controls on firearms. I cannot give an exact timescale for publication but I expect this to be shortly.

#### ■ Immigration Controls: Airports

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[25473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many days e-gates were not in use in airports in each of the last five years.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office does not hold this information in an accessible format.

#### ■ Immigration: Detainees

**Kate Osborne:** [R] [\[25992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Introduction to the Government Response to the Report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) on its visit to the United Kingdom from 27 March to 6 April 2023 (CPT/Inf (2024) 09), whether he has had recent discussion with Cabinet colleagues on the implications for their policies of the (a) conditions of detention and (b) treatment of persons held under immigration powers in the UK.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

Detention plays a key role in maintaining effective immigration control and securing the UK's borders, particularly in connection with the removal of people who have no right to remain in the UK but who refuse to leave voluntarily.

The Home Office takes the welfare and safety of people in its care very seriously and we are committed to ensuring the proper protection and treatment of people in detention.

#### ■ Immigration: Fees and Charges

**Layla Moran:** [\[25919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for a fee waiver application decision; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of those waiting times on people without leave to remain.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Please find published transparency data regarding consideration times for fee waivers in relation to permission to stay here: Immigration and protection data: Q4 2023 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

Where a fee waiver application is submitted in relation to a subsequent application for permission to stay, while the applicant still has valid permission, and that permission expires while the fee waiver application is outstanding, section 3C of the 1971 Immigration Act will automatically extend the person's permission while the fee waiver and linked application are still pending.

In the case of applicants where there is evidence of significant vulnerability, for example homeless individuals, the department makes efforts to prioritise consideration of their fee waiver application to support resolution of status.

**Refugees: Afghanistan****Anneliese Dodds:**[\[25921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 19 April 2024 to Question 22008 on Refugees: Afghanistan, what his planned timetable is for establishing a route for separated families to be reunited.

**Tom Pursglove:**

In October we committed to establishing a route for those evacuated from Afghanistan under Pathway 1 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme without their immediate family members to reunite them in the UK. We remain on track to meet that commitment in the first half of this year. Further details and guidance will be provided in due course.

**Safety of Women at Night Fund****Alex Cunningham:**[\[25840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of introducing a new Safety of Women at Night Fund.

**Chris Philp:**

The independent evaluation of the Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) Fund, worth £5 million and delivered over the 2021/22 financial year, was published on 10 April.

Learnings from the SWaN Fund were incorporated into rounds Four and Five of the Safer Streets Fund, worth £50m and £35m respectively, which included a primary objective around combatting violence against women and girls in public spaces, and have funded a range of interventions including CCTV, streetlighting and educational initiatives with a focus on changing attitudes and behaviours. Round five is currently ongoing.

## ■ Vagrancy Act 1824

**Layla Moran:**

[\[25920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Repeal of the Vagrancy Act 1824: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 factsheet, updated on 20 August 2022, whether he plans to repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824 once the Criminal Justice Bill is passed.

**Chris Philp:**

Nobody should be criminalised for simply being having nowhere to live. That is why we are committed to bringing into force the repeal of the outdated Vagrancy Act 1824.

We have tabled amendments for Report stage of the Bill which will bring the Repeal of the Vagrancy Act into force three months after the Criminal Justice Bill receives Royal Assent.

At this same time, the provisions on nuisance begging and nuisance rough sleeping in the Criminal Justice Bill will also come into force.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### ■ House of Commons: Food

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[25631\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the House of Commons' policy is on the procurement of (a) food and (b) drinks produced in Britain for use in its canteens and restaurants.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

The House of Commons complies with UK legislative standards when procuring food and drinks from suppliers. Its procurement approach supports and where possible prioritises the purchase of food and drink produced in Britain. For example:

- The Strangers' Bar offers Members the opportunity to request that a specific cask ale from an independent, regional brewer from their constituency be offered for sale.
- As much as possible, most fresh products purchased by Catering Services are sourced within the UK. This includes meat, poultry, dairy, bread, eggs and most fruit and vegetables (when in season). Bought-in sandwiches use British chicken and cheese boards feature only British cheese. Milk is sourced locally from a British dairy.
- There is a mandatory inclusion of wines from England and Wales on wine lists.
- Speciality cakes and dairy ice cream are only UK-made.
- Bottled water is from British source.

- Promotional activity in catering outlets highlights British food by showcasing a rolling programme of regional goods.

Certain regulations, such as the Government's Procurement Policy Note of December 2020 and increased use of the UK-based Catering Framework, have allowed for additional freedom for spend on goods and services below certain price thresholds. Within the limits of these regulations, the House where possible seeks to hold competitions which only target producers within the UK.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Prisons: Drugs

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[25784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the £100m Security Investment Programme in preventing drugs being smuggled into prisons since March 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

The Government's £100m Security Investment Programme, aimed at reducing the conveyance of illicit items such as drugs, was completed in March 2022.

This investment delivered 75 additional X-ray body scanners resulting in full coverage across the closed adult male estate. As of October 2023, we have recorded 46,925 positive indications, helping to tackle the smuggling of drugs and other illicit items into prisons.

The investment also funded Enhanced Gate Security at 42 high-risk sites, enhancing our routine searching of staff and visitors. Over 140 new staff were recruited into the Counter-Corruption Unit through the Security Investment Programme. This includes regional Prevent teams dedicated to building staff resilience through training, awareness raising and individual support, as well as 20 Police Investigators dedicated to investigating corruption within HMPPS.

As part of this investment, we are undertaking a full evaluation for the Security Investment Programme. The evaluation explores whether the programme has achieved its intended outcomes, how the programme has been delivered, whether it has been delivered as intended and to identify factors which further strengthen its effectiveness.

### ■ Repossession Orders: Wales

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

[\[25889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2024 to Question 13012 on Repossession Orders: Wales, if he will make an updated estimate of when the Possession Claim Online service will be made available in Welsh for properties in Wales.

**Mike Freer:**

As a result of the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016 introduced by the Welsh Government and implemented in December 2022, changes to the Possession Claim Online (PCOL) service are required to enable users to make a claim for possession of a property located in Wales.

Work is still ongoing between HMCTS and Welsh Government to agree the scope and funding of these changes to ensure compliance with the legislation.

■ **Young Offender Institutions: Prison Accommodation**

**Janet Daby:**[\[25980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average number of hours inmates spent out of their cell was on (a) weekdays and (b) weekend days in each young offender institution in April 2024.

**Edward Argar:**

The information requested regarding average time-out-of-room spent by children and young people in young offender institutions during April 2024 is shown in the table below.

|          | COOKHAM<br>WOOD | FELTHAM | PARC | WERRINGTON | WETHERBY |
|----------|-----------------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| Weekdays | 4:16            | 4:28    | 8:20 | 4:40       | 5:05     |
| Weekends | 4:19            | 3:51    | 6:28 | 3:30       | 3:40     |

We know the importance of ensuring that time in custody is purposeful and are committed to ensuring that children and young people have the necessary and appropriate access to education, skills, and work provision with a consistent daily programme of activities.

The Youth Custody Service is reviewing regime models and staff deployment to maximise time-out-of-room, creating as open a regime as can safely be managed, as well as providing education and enrichment for those who cannot safely be in a classroom setting. Additionally, work done to reduce conflict and manage behaviour, to increase the size of groups who are mixing in the regime, has increased time-out-of-room.

**LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES****■ Cycleways: Planning**

**Andrew Selous:** [\[25184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mentioning the National Cycle Network in the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Lee Rowley:**

The National Planning Policy Framework does currently state that planning policies should “provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks with supporting facilities which are designed to promote active travel”. We will certainly bear in mind my Hon Friend’s views for further updates.

**■ High Rise Flats: Insulation**

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[25923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Building Safety Remediation: monthly data release - March 2024, published on 18 April 2024, what is the target completion date for occupied buildings over 18 metres that have not had ACM cladding removed.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[25924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's web page entitled Building Safety Remediation data releases, updated on 18 April 2024, what his expected completion date is for the removal of cladding from the 28 occupied buildings over 18 metres with ACM cladding.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[25925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Building Safety Remediation: monthly data release - March 2024, published on 18 April 2024, what the target state date is for remediation work to commence for all buildings under the Building Safety Fund that have not yet started works.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[25926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Building Safety Remediation: monthly data release - March 2024, published on 18 April 2024, what the target completion date is for all buildings under the Building Safety Fund that have not yet completed works.

**Lee Rowley:**

The department will continue to pursue a range of initiatives to seek remediation at the earliest date. The Honourable Gentleman will be aware, from the document he quotes in his questions, that the length of time to conclude remediation will depend upon the number of responsible entities that start remediation in a timely manner and

how many will need to be compelled to do so. The Government will continue to take action to make progress on remediation.

#### ■ **Holiday Accommodation: Planning Permission**

**Matthew Pennycook:** [\[25888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his planned timetable is for responding to his Department's consultation on the introduction of a use class for short term lets and associated permitted development rights.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN [21419](#) on 22 April 2024.

#### ■ **Local Government: Elections**

**John Healey:** [\[25157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of UK veterans who were turned away from polling stations on 2 May after attempting to use their Veterans ID Card as voter ID.

**Simon Hoare:**

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [24794](#) on 13 May 2024.

#### ■ **Railways: Radlett**

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[25357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make representations to SEGRO on responding to requests for a public meeting on ongoing construction work at the former Radlett Aerodrome site.

**Lee Rowley:**

Following planning permission being granted for this proposal in 2014, I understand that some site preparation works are currently underway, with construction expected to begin this summer. I am also aware that there are proceedings due to come before the courts next month and as such it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this individual development.

#### ■ **Social Rented Housing: Northern Ireland**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[25218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had discussions with the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland on the provision of social housing.

**Jacob Young:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [12441](#) on 7 February 2024.



## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ 5G: Public Sector

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[25494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department plans to integrate 5G networks with public sector infrastructure; and whether she has had discussions with network providers on the role of public sector infrastructure in improving coverage.

**Julia Lopez:**

Our 2023 Wireless Infrastructure Strategy sets out a range of measures to drive 5G adoption in the private and public sectors to ensure the UK can fully realise the benefits of 5G. This includes a commitment to drive innovation in public services, and for digital connectivity requirements for future users of infrastructure to be at the heart of planning for major infrastructure projects. This includes our commitment that all new hospitals are built with 5G or the equivalent technology.

My Department has regular engagement with network providers to explore how the public sector can be an early adopter of 5G and deliver our ambitions to improve 5G coverage nationally.

We have taken steps to encourage the use of public sector assets for wireless infrastructure deployment, including through the £7 million Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator programme, which helps local councils and the telecoms industry resolve the challenges involved with using publicly owned land, buildings and street furniture to host digital infrastructure.

DSIT has also awarded six local authority pilots a total of £1.3 million through our Smart Infrastructure Pilots Programme, to test “smart” multipurpose columns that provide wireless connectivity services and other uses, such as EV charging.

My Department has also published, via the [Digital Connectivity Portal](#), - extensive guidance for local authorities and operators to help facilitate broadband deployment. This includes technical information, as well as examples of best practice.

### ■ Bioengineering: Carbon Emissions

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[25492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of engineering biology on reaching net zero.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The National Vision for Engineering Biology, published December 2023, identifies opportunities to apply engineering biology to tackle Net Zero in sectors including low carbon fuels and chemical manufacturing.

## ■ Disease Control

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[25488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to collaborate with the Department for Health and Social Care on pandemic preparedness.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Our new £520m fund will help provide the capabilities and capacities to support domestic UK health resilience and ensure a robust response to potential future health emergencies, such as influenza pandemics. The Office for Life Sciences will publish the fund's strategic objectives, process, and assessment criteria in due course. We are working closely with DHSC to ensure that the fund will contribute to the Government's pandemic preparedness priorities.

## ■ Life Sciences Council

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[25846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many times a year, on average, she meets representatives of the Life Sciences Council; and when she plans to next meet the council.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Secretary of State, alongside the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care co-chairs the Life Sciences Council twice a year. The most recent meeting took place on 23 November 2023 and the date for the next meeting is currently being agreed with members.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[25847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when the most recent meeting of Life Sciences Council was held; and when the council is scheduled to meet next.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The last meeting of the Life Sciences Council took place on Tuesday 21 November 2023.

The date for the next meeting is currently being agreed with members.

## ■ Public Sector: Equality

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[25495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what training her Department offers officials on the Public Sector Equality Duty.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is currently developing guidance to support officials carrying out Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) considerations and is due to be published internally this month. Officials have been

able to access their previous Department's (BEIS & DCMS) guidance on applying PSED since DSIT formed in February 2023.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[25848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether officials in her Department have provided Ministers with written advice on meeting the public sector equality duty in relation to the (a) UK Science and Technology Framework, (b) National AI Strategy and (c) Life Sciences Vision.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The department does not hold an Equality Impact Assessment for the Science and Technology Framework, as it is a high-level strategic Framework through which to deliver Government policy. Individual policies that will be delivered under the Framework have or will develop Equality Impact Assessments for their policies, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty. As set out in the published Science and Technology Framework, many of the strands have equality considerations at the heart of what they are aiming to achieve.

#### ■ UK Research and Innovation: Disease Control

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[25489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what funding UK Research and Innovation provides to support research and innovation related to pandemic preparedness.

**Andrew Griffith:**

As the Member should know, DHSC are the lead department for pandemic preparedness, a core element of the UK Biological Security Strategy.

### SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

#### ■ Political Parties: Registration

**George Galloway:** [\[26073\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 13 May 2024 to Question 25444 on Political Parties: Registration, if she will ask the Commission to make an assessment of the consistency of those rules with the approval of a description on a ballot paper of the Liberal Party that includes reference to Steve Radford's candidate.

**Cat Smith:**

All applications to register new party descriptions are assessed against the criteria set out in law. The criteria are designed to ensure voters can mark the ballot paper with confidence.

The description referenced was registered 23 years ago. The Commission has since updated its approach to descriptions that feature individuals' names, to ensure the statutory criteria which prevent voters from being misled or confused are met.

The Commission periodically reviews the registers of political parties to ensure registered details continue to meet the statutory tests. It will consider descriptions that include an individual's name as part of its programme of future reviews.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Sir Jeremy Quin:** [\[902851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve road safety.

**Guy Opperman:**

Although by global standards, roads in the UK are very safe, every road death and injury is a tragedy for the families involved and we are working on a number of measures to keep our roads and road users safe. This Government has updated The Highway Code to improve road safety for people walking, cycling and riding horses, tightened up the law to target the most dangerous drivers and closed the loophole in the offence of driving while using a mobile.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[902853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve rail services.

**Huw Merriman:**

We are delivering a simpler and better railway. In advance of legislation to establish Great British Railways, we have reorganised the Department of Transport with the creation of an integrated Rail Services Group. This group brings together most of the Passenger Services Group and the Rail Infrastructure Group. This single team, focussed on the day-to-day operational performance of the railway, will pave the way to an integrated rail body.

**Judith Cummins:** [\[902854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will have discussions with representatives of the insurance industry on regional variations in average car insurance costs.

**Guy Opperman:**

Individual motor insurers are responsible for setting premiums and the terms and conditions of their policies, and are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

However, the Department is aware that motor insurance costs have been increasing. The Minister for Roads and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury met with representatives of the insurance industry on the 13th of May to discuss this matter.

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[902856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his timeline is for reviewing the business case for strengthening works on Hammersmith Bridge.

**Huw Merriman:**

Given the complexity of the Strengthening works and the rising projected costs, Ministers are considering next steps and will make a final decision on the business case in due course.

In the meantime, my Department is continuing to work productively with both the Borough and Transport for London to ensure the eventual reopening of Hammersmith Bridge to all users, subject to cost.

The Government recognises the frustration Londoners feel due to the ongoing closure of Hammersmith Bridge, which is why we've provided almost £13m towards repairing and stabilising the structure, and recently announced almost £3m for a new temporary cycle way.

## ■ Active Travel: Carbon Emissions

**Wera Hobhouse:**

[\[25523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the the Institution of Civil Engineers and All-Party Parliamentary Group on Infrastructure report entitled What are the public behavioural changes required to meet net zero?, published in February 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his polices of the finding that funding safe active travel infrastructure may support people looking to change their behaviour to reduce carbon emissions; and what steps his Department is taking to incentivise transport choices that reduce carbon emissions.

**Guy Opperman:**

This Government's approach to decarbonisation is not to stop people doing things, but to enable people to do the same things differently and more sustainably. The Government set out its plans for decarbonising transport in its 2021 Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) and has continued to build on these plans.

The Government agrees that funding safe active travel infrastructure can enable more people to choose walking, cycling and wheeling for short journeys, and that this in turn can reduce carbon emissions. The TDP includes an assessment of the carbon savings that are projected to be delivered by the Government's current and projected future support for active travel. This support includes the investment of around £3 billion over the current Parliament, much of which will directly support the roll-out of safe and attractive active travel infrastructure.

## ■ Commuters: North West

**Damien Moore:** [\[25549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support those commuting by car between towns and cities in the North West.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Plan for Drivers, published last year, shows that the government is on the side of drivers, including measures to promote smoother journeys and cracking down on inconsiderate driving. We are also investing significantly in the strategic and local road network, including £8.5m allocated to roads across the North West from the third round of the Safer Roads Fund in March 2024, and £1.3bn investment through the Road Investment Strategy in enhancing, renewing and maintaining the Strategic Road Network in the North West in the period 2020 - 2023. In addition, the Network North announcement included an additional £3.3bn long term road surfacing fund for the North for the period 2023-2033. This is in addition to the local transport funding already allocated at the last Spending Review and to what local authorities were already expecting in the future.

Another significant step we have taken to support commuting by cars is, no increase in the main fuel duty rate since January 2011. Furthermore, recognising fuel price volatility, we cut five pence off fuel duty in March 2022. This was extended for another year in March 2023. This cut, along with the fuel duty freeze, saved the average car driver around £100 in 2023/24.

## ■ Cycleways

**Andrew Selous:** [\[25185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the relationship between the National Cycle Network and local cycle routes.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department for Transport has not undertaken an assessment of the adequacy of the relationship between the National Cycle Network (NCN) and local cycle routes, but we are working to improve this situation.

## ■ Cycling: Pedestrian Areas

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[25533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 February 2024 to Question 15138 on Cycling: Pedestrian Areas, how he plans to support the DVSA in increasing awareness of Rule 64 of the Highway Code among cyclists.

**Guy Opperman:**

Factual awareness-raising and behaviour change campaigns took place in 2022 and 2023, to highlight the changes the Department made to the Highway Code in January 2022, as part of helping to improve road safety for people walking, cycling, and horse riding.

The campaigns were supported by significant media resource: utilising channels such as radio, digital audio, video on demand, and social media advertising. This approach has helped the Department and DVSA to increase awareness of the relevant Highway Code rules for cycling.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[25534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2023 to Question 6880 on Cycling: Pedestrian Areas, if his Department will make such an assessment.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government has no plans to make such an assessment.

### ■ **Cycling: Safety**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[25535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2023 to Question 6880 on Cycling: Pedestrian Areas, whether he plans to develop targeted educational campaigns to improve cyclists' knowledge of pedestrian safety.

**Guy Opperman:**

Active Travel England is providing £50 million to expand Bikeability cycle training to a million more young people between 2023 and 2025 as part of a projected £3 billion investment in active travel up to 2025. This will help to improve standards of cycling behaviour by teaching young cyclists the rules of the road. In addition, a THINK! Campaign, with significant media investment, supported the changes made to The Highway Code in January 2022. The campaign aimed to raise awareness and understanding of the changes, helping to improve road safety for people walking cycling and horse riding. It included messaging on the hierarchy of road users, making clear that those road users who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger or threat they may pose to others.

There are no further plans to develop a targeted educational campaign to improve cyclists' knowledge of pedestrian safety.

### ■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Contracts**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[25812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Minister without Portfolio's article of 12 May 2024 in The Sunday Telegraph, when the DVLA is expected to terminate its contract with Political Engagement Ltd., procurement reference 430567/1349023; and whether a notice period is required under the provisions of clause 11.3 of that contract.

**Guy Opperman:**

No monies have been paid under this contract, which is a call-off contract for conference attendance. It can be cancelled at 90 days notice.

## ■ Driving Licences

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[25196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing graduated driving licences.

**Guy Opperman:**

I discussed the issue of graduated driving licences with the MP for Shrewsbury and Atcham and his constituent on 17 April. Since then, the Department for Transport has been considering the Driver 2020 project and further measures the Department can take to improve road safety for young drivers. The Department is still reviewing its position.

## ■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

**Alex Norris:** [\[25541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help reduce waiting times for practical driving tests.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards.

To increase the number of car driving test slots, the DVSA deployed eligible managers and administrative staff back on the front line to do driving tests from the beginning of October 2023 until the end of March 2024; which created over 145,000 additional test slots. Eligible managers and administrative staff will continue to spend a portion of their time conducting car tests in the coming months to help continue to reduce waiting times.

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers, including: the recruitment of driving examiners, conducting tests outside of regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from driving examiners is creating, on average, over 48,300 extra car test slots each month.



## ■ East Coast Main Line: Timetables

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[25670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the rail sector on timetable changes proposed for the East Coast Main Line.

**Huw Merriman:**

I met with the rail industry to discuss the delay to the upgrade timetable and how the improvements can be delivered as soon as possible.

I have made clear the importance of Network Rail continuing to develop a process for eventually delivering this timetable and realising the benefits of £4 billion investment in infrastructure and rolling stock on the route.

## ■ High Speed 2 Line: Euston Station

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[25678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to provide funding for the construction of an HS2 tunnel to Euston station.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Government remains committed to delivering a privately financed HS2 Euston station as part of a transformed 'Euston Quarter' outlined in the Network North paper. The Department continues to define and develop a range of development models and financing mechanisms to best meet the objectives of the 'Euston Quarter'. This includes consideration of options for using alternative funding to cover the section of HS2 from Old Oak Common to Euston, underpinned by contributions from those people and businesses this development supports.

## ■ Highway Code

**Michael Shanks:**

[\[26025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the level of public awareness of changes to the highway code made in 2022.

**Guy Opperman:**

The January 2022 changes to The Highway Code to help improve road safety for people walking, cycling and horse riding have been communicated via a factual awareness raising campaign and broader behaviour change campaigns.

Over £2.4million has been spent on media across the campaign, utilising channels such as radio, digital audio, video on demand and social media advertising.

Results from the most recent campaign activity in August 2023 include:

- Awareness: The percentage of road users reporting to know either a little or a lot about the Highway Code changes in September 2023 was at 70% among all road users (82% amongst drivers), with 86% of road users having heard of the changes by September 2023.

- **Understanding:** In September 2023 86% of drivers correctly identified that you should leave at least 1.5 metres of space when passing cyclists. Pedestrian priority at junctions was correctly identified by 77% of drivers.
- **Empathy:** Drivers agreeing that it is their responsibility to respect and give space to vulnerable road users remains consistently high and was at 93% in September 2023.
- **Action:** In September 2023 81% of drivers claim to leave a gap of 1.5M when passing a cyclist all or most of the time.

We will continue to promote The Highway Code changes on THINK! and DfT social media channels and via our partner organisations.

### ■ **Luton Airport: Construction**

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[25356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 19 September 2023 to Question 199520 on Luton Airport: Construction, when he plans to respond to the Climate Change Committee's recommendations; and if he will respond to the recommendation on not expanding the airport until a capacity management framework is in place before announcing a decision on expansion of the airport.

**Anthony Browne:**

The Government responded to the Climate Change Committee's recommendations on 26 October 2023. The published response "*Responding to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) 2023 Annual Progress Report to Parliament*" is available in the Libraries of the House.

### ■ **Motorways**

**Catherine West:**

[\[25512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make his policy to reinstate a hard shoulder on all smart motorways.

**Guy Opperman:**

On 16 April 2023, the Government announced that all plans for new smart motorways have been cancelled, recognising the lack of confidence felt by drivers and cost pressures. This means no new smart motorways will be built.

We are focused on investing £900m to add further safety improvements to existing smart motorways, including constructing over 150 extra emergency areas – so that people can continue to get around easily and with increased confidence.

Restoring the hard shoulder while maintaining capacity would be hugely disruptive, both for road users and local communities, and come at a significant financial cost, and a potential impact on the overall safety of the road network.

Any reduction in capacity on our Strategic Road Network could put more drivers and passengers at risk of death or serious injury by forcing them on to less safe local roads.

## ■ Railways: Manufacturing Industries

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[25675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support the long-term sustainability of the rail manufacturing sector.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Government is committed to supporting a thriving UK-based rolling stock industry. The Department for Transport works closely with rolling stock owners and train operators to understand when new trains are likely to be required and seeks to ensure a regular flow of work for train manufacturers. Trains are major assets with a lifetime of 35-40 years so there will naturally be peaks and troughs in procurement cycles.

Since 2012, train operators have invested in around 8,000 new vehicles for the mainline railway in Great Britain. Despite the impacts of the Covid pandemic, there is now a strong domestic UK market for rolling stock procurement. Over 2,000 new vehicles are expected to be procured over the next few years, providing £3.6 billion of opportunities for train manufacturers. Rolling stock owners also continue to invest heavily in their fleets, with several major upgrades currently underway.

In January 2024, I wrote to train manufacturers to outline the pipeline of current and expected orders for new trains. This included details of current competitions for Northern, SouthEastern, Chiltern, TransPennine Express and an expected procurement by Great Western Railway.

## ■ Railways: Passengers

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[25841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether any operators have lost their accreditation to the Safeguarding on Rail Scheme.

**Huw Merriman:**

Since the first Safeguarding on Rail Scheme accreditation for Great Western Railway (GWR) in 2021, no rail operator has lost their accreditation.

## ■ Railways: Standards

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[25677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the number of train cancellations in Q3 of 2023-24.

**Huw Merriman:**

Performance varies across the network and is dependent on both reliable infrastructure and strong operator performance. Where we have both, as on Anglia, passengers enjoy great performance and I'm clear this is the standard for all operators to achieve working with their Network Rail route counterparts. I regularly meet Network Rail and train operators to encourage greater collaboration on day-to-day performance including convening a rail industry summit in March.

Reforming and modernising the railway is essential to delivering a more reliable rail network that is financially sustainable and improves the experience for passengers. Outdated working practices, like relying on voluntary overtime to run trains every day of the week, increases the likelihood of cancellations and prevents passengers getting the service they pay for and deserve.

**■ Railways: Strikes****Charlotte Nichols:**[\[25372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he had discussions with rail unions on taking steps to avoid the strikes that commenced on 7 May 2024.

**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.

**■ Railways: Tickets****Stephen Morgan:**[\[25673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help simplify the rail ticketing system.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Plan for Rail proposes the biggest shake-up of rail in a generation. We have already made progress on fares and ticketing reforms, for example introducing flexible season tickets, expanding single leg pricing to most of London North Eastern Railway's (LNER) network and committing to Pay As You Go (PAYG) in urban areas across the country.

In February we announced that PAYG pilots in both Manchester and the West Midlands are due to be launched in 2025, expanding pay as you go to an additional 92 rail stations. We will also be extending contactless PAYG ticketing to 53 additional stations in the South East.

In addition, on 16 January this year, LNER began selling tickets for its two year long "Simpler Fares" pilot, for travel from 5 February. This pilot involves removing the old off-peak which led to some very quiet "peak" and very busy "off-peak" services,

simplifying the fares and ticketing system to smooth out demand and reduce crowding, making travel more comfortable for passengers.

## ■ Roads: North West

**Damien Moore:**

[\[25548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve road (a) maintenance and (b) conditions in the North West.

**Guy Opperman:**

On 4 October 2023 the Prime Minister announced an unprecedented increase of £8.3 billion for local highway maintenance over the period from 2023/24 to 2033/34 to help fix the blight of potholes on our local highway networks up and down the country.

As part of this, local highway authorities in the North West of England will receive in total a minimum funding uplift of £1.269 billion between 2023-24 and 2033-34. This includes an additional £19 million in both the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years to allow local highway authorities across the North West to make an immediate start on improving road conditions. Funding allocations for individual local highway authorities are published on gov.uk.

## ■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[25484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the annual local authority road maintenance survey 2024.

**Guy Opperman:**

It is being considered.

## ■ Rolling Stock: Manufacturing Industries

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[25676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Hitachi on its Newton Aycliffe plant.

**Huw Merriman:**

My Department has met Hitachi Rail's UK management team several times in recent months to discuss workload at the company's Newton Aycliffe site. We remain keen to discuss options with Hitachi as it seeks to secure a sustainable long-term future for its site.

## ■ Shipping: Slavery

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[25477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps his Department has taken to tackle modern slavery in the maritime industry.

**Guy Opperman:**

While onboard for surveys and inspections, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) inspectors assess the working and living conditions for crew including, but not limited to, employment agreements, payment of wages and standards of accommodation. These inspections implement the standards of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, and the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No.188), that came into force in 2013 and 2019, respectively.

Inspectors also interview crew while they are onboard during merchant and fishing vessel inspections and surveys, offering a confidential space for concerns to be raised. If there is any evidence of modern slavery, the matter is followed up and information is also forwarded to HMRC or local police for further investigation, as needed.

**■ Transport: North of England****Stephen Morgan:**[\[25671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the policy paper entitled Network North, published on 4 October 2023, how many and what proportion of the Network North projects have an approved business case.

**Huw Merriman:**

Projects have different business cases during their life cycle. Since the Government announced Network North on 4 October, the Department has been working closely with delivery bodies to establish plans for delivery. Announcements on progress of business cases and delivery will be made as schemes develop.

**TREASURY****■ Defibrillators: VAT****Ian Byrne:**[\[26006\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an estimate of the cost to the public purse of a removing Value Added Tax on automatic external defibrillators.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Government provides VAT reliefs to aid the purchase of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) through VAT refunds on purchases made by local authorities including parish councils, and VAT reliefs for purchases made through voluntary contributions where the AED is donated to eligible charities or the NHS.

The cost of relieving VAT on AEDs is uncertain owing to the lack of data on purchases of these devices. Businesses are not required to provide information at a

product level in their VAT returns, as this may impose an excessive administrative burden.

The Government is currently inviting community organisations to bid for funding as part of a £1 million grant scheme that expands public access to AEDs, particularly in public places where they are most needed.

## ■ Inheritance Tax

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[25195\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average waiting time was for individuals submitting an IHT400 form to HMRC between 1 January to 30 April 2024 to receive a unique code to enable them to apply for probate; and how many individuals have waited for (a) one to two, (b) two to three, (c) three to four, (d) four to five, (e) five to six and (e) more than six months since submitting their IHT400 form to receive the unique code from HMRC as of 8 May 2024.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

HMRC prioritises requests for IHT reference numbers and the follow up IHT400 forms submitted to set up an IHT account. Between 1 January and 30 April 2024 HMRC have exceeded its service standard for issuing unique codes for Probate cases where the correct tax amount has been accounted for. The service standard is to process 80% of these requests within 15 working days.

## ■ Taxation

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[25476\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to simplify the tax system.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Chancellor has been clear that tax simplification is a key priority. He has set a clear mandate for officials in HMT and HMRC to focus on simplification during tax policy making and implementation.

Recent fiscal events have included several simplification measures. At Autumn Statement 2023 the government abolished the obligation to pay class 2 self-employed national insurance contributions, simplified the capital allowances system for large businesses by making full expensing permanent, and made it easier for self-employed to use a simplified method for calculating small business profits known as the cash basis.

The Government announced additional simplifications in a Written Statement on 16<sup>th</sup> January.

## ■ Tourism and Service Industries: Government Assistance

**Damien Moore:** [\[25556\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent fiscal steps his Department has taken to help support small and local businesses in the (a) seasonal tourism and (b) service industries.

**Gareth Davies:**

The Government is committed to supporting small and local businesses in the hospitality, tourism, and services sectors, which provide a significant contribution to the UK economy and society.

At the Autumn Statement 2023, the Government announced an extension to the 75% business rate relief for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties for 2024-25, a tax cut worth £2.4 billion.

Spring Budget 2024 goes further to support SMEs by increasing the VAT registration threshold from £85,000 to £90,000 which means the UK now has the joint highest VAT registration threshold in the OECD. This keeps the majority of UK businesses out.

Our Small Business Rates Relief means one-third of business properties in England already pay no Business Rates. We provide other tax reliefs benefiting SMEs such as the Annual Investment Allowance and Employment Allowance, and support investment in SMEs through British Business Bank programmes.

Furthermore, over this Spending Review period – the Government has allocated over £100m to the British Tourist Authority to support VisitBritain and VisitEngland with marketing activity to promote Britain as a destination.

## ■ Treasury: Correspondence

**Michael Shanks:** [\[26024\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of response times for ministerial correspondence.

**Gareth Davies:**

The Government attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence. Ministers and officials are committed to providing the highest level of service. The [Cabinet Office](#) publishes correspondence performance data on GOV.UK on a regular basis, detailing departmental performance in handling correspondence.

## ■ Treasury: Food

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[25414\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his Department's policy is on the procurement of (a) food and (b) drinks produced in the UK for use in its canteens and restaurants.



**Gareth Davies:**

Our buildings are managed by the Government Property Agency (GPA), and they are responsible for the provision of catering services across our sites.

**WALES**■ **Wales Office: Food****Sir John Hayes:**[\[25633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, 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.

**Fay Jones:**

The Department does not operate a canteen or restaurant.

**WORK AND PENSIONS**■ **Access to Work Programme: Digital Technology****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[25287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress his Department has made on the digitalisation of Access to Work.

**Mims Davies:**

As of May 2024, customers are able to both make applications to, and claim payments online for, the following elements of Access to Work:

- Adaptations to premises and equipment
- Adaptations to vehicle
- Special Aids and Equipment
- Support Workers
- Travel in work
- Travel to work

■ **Access to Work Programme: Osteoarthritis****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[25284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living with osteoarthritis have (a) applied for and (b) been successful in an Access to Work application in the last 12 months.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [25285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living with rheumatoid arthritis have (a) applied for and (b) been successful with an Access to Work application in the last 12 months.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [25286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living with a musculoskeletal condition have (a) applied for and (b) been successful with an Access to Work application in the last 12 months.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department does collect information on Access to Work applicant's primary medical condition, however we do not hold information to the level required to identify people with the specific conditions requested. Therefore, we are not able to make an estimate of the number of people that have applied for, or been approved, for support through the Access to Work scheme.

Information on Access to Work volumes for approvals and recipients by primary medical condition are published annually in the official statistics found [here](#).

■ **Carer's Allowance****Sir Stephen Timms:** [25731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many outstanding Carer's Allowance Verify Earnings and Pension service alerts there were at the end of the financial year 2023-24.

**Mims Davies:**

The DWP is currently developing recommendations focused on helping claimants understand their responsibilities to report a change of circumstances and how DWP can help prevent the accumulation of debts amongst Carer's Allowance claimants.

■ **Carer's Allowance: Overpayments****Sir Stephen Timms:** [25729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in debt to the Department through overpayments of Carers Allowance; and how much do they owe in total.

**Sir Stephen Timms:** [25730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) men and (b) women are in debt to his Department through overpayments of Carers Allowance.

**Paul Maynard:**

As of 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024, the volume of people who have an outstanding Carers Allowance debt is 134,800 with a total value of £251m. This figure represents the total stock and as such the total monetary amount may have been accrued over

multiple years. Those who have an outstanding Carers Allowance debt may no longer be in receipt of the benefit.

Women make up the majority of Carer's Allowance claims, and this is reflected in the proportion of those with an outstanding Carer's Allowance debt. As of 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024, there were 42,800 (32%) males, 91,900 (68%) females and 100 (less than 1%) not identified, with an outstanding Carers Allowance debt.

As of November 2023, there were over 991,000 people in receipt of Carers Allowance. That figure is made up of over 271,000 (27%) males and 720,000 (73%) females.

The data contained in our response has been sourced from internal DWP management information, which is intended only to help the Department to manage its business. It is not intended for publication and has not been subject to the same quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. It should therefore be treated with caution.

All figures provided have been rounded .

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

[\[25732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Carer's Allowance overpayment cases are being investigated by his Department; and if he will publish the level of overpayments being pursued, broken down into £1,000 ranges in the financial year 2023-24.

**Paul Maynard:**

There are currently 750 live cases where Carers Allowance is shown as the "primary" benefit under investigation.

We do not hold information on the size of any individual overpayment whilst the investigation process is taking place – this is not determined until the investigation is completed.

## ■ Child Benefit

**George Galloway:**

[\[26074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the two-child limit for benefits.

**Jo Churchill:**

There are no plans to make such an assessment.

## ■ Disability: Cost of Living

**John McDonnell:**

[\[25139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an estimate of the number and proportion of disabled people facing one-off extra costs related to their disability.

**Mims Davies:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May to PQ[24769](#).

■ **Disability: Finance****John McDonnell:**[\[25140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of his Department's report entitled *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*, published on 20 July 2021 on the finances of people with complex disabilities.

**Mims Davies:**

In *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*, we explored how the benefits system can better meet the needs of claimants now and in the future, by improving claimant experience of our services, enabling independent living, and improving employment outcomes.

We received over 4,500 written responses to the Green Paper, and held consultation events with disabled people and people with health conditions and their representatives. These included both virtual and face-to-face events, with events in Scotland, Wales and every region of England.

We carefully considered the feedback we received to our consultation in developing the next steps set out in the *Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper*, published in March 2023. As stated in the White Paper, we are continuing to develop and refine our policy proposals.

■ **Employment: Parents****Caroline Ansell:**[\[25294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support parents of children with SEND to remain in the workforce.

**Jo Churchill:**

Eligible Universal Credit (UC) customers can claim back up to 85% of childcare costs making it easier for families to take up and progress in work.

In the past year the Department has increased the generosity of the UC childcare costs maximum amounts by over 50%, to £1015 for one child and £1,739 for two children or more.

UC childcare support is paid to registered providers for example, OFSTED and providers registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

■ **Employment: Poverty****Damien Moore:**[\[25542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support in-work progression.

**Jo Churchill:**

Since September 2022 we have increased the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) from earnings equivalent to 9 hours per week at the National Living Wage to the equivalent of 18 hours, bringing over 400,000 working customers into regular support from a Work Coach to help them increase in work progression and thereby increase earnings.

In addition, working Universal Credit customers earning above the AET are eligible to access support on a voluntary basis from a Work Coach, providing individual and tailored support designed to help customers.

**■ Housing Benefit: Scotland****Peter Grant:**[\[25868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of housing benefit in the context of average rents in Scotland.

**Mims Davies:**

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are reviewed annually by the Secretary of State. The review includes consideration of current rents, as well as the broader fiscal context. Rent Service Scotland have responsibility for collecting the private rental data that is used to help calculate LHA rates in Scotland.

From April this year the Government is investing £1.2 billion increasing LHA rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents in Great Britain. This significant investment ensures 1.6 million private renters in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit will gain on average, nearly £800 in additional help towards their rental costs in 2024/25. This includes around 85k private renters in Scotland who currently receive LHA.

LHA provides a reasonable level of housing support towards rental costs in the private rented sector. LHA rates are not intended to cover all rents in all areas.

For those who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs and need further support Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available from local authorities. Since April 2017, DHPs have been fully devolved to Scotland who are responsible for the allocation and payment to Scottish local authorities.

**■ Jobcentres: Southport****Damien Moore:**[\[25545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to expand support available through Jobcentres in Southport constituency.

**Jo Churchill:**

The local Jobcentre team are collaborating with a range of partners to support people into work and help employers fill vacancies. In addition to hosting job fairs, delivering Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), and hosting employer Group Information Sessions, Southport Jobcentre is working with Sefton Council, local

colleges, care & childcare providers, manufacturing, retail, education, agriculture, and hospitality companies, to provide an employment and skills offer to help meet the recruitment needs of local employers.

Southport Jobcentre has been working closely with employers such as Sainsbury's and McDonald's to hosts SWAP's for Southport residents to have direct access to live vacancies. The Jobcentre has also collaborated with Southport College to hosts job fairs to bring together national and local employers for job opportunities as well as providers to support customers with breaking down barriers to work. Additionally, the Jobcentre looks forward to supporting Southport's future regeneration and exciting projects which includes the Southport Enterprise Arcade, the Garrick Theatre development and the Marine Lake Events Centre.

Disability Employment Advisers (DEA's) offer advice and expertise on how to help disabled people and people with health conditions into work, alongside close working with Merseycare, The Peer Mentoring Service, Life Rooms, and Sefton Council. Southport Jobcentre colleagues also attend local events to highlight the support available, including Access to Work, Disability Confident and the Working Health Pioneer programme.

#### ■ **Kickstart Scheme**

**Caroline Ansell:** [\[25299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information he holds on the number and proportion of participants of the Kickstart scheme that are in employment.

**Mims Davies:**

The Impact Assessment on Kickstart is currently being finalised. This assessment will quantify any impact on movement into employment following the scheme. We aim to publish the findings of this assessment in due course.

#### ■ **Personal Independence Payment: Hearing Impairment**

**Liz Twist:** [\[25314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to ensure that all people with hearing loss have access to (a) Relay UK, (b) video calls with captions, (c) a video relay service and (d) in-person transcriptions services when applying for Personal Independence Payment.

**Mims Davies:**

When applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) there are two different types of service offer available to claimants who are deaf or hearing impaired.

We offer Video Relay Service, a third-party sign and talk solution which allows sign language to be used to aid communication between a claimant and DWP, via a third party. There is no transcript of the conversation, but calls are recorded.

Information is provided on Gov.UK:

**British Sign Language (BSL)** [video relay service](#)

**If you're on a computer - find out how to [use the service on mobile or tablet](#)**

We also offer a service known as Relay UK. This is a text relay service for people who cannot hear or speak on the telephone and includes captions. The full conversation is transcribed in real time as it happens.

Information is available on Gov.UK:

[Relay UK](#) (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 917 2222

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

**Angela Crawley:** [\[25869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of PIP assessments on the mental health of claimants.

**Angela Crawley:** [\[25870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that PIP assessments accurately assess claimants with mental health issues.

**Mims Davies:**

The Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment identifies the needs arising from physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive issues, or any combination of these. The assessment criteria were developed over a decade ago in conjunction with independent health, social care, and disability experts.

All health professionals performing PIP assessments receive comprehensive training in disability analysis including specific training on mental health conditions and how to identify their impact on claimants' ability to carry out the activities in the assessment. Our assessment providers have Mental Health Function Champions (MHFC) to support assessors when reviewing evidence and provide advice to DWP Case Managers. MHFCs are specialist practitioners who have at least 2 years of post-registration clinical experience in a mental health or learning disability role.

No assessment has been made of the potential mental health impact of PIP assessments, although customer experience is something that is continually monitored. It would be extremely difficult to objectively separate the specific impact of assessments on mental health from other contributory factors.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Mental Illness

**Angela Crawley:** [\[25871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many PIP claimants have been assessed as unfit for work due to mental health issues in 2024.

**Mims Davies:**

No one has been assessed as unfit for work as the assessment for Personal Independence Payment does not assess a claimant's capacity for work or work-related activity.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Women****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[25986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department received a draft of the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman report on changes to Women's State Pension age, published on 21 March 2024.

**Paul Maynard:**

The Department for Work and Pensions did not receive a draft of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report on changes to women's State Pension age, published on 21 March 2024.

■ **Unemployment: Musculoskeletal Disorders****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[25288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of trends in the the number of people who are out of work because of a musculoskeletal condition.

**Mims Davies:**

Information on the number of people who are out of work because of a musculoskeletal condition is not held by the Department for Work and Pensions.

The available published information on the number of disabled people aged 16 to 64 with a musculoskeletal condition by employment status in the UK is shown in the table below.

**Number of disabled people (in thousands) aged 16 to 64 with a musculoskeletal condition by employment status, UK**

|         | MAIN LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION |               |                   | MAIN OR SECONDARY LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION |               |                   |
|---------|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--|---------------|-------------------|
|         | Total                           | In employment | Not in employment | Total  | In employment | Not in employment |
| 2013/14 | 2,386                           | 1,217         | 1,169             | 3,712  | 1,594         | 2,119             |
| 2014/15 | 2,460                           | 1,308         | 1,152             | 3,835  | 1,735         | 2,099             |
| 2015/16 | 2,438                           | 1,317         | 1,121             | 3,850  | 1,760         | 2,090             |
| 2016/17 | 2,409                           | 1,354         | 1,056             | 3,746  | 1,795         | 1,950             |



|         | MAIN LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION |       |     | MAIN OR SECONDARY LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION |       |       |
|---------|---------------------------------|-------|-----|--|-------|-------|
|         |                                 |       |     |  |       |       |
| 2017/18 | 2,355                           | 1,367 | 988 | 3,684  | 1,818 | 1,866 |
| 2018/19 | 2,365                           | 1,367 | 999 | 3,688  | 1,829 | 1,859 |
| 2019/20 | 2,342                           | 1,404 | 938 | 3,698  | 1,908 | 1,790 |
| 2020/21 | 2,130                           | 1,227 | 902 | 3,623  | 1,789 | 1,834 |
| 2021/22 | 2,258                           | 1,323 | 934 | 3,763  | 1,879 | 1,884 |
| 2022/23 | 2,342                           | 1,346 | 996 | 3,974  | 1,974 | 2,001 |

Data source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - [The employment of Disabled People 2023 \(LMS003 and LMS004\)](#)

Notes:

- Numbers are rounded to and shown to the nearest 1000.
- Numbers are central estimates and subject to sampling variation. The precision of these estimates will be limited by sample size.
- Annual Population Survey data has not been reweighted to incorporate the latest estimates of the size and composition of the UK population.

■ **Universal Credit**

**Catherine West:**

[\[25513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2024 to Question 902040 on Universal Credit, when he will publish constituency level data setting out how many Universal Credit Migration Notice letters he plans to send.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department publishes regular Move to Universal Credit statistics, which can be found at: [Move to Universal Credit statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The next release, on Tuesday 14 May 2024, will include statistics, including Migration Notices sent, by Parliamentary Constituency level. Forecasts at constituency level are not readily available.

**Catherine West:**

[\[25516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to collect data on the reasons people do not claim Universal Credit when required to do so by the managed migration process.

**Jo Churchill:**

A survey commenced in April this year where we contacted people who have not claimed Universal Credit following receipt of the migration notice. Findings from this survey will be published in due course.

We published research on Tax Credit only claimants on 29 February 2024 [Move to Universal Credit – insight on Tax Credit migrations and initial Discovery activity for wider benefit cohorts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

**■ Universal Credit: Disability**

**Catherine West:** **[25514]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has (a) made an assessment of the potential impact of Universal Credit migration on disabled people and (b) put support in place for disabled people affected by that migration.

**Jo Churchill:**

The DWP continue to learn and iterate our approach as we progress our Move to Universal Credit activity. We remain committed to ensuring that the transition to Universal Credit works as smoothly as possible for all customers, including the most vulnerable in society. Our latest insight publication is available on GOV.UK - [Move to Universal Credit – insight on Tax Credit migrations and initial Discovery activity for wider benefit cohorts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

We have developed an enhanced support journey for ESA and Income Support customers and remain confident that this provides effective support for our most vulnerable customers.

All customers can also use the independent Help to Claim service run by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland which provides support across England, Scotland, and Wales as well as accessing face to face support at job centres.

Also, we continue to work with a broad range of external stakeholders to gather their insight and experience of working with our mutual customers, to learn and develop our approach for moving legacy benefit customers to Universal Credit.

**■ Universal Credit: Employment**

**Stephen Morgan:** **[25915]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the number of in-work Universal Credit claimants that have had payments stopped due to errors made by his Department in the last 12 months.

**Jo Churchill:**

No estimate has been made. Customers can request a mandatory reconsideration if they do not agree with the decision to stop their Universal Credit.

**■ Vacancies: Portsmouth****Stephen Morgan:****[25913]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to help fill job vacancies in Portsmouth.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Jobcentre team are supporting residents into work and helping those in work to progress to higher paid jobs. We are working with local and national employers to help fill vacancies quickly, delivering Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), recruitment days, Job Fairs, and work trials.

Our Youth Team works with the Prince's Trust to provide additional support and courses to prepare young people who are not in education and training, including those without parental support, to attain training and employment.

The Jobcentre works closely with the National Careers Service who, after a successful trial, will deliver ongoing bespoke Group Information Sessions to customers who require a CV or need their current CV enhancing to apply for jobs.

The Jobcentre is hosting a bespoke Armed Forces recruitment event that will follow up on the UK's national Armed Forces Day. This is in partnership with the Royal Navy, British Army, Royal Air Force and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Additionally, the team in Portsmouth are working closely with local employers including Nature's Way, Solent Sky Services and Thatched House (Greene King) to fill their job vacancies as well as working closely with partners such as the local Chamber of Commerce to offer regular Job Fairs focussed on specific sectors and customer groups.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Smarter Regulation Programme Update

**Secretary of State for Department for Business and Trade (Kemi Badenoch):**  
[\[HCWS468\]](#)

A year ago, the Government established the Smarter Regulation Programme to focus on improving regulation across the UK economy to reduce burdens, push down the cost of living and drive economic growth.

Today, I am pleased to be able to update the House on our progress with the publication of two papers. Firstly, '**Smarter Regulation: One Year On - May 2024**' which details our progress so far outlining important reforms and a roadmap for further reform. Secondly, our White Paper '**Smarter Regulation: Delivering a regulatory environment for innovation, investment and growth**' sets out an ambitious plan to improve the UK's regulatory landscape and encourage innovation, investment and economic growth.

The UK's regulatory landscape is recognised internationally as a model of best practice in many respects. There is, however, strong evidence which suggests that our regulatory culture hinders our ability to stimulate economic activity, foster innovation and attract investment.

Over decades, successive governments have automatically defaulted to regulation as a preferred option, rather than a last resort. This has led to a myriad complex and burdensome regulations which cost the economy an estimated £70 billion. Nearly half of all businesses tell us that regulation is an obstacle to growth.

My department set up the Smarter Regulation programme to re-energise regulatory reform, capitalise on the benefits of Brexit, and promote growth in every corner of the economy.

*Smarter Regulation: One Year On – May 2024*

So far, it is estimated that our reforms will reduce the burden on business by up to £1 billion or 50 million hours per year by cutting unnecessary bureaucracy and form filling. The overall benefits to society are estimated at £6.3 billion.

Our reforms include making changes to the EU's Working Time Directive reporting requirements, and improvements to price transparency and product information for consumers.

'Smarter Regulation: One Year On' includes 25 new policy announcements across almost every sector of the economy to reduce burdens on business. This includes in those announced today:

- a consultation containing proposals to deregulate the Commercial Agents Regulations, freeing businesses to negotiate contracts with one another without reference to outdated regulations that create legal ambiguity and confusion;

- a consultation on proposals to abolish the legal framework for European Works Councils – mandatory committees multinationals had to consult if they employed people in the EU. The reforms could save business in the region of £5 million per year;
- a consultation on new proposals on an alternative model for UK REACH, reducing the need for industry to access EU hazard data, improving data on ‘use and exposure’ and improving regulator powers, while ensuring high levels of protection of human health and the environment;
- proposals to modernise the outdated and overly restrictive rules on gaming machines in a boost for bingo halls, casinos and arcades;
- a consultation that builds on current covid easements to simplify how the sale of alcohol is licensed for consumption in pavement areas next to pubs and bars. This will support alfresco hospitality, including an option for providing take-away and delivery sales by default; and,
- an international vehicle standards vision which will set out the Government’s strategy for opening our markets to new vehicles, such as autonomous vehicles, to drive change and support innovation.

We will also consult on raising the corporate reporting threshold for medium-sized companies from 250 to 500 employees, which will reclassify 2,000 companies from large to medium sized, and on exempting 41,000-43,000 medium-sized companies from producing a strategic report. This could save these companies around £150 million per year, offering a more proportionate set of requirements for SMEs, by cutting red tape and lowering their costs so that they can focus on delivering for their customers. Meanwhile, we are consulting on reforms to the complex TUPE regulations, which protect employees’ employment rights when the business or undertaking for which they work transfers to a new employer. These will save businesses time and money, while continuing to protect workers’ rights.

*Smarter Regulation: Delivering a regulatory environment for innovation, investment and growth – White Paper*

Today, I am also pleased to publish a White Paper which aims to deliver a paradigm shift in the UK regulatory landscape: our goal is to instil a culture of ‘world-class service’ in how regulators and government operate to deliver the best outcomes for businesses, consumers and society. We are clear this is not about reducing regulatory safeguards: we are rightly proud of the standards and protections our regulatory regime offers.

The reform package in the White Paper includes:

- defining for the first time what constitutes a business regulator, and introducing a set of guiding principles of smarter regulation that we expect these regulators to apply in their day-to-day decision making;
- a new ‘register of regulators’, as part of our ambition for a “one-stop-shop” of regulatory information so that anyone can find out which regulators and regulations apply to their business;

- launching a new Regulators Council to improve the strategic dialogue between regulators and government, and monitor the effectiveness of policy and strategic guidance issued;
- a new Share Once Support Register which will mean vulnerable customers only need to register with energy, telecoms and water companies once, making sure they don't drop off the register and are safe in the knowledge that their access to utilities is protected; and,
- a new Growth Duty Performance Framework to enhance transparency and accountability, by asking regulators to provide evidence on how they are supporting economic growth.

This is about establishing a high bar for regulation and avoiding unnecessary costs for UK businesses but it is fully consistent with acting where that bar is met and where we need to protect consumers, businesses and the environment – for example the government's steps to increase regulatory scrutiny in the water sector.

Our focus is to ensure that we are the best regulated economy in the world with a well-functioning landscape of regulators. The reforms we outline today will give entrepreneurial businesses more opportunity to innovate, experiment, and capitalise on the UK's global leadership in areas like clean energy technologies, life sciences, and digital services. They will help regulators to provide companies with the service support they need to innovate and attract investment, minimising burdens and supporting economic growth.

The White Paper has been laid in Parliament and a copy of the Smarter Regulation: One Year On - May 2024 paper has been deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Gambling White Paper Update

**Minister for Sport, Gambling and Civil Society (Stuart Andrew):** [\[HCWS471\]](#)

I wish to inform the House that His Majesty's Government will today publish its response to the consultation on measures relating to the land-based gambling sector. This will introduce a range of liberalising measures for venues like casinos, bingo halls and arcades, alongside other provisions to protect young people and children, as well as increasing the fees licensing authorities can charge for gambling premises licences.

Many of the current restrictions on venues like casinos and bingo halls derive from the assumption that restrictions on the supply of gambling, such as the number of gaming machines available in a venue, were an important protection. The legislation had not envisaged the rise of online gambling and the ability to gamble at any time, regardless of location. In light of this, restrictions on availability are now less important for protecting customers than factors such as the characteristics of the product and the quality of monitoring a customer's play in a venue. As set out in the [Gambling Act Review white](#)

[paper](#), the measures we consulted on are therefore necessary to modernise the outdated and overly restrictive regulations that apply to the land-based gambling sector.

The consultation ran from 26 July to 4 October 2023 and invited views on the details of a range of proposals relating to casinos, arcades and bingo halls. Following consultation, the Government will introduce the following measures:

### **Casinos**

We will make a number of adjustments to relax the existing rules that apply to casinos. There are currently two types of casino licence - those originating from the Gaming Act 1968 and those created by the Gambling Act 2005. 1968 Act casinos are generally allowed only 20 gaming machines regardless of their size, compared to up to 80 for Small and 150 for Large 2005 Act casinos. Following consultation, we will bring the regimes closer together so that 1968 Act casinos can offer more machines to meet customer demand where it is proportionate to their size and non-gambling space. We are also extending the ability to offer betting as a product in casinos, which will bring Britain's casino product offering more in line with international jurisdictions.

### **Machine allowance in arcades and bingo halls**

We will adjust machine allowances for arcades and bingo halls to allow greater flexibility over their gaming machine offer. Currently, no more than 20% of gaming machines in adult gaming centres and bingo premises can be Category B machines (with a £2 maximum stake), with the others required to be lower stake (Category C or D machines). The Gambling Act Review concluded that this rule is no longer required to offer customer protections, unnecessarily restricts operators and can lead to a number of machines being placed in venues that are not used by customers. Therefore, we will introduce a 2:1 ratio of Category B to Category C and D gaming machines. This measure will apply on a device type basis, meaning that the ratio applies to the three different types of device on which gaming machines content is currently offered in arcades and bingo halls, namely large cabinets (such as traditional fruit machines), smaller cabinets placed in between larger machines (in-fills) and tablets.

### **Cashless payments on gaming machines**

We will remove the prohibition on direct debit card payments on gaming machines, alongside the introduction of appropriate player protections. The prohibition on the direct use of debit cards on gaming machines was intended to protect players. However, the use of non-cash payments has increased greatly across society since these rules were put in place and some sectors, particularly machines in pubs, are seeing business disappear because customers do not carry cash. We will help future-proof the industry by removing this prohibition subject to appropriate player protections being put in place. The Gambling Commission will also consult on a number of player protection measures that may be included in their Gaming Machine Technical Standards to ensure that appropriate frictions are in place when direct debit card payments are used. These protection measures may include minimum transaction times, cardholder verification, transaction limits, breaks in play and staff alerts when mandatory and voluntary limits are reached. This measure will only come into force when we are confident that the right player



protections are in place. Existing limits on stakes and prizes for all categories of gaming machine will remain unchanged.

### **Age limits for certain gaming machines**

We will introduce an age limit for certain Category D gaming machines. Category D machines are low-stake games that can be played by anyone regardless of age. The Gambling Act Review concluded machines which mirror adult slot machines and pay out cash should be made unavailable to children. These are also known as 'cash-out' slot-style Category D machines. Therefore, we will make it a criminal offence to invite, cause, or permit anyone under the age of 18 to play these particular types of machines. This builds on the existing voluntary commitment implemented in 2021 by Bacta, the amusement and gaming machine industry trade body, banning under-18s from playing this type of machine in their members' venues.

### **Licensing authority fees**

We will increase the maximum cap on the premises fees that can be charged by a licensing authority. Licensing authorities (local authorities in England and Wales, licensing boards in Scotland) play an important role in regulating gambling through licensing premises and enforcing licence conditions. The cap for their licensing fees has not been updated since 2007, while the costs associated with licensing have increased. We will therefore increase the maximum cap that licensing authorities can charge by 15%. The gambling fees payable in Scotland will continue to be set by Scottish Ministers.

Together we believe these measures will support the land-based gambling sector and modernise the current outdated restrictions, as well as helping to protect young people and supporting licensing authorities. These measures also complement the other changes that we are progressing relating to gambling regulation, including the introduction of a stake limit for online slots and a statutory levy to fund research, prevention and treatment. As outlined in the gambling white paper, we are making sure that we have the right balance between consumer freedoms and choice on the one hand, and protection from harm on the other.

Gambling policy is devolved in Northern Ireland but substantially reserved as regards Scotland and Wales. In some cases, the power to deregulate (e.g. to increase the number of gaming machines a casino may make available) is reserved, but the power to put appropriate protections in place to support that deregulation is devolved in Scotland. Where this is the case, our deregulation will extend only to England and Wales unless and until appropriate protections are in place in Scotland. It will be for Scottish Ministers to decide how to exercise the powers conferred on them by the Gambling Act 2005.

We will lay the necessary legislation to implement these measures in due course.

I will deposit a copy of the response to the consultation in the libraries of both Houses.



## EDUCATION

### ■ Post 16 Qualifications review update

**The Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Luke Hall):**  
[\[HCWS470\]](#)

Today we are publishing the list of new Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and new Technical Qualifications (TQs) that will be publicly funded at level 3 from 1 August 2025. This follows the first cycle of our post-16 qualifications reform at level 3. We have approved 74 new qualifications for public funding in Construction and the Built Environment, Digital, Education and Early Years, Engineering and Manufacturing and Health and Science. In assessing these qualifications, we looked at evidence from employers, higher education institutions and colleges about the value these qualifications would bring to young people, adults and our economy. Technical qualifications have also been approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) against the level 3 occupational standards.

The aim of the Post-16 Qualifications reform at level 3 and below is to streamline the qualifications landscape, simplify choices for students, and only fund qualifications that are high-quality and lead to good progression outcomes. By ensuring that approved qualifications meet new, more rigorous criteria for public funding, young people can be confident that they will be able to progress to university and higher technical education, and directly into apprenticeships and skilled employment. In future, students will be able to study technical qualifications based on occupational standards that have been codesigned with employers, enabling young people to develop skills needed for the future. New alternative academic qualifications must demonstrate clear progression to related higher education and will be approved in a range of subjects in areas where there are not A Levels.

Our reforms place world class A levels and T Levels at the heart of level 3 study programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds, paving the way for the introduction of the Advanced British Standard. We know that students who take A levels have better outcomes overall in terms of progressing into, and staying in, higher education (HE) than those who study Applied General Qualifications (AGQs). A 2022 Nuffield Foundation report found that students who enter higher education with BTECs are almost twice as likely to drop out before their second year when compared to A level students, even after controlling for differences in background characteristics.

T Levels will also ensure that young people can feel confident that they are studying technical qualifications which will prepare them for jobs in their chosen field. T Levels equip students with a thorough understanding of their chosen sector and the skills needed to work in specific occupations, with the 45-day industry placement providing valuable workplace experience.

Last summer's T Level results show students are succeeding in these new, high-quality qualifications. Over 90% of T Level students passed their T Level in summer 2023, with over two thirds of the cohort achieving a merit or above. Students have gone on from T

Levels to outstanding destinations, including moving directly into employment, undertaking higher apprenticeships, or progressing into higher education. Almost a third of the first cohort of T Level students who completed their course and progressed into employment and apprenticeships, were employed by their industry placement organisation – proving the worth of T Levels to both students and employers. Over 30,000 students have started a T Level since 2020, including over 16,000 students who started a T Level course in September 2023 – almost as many students as in the first 3 cohorts combined, and an increase of almost 60 per cent from September 2022.

We are pleased to see this growth and remain confident that numbers will continue to grow as more providers deliver T Levels. There are now 18 subjects available at over 250 providers across England, with a further 3 being rolled out this September. The latest T Level Action Plan sets out how we will continue to improve access to T Levels, ensure quality delivery, and support providers and employers as we move into the fourth year of delivery.

Alongside approving new qualifications for public funding at level 3, we have also published a list of 318 qualifications which will have public funding removed on 31 July 2025 due to being in the cycle 1 routes listed above and which have not been reformed. Where awarding organisations told my department that existing qualifications would be replaced with newly reformed alternative academic or technical qualifications, these qualifications do not appear on this list. They will also have a public funding end date of 31 July 2025. This will be reflected in DfE's database of qualifications approved for public funding on gov.uk.

The qualification reforms also include reforming level 2 qualifications to ensure they are high quality, have a clear purpose, and lead to better outcomes. Reformed level 2 qualifications will either support progression to reformed L3 study, for example via the T Level Foundation Year, or enable students to move directly into skilled employment in occupations at level 2, or via apprenticeships. The government is also investing around an additional £300m over two years to support those who need to retake their English and Maths. I will update the house on the outcomes of cycle 1 of the qualification reforms at level 2 in July, following a similar approvals and review exercise at that level for technical qualifications in Construction and the Built Environment, Education and Early Years, Engineering and Manufacturing and Health and Science routes.

This latest update builds on the work we have already done to streamline the qualifications landscape, including removing funding from 5,500 qualifications with low and no enrolments and the removal of funding from technical qualifications that overlap with T Levels from 31 July 2024 in Construction and the Built Environment, Digital, Education and Childcare, and Health and Science. It will ensure that learners studying level 3 qualifications can be confident that their studies are equipping them to progress into higher education and employment in the future.

The range of qualifications that will be available at level 3 for public funding from 2025 will shortly be updated on the DfE database of qualifications approved for public funding on gov.uk, to reflect these changes. It will be updated again in July, following the opportunity for awarding organisations to request a procedural review.

Copies of the associated documents have been placed in the libraries of both houses.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

**Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Claire Coutinho):**

[\[HCWS469\]](#)

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by Mallard Pass Solar Farm Limited for development consent for the construction and operation of a solar farm energy generating development on land in Lincolnshire, South Kesteven and Rutland.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The current statutory deadline for the decision on Mallard Pass Solar Farm application is 16 May 2024.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 13 June 2024 for deciding this application. This is to ensure there is sufficient time for the Department to consider the application.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

### ■ Policy framework for managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Nuclear and Renewables) (Andrew Bowie):**

[\[HCWS475\]](#)

Nuclear power, which uses radioactive nuclear fuel, continues to provide low carbon electricity to homes and businesses in the UK. The UK also uses radioactive substances in many different products and processes – to treat and diagnose serious illnesses, to deliver research and development and in industrial processes. Most uses of radioactive material create radioactive waste, which needs to be managed and the facilities that use this type of material, including nuclear power stations, will eventually need to be deconstructed safely and efficiently after they stop operating.

The UK Government and devolved administrations are today publishing an updated policy framework for nuclear decommissioning and managing radioactive substances following a consultation conducted during spring 2023.

The policy document published today replaces, *Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Final Conclusions* (Cm 2919) which was published in 1995. It updates, clarifies and consolidates a number of policies into a UK-wide policy framework. It sets out clearly those policies that are pursued jointly by the UK Government and

devolved administrations and any separate policies that apply in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Nuclear power will continue to be an important source of low carbon electricity in England and Wales as we work towards reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Although the Scottish Government does not support building new nuclear plants under current technologies it places great importance on the need to address Scotland's radioactive waste legacy and is committed to the safe, secure and responsible management of waste with care for people and the environment. The UK Government and devolved administrations agree that it is vital that we have a policy framework for decommissioning and managing radioactive waste that is fit to deal with our legacy waste and fit for the future.

The waste can occur as gases, liquids or solids. Radioactive substances policy covers the management and use of radioactive materials and how any subsequent wastes are then managed to ensure people and the environment are protected.

Key updates to the UK-wide policy include enabling additional disposal capability in England and Wales to deliver faster, more cost effective and sustainable decommissioning and placing greater emphasis on including decommissioning by design into nuclear projects.

Overall, the revised policy framework creates clearer and more consistent policy objectives across the UK, which should unlock more innovative and sustainable ways of working realising significant savings for industry and the taxpayer, whilst maintaining high standards of safety, security and environmental protection.

The UK Government and devolved administrations are publishing alongside the final policy framework a summary of the responses to the consultation.

I will deposit a copy of the updated policy framework for nuclear decommissioning and managing radioactive substances in the Libraries of the House.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ NHS Workforce Update

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Victoria Atkins):** [\[HCWS477\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House that, earlier this week, I made a revised, reforming offer to the British Medical Association (BMA) Specialist, Associate Specialist, and Specialty (SAS) committee. The Committee have agreed to put this deal to their members for a vote with a recommendation that they accept.

SAS doctors are a vital part of the NHS. They focus predominantly on providing direct patient care by providing clinical expertise in their specialist area and taking responsibility for a full range of patients within their area of practice, making them essential to our efforts to cut waiting lists and deliver the highest quality service to patients.

During the course of the multi-year agreement for SAS doctors, pay for the pre-2021 contracts has been increasing at a faster rate than for the 2021 contracts. Therefore, the revised offer continues to address the unintended imbalance between the pre-2021 and the 2021 contracts to ensure consistency and fairness across the workforce, help speed up the delivery of elements of the new contracts introduced in 2021 and encourage more existing doctors to take up the new contract. This offer, if accepted, would mean that pay scales for those on the pre-2021 contracts would receive an uplift of £1,400. New pay scales would take effect from 1 April 2024. The offer also includes steps to support career progression opportunities for SAS doctors.

As in the original offer, the revised offer includes a joint piece of work to consider how Locally Employed Doctors – doctors who are employed on local terms and conditions as opposed to national – can be better supported to progress in their careers.

This offer is independent of the headline pay uplift SAS doctors received in 2023-24 and that they will receive in 2024-25 through the established pay review body process. The DDRB will still recommend a pay uplift for SAS doctors in 2024-25 and the Government will consider it in the usual way.

If this offer is accepted, the BMA will withdraw the rate card for SAS doctors in England with immediate effect and the dispute will come to an end, meaning no industrial action would be taken by BMA SAS doctors in England under their current mandate.

The BMA will recommend this offer to their members in a vote in the coming weeks.

I also want to inform the House that we have agreed with the BMA Junior Doctors Committee to explore a process of mediation, which I hope will move us towards a resolution. Both parties have mutually agreed a preferred mediator, and the BMA and my department will now begin the process of engaging with the selected mediator.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Alcohol Licensing – Consumption of alcohol in licensed pavement areas / off-sales

**The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp):** [\[HCWS472\]](#)

The Government is today launching a consultation on measures that would make it easier for licensed premises to sell alcohol for consumption in an adjacent licensed pavement area. This consultation aligns with the Government's commitment to support businesses and our broader work on smarter regulation.

The Licensing Act 2003 allows premises licence holders to sell alcohol for consumption on site ('on-sales'), off site ('off-sales') or both. The holder of an on-sales only licence can subsequently apply to their Licensing Authority for a variation if they wish to add off-sales to their licence.

To provide vital support to businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary provisions in the Business and Planning Act 2020 (the 2020 Act) enabled on-sales only premises licence holders to automatically also do off-sales without any need to amend their licence, thus saving these businesses time and money.

The 2020 Act also introduced changes to the process for obtaining pavement licences, which are licences granted by the local authority that allow the licence-holder to place removable furniture over certain highways adjacent to the premises. The 2020 Act streamlined the process to allow businesses to secure pavement licences quickly.

The measures in the 2020 Act were designed to support businesses and the specific provisions referenced above, when taken together, meant that pubs and restaurants were able to serve alcohol outside in the area covered by any pavement licence that they held.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has made permanent the provisions set out in the 2020 Act relating to pavement licensing, but the future of the off-sales element has not yet been decided and the provision is due to lapse in March 2025.

The Government remains committed to supporting the hospitality sector whilst it faces ongoing financial challenges. In September 2023, we made it clear that the Government's ultimate goal is to create a unified consent regime that includes licensing consent for the consumption and sale of alcohol in the outside pavement area before the provision lapses next year. As such, we have identified three options to consult on that would enable premises to continue to sell alcohol for consumption in a licensed pavement area with ease, whilst ensuring that licensing authorities and local residents continue to have a say about what happens in their area.

Alongside new options that would make it easier for business to do off-sales, we have also included the option of making the 2020 Act off-sales easement permanent. All three options would require an amendment to legislation. As these would represent deregulatory measures, we believe that a Legislative Reform Order - made under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 - would be a suitable vehicle for making such an amendment.

The consultation will run for eight weeks and the Government will publish its response afterwards. A copy of the consultation and related impact assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on Gov.UK.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Report of the Independent Reviewer for National Security Arrangements 2023

**Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Chris Heaton-Harris):** [\[HCWS474\]](#)

The role of the Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland is to monitor compliance with Annex E of the St. Andrews Agreement 2006, reviewing the relationship between MI5 and PSNI in handling national security matters.

Professor Marie Breen Smyth, the Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland, has sent me her report for 2023. What follows is a summary of the main findings of the report covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023. Professor Breen Smyth states:

“My contact with MI5 and the PSNI was again largely conducted in person. Policy directions remain consistent with those made in the review period in 2022.



For the first time since records began in 1969, there were no security related deaths in 2023. However, there was an increase in bombing and shooting incidents compared with the previous 12 months. Groups that are not assessed to be a National Security threat, such as loyalist paramilitary groupings, conducted some of these.

A review of the numbers of actual and attempted attacks from 2008 until 2023 shows that the highest number of attacks were conducted in 2010 when the security risk was SEVERE falling consistently through to 2022. The downward trend is apparent in all categories, with the exception of shooting and bombing incidents where there was a rise in the current period. There is a slight increase in the number of people arrested and a moderate decline in the number of people charged.

The year began with the Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) threat at SUBSTANTIAL – an attack is likely - having been reduced to this level on 22 March 2022. Attacks by dissident republicans (DRs) have significantly declined since 2009. Nevertheless, dissident republican activity increased in early 2023, including the attempted murder of DCI John Caldwell in Omagh in February.

On 28 March 2023, the NIRT Threat Level was raised to SEVERE – an attack is highly likely. The threat level had been lowered from SEVERE to SUBSTANTIAL in March 2022. Before this, it had remained at SEVERE for over a decade.

The primary target for DR groups remains PSNI and prison officers. Thus, there is a risk of an attack as long as the level of DR activity remains significant. Such attacks are within the capability of DRs and constitute a risk not only to the intended targets such as PSNI officers, but because of their actions they unintentionally place members of the public at risk.

The perceived and possibly the actual risk to PSNI officers was exacerbated by a data breach which took place on 8 August 2023 when the PSNI responded to a Freedom of Information request and inadvertently published officer details online.

The national security threat emanating from DR groups forms only part of the wider security picture. Paramilitary-style attacks, threats and intimidation directed at the wider community emanate from DRs and other republican and loyalist groups as well as serious and organised crime groups.

There has been no significant change within loyalist groupings in relation to the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework. Concerns remain in relation to wider constitutional issues perceived to be affecting Northern Ireland. Armed loyalist organisations show no signs of resurgence on this or other issues.

In terms of prospects for the security of the immediate future, violent dissident republicans remain intent on conducting attacks against security targets and the security forces continue to work to disrupt those threats. Despite successful interdictions by them and an almost complete lack of community support for their activities, DRs remain committed to violence as a strategy. As a result, attacks and attempted attacks remain highly likely.

The implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework and perceived consequences for the constitutional position of Northern Ireland remains a significant issues for the Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) community. Discontent within this community has previously been linked with localised disorder as seen in 2021.

As IRNSA I believe that a formal process of paramilitary transition is needed to dismantle the remaining organisations, ending recruitment and taking weapons out of circulation. Whilst compiling the report I discussed recent initiatives in relation to paramilitary transition and how this can benefit the security picture. There will remain a significant organised crime problem, but Northern Ireland has this in common with the rest of the UK and beyond. Ending paramilitarism would clear the path to a focused law enforcement approach, devoid of any political overtones.

Although dissident republicans continue to pose the most significant threat to national security in Northern Ireland, efforts by security partners has meant that the vast majority of the population are able to go about their daily lives secure from the threat of terrorism. Despite this, risks to serving police officers and prison officers persist and constant vigilance remains necessary.”

#### SUMMARY

##### Annex E to the St Andrews Agreement

Further to reinforce this comprehensive set of safeguards, the Government confirms that it accepts and will ensure that effect is given to the five key principles which the Chief Constable has identified as crucial to the effective operation of the new arrangement.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a: All Security Service intelligence relating to terrorism in Northern Ireland will be visible to the PSNI   | I am satisfied that the PSNI continue to have sight of all Security Service intelligence relating to NIRT. There is compliance.                           |
| b: PSNI will be informed of all Security Service counter terrorist activities relating to Northern Ireland   | A number of processes ensure that PSNI are fully informed. There is compliance  |
| c: Security Service intelligence will be disseminated within PSNI according to the current PSNI dissemination policy, and using police procedures      | This continues to be organisational practice. There is compliance.  |
| d: The great majority of national security CHIS in Northern Ireland will continue to be run by PSNI officers under existing handling protocol          | The PSNI and Security Service continue to work jointly on cases. Arrangements for this continue to be jointly negotiated and agreed. There is compliance. |
| e: There will be no diminution the PSNI's responsibility to comply with the Human Rights Act or the Policing Board's ability to monitor HRA compliance | PSNI continues to operate within the National Security arena in strict compliance with ECHR. There is compliance.   |



## TRANSPORT

### ■ Vehicle Regulations

**Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Mark Harper):**

[\[HCWS473\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House that today I am publishing a strategy setting out our approach to the future regulation of road vehicles.

Following our departure from the EU, we have the freedom to rethink the “type approval” rules which apply to all cars, vans, motorcycles and other vehicles sold in the UK.

Whilst maintaining our high standards of safety and environmental protection, wherever possible we will reduce the administrative burden of demonstrating compliance with regulations.

We will build a framework based on three key principles:

- Use international standards wherever possible – making regulation cheaper to follow for importers and exporters.
- Deregulate low risk areas and accept alternative national standards where international standards do not exist or aren't suitable. If we don't need to regulate, we won't. If products can be proved safe in a comparable jurisdiction we won't impose the cost of unnecessary re-testing.
- Introduce UK-specific rules only where necessary, for example to introduce new technology more quickly, to simplify administrative requirements for industry or where we need to act for safety reasons.

In the short term, we will implement these principles with a three-year programme of reform to retained EU regulations. This will include options for future emission regulation and plans to introduce new safety technologies, such as automated lane keeping, and regulation to strengthen cyber security.

I will place a copy of A Vision for GB Type Approval in the libraries of both Houses.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Fraud and Error in the Benefit System

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions (Paul Maynard):**

[\[HCWS476\]](#)

The annual statistics for Fraud and Error in the Benefit System for the financial year ending 2024 were published earlier today.

Fraud and error is an ongoing challenge across government and beyond. In 2023 fraud was responsible for 37% of all crime against households and there has been a rising trend in fraud against organisations. With welfare benefits paid to around 22.7 million

people, the welfare system is a deliberate target for both organised crime groups and opportunistic individuals

Today's figures confirm the overall rate of overpayments is now 3.7% (£9.7bn) for 2023-24, compared to 3.6% (£8.3bn) in 2022-23. Overpayments due to fraud were 2.8% compared to 2.7% last year while claimant error and official error remained at 0.6% and 0.3% respectively. The rate of overpayments in Universal Credit was 12.4% in 2023-24 compared to 12.7% in 2022-23.

It is vital that the Government continues to robustly tackle fraud to ensure support goes to those who need it most. We are taking further steps to minimise errors, ensuring the right people are paid the right amount at the right time. The total rate of benefit expenditure underpaid in 2023-24 was 0.4% (£1.1bn), compared with 0.5% (£1.2bn) in 2022-23.

This week the Government has published an update to DWP's Fraud Plan, "Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System: Going Further" highlighting measures we are taking to prevent and stop fraud.

- In 2023/24, we exceeded the £1.3bn savings target we set and expect our plan to deliver £9bn in total by 2027-28.
- Since 2022 we have delivered on commitments to invest in our front line, hiring over 4,400 people across our counter fraud and targeted case review programmes combined. We will continue to expand our targeted case review team to almost 6000 by March 2025.
- We are delivering new powers to improve our access to vital third-party data so we are better able to identify fraud and take action. The third-party data gathering measure is a strong, yet proportionate step to prevent exploitation of the benefit system and will save up to £600 million over the next 5 years.
- We are preparing a new fraud bill for the next Parliament which will align DWP with HMRC, provide new powers to make arrests and conduct search and seizures by warrant, and enable penalties to be applied to a wider set of fraudsters through a new civil penalty.

This is an ambitious package which we will deliver to protect the taxpayer and help uphold the principles of fairness that sits at the heart of the welfare system.

Today's publications also include changes to claimant error underpayments. These have been reclassified and reported as Unfulfilled Eligibility in the Benefit system Publication. This follows a planned review of the fraud and error statistics that determined that the estimates previously published as Claimant Error underpayments do not fit the legal definition of underpayments. The total unfulfilled eligibility rate in 2023-24 was 1.2% (£3.1bn) compared with 1.0% (£2.3bn) in 2022-23.

We will report more on both overpayments and underpayments by way of our Annual Report and Accounts, which are due to be published in July 2024.