



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 April 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:37 P.M., 12 April 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

■ Zane Gbangbola

Ellie Reeves:

[19925]

To ask the Attorney General, if she will apply to the High Court to order a new investigation into the death of Zane Gbangbola during flooding in 2014.

Robert Courts:

The Surrey Senior Coroner has already carried out a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding Zane Gbangbola's death, taking into account a considerable amount of evidence. The Coroner, as an independent judicial office holder, drew his own conclusions based on this evidence.

If there is a belief that the evidence was not considered properly during the original inquest, or that there is new evidence available, the correct process is for an application to be made to the Attorney General asking her to apply to the High Court to quash the inquest and order a fresh investigation. The High Court would take this course of action if it believed that it would be in the interests of justice.

If the Hon Member or the victim's family would like to make such an application to the Attorney General, they are welcome to contact the Attorney General's Office at correspondence@attorneygeneral.gov.uk for information and guidance on how to apply.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[19231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many UK arms export licences have been issued where the end user is the Israeli Defence Force for (a) equipment and (b) parts of equipment in the last 6 months.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[19232]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many UK arms export licences are currently active for (a) equipment and (b) parts of equipment whose end user is the Israeli Defence Force.

Greg Hands:

HM Government publishes data on export licensing decisions on a quarterly basis in the Official Statistics, including data on outcome, end user destination, overall value, type (e.g. military, other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This data is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>.

The most recent Official Statistics cover the period 1 April - 30 June 2023.

Information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 October – 31 December 2023 will be published after April 2024 and information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 January – 31 March 2024 will be published later this year.

■ **BMW: Government Assistance**

Kenny MacAskil: [19724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what (a) criteria and (b) assessment process was used to determine the award of up to £75 million to BMW made under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The award to BMW met the following criteria;

- The award is associated with a strategically important and significant opportunity related to an internationally mobile investment.
- Significant private sector investment will be leveraged.
- A significant number of jobs will be created and/or safeguarded.
- The award meets Government's value for money requirements.
- The award is deemed legally compliant in accordance with the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022

The assessment process followed HM Treasury Green Book Appraisal Guidance including detailed due diligence conducted by an independent third party. The assessment process also included scrutiny by the Industrial Development Advisory Board.

The award to BMW supports a total investment of £575m by the company and will secure production of new electric models of the Mini at the plant in Oxford.

■ **Business: South Holland and the Deepings**

Sir John Hayes: [20002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the cost to the public purse was of funding provided to businesses in South Holland and the Deepings constituency during the covid-19 pandemic through the (a) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, (b) Small Business Grant Fund and (c) Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the government department responsible for the Covid-19 Business Support Grant Programme following the recent machinery of Government changes, and closure of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, has published statistics here: [all-business-support-covid-grants-by-la](#), which give details of the following information for Covid-19 Business Support Grant schemes:

- (1.) total grant allocation awarded by Government to the Local Authority.
 (2.) total number of individual grant awards made by the Local Authority; and
 (3.) total value of grant awards made by the Local Authority.

Detail is provided for South Holland District Council as follows:

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ALLOCATION (LADGF)	NUMBER OF PAYMENTS (LADGF)	VALUE OF PAYMENTS (LADGF)	ALLOCATION (SBGF & RHLGF)	NUMBER OF	VALUE OF
					PAYMENTS (SBGF & RHLGF)	PAYMENTS (SBGF & RHLGF)
South Holland District Council	£990,750	151	£990,750	£19,815,000	1,503	£17,475,000

This is the lowest level of geographic detail that DBT holds – if detail at ward level is required then the District Council would have to be approached for this information. Similarly, if a split between the LADGF and RGHLG is required the District Council would have to be approached for this information.

■ Energy Intensive Industries: Government Assistance

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[19720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much her Department has paid by way of financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 in compensation for indirect costs of the (a) UK Emissions Trading System and (b) Carbon Emissions Tax and Carbon Price Support mechanism to (i) INEOS Chemical Grangemouth Ltd and (ii) INEOS ChlorVinyls Ltd in each year since January 2021.

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[19721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much her Department has paid by way of financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 in compensation for indirect costs associated with the (a) UK Emissions Trading System and (b) Carbon Emissions Tax and Carbon Price Support mechanism to (i) British Steel Ltd, (ii) Celsa Manufacturing UK Ltd, (iii) CF Fertilisers UK Ltd, (iv) DS Smith Paper Ltd, (v) Kimberly Clark Ltd, (vi) Outokumpu Stainless Ltd, (vii) Palm Paper Ltd, (viii) Runcorn MCP Ltd, (ix) SABIC UK Petrochemicals Ltd, (x) Tata Steel UK Ltd and (xi) UPM-Kymmene UK Ltd in each year since January 2021.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The total compensation these companies have received for indirect costs of the (a) UK Emissions Trading System and (b) Carbon Emissions Tax and Carbon Price

Support mechanism is as follows: (i) Jan-2021 to March-2022: £165,174,750, (ii) April-2022 to March-2023: £ 114,934,773, (iii) April-2023 to present: £100,952,928.

We are unable to provide the spending for individual companies or under section 8 alone as this would lead to commercially sensitive information being released.

■ Export Controls

Liam Byrne: [\[19294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to include an analysis of the work of the Office for Trade Sanctions Implementation in future strategic export controls annual reports.

Greg Hands:

The UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2023, which is due to be published later this year, will include an update on the creation of the Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation (OTSI) and plans to transition certain functions from the Export Control Joint Unit to OTSI. Once OTSI has been established, we expect it to produce an annual report covering the breadth of OTSI's activity.

■ Exports

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which industries have seen a reduction in exports since 31 January 2020; and what proportion those exports have reduced by.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which sectors have seen a reduction in exports since 31 January 2020; and what estimate she has made of the impact on GDP of those reductions by sector.

Greg Hands:

UK trade statistics experienced higher levels of volatility between 2019 and 2022, due to the pandemic, global recession, supply chain disruption, EU Exit, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, price inflation, and data collection changes. Hence the department uses 2018 as the most recent stable baseline when comparing trends over time. Over this period (2018 to 2023) and after adjusting for inflation, UK exports of services rose £44bn (13%) and exports of goods (excluding precious metals) fell £45bn (-12%). With goods exports to the EU down £22bn (-13%) and down £22bn (-12%) to non-EU countries.

Changes in UK exports by commodity groups and service types are published by the ONS in their [monthly UK trade publication](#). In 2023 compared to 2018, UK GDP increased by £80bn (4%) in real terms. This was driven by an £84bn (5%) increase for the services sector. We have not estimated how much of this was due to any change in exports.

■ Exports: Hamas

Liam Byrne:

[19284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential (a) risk and (b) prevalence of (i) re-export and (ii) diversion of UK exports to Hamas.

Greg Hands:

The Department for Business and Trade works alongside other government departments to regularly assess UK export licences. This includes working with the Ministry of Defence on risks of diversion of exported goods and national security risks arising from hostile state activity.

The Export Control Joint Unit will not issue an export licence to any destination where to do so would be inconsistent with the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, including where there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law. HMG can and does refuse applications where there is a planned re-export that is inconsistent with the Criteria, or where we assess that the goods may be diverted to an undesirable destination.

■ F-16 Aircraft: Export Controls

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[19233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many arms export licences have been issued for (a) equipment and (b) parts of equipment for American built F16 aircraft in the last 10 years.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[19234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many and what proportion of domestic arms export licences are active for (a) equipment and (b) parts of equipment used in American built F-16 aircraft.

Greg Hands:

HM Government publishes data on export licensing decisions on a quarterly basis in the Official Statistics. This covers all requested data up until 30 June 2023.

This data is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>.

■ F-35 Aircraft: Export Controls

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[19235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many arms export licences have been issued for (a) equipment and (b) parts of equipment for American built F-35 aircraft in the last 10 years.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[19236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many arms export licences are currently active for (a) equipment and (b) parts of equipment used in American built F-35 aircraft.

Greg Hands:

HM Government publishes data on export licensing decisions on a quarterly basis in the Official Statistics. This covers all requested data up until 30 June 2023.

This data is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>.

■ **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

Liam Byrne:

[19283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many export licences have been granted to assist in the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza since 1 October 2023; and what items have been licensed.

Greg Hands:

HM Government publishes data on export licensing decisions on a quarterly basis in the Official Statistics, including data on outcome, end user destination, overall value, type (e.g. military, other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This data is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>.

The most recent Official Statistics cover the period 1 April - 30 June 2023.

Information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 October – 31 December 2023 will be published after April 2024 and information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 January – 31 March 2024 will be published later this year.

■ **Gratuities**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[19984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what (a) steps she is taking and (b) discussions she has had to support businesses prepare for the full implementation of the Employment (Allocation of Tips) Act 2023.

Kevin Hollinrake:

In recent months, the Department for Business and Trade has met with a range of business representative organisations, as well as other stakeholders, to discuss the new tipping legislation and address any remaining concerns. Businesses and other stakeholders also had the opportunity to respond to the public consultation. The responses are currently being analysed to inform the final version of the statutory Code of Practice.

The final version of the Code will be published in the coming weeks, to ensure businesses have sufficient time to ensure they are compliant, ahead of coming into force in the summer.

■ **Industry: Government Assistance**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[19722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much her Department has paid by way of financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland in (i) 2018-2019, (ii) 2019-2020, (iii) 2020-2021, (iv) 2021-2022 and (v) 2022-2023 financial year.

Kevin Hollinrake:

We are unable to provide a breakdown in the manner requested as the data is not held in that format. However, full details of financial assistance provided under the Act are published annually in the Industrial Development Act annual report, copies of which are available in the House libraries.

■ **Open General Export Licences: Israel**

Liam Byrne:

[\[19281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what reviews have been conducted for the terms of each Open General Export Licence that lists Israel as a permitted destination since October 2023.

Liam Byrne:

[\[19282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Open General Export Licence for exports in support of joint strike fighter: F-35 Lightning II has been reviewed since October 2023.

Greg Hands:

The Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel and Gaza.

The Government can and does respond quickly and flexibly to changing international circumstances. All export licences, including Open General Export Licences, are kept under careful and continual review as standard. We are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences and refuse new licence applications as circumstances require.

Any changes to Open General Export Licences would be communicated through a Notice to Exporters which would be published on GOV.UK.

■ **Postage Stamps: Prices**

Martyn Day:

[\[19912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment her Department has made of the planned increase in the cost of first class stamps on the affordability of the postal service.

Kevin Hollinrake:

It is the responsibility of Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, to ensure that the universal postal service is affordable for customers as well as being efficient and financially sustainable. Royal Mail must work within Ofcom's regulatory framework, including the current price cap that prevents second class post rising above inflation, to ensure the availability of a basic affordable universal service.

Ofcom recently reviewed the safeguard caps and announced on 24 January 2024 that it would retain the safeguard cap on second class standard and large letters and not allow the safeguard cap to rise higher than CPI inflation.

■ **Trade Agreements: India****Sir Robert Buckland:**[\[19865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what her planned timetable is for the signing of a UK-India trade agreement.

Greg Hands:

Progress has been made on negotiating a free trade agreement with India, closing the majority of chapters and making headway on the outstanding issues. Only the most complex issues remain open, with talks focused on goods, services, and investment.

The Government remains focused on securing a deal in the best interests of the British people and economy. It has always been about the deal and not the date.

Officials are expected to continue talks during India's pre-election period.

CABINET OFFICE■ **50:50 Parliament****Rachel Maclean:**[\[19959\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government has provided funding to 50:50 Parliament in the last five years.

Alex Burghart:

The Cabinet Office finance system does not show any transactions to 50:50 Parliament in the last five years, including grants issued by the department. The Cabinet Office does not hold financial data for other departments.

■ **Blood: Contamination****Claire Hanna:**[\[19736\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had on the appointment of a chair for the compensation arms length body for infected blood victims.

John Glen:

The Government will respond in full to Sir Brian's recommendations on compensation following the publication of the Inquiry's final report, however, we are making progress. In particular, the Government will bring forward amendments at Report Stage of the Victims and Prisoners Bill in the Other Place with the intention of speeding up the implementation of the Government's response to the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Claire Hanna:[\[19738\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure interim payments to infected blood bereaved families are made without delay.

John Glen:

In October 2022, we made interim payments of £100,000 to chronic infected beneficiaries and bereaved partners registered with existing support schemes. I recognise the importance the infected blood community places on interim payments relating to those deaths not yet recognised, and the Government is working through the technical implications of recommendation 12.

■ Cabinet Office: Staff**Neil O'Brien:**[\[19715\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what staff networks there are in his Department.

John Glen:

There are 15 active networks listed below:

- Flexible working and job share,
- Carers,
- Parenting,
- CORE (Race),
- ABLE (disability),
- Social Mobility,
- Menopause,
- Faith & Belief,
- Christian Network,
- Civil Service Jewish Network,
- LGBT+,
- EU Nationals
- EngAge (intergenerational/age)
- Gender Equality Group.

- Neurodiversity Network

■ Civil Servants: Incentives

Sir John Hayes: [\[19253\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants have been paid bonuses in each of the last five years.

John Glen:

As part of the Government's commitment to transparency, departments have published aggregated annual information on their bonus spend on their own websites since 2011. This promotes scrutiny of how taxpayers' money is spent. The latest data, which covers the 2021/22 performance year, was published on Government Departments' websites on 31 March 2023. This data includes information on total bonus spend, the number of civil servants receiving bonuses, and the size of payments.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Andrew Rosindell: [\[19826\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate she has made of the number of illegal drug related deaths in (a) Romford constituency and (b) England.

John Glen:

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

A response to the Hon gentleman Parliamentary Question of 21st March is attached.

Attachments:

1. UK Statistics Authority Response [PQ19826 (1).pdf]

■ Government Departments: Communication

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19688\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he is taking steps to (a) ensure consistency in the accessibility of departmental communications and (b) support the use of (i) sign language videos, (ii) audio recordings and (iii) other accessible formats in such communications across Departments.

Alex Burghart:

[Holding answer 28 March 2024]: On 5 February 2024 the government published the final Disability Action Plan together with the independent analysis of the consultation findings. The Disability Action Plan sets out 32 practical actions which the government will take forward over the next 12 months.

Action 28 outlines steps the government is taking to ensure consistency in the accessibility of departmental communications. These steps include the publication of accessible standards, revising and improving guidance, training, and monitoring. The accessibility guidance emphasises the need for government organisations to consider

the communication needs of individuals and, where appropriate, the provision of BSL and commonly-requested alternative formats.

In July 2024, the government will publish the second BSL report that will outline what ministerial departments have done to promote and facilitate the use of BSL in their communications with the public. This follows the publication of the first BSL report in July 2023, which included a number of actions to continually improve the government's use of BSL in public communications (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-british-sign-language-bsl-report-2022>)

■ House of Lords: Reform

Julian Sturdy: [19612]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing the number of sitting peers in the House of Lords.

Alex Burghart:

The House of Lords has a key role in scrutinising the executive and as a revising chamber. The Government has made no assessment of the merits of reducing the number of sitting peers and notes that unlike the Commons, peers are not full-time salaried legislators. It is important to focus on the number of peers who attend, and not just the number eligible to sit. Existing mechanisms allow sitting peers to retire or resign.

■ Infected Blood Inquiry

Conor McGinn: [19392]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department has made on implementing recommendations of the first interim report of the Infected Blood Inquiry.

John Glen:

The Inquiry's first interim report contained the recommendation that an interim payment of no less than £100,000 be paid to all those infected and bereaved partners registered with existing support schemes. The Government made these payments in October 2022, and these payments continue to be made to eligible beneficiaries upon being accepted onto the schemes.

■ King Charles III: Art Works

Charlotte Nichols: [19975]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will extend the offer of a free portrait of King Charles to churches.

Alex Burghart:

The Government does not currently have any plans to extend the offer of a free portrait of The King to churches or other places of worship.

The UK Government launched an Official Portrait scheme in November 2023 to enable certain Public Authorities across the UK to apply for a free, framed official portrait of His Majesty The King for display in their buildings.

The scheme is ongoing and is due for completion by mid year 2024. His Majesty's accession has marked the beginning of a new reign and the UK Government considers it is right that public authorities, as part of the fabric of our nation, have the opportunity to commemorate this moment, strengthen civil pride and reflect the new era in our history.

A portrait will be available for purchase in due course for those not eligible for this scheme and details will be communicated at the time.

■ Office for Veterans' Affairs: Standards

Steve McCabe:

[\[19246\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper entitled Veterans' Strategy Action Plan: 2022 to 2024, what metrics the Office for Veterans' Affairs uses to assess the effectiveness of the (a) implementation and (b) impact of commitments that (i) it is responsible for and (ii) other Departments lead on; and what steps the Office for Veterans' Affairs takes to help ensure that those metrics are met.

Johnny Mercer:

The Office for Veterans' Affairs works with partners across and beyond government to monitor the effectiveness and impact of the commitments outlined in the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan.

Since the publication of the Action Plan in 2022, the Government has published four updates on progress; two six monthly reports in August 2022 and August 2023, and two updates within the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report laid before parliament in December 2022 and December 2023.

The most recent report highlighted notable achievements against the Action Plan and 2018 Strategy for our Veterans, outlining where commitments have been delivered and where more work is needed to deliver on our government's ambition to make the UK the best place to be a veteran. The Office for Veterans' Affairs engages with its partners regularly to ensure the commitments in the action plan are delivered, with updates on progress provided to the Veterans Advisory Board and departments across government.

■ Unemployment: Long Covid

Ellie Reeves:

[\[20085\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people were out of work as a result of having long covid in the latest period for which figures are available.

John Glen:

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

A response to the Hon lady's Parliamentary Question of 22nd March is attached.

Attachments:

1. UK Statistics Authority Response [PQ20085 (1).pdf]

■ Veterans: Advisory Services**Steve McCabe:****[19245]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the transition to the new Veteran's Gateway on existing users of that service.

Johnny Mercer:

The Office for Veterans' Affairs has conducted extensive research with veterans and charities to understand the current service provided by the Veterans' Gateway. Based on the feedback received, we plan to improve information and content on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) as well as developing a new comprehensive signposting tool, ensuring veterans receive the right help as quickly as possible.

We plan to regularly assess, iterate and improve the services we provide to veterans to ensure that they meet individual needs and align with the principles in the Government Service Standard.

■ Veterans: Homelessness**Steve McCabe:****[19239]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what definition of homelessness is used by the Office for Veterans Affairs.

Johnny Mercer:

The Office for Veterans' Affairs' definition of homelessness is in line with the Government's definition of homelessness. Statutory homelessness is defined as households or individuals who are owed a homelessness duty by a local authority.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ Christianity: Ceremonies****Neil O'Brien:****[19960]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how many confirmations there were in each year since 1994.

Andrew Selous:

The table below shows the number of confirmations conducted in the Church of England each year since 1994. As the Established Church, every member of the public, whatever their belief, living within a parish in England has the right to access baptism, marriage and burial services of the Church of England as long as performing that service is lawful under Canon Law. The detailed data on the number of baptism and confirmation services is published in the annual data 'Statistics for Mission'.

Post 2009 figures can be found here:

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/statisticsformission2022_tables.xlsx

Pre-2009 figures can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/data-services/resources-publications-and-data#na>

YEAR	NUMBER OF CONFIRMATIONS
1994	48,024
1995	43,667
1996	42,768
1997	40,881
1998	39,926
1999	37,469
2000	36,387
2001	33,367
2002	33,425
2003	31,797
2004	30,425
2005	29,833
2006	29,380
2007	27,926
2008	26,972
2009	25,028
2010	22,349
2011	22,242
2012	22,540
2013	19,883
2014	18,028
2015	16,723
2016	15,917

YEAR	NUMBER OF CONFIRMATIONS
2017	15,253
2018	14,475
2019	13,355
2020	2,165
2021	6,388
2022	10,855

■ Church of England: Carbon Emissions

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19601\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to help achieve net zero.

Andrew Selous:

The Church Commissioners are committed to reducing the carbon intensity of their portfolio by 2025 and, as a member of the Asset Owners Alliance, reaching 'Net Zero' in the investment portfolio by 2050.

The General Synod has set a target for the Church of England to become Net Zero by 2030. The National Church Institutions are supporting every diocese with a grant to grow capacity and employ staff to manage the work of achieving this net zero ambition. The Church Commissioners have committed funding of £30m for 2023-25 and £190m total for a 9-year programme from 2023-31. Stage one will explore the best ways to decarbonise the diverse range of buildings and navigate planning and governance structures. The project will assess cathedrals and clergy housing, with demonstration churches that can act as showpieces of what is possible. There will be a special grant available from dioceses to enable churches to fund improvements to their energy efficiency.

A second workstream supports schools in accessing public sector decarbonisation funds, and another stream of grants will match local fundraising in churches for net-zero carbon projects through the Buildings for Mission scheme

This will provide a clear picture of the kinds of projects that are effective in reducing emissions, ready for a scaled-up investment in the second 3-year period

Recent success stories include York Minster and the Chapel at Kings College, Cambridge, which have joined many other major churches and cathedrals across the country in installing new solar panels and renewable technologies, reducing their running costs and making them more sustainable buildings.

■ Church of England: Land Use

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19602\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether a recent assessment has been made of the environmental improvements being advanced through the church's holding of agricultural land.

Andrew Selous:

The Church Commissioners undertake rolling assessments of environmental improvements being made to the farmland portfolio by tenants, which is used to update the baseline study undertaken five years ago. Data has so far been provided on over 25,000 acres of Commissioners' land holdings and contains details of environmental changes, such as transitioning to regenerative agricultural practices. The Commissioners are pleased to announce a partnership with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), which will further develop this work.

The Church Commissioners' rural estates team continues to engage with our new and existing agricultural tenants through regular individual farm visits, the sharing of ground-sourced data, including carbon audits, and the gathering of information from third parties. On recent assessment revealed that on a single Commissioners' farm in Kent, over 45 species of bird were recorded during a single visit in December 2023.

■ Church Schools: Hendon

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19599\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether he has made an assessment of the contribution of church schools in Hendon constituency.

Andrew Selous:

Though the National Church Institutions are not responsible for the operation of individual schools, the Diocese of London has volunteered the following information, which I hope is useful.

There are two Church of England schools in the Hendon Constituency.

St Mary's and St John's educates more than 1,600 pupils. One quarter are on free school meals, which is higher than the Local Authority average. Pupils are making above-average progress at an 8-level attainment of 0.39 compared with the national average of -0.03.

St Paul's School Mill Hill educates 210 pupils. One fifth of pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals, in line with the Local Authority average. Pupils attainment is above-average; 84% attained the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths last summer compared to the national average of 60%.

I commend the teachers and leadership teams in both schools for these achievements.

The Church of England educates over one million children in its 4,700 schools across England. Church Schools are committed to the flourishing of children and deliver a rounded education that remains in high demand with parents. They serve all those in the community, whatever their faith or belief.

■ Church Services: Attendance

Neil O'Brien:

[19961]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what average weekly attendance was in each year since 1994.

Andrew Selous:

The National Church Institutions first started collecting attendance data centrally in the autumn of 2000; as a result, it is not possible to publish data for the period 1994-1999. A methodological change also took place between 2000 and 2003 which means statistics for those years are not directly comparable with the data now collected. The data displayed below shows the longest period of comparable figures available, from 2003-2022.

	ADULT			ADULT			ADULT	CHILD	ALL AGE
	AVERAG	CHILD	ALL AGE	AVERAG	CHILD	ALL AGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE
	E	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	E	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL
	WEEKLY	WEEKLY	WEEKLY	SUNDAY	SUNDAY	SUNDAY	SERVICE	SERVICE	SERVICE
	ATTEND	ATTENDA	ATTENDAN	ATTENDA	ATTENDA	ATTENDA	ATTENDA	ATTENDA	ATTENDA
	ANCE	NCE	CE	NCE	NCE	NCE	NCE	NCE	NCE
2003	905,000	218,000	1,126,000	802,000	154,000	959,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2004	896,000	220,000	1,119,000	789,000	151,000	942,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2005	898,000	218,000	1,119,000	791,000	147,000	941,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2006	894,000	217,000	1,115,000	786,000	145,000	935,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2007	888,000	205,000	1,097,000	779,000	137,000	919,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2008	877,000	215,000	1,094,000	768,000	139,000	910,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2009	867,000	211,000	1,082,000	758,000	134,000	895,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2010	851,000	208,000	1,062,000	741,000	130,000	874,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2011	840,000	207,000	1,050,000	728,000	127,000	858,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2012	843,000	202,000	1,049,000	733,000	128,000	864,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2013	836,000	157,000	994,000	721,000	124,000	845,000	23,000	103,000	126,000
2014	831,000	144,000	975,000	711,000	119,000	830,000	35,000	113,000	148,000
2015	819,000	140,000	959,000	698,000	115,000	813,000	40,000	131,000	171,000

	ADULT			ADULT			ADULT	CHILD	ALL AGE
	AVERAGE	CHILD	ALL AGE	AVERAGE	CHILD	ALL AGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE
	WEEKLY	WEEKLY	WEEKLY	SUNDAY	SUNDAY	SUNDAY	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL
	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE
	NCE	NCE	CE	NCE	NCE	NCE	NCE	NCE	NCE
2016	791,000	132,000	922,000	671,000	108,000	780,000	42,000	139,000	182,000
2017	767,000	127,000	895,000	653,000	104,000	757,000	46,000	152,000	198,000
2018	752,000	120,000	872,000	635,000	96,000	730,000	40,000	137,000	177,000
2019	734,000	120,000	854,000	613,000	94,000	707,000	41,000	141,000	182,000
2020	317,000	28,000	345,000	273,000	24,000	298,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
2021	531,000	75,000	605,000	447,000	62,000	509,000	18,000	71,000	89,000
2022	567,000	87,000	654,000	477,000	70,000	547,000	36,000	128,000	164,000

Attendance figures are collected from churches for the first 4 Sundays of October and in the following Monday-Saturday midweek periods - this exercise is referred to as the "October count". Figures include attendance at baptisms, as these usually take place in service, but not attendance at weddings and funerals. Attendance at services for schools is NOT included in the average weekly and average Sunday attendance figures but is reported separately.

In 2013, the question was changed to specifically ask about attendance at school services. Prior to 2013, it was apparent that some churches included such attendance in their reported figures while others did not. The change in question during this year resulted in a large change in the average weekly attendance from 2012 to 2013 and a more consistent practice across the church as a whole.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Advertising: Codes of Practice

Ronnie Cowan:

[20070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of new advertising codes to address emerging challenges presented by (a) social media and (b) online marketing activities.

Julia Lopez:

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is responsible for the enforcement of the advertising codes while its sister organisation, the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), codifies advertising standards. Both organisations operate independently of

the government and monitor developments in technology and advertising techniques to ensure the codes are enforced and remain fit for purpose.

■ Clothing: Cultural Heritage

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[19827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she has taken to support traditional English sartorial culture and the related industry.

Julia Lopez:

As part of the Creative Industries Sector Vision, the government announced £2 million funding to support five London Fashion Weeks over the next two years. This will go specifically towards supporting emerging designer talent and increasing access to the sector, delivered through the British Fashion Council's NEWGEN programme.

DCMS also supports the UK Research and Investment (UKRI) £15 million Circular Fashion programme, launched in 2022 to bring the sector, academia and government together to understand and drive the fashion and textiles industry towards sustainable and responsible practices. This programme will be critical in developing this area of research and meeting the goal of transforming the fashion and textiles sector to adopt economically viable and scalable circular models by 2032.

The textiles, fashion and craft industries play an important role in the UK's social and cultural heritage, and are a major driver of economic growth. The UK is famous for its unrivalled creativity and innovation and it has a track record for producing some of the world's most influential designers. Recognising this contribution, we are committed to supporting future growth in the sector. DCMS continues to engage with the British Fashion Council, the Crafts Council and the wider industries to understand the challenges the sectors are facing and how the government can best provide support.

■ Cultural Heritage: Fees and Charges

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to ensure that cost is not a barrier to people accessing heritage visitor attractions in their area.

Julia Lopez:

Many heritage visitor attractions are free to visit or offer schemes to support access, and DCMS-sponsored museums are free to enter for people of any age. The vast majority of the 400 sites in the National Heritage Collection, which is managed by English Heritage Trust on behalf of HM Government, are also free to enter. Where the charity does need to charge visitors an entry fee to support its work, it works to increase engagement with under-represented groups, so that everyone has the opportunity to connect with our shared heritage. English Heritage is also one of the largest providers of free school visits in the UK.

The National Lottery also runs 'National Lottery Open Week' which provides free admission for holders of a lottery ticket or scratch card at venues across the UK, including English Heritage Trust, Historic Royal Palaces, and National Trust properties.

■ **Loneliness: Older People**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle chronic loneliness in people over the age of 65; and what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of those steps.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle moderate to high-levels of social isolation experienced by some older men.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking with (a) local communities and (b) voluntary organisations to combat loneliness and social isolation in (i) older men and (ii) all elderly people.

Stuart Andrew:

Many people experience loneliness and social isolation, and the Government is committed to reducing the stigma associated with loneliness, and building a more connected society. Government, local councils, health systems and voluntary and community sector organisations all have an important role to play in achieving this.

Since publishing the first ever government Strategy for Tackling Loneliness and appointing the world's first Minister for Loneliness in 2018, we have invested almost £80 million in tackling loneliness. These interventions include a national communications campaign that aims to reduce the stigma of loneliness, which has reached at least 25 million people across the country. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is also delivering the 'Know Your Neighbourhood Fund' to boost volunteering and reduce loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England. We have also brought together over 750 people from across the public, private and charity sectors through our Tackling Loneliness Hub, where members can learn from events and workshops, share the latest research and collaborate on new initiatives.

Last March, we published the fourth annual report of our Tackling Loneliness Strategy. It contains over 60 new and ongoing commitments from 11 government departments. So far, we have made progress against at least 46 of these commitments and at least 7 have been completed. Due to the nature of the commitments many have now been incorporated into business as usual. The fifth annual report will provide a full update on commitments, and is due to be published in May.

■ Museums and Galleries

Rachael Maskell: [\[19642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that important items from national collections are shared with museums and galleries around the country.

Julia Lopez:

Museums with national collections have a long history of loaning objects from their collection and touring exhibitions across the country. The 15 museums and museum groups directly sponsored by DCMS report annually on their UK loans and regional engagement, encouraging strategic dialogue between national collections to lend and foster collaborations, with data from 2022/23 showing that over 1,100 UK venues received loans. Non-national museums are also supported to borrow, through public funding, via Arts Council England, to organisations like the Touring Exhibition Group.

■ Public Libraries

Rachael Maskell: [\[19644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to increase access to libraries.

Julia Lopez:

We will be publishing a refreshed Government strategy for public libraries later this year. This will be informed by Baroness Sanderson's independent review of English public libraries and will help ensure that people across the country can benefit from great public library services.

The DCMS-funded £20.5 million Libraries Improvement Fund (2021-2025) is supporting public library services in England. It is enabling them to upgrade their buildings and improve digital infrastructure, increasing their potential to develop more flexible spaces and improving digital access, thereby increasing library access and use.

■ Public Libraries: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[19643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that libraries are receiving adequate funding from local authorities.

Rachael Maskell: [\[19645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps her Department has taken to help support libraries that have had a reduction in funding from local authorities.

Julia Lopez:

Local authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service which meets local needs. It is for each local authority to consider how best to deliver this.

His Majesty's Government has provided an additional £600 million on top of the £64 billion Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 — an increase of 7.5% in cash terms. This uplift will help to reduce pressure on councils' budgets, and protect services including public libraries.

In addition, DCMS announced on 25 March that 43 library services in England would benefit from Round 3 of the Libraries Improvement Fund which is allocating £10.5 million across this financial year and next. The Fund has allocated £20.5 million since 2021 to public library services across England to support them to upgrade their buildings and improve digital infrastructure so that they are better placed to respond to the changing ways people want to use them.

DEFENCE■ **Air Force: Equality****Sir John Hayes:**[\[20001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the Royal Air Force has spent on diversity and inclusion personnel since 2019.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Royal Air Force has spent £3,072,249.93 on salaries for people employed in dedicated Diversity and Inclusion roles from 2019 to 2023.

The Royal Air Force has a number of individuals whose roles encompass Diversity and Inclusion. However, all Regular RAF personnel are first and foremost aviators and are paid as such. There are a small number of Civil Servants and Full Time Reserve Service personnel within the team who applied specifically for D&I roles. In February 2024, the Secretary of State for Defence ordered a root and branch review of ethnicity, diversity and inclusivity policies in Defence which is ongoing.

■ **Antisatellite Weapons: Expenditure****Maria Eagle:**[\[18397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on space integrated battlespace in each financial year since 2019-20.

James Cartlidge:

The Space total spend on equipment costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (MILLION)
2021-22	£8.511
2022-23	£13.786

The Space delivery team total spend on operating costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (MILLION)
2021-22	£2.421
2022-23	£4.683

The Space team, which was stood up in March 2021, is a specific project team in DE&S and the figures above represent the total spend of that team. The figure does not represent the total spend on all space projects across Defence.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

Luke Pollard:

[\[19179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 22 of his Department's UK Armed Forces Defence Accommodation Strategy, published in October 2022, for what reason the target of no more than 10% of service family accommodation properties being vacant by September 2023 was not met; and whether he has set a new vacancy rate target.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) 10% void rate remains a valid target, however, a revised achievement date of 1 November 2026 was agreed with the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in June 2023.

The Modernised Accommodation Offer (MAO) will significantly increase eligibility and demand for Service Family Accommodation (SFA), which will be satisfied through the use of void SFA. This has changed the planning assumptions on which the original target was set and to dispose of void SFA ahead of MAO would increase reliance on the Private Rental Sector (PRS), creating additional, avoidable long-term costs to the MOD.

Luke Pollard:

[\[20104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January 2024 to Question 10351 on Armed Forces: Housing, if he will provide a regional breakdown of those figures.

James Cartlidge:

The table below provides a breakdown per region of the number of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) which have been treated for damp and mould, loss of heating, loss of hot water, loss of water supply, electrical faults, and pest infestation since 1 April 2022.

As previously advised, the damp and mould figures are provided from February 2023 and issues relating to the loss of heating and hot water are not recorded separately as boiler faults often affect both.

The 1,674 SFA properties which had been treated for damp and mould was reported as at 10:00 hours on 18 January 2024 from the live reporting system. The end of day final figure recorded for 18 January 2024 was 1,679, as shown in the table below.

ISSUE	NO. OF SFA IN SOUTH EAST	NO. OF SFA IN SOUTH WEST	NO. OF SFA IN CENTRAL	NO. OF SFA IN NORTH	TOTAL NO. OF SFA PROPERTIES	SUPPORTING NOTES
Damp and mould (provided from February 2023)	700	656	174	149	1,679	
Loss of heating and hot water	8,120	9,117	3,330	3,535	24,102	This figure includes all repairs associated with heating such as condensate pipes freezing in extremely cold weather, a faulty single radiator valve, a lack of hot water to individual taps and are not limited to just a total loss of

ISSUE	NO. OF SFA IN SOUTH EAST	NO. OF SFA IN SOUTH WEST	NO. OF SFA IN CENTRAL	NO. OF SFA IN NORTH	TOTAL NO. OF SFA PROPERTIES	SUPPORTING NOTES
						heating or water loss.
Loss of water supply	9	13	21	5	48	
Electrical faults	8,981	9,490	7,371	4,044	29,886	The electrical fault figure includes faults such as light bulb changes, one hob of an electric oven not working and electric shower issues. It does not always relate to any safety issue or total loss of electricity.
Pest infestation	1,874	1,473	1,125	651	5,123	Pest control requests are responded to within 3 hours if an emergency, and within 15 days if routine.

■ Armed Forces: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a comparative assessment of the adequacy of recruitment and retention strategies for armed forces personnel in (a) the UK and (B) other NATO countries.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 January 2024 to Question 9841 to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis).

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces: Recruitment [9841 - Armed Forces Recruitment.docx]

Gen Kitchen: [\[19752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to increase levels of armed forces recruitment and retention.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 January 2024 to Question 9841 to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis).

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces: Recruitment [9841 - Armed Forces Recruitment.docx]

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

Giles Watling: [\[19759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the impact of each additional 0.5% of GDP spent on defence up to 3% of GDP on (a) force readiness and (b) levels of recruitment to the armed forces.

James Cartlidge:

It is not possible to provide this information as the Department does not undertake its planning activity in this way.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement

Maria Eagle: [\[18379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on land combat vehicles in each financial year since 2019-20.

James Cartlidge:

The Land Combat Vehicle (LCV) delivery team total spend on equipment and support by financial year is as follows:

FY	LCV TOTAL SPEND(£MILLION)
2019-20	£94.3
2020-21	£208.5
2021-22	£209.3
2022-23	£189.2

The LCV total spend on operating costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	LCV TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2019-20	£12.5
2020-21	£14
2021-22	£12.5
2022-23	£13.2

LCV is a specific project team in DE&S and the figures above represent the total spend of that team. The figures do not represent the total spend on all land combat vehicles across the Department which would not be held centrally and would not be answerable without a disproportionate cost.

■ Chinook Helicopters

John Healey:

[\[19779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the press release entitled Capability boost for UK's global military operations as contract confirmed for new Chinook, published by his Department on 14 March 2024, what the cost is of the 14 new Chinook helicopters.

James Cartlidge:

The Chinook Extended Range Programme has an Approved Budgetary Level of £1.5 billion. Final costs will be subject to the conclusion of negotiations with the US Government and Boeing, and variance throughout the life of the programme in common with all FMS cases.

John Healey:

[\[19780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the press release entitled Capability boost for UK's global military operations as contract confirmed for new Chinook, published by his Department on 14 March 2024, when the first new Chinook helicopter will be delivered.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones) on 14 March 2024 to Question 18680.

Attachments:

1. Chinook Helicopters: Procurement [18680 - Chinook Helicopters Procurement.docx]

John Healey:[\[19781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Capability boost for UK's global military operations as contract confirmed for new Chinooks, published on 14 March 2024, what is the Initial Operating Capability of the new Chinook helicopters; and when this will be achieved.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 15 February 2024 to Question 12919.

Attachments:

1. Chinook Helicopters: Procurement [12919 - Chinook Helicopters Procurement.docx]

John Healey:[\[19782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Capability boost for UK's global military operations as contract confirmed for new Chinooks, published on 14 March 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the foreign exchange rate on the value of the contract for new Chinook helicopters.

James Cartlidge:

The Foreign Military Sales agreement with the US Government is denominated in US dollars in common with all such cases. The forecasted cost of the programme is based on the most up to date exchange rate predictions from Defence Economics. The risk of future foreign exchange exposure will be mitigated by the Department's use of forward purchasing arrangements.

John Healey:[\[19783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Capability boost for UK's global military operations as contract confirmed for new Chinooks, published on 14 March 2024, if he will publish a breakdown of the estimated £151 million of extra investment to the economy.

James Cartlidge:

This is commercially sensitive due to ongoing negotiations within the US Government's Foreign Military Sales arrangements.

John Healey:[\[19784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the press release entitled Capability boost for UK's global military operations as contract confirmed for new Chinook, published by his Department on 14 March 2024, what the £300 million reduction in costs includes; and how this will be achieved.

James Cartlidge:

The £300 million reduction in cost is derived from more detailed planning between the UK, the US Government and Boeing. This includes refinements in capability requirements, maturation of costs, and programme risk adjustments.

John Healey:[\[19785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the press release entitled Capability boost for UK's global military operations as contract confirmed for new Chinook, published by his Department on 14 March 2024, whether his Department plans to retire older models of Chinook helicopters.

James Cartlidge:

14 of the oldest Chinook helicopters from the existing fleet will be retired as the 14 new Chinook ER aircraft are introduced to service.

■ Defence Equipment & Support: Staff**Maria Eagle:**[\[19262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the future maritime platforms team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle:[\[19263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the naval ships support team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle:[\[19264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the maritime combat systems team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle:[\[19265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the marine systems support team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle:[\[19266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the boats team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent employed in the teams requested, in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees, and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	FUTURE MARITIME PLATFORMS	NAVAL SHIPS SUPPORT	MARITIME COMBAT SYSTEMS	MARINE SYSTEMS SUPPORT	BOATS
2018-19	161.61	163.64	262.17	277.55	n/a
2019-20	204.78	187.4	281.98	268.13	n/a
2020-21	203.58	188.28	283.22	263.76	44.99
2021-22	290.62	247.58	327.55	285.98	50.43
2022-23	309.82	272.65	324.95	301.17	50.33

The Boats team did not exist prior to FY 2020-21, therefore the FTE figures are not available.

Maria Eagle:

[\[19267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the future and common support services team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

James Cartlidge:

The Future and Common Support Services team did not stand up until the 2023-24 Financial Year and the data for this year will not be available until the end of the Financial Year.

Maria Eagle:

[\[19270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the fires, infrastructure and manoeuvre support team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in the Fires, Infrastructure and Manoeuvre Support team in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees, and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	FIRES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANOEUVRE SUPPORT TEAM
2018-19	88.2
2019-20	88.9
2020-21	93.3

FINANCIAL YEAR	FIRES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANOEUVRE SUPPORT TEAM
2021-22	113.0
2022-23	113.4

Maria Eagle:

[\[19271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the vehicle support team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in the Vehicle Support team in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees, and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	VEHICLE SUPPORT TEAM
2018-19	272.9
2019-20	296.0
2020-21	247.8
2021-22	379.5
2022-23	385.0

Maria Eagle:

[\[19272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the soldier training and special projects team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in the Soldier Training and Special Projects team in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees, and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	SOLDIER TRAINING AND SPECIAL PROJECTS TEAM
2018-19	235.4
2019-20	251.8

FINANCIAL YEAR	SOLDIER TRAINING AND SPECIAL PROJECTS TEAM
2020-21	220.9
2021-22	270.2
2022-23	291.4

Maria Eagle: [\[19274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the weapons support team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[19275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the complex weapons delivery team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[19276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the complex weapons portfolio team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[19277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the weapons engineering team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[19278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the weapons support future enterprise team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed within the complex weapons delivery, complex weapons portfolio, weapons engineering and weapons support future enterprise teams in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	COMPLEX WEAPONS DELIVERY	COMPLEX WEAPONS PORTFOLIO	WEAPONS ENGINEERING	FUTURE ENTERPRISE
2018-19	Team did not exist	21.33	115.46	Team did not exist
2019-20	4.00	21.22	126.94	Team did not exist
2020-21	5.00	12.00	119.68	12.11
2021-22	5.00	14.81	132.25	24.03
2022-23	18.65	12.65	130.25	30.89

Note: The numbers employed in the Weapons Support team is not held in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Maria Eagle:

[\[19279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the Typhoon delivery team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle:

[\[19280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people worked on the Lightning II Team at Defence Equipment and Support in each year since 2019.

Maria Eagle:

[\[19541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the UK Military Flying Training Systems Team at Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle:

[\[19542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the Remotely-Piloted Air Systems Team at Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed within the Typhoon delivery, Lightning II delivery, Military Flying Training Systems and Remotely Piloted Air Systems teams in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TYPHOON DELIVERY	LIGHTNING II DELIVERY	MILITARY FLYING TRAINING SYSTEMS	REMOTELY PILOTED AIR SYSTEMS
2018-19	205.4	139.75	149.6	147.8
2019-20	216.2	155.27	164.77	177.53
2020-21	221.4	164.65	162.81	175.64
2021-22	311.6	197.20	171.83	200.79
2022-23	303.6	202.16	180.12	195.79

Maria Eagle: [\[19548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the electronic warfare and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the air, space, command, control and defence team at Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the special projects team at Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the future capability group at Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed within the Electronic Warfare and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear, the Air, Space, Command, Control and Defence, the Special Projects and the Future Capability Group delivery teams in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	ELECTRONIC WARFARE AND CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, RADIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR	AIR, SPACE, COMMAND, CONTROL AND DEFENCE,	SPECIAL PROJECTS	FUTURE CAPABILITY GROUP
2018-19	87.37	Team did not exist	186.9	46.36
2019-20	208.07	Team did not exist	200.16	88.19
2020-21	225.47	Team did not exist	246.24	96.83
2021-22	245.24	35.14	252.15	94.81
2022-23	249.2	36.06	223.2	112.61

Maria Eagle:

[\[19552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the international relations group in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 as of 20 March 2024.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed within the International Relations Group in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the table below. The figures include civilian and military employees and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FINANCIAL YEAR	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GROUP
2018-19	13.9
2019-20	13.3
2020-21	17.6
2021-22	26.6
2022-23	29.4

Maria Eagle:

[\[19553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the domain commercial (a) air and (b) ships team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the air support commercial team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the combat air commercial team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the ships commercial team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the land equipment commercial team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the weapons commercial team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the helicopters commercial team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the integrated battlespace commercial team in Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March 2024.

Maria Eagle: [\[19788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the Logistics Delivery Commercial Team at Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 21 March.

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent employed in the commercial teams requested, in each Financial Year (FY) since 2019 as at 31 March, is detailed in the tables below. The figures include civilian and military employees, and workforce substitutes.

Figures for 2023-24 will not be available until the end of the FY.

FY	AIR AND SHIPS DOMAIN	AIR SUPPORT	COMBAT AIR	LAND EQUIPMENT	WEAPONS HELICOPTERS
2018-19	880.6				
2019-20	915.25				
2020-21	874.19				
FY	SHIPS DOMAIN	AIR DOMAIN / SUPPORT	COMBAT AIR	LAND EQUIPMENT	WEAPONS HELICOPTERS
2021-22	196.19	187.64		284.71	
2022-23	208.3	183.28		336.1	

Commercial people for the above areas are deployed across DE&S, into different teams, as and when required. The data provided above is the most detailed information available.

FINANCIAL YEAR INTEGRATED BATTLESPACE COMMERCIAL LOGISTICS DELIVERY COMMERCIAL

2018-19		
2019-20	Team did not exist	Team did not exist
2020-21		
2021-22	115.65	43.89
2022-23	115.94	40.33

■ Defence: Costs

Maria Eagle:

[\[19795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on (a) chemical, (b) biological and (c) radiological defence in each financial year since 2019-20.

James Cartlidge:

A number of areas within Defence, including DE&S, the Front Line Commands and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) conduct work or incur costs in these areas and financial information is not held centrally. Accordingly a departmental response can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Dstl: Costs

Maria Eagle:

[\[19791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the advanced materials programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the AI programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the Air Systems programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the autonomy programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the communications and networks programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the crime and policing programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the cyber security programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the Defence Science and Technology Futures programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the deterrent and submarines systems programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the electromagnetic activities programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the Future Kinetic Effects and Weapons programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the Future Sensing programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on Future Workforce and Training programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the High Level Decision Support programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the Human Performance and Protection programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

Maria Eagle: [\[19807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on the Hypersonics programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019-20.

James Cartlidge:

Dstl works with industry, academia and Government to make sure the UK has the right defence science and technology capabilities, and to deliver work for our customers in the Ministry of Defence and the rest of Government.

Dstl provides summary information on its Science and Technology Programmes on its website to inform the public of the nature of the work it is undertaking. Detailed Programme costs cannot be provided in the interests of National Security.

■ Dstl: Expenditure

Maria Eagle: [\[20017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the PULSAR project in each financial year since 2019.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 2 April 2024 to Question 19791.

Attachments:

1. Dstl: Costs [UIN 19791.docx]

■ Dstl: Finance

Maria Eagle: [\[20007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Influence and Command programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Land Systems programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Maritime Systems programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Missile Defence programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Security Systems programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Space Systems programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Specialist Systems programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the Support and Sustainability programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the engineering biology project at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department provided for the human augmentation project at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in each financial year since 2019.

Maria Eagle: [\[20019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget is for the Advanced Materials programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in the (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26 financial year.

Maria Eagle: [\[20022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget is for the Autonomy programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in the (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26 financial year.

Maria Eagle: [\[20023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for the Chemical Biological and Radiological Defence programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory is for the financial year (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26.

Maria Eagle: [\[20024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for the Crime and Policing programme at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory is for the financial year (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 2 April 2024 to Question 19791.

Attachments:

1. Dstl Costs [19791 - Dstl Costs.docx]

■ **Hazardous Substances: Waste Disposal**

Ellie Reeves: [\[19926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which hazardous military waste materials are prohibited from being put into landfill as of 21 March 2024.

James Cartlidge:

There are no derogations, exemptions or disapplications for defence activities within waste legislation. Therefore, hazardous military waste is dealt with in the same way as non-military hazardous waste. Hazardous waste prohibited from landfill, of

relevance to Ministry of Defence activities, includes liquid waste and waste that would be explosive, corrosive, oxidising, flammable or highly flammable.

■ **HMS Queen Elizabeth: Fires**

Luke Pollard: [\[19465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Royal Navy is taking to (a) assess the cause of the fire on HMS Queen Elizabeth on 8 March 2024 and (b) prevent future fires on ships.

James Cartlidge:
An investigation is underway to establish the cause of the fire onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth on 8 March 2024. This will seek to identify any appropriate lessons that can be implemented in future instances of this nature.

■ **Military Aircraft: Expenditure**

Maria Eagle: [\[18395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on multi-mission aircraft in each financial year since 2019-20.

James Cartlidge:
The DE&S Multi-Mission Aircraft Delivery Team total spend on equipment by financial year (FY) is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2019-20	672.070
2020-21	1,039.994
2021-22	655.910
2022-23	327.614

The Multi-Mission Aircraft delivery team total spend on operating costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2019-20	11.278
2020-21	16.789
2021-22	15.932
2022-23	17.244

The Multi-Mission Aircraft Delivery Team is a specific project team in DE&S and the figures above represent the total spend of that team. The figure does not represent the total spend on all multi-mission aircraft projects across Defence which would not be held centrally and would not be answerable without a disproportionate cost.

■ Ministry of Defence: Carbon Emissions

Luke Pollard:

[\[19470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of his Department's contribution to the Government's total carbon emissions in the last 12 months.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) assesses carbon emissions at the end of the Financial Year. (FY) Once the data has been gathered for FY 2023-24 the breakdown of the Department's carbon emissions will be published as part of the MOD Annual Report and Accounts. In the last published Greening Government Commitment Report MOD emissions made up 53.7% of the total Government emissions.

■ Ministry of Defence: Expenditure

Maria Eagle:

[\[18393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on air systems (a) equipment and (b) training in each financial year since 2019-20.

James Cartlidge:

The DE&S Air Systems Equipment and Training delivery team total spend on equipment by financial year (FY) is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2019-20	121.768
2020-21	134.955
2021-22	111.061
2022-23	86.736

The DE&S Air Systems Equipment and Training delivery team total spend on operating costs by financial year is as follows. This is not split out into separate Equipment and Training costs:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2019-20	14.726
2020-21	14.078
2021-22	11.299

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2022-23	10.709

Air Systems is a specific project team in DE&S and the figures above represent the total spend of that team. The figure does not represent the total spend on all air system project equipment and training across Defence which would not be held centrally and would not be answerable without a disproportionate cost.

■ Ministry of Defence: Finance

Maria Eagle:

[\[18669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected annual budget is for the Future and Common Support Services Team in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26.

James Cartlidge:

The Future and Common Support Services delivery team was established in February 2022 and its primary function is to undertake concept phase work. It does not currently incur capital expenditure on equipment or services, nor does it plan to in 2025-26. In 2023-24, FCSS also managed a small technical demonstration programme, whose budget resides within the Vehicle Support Team.

The Future and Common Support Services delivery team forecast operating costs by financial year is as follows (this does not represent the complete operating costs of the team as some of these costs held within the wider Land Equipment Operating Centre):

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONTRACT SPEND£
FY23/24	953,995.20
FY24/25	1,506,720.00
FY25/26	0

Notes:

- It should be noted that the annual operating expenditure budget beyond 2024-25 is not available.
- Due to the Operating Model work currently underway in DE&S, the current team structure is likely to change significantly, and we anticipate that the way that budgets are apportioned will also change.

Maria Eagle:

[\[18671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for the Fires, Infrastructure, and Manoeuvre Support Team at Defence Equipment and Support is for (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26.

James Cartlidge:

The figures presented in this table represent the projected annual operating expenditure budget and forecast costs for the Fires, Infrastructure, and Manoeuvre Support (FIMS) delivery team at Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S).

The FIMS delivery team forecast equipment costs by financial year is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONTRACT SPEND £M
FY23/24	251.75
FY24/25	420.64
FY25/26	464.49

The FIMS delivery team forecast operating costs by financial year is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL SPEND £M
FY23/24	22.14

Notes:

- It should be noted that the annual operating costs budget for 2024-25 and beyond is not available.
- Due to the Operating Model work currently underway in DE&S, the current team structure is likely to change significantly, and we anticipate that the way that budgets are apportioned will also change.

■ Ministry of Defence: Renewable Energy

Luke Pollard:

[\[19469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of the energy used by his Department is from renewable sources.

James Cartlidge:

In financial year (FY) 2022-23 1.2% of Ministry of Defence (MOD) electricity consumption was generated directly from renewable sources. The majority of MOD electricity supply comes from the National Grid, of which a sizable proportion is generated from renewable sources. The proportion of renewable sources used in the National Grid varies but based on Government figures published for the UK in December 2023, renewable generation reached 44.5%.

MOD's energy consumption figures are published in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts (ARAC).

■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

Maria Eagle: [\[18991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 December to Question 5174 on Defence Equipment, when he plans to send the response letter to the Rt hon. Member for Garston and Halewood.

James Cartlidge:

I responded to the right hon. Member on 3 April 2024. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

Maria Eagle: [\[18995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December to Question 7162 on Air Force: Military Aircraft, when he plans to send the response letter to the Rt hon. Member for Garston and Halewood.

James Cartlidge:

I responded to the right hon. Member on 22 March 2024.

■ Navy: Equality

Sir John Hayes: [\[20128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the Royal Navy has spent on diversity and inclusion personnel since 2019.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Royal Navy has spent £2,445,980.00 on salaries for people employed in dedicated Diversity and Inclusion policy roles from 2019 to 2023.

The Royal Navy has a number of individuals whose roles encompass Diversity and Inclusion. Service Personnel rotate through postings which can include Diversity and Inclusion roles. Their work is supported by a small number of Civil Servants. Each of these individuals are paid commensurate to their rank and training. In February 2024, the Secretary of State for Defence ordered a root and branch review of ethnicity, diversity and inclusivity policies in Defence which is ongoing.

■ Rwanda: Asylum

Luke Pollard: [\[20105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the use of RAF planes to transport asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Leo Docherty:

The Secretary of State for Defence has frequent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on issues affecting their Departments.

■ **Type 26 Frigates: Iron and Steel**

Maria Eagle: [\[14480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2023 to Question 140032 on Type 26 Frigates: Iron and Steel, what the grades of UK-produced steel purchased for the (a) Batch 1 Type 26 and (b) Type 31 frigates were, broken down by (i) each order’s classification under the SAE grading system and (ii) the value and tonnage of each of those orders.

James Cartlidge:
I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given to question 14479 answered on 5 March 2024.

- Attachments:**
- 1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Iron and Steel [14479 - Fleet Solid Support Ships Iron and Steel.docx]

■ **Warships: Fires**

Luke Pollard: [\[19466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many fires broke out on Royal Navy warships in (a) 2020, (b) 2021, (c) 2022, (d) 2023 and (e) 2024 as of 19 March 2024.

James Cartlidge:
The table below shows the numbers of fires that have broken out on Royal Navy warships since 2020.

YEAR	NUMBER OF REPORTED FIRES
2020	24
2021	23
2022	19
2023	24
2024 (as of 22 March 2024)	5

All of the fires listed were considered minor and were extinguished by first responder firefighters.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Darren Jones: [\[19134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of providing a formal apology to unmarried women and their children who were forcibly separated between 1949 and 1976.

David Johnston:

The government agreed that the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) raised some important issues regarding historical adoption practices. Whilst a formal apology has not been issued, as the government did not actively support these practices, the government has publicly said sorry on behalf of society to all those affected by these practices during this period.

As the government response said at the time, successive governments have made significant changes to adoption legislation and practice to ensure that the practices reported are never repeated.

Furthermore, following the JCHR report, the department has already amended regulations to make it easier for adults to access adoption support. In addition, the department has written to local authorities, encouraging them to retain historical adoption records for 100 years instead of 75, to make access to records easier, and asking them to support access without undue delay to such records.

■ Adoption and Guardianship: Finance

Caroline Ansell: [\[19415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department has provided through the adoption and special guardianship support fund in each of the last five years.

Caroline Ansell: [\[19416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications to the adoption and special guardianship support fund were (a) made and (b) successful (i) in total and (b) by local authority area; and what the average amount awarded was for those claims (A) in total and (B) by local authority area in each of the last five years.

David Johnston:

The information requested can be found in the attached table.

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Attachments:

1. 18415_19416_Table [19415 19416 Table QC 210324.xlsx]

■ **Childcare: Greater London**

Ellie Reeves:

[\[19665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress her Department has made on increasing the provision of school-aged childcare facilities for parents with young children in London.

David Johnston:

The government is investing £289 million in a new wraparound childcare programme. This programme is to support local authorities in London and throughout England to work with primary schools and private providers to set up and deliver more wraparound childcare before and after school in the term time. The government's ambition is for all parents of primary school children who need it to be able to access childcare in their local area from 8am to 6pm by September 2026.

In October 2023, the department published guidance for local authorities on their role to support the expansion of wraparound childcare along with local authority funding allocations. In February 2024, the department also published guidance for schools and trust setting out expectations of schools in the delivery of wraparound provision.

From April 2024, Bi-borough, consisting of the local authorities of Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea, will be rolling out expanded wraparound provision, five months ahead of the national programme launch in September, meaning that some parents in London will have access to childcare sooner. Along with three other local authority areas, Cambridgeshire, Central Bedfordshire and Norfolk, these early adopters form part of a test and learn phase to strengthen the delivery of the full rollout.

This year, the department has again provided over £200 million for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, with all local authorities in England delivering in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. The HAF programme provides healthy meals, enriching activities and free childcare places to children from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning. Since 2022, the HAF programme has provided 10.7 million HAF days to children and young people in this country. The expansion of the programme year on year has meant a total of 5.4 million HAF days provided between Christmas 2022 and Easter and summer 2023.

The department is working to ensure that the creation of new or expanded wraparound childcare provision can also help to support the delivery of sustainable holiday childcare provision, wherever possible.

■ **Department for Education: Legal Costs**

Pat McFadden:

[\[19024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total cost to the public purse was of legal (a) support and (b) representation to Ministers in her Department in relation to their official conduct in each of the last three years.

Damian Hinds:

Such information is not centrally recorded or collated in the form requested. More generally, I would refer the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East to the long standing policies on legal expenditure, as set out recently by Cabinet Office Ministers on 12 March 2024, Official Report, PQ 17709 and 12 March 2024, Official Report, House of Lords, Cols. 1901-1904.

■ **Department for Education: Written Questions****Paul Blomfield:**[\[19605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to respond to Question 17725 on Academic Freedom tabled by the hon. Member for Sheffield Central on 8 March 2024.

David Johnston:

A response was published to the hon. Member for Sheffield Central to Question [17725](#) on 21st March 2024.

■ **Education: Autism****Sir Robert Buckland:**[\[19862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the time taken to make an autism assessment on educational attainment.

David Johnston:

I refer my right hon. Friend, the Member for South Swindon, to the answer of 25 March 2024 to Question [18946](#).

■ **Foster Care: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[17041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help increase the number of foster care placements in (a) South Holland district and (b) Lincolnshire.

David Johnston:

Lincolnshire County Council is participating in the £45 million Families First for Children Pathfinder, which came out of the department's children's social care implementation strategy Stable Homes, Built on Love. The pathfinder aims to rebalance children's social care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support.

As part of the pathfinder, the department is working with a select number of local areas to test significant changes to how local areas help children and young people. This includes increasing support at the earlier end of the system, with the aim of keeping children with birth parents or wider family where safe to do so. This will help

to reduce the number of children looked after and therefore drive down demand for foster care or other placements.

There is support available from the department where children are unable to stay with their birth families and foster care placements are sought. Lincolnshire County Council are being supported by the Fosterlink support service. Fosterlink provides support for local authorities to improve the way they recruit foster carers by reviewing current processes to identify areas for service and practice improvements, as well as creating a national network in which to share best practice.

More broadly, the department is investing over £36 million this parliament to deliver a fostering recruitment and retention programme, so foster care is available for more children who need it. This will boost approvals of foster carers, as well as taking steps to retain the foster carers we have.

Greater financial support for foster carers will help improve the experiences of all children in care. For the second year running, the department is uplifting the National Minimum Allowance (NMA) above the rate of inflation. For 2024/2025, the NMA will increase by 6.88%. This is on top of a 12.43% NMA increase in 2023/24.

In addition, the department estimates that changes to tax and benefit allowances will give the average foster carer an additional £450 per year as well as simplifying the process for self-assessment returns for most foster carers.

The department will also build on this investment since 2014 of over £8 million to help embed the Mockingbird programme, an innovative model of peer support for foster parents and the children in their care where children benefit from an extended family environment.

Sir John Hayes:

[19530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help increase the number of foster care placements in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

David Johnston:

Lincolnshire County Council is participating in the £45 million Families First for Children Pathfinder, which came out of the department's children's social care implementation strategy Stable Homes, Built on Love. The pathfinder aims to rebalance children's social care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support.

As part of the pathfinder, the department is working with a select number of local areas to test significant changes to how local areas help children and young people. This includes increasing support at the earlier end of the system, with the aim of keeping children with birth parents or wider family where safe to do so. This will help to reduce the number of children looked after and therefore drive down demand for foster care or other placements.

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In addition, the department estimates that changes to tax and benefit allowances will give the average foster carer an additional £450 per year as well as simplifying the process for self-assessment returns for most foster carers.

The department will also build on this investment since 2014 of over £8 million to help embed the Mockingbird programme, an innovative model of peer support for foster parents and the children in their care where children benefit from an extended family environment.

■ Foster Care: North West

Conor McGinn:

[19389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help increase the number of foster care placements in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) the North West.

David Johnston:

The department is investing over £36 million this parliament to deliver a fostering recruitment and retention programme, so that foster care is available for more children who need it. This will boost approvals of foster carers, as well as aiding the retention of foster carers already in place.

St Helens North is participating in this programme, working in a regional cluster group, 'Foster4', which is led by Warrington.

Greater financial support for foster carers will help improve the experiences of all children in care. For the second year running, the department is increasing the National Minimum Allowance (NMA) above the rate of inflation. For 2024/2025, the NMA will increase by 6.88%. This is on top of a 12.43% NMA increase in 2023/24.

In addition, the department estimates that changes to tax and benefit allowances will give the average foster carer an additional £450 per year as well as simplifying the process for self-assessment returns for most foster carers.

The department will also build on its investment since 2014 of over £8 million to advance the work of the Mockingbird programme, an innovative model of peer

support for foster parents and the children in their care where children benefit from an extended family environment.

■ Nurseries: North West

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[19260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase nursery staff in the North West, in the context of the Government's plans to expand the number of free childcare places.

David Johnston:

By the 2027/28 financial year, the government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever.

In February, the department launched a new national recruitment campaign for the early years and childcare sector, 'Do something BIG. Work with small children', and a financial incentives pilot. Eligible joiners and returners will receive a tax-free payment of up to £1,000. This followed the introduction of workforce flexibilities to the Early Years Foundation Stage in January.

The department has also introduced Skills Bootcamps for Early Years, which will create a pathway to accelerated Level 3 Early Years Apprenticeships. The number of paid childcare staff in 2023 is estimated at 347,300 compared to 334,400 paid childcare staff in 2022, an increase of 3.86%. Additionally, the department has invested up to £180 million in providing an early years education recovery package of workforce training, qualifications and support and guidance for the early years sector. This includes additional places for early years initial teacher training (EYITT), and new level 3 qualifications criteria for early years educators to ensure higher quality training and better care for children. The new criteria will come into effect from September 2024.

For the North West, the total number of staff working in group and school based providers has increased from 39,394 in 2018 to 42,027 in 2023, an increase of 6.68%.

■ Nutrition: Education

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to include information about the benefits of eating (a) wholemeal and (b) traditionally made bread in the school curriculum to promote healthier eating habits.

Damian Hinds:

The government wants to support the health and well-being of everyone. The department recognises the importance of education in delivering this aim and is supporting schools in a number of ways to provide high-quality healthy eating education for their students.

The department does not specify how schools should teach the curriculum. It is a framework setting out the content of what the department expects schools to cover in each subject and trusts that teachers will develop the right approach for pupils in their particular school.

Cooking and nutrition are a discrete strand of the national curriculum for design and technology and is compulsory for key stages 1 to 3. The curriculum aims to teach children how to cook and how to apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition. Students should become competent in a range of cooking techniques, as well as understanding the characteristics of a broad range of ingredients. The curriculum does not specify bread, but teachers may choose to include it among the foods they study.

A food preparation and nutrition GCSE, introduced in September 2016, requires pupils to understand and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating when preparing and cooking food. Pupils learn about bread when studying food groups, where they could learn about the nutritional benefits of wholemeal. Similarly, they develop dough making skills in the preparation section of the course, allowing them to learn about traditional bread making.

The importance of healthy eating is also included in the science curriculum for both primary and secondary schools. Healthy eating is covered through topics relating to nutrition and digestion, which cover the content of a healthy diet and the impact of diet on how the body functions.

The statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education includes content on the importance of daily exercise, good nutrition and the risks associated with an inactive lifestyle, including obesity.

Oak National Academy will be providing a fully resourced curriculum for key stage 1 to key stage 3 for food and nutrition. This will align with the national curriculum and also Oak's guiding principles, which focus on the knowledge and skills specific to food and nutrition.

In addition, the standards for school food are set out in the requirements for school food regulations 2014, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england>.

These regulations are to ensure that schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. The standards require bread, with no added fat or oil, to be available every day. The 'School food standards practical guide' encourages use of wholegrain varieties of starchy foods, as well as using at least half wholemeal or granary flour when making bread, puddings, cakes, biscuits, batters and sauces. The 'School food standards practical guide' can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-standards-practical-guide#the-standards-for-school-lunch>.

■ Out-of-school Education

Andrew Rosindell:

[19820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has taken steps with relevant authorities to provide out of hours academic tutoring provision in state schools in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

Damian Hinds:

The department is investing over £1 billion in tutoring via its flagship National Tutoring Programme (NTP). This has seen nearly five million tutoring courses commence since the programme started in November 2020, including over two million in each of the last two academic years. In the current academic year, 346,000 courses have started up to 5 October 2023.

The principal objective of the NTP is to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. In the 2023/24 academic year, schools are required to consider offering tutoring to all of their pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. The department is continuing to recommend that schools use pupil premium funding to cover their contribution to the cost of tutoring. Pupil premium funding will rise to over £2.9 billion in the 2024/25 financial year, an increase of £80 million from 2023/24. This represents a 10% increase in per pupil rates from 2021/22 to 2024/25.

The department is committed to the objective that tutoring should be embedded across schools in England following the final year of the NTP. The department will expect tutoring to continue to be a staple offer from schools, with schools using their core budgets, including pupil premium, to provide targeted support for those children who will benefit.

■ Parents

Alex Cunningham:

[16740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of parenting programmes on (a) levels of expenditure associated with (i) child and adult mental health and (ii) youth anti-social behaviour and (b) the proportion of parents able to return to the workplace as a result of a reduction in school refusal rates.

David Johnston:

The department is clear that parents should do everything they can to ensure that their child is in school every day. Regular school attendance is vital for children's attainment, mental wellbeing and long-term development. It is crucial that the department has a system of support in place to ensure every child attends school every day, ready to learn and thrive.

The government's 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance, which will become statutory ahead of the next school year, includes a core set of functions that local authority attendance support staff, whether titled education welfare officers, attendance officers or early help practitioners, are expected to provide free of charge

to all schools and funded centrally through the Central Schools Service Block and Supporting Families Grant. Some early adopters have reported benefits from integrating attendance into other services, and providing better, more joined up whole family support, that has the potential to reduce demand for higher cost crisis services over time.

The department's attendance mentors pilot sees mentors supporting a group of persistently absent pupils and their families, on a one-to-one basis, to help identify and address their barriers to education. The department has had positive feedback from parents, pupils and schools who have engaged with the attendance mentors programme and have started to see some promising impact data. The department has recently announced an additional investment of £15 million to expand mentoring into ten new areas over the next three years.

The government's Supporting Families programme continues to work with families where attendance issues are a significant concern. 'Getting a good education' is a headline indicator in the national Supporting Families Outcomes Framework, which requires sustained good attendance for all children in the family, across two consecutive school terms. It is important that those identifying attendance issues begin to explore and identify any issues which may be behind the attendance problems, including any needs and circumstances in the wider family as part of Early Help Assessment processes.

The department's reforms are starting to make a difference. There were 440,000 fewer pupils persistently absent or not attending in 2022/23 than in the year before. Overall absence during the 2023/24 autumn term was 6.8%, down from 7.5% in the 2022/23 autumn term.

Alongside this, the department is currently considering options for widening access to parenting support through family hubs and is undertaking assessments of the effectiveness and value for money of evidence-based parenting programmes, as well as other forms of support for parents. As part of this work to inform future fiscal events, the department will consider the downstream economic impacts of parenting programmes.

■ Pre-school Education and Primary Education: Down's Syndrome

Sir John Hayes:

[19250]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support (a) early years learning and (b) primary education for children with Down's Syndrome.

David Johnston:

The department is committed to improving the life outcomes and opportunities for children with Down syndrome, including through follow-up to the Down Syndrome Act 2022. From 2025, the department will begin collecting data on the numbers of children and young people with Down syndrome in schools and colleges. This will help inform the planning locally of long term services.

The special educational needs and disability (SEND) system in education settings provides support for all children with SEND. The system focuses on removing barriers to education and putting the right support in place to meet need, regardless of the specific condition a child may have. The department set out its mission for more children and young people with SEND to have their needs met effectively in mainstream settings in the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan in March 2023. The SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-and-alternative-provision-improvement-plan>.

In the Improvement Plan, the department confirmed that frontline professionals, such as teachers and early years practitioners, would be equipped with the skills and expertise to make best use of provision and to identify needs early, accurately and consistently. The department is developing a suite of practitioner standards to help early years staff, teachers and teaching assistants to identify and support the needs of children and young people they work with, prioritising areas such as speech and language development. The department is funding up to 7,000 early years staff to gain an accredited Level 3 early years special educational needs co-ordinator qualification.

Additionally, the department is investing £2.6 billion in new specialist places to increase the number of places for those children who need specialist support in mainstream and special schools, and alternative provision. These developments will help children with Down syndrome in early years settings and primary schools reach their full potential.

Specifically on early years learning, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards and requirements that all early years providers must follow, including learning and development requirements. The EYFS includes specific requirements for supporting children with SEND, including those with Down syndrome. All early years providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEND and all providers who are funded by the local authority to deliver early education places must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice.

■ Pupils: Transgender People

Julian Sturdy:

[19610]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps her Department has taken to help protect trans children from bullying and harassment in schools.

David Johnston:

The government has sent a clear message to schools that bullying, including cyberbullying, for whatever reason, is unacceptable.

The department has provided over £3 million of funding, between 10 August 2021 and 31 March 2024, to five anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying, this includes projects targeting bullying of particular groups.

In addition to this, on 19 December 2023 the department published the draft guidance for schools and colleges in relation to gender questioning children, along with a consultation, which was clear that bullying must never be tolerated. The consultation closed on 12 March 2024 and the responses will support the department to finalise the guidance for schools and colleges for final publication later this year.

■ Schools: Absenteeism

Ellie Reeves:

[19674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of children and young people missing school as a result of long covid in the last 12 months.

Damian Hinds:

The department does not hold information on absence by the specific category of long COVID. Data on absence by reason, which includes the category of illness, is published in the 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England' statistical release:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

Where pupils face barriers to their attendance because of long-term medical conditions, the department expects schools to work with families to put in place additional support to help them to attend regularly. They should also consider whether support from external agencies would be appropriate, may need to provide reasonable adjustments, and ensure that appropriate pastoral support is in place. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable provision for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

■ Schools: Buildings

Catherine McKinnell:

[18154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the number of children learning in the 15% of the school estate with the greatest repair need.

Damian Hinds:

The first ever review of the condition of the school estate was the Property Data Survey, which was carried out between 2012 and 2014, and covered 85% of the school estate. This government introduced the Condition Data Collection (CDC), the first ever comprehensive survey of the school estate and one of the largest data collection programmes of its kind in Europe. Almost all government funded schools in England were visited as part of CDC during 2017 to 2019. Thanks to the department's evidence led approach, following the James Review of Capital in 2011, this government has been able to allocate capital funding based on consistent data on condition need. This is the first UK government in history to allocate capital funding based on a national assessment of condition need.

The department's plan to ensure schools are well maintained is working. CDC2, the successor programme to CDC, is underway and is due to complete in 2026. Early indications of the department's CDC2 data collection to date, and feedback from responsible bodies, shows that in almost every case where a D grade component was identified in the CDC1 report, it has since been addressed.

CDC uses floor area of buildings rather than pupil numbers as a consistent approach to assessing buildings. Key findings from the CDC1 programme can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/989912/Condition_of_School_Buildings_Survey_CDC1_-_key_findings_report.pdf.

Catherine McKinnell:

[18156]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2023 to Question 519 on Schools: Buildings, what progress her Department has made on the system-built block assessment; and whether she has made an estimate of the number of schools where safety issues have been raised.

Damian Hinds:

The department follows Health and Safety Executive guidance on building safety issues, and monitors reports from Collaborative Reporting for Safer Structures, the Institution of Structural Engineers, and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors for any bulletins on safety that may impact the school estate.

Where the department is alerted to significant safety issues with a building that cannot be managed with local resources, the department provides additional support on a case-by-case basis. There are no areas within schools open to pupils where there is a known immediate safety issue.

The department is working with the sector to establish a research study of several system-built frame types to establish how these buildings will age.

Following the National Audit Office's recommendation in their June 2023 report on Condition of School Buildings, the department is consulting external academic and other experts on the proposed research into system-built blocks through a workshop in late March 2024.

■ Schools: Concrete

Ian Lavery:

[19619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete have had remedial work completed in the last 12 months.

Damian Hinds:

A list of education settings with confirmed RAAC and the funding route to remove RAAC was published on 8 February. This is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>.

The government is funding the removal of RAAC either through grants, or through the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP). The longer-term requirements of each school or college will vary depending on the extent of the issue and nature and design of the buildings. Permanently removing RAAC may involve refurbishment of existing buildings or rebuilding affected buildings.

Schools joining the SRP will be prioritised for delivery according to the condition need of their buildings, readiness to proceed, and efficiency of delivery. The department will also take into account the suitability and longevity of the temporary accommodation they are using. The department has committed to responsible bodies that it will confirm when works are expected to start by the end of the summer term.

For schools and colleges receiving grants, the department is working with responsible bodies to support them to agree the scope of works they are procuring. In some cases, this may involve undertaking technical assessments to inform the design of building works and in other cases the removal of RAAC is already underway and will be completed in the coming months.

■ Schools: Finance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[19682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to review the current funding formula for schools to ensure that it is adjusted for (a) inflation and (b) increases in the cost of living.

Damian Hinds:

The overall core school budget will total £60.7 billion in the 2024/25 financial year, the highest ever level in real terms per pupil. School funding is therefore set to have risen by £11 billion next year, compared with 2021/2022.

■ Schools: Knives

Feryal Clark: [\[19493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many weapons were seized in schools in England in (a) 2018 and (b) 2023.

Feryal Clark: [\[19494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of guidance for schools on knife crime.

Feryal Clark: [\[19495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has plans to update guidance for schools on knife crime.

Feryal Clark: [\[19496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with Ofsted on guidance for schools on knife crime.

Feryal Clark:

[19497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on regarding knife crime.

Feryal Clark:

[19498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the incidence of knife crime on school premises.

David Johnston:

The department does not hold data on how many weapons have been seized in schools.

The statutory 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) guidance advises schools on creating safe environments. KCSIE is clear that all staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. The 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation' Guidance was updated in 2022 to emphasise the importance of the school duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils and staff. Headteachers, and the staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions, where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item, such as knives or weapons, and confiscate such items.

The department works across government, and with other partners, on initiatives to prevent serious violence, including knife crime. Over £50 million has been made available to fund specialist support in mainstream and alternative provision schools in the areas where serious violence most affects children and communities. This includes SAFE ('Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed') taskforces that have been established in ten areas, reaching over 2,100 children as of September 2023. Taskforces are school-led partnerships investing in evidence-based interventions in and around school, such as mentoring and social skills training, that reach children early on, to re-engage them in their education and reduce their involvement in serious violence. To benefit areas outside of the programme, the department has published a supportive guide on school-based interventions, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-taskforces>.

■ Schools: Medical Equipment

Andy Slaughter:

[19571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on the number and proportion of schools that have purchased adrenaline auto-injector devices for emergency use in children who are at risk of anaphylaxis since the coming into force of the Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2017.

David Johnston:

From 1 October 2017, the Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2017 allowed all schools to buy adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) devices without a prescription, for emergency use in children who are at risk of anaphylaxis, but where their own device

is not available or not working (for example, because it is broken, or out-of-date). The department does not hold data on the number of schools that have purchased AAI devices.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [19647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of using the Boxall profile measurement tool to help measure the social emotional mental health and wellbeing of school pupils.

David Johnston:

The department is committed to ensuring schools are safe, calm and supportive environments, which promote and support mental health and wellbeing.

Measuring pupil wellbeing can help schools to identify need and monitor the impact of policies and interventions, which is one of the core principles of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing recommended by the department. The department is offering every school and college a grant to train a senior mental health lead who can oversee this approach and has recently commissioned a Mental health lead resource hub which has a variety of relevant measurement tools, including the Boxall profile. More information can be found at:

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-or-college-resources/>.

As set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan, the department is also developing practitioner standards for frontline education staff, setting out the best available evidence of what works for identifying and supporting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs, including social, emotional and mental health, across early years, schools and post-16 education.

■ Sign Language: GCSE

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [20083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of secondary (a) mainstream and (b) maintained special schools offered British Sign Language GCSE in each of the last five years.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [20084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to increase the provision of British Sign Language GCSE in mainstream secondary schools.

Damian Hinds:

The department published British Sign Language GCSE subject content in December 2023, following a public consultation last summer. Exam boards are now able to develop detailed specifications, which must be reviewed and accredited by Ofqual before schools and colleges are able to teach them. As such, no schools are

currently offering the GCSE. The department's aim is that exam board specifications will be available to schools who wish to offer the GCSE from September 2025.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

Ellie Reeves:

[19664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to work with (a) schools and (b) local authorities to help (i) ensure adequate funding for SEND provision and (ii) promote inclusion in mainstream schools in London.

David Johnston:

Mainstream schools in London are being allocated a total of £7.15 billion in the 2023/24 financial year. Of that, local authorities have identified £869 million as notional budgets, which act as a guide to how much schools might need to spend on their pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Where SEN support costs for an individual pupil are in excess of £6,000, schools can additionally access local authorities' high needs budgets, which are for children and young people with more complex needs. Local authorities in London have been allocated high needs funding amounting to £1.9 billion in 2023/24. This is set to increase to £2 billion in the 2024/25 financial year, meaning a cumulative increase of 29% per head over the three years from the 2021/22 allocations. By 2024/25, high needs funding will have increased by 60% over the five years since 2019/20, to a total of over £10.5 billion nationally.

As of March 2024, the department has published just under £850 million of further investment in places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or who require alternative provision. Spread over the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years, it forms part of the £2.6 billion the department has committed to investing in high needs capital between 2022 and 2025 and represents a significant, transformational investment in new high needs provision. Between 2021/22 and 2024/25, London has been allocated just over £542 million. This is 20% of the total funding provided to local councils to support the provision of new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities or requiring alternative provision.

In the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan, published in March 2023 following extensive consultation with schools and local authorities, the department set out its mission for more children and young people to have their needs met effectively in mainstream settings. To bring together local authorities, health and education partners across local systems to strategically plan and commission support for children and young people with SEND, the department is working with local authorities to create or strengthen local SEND and AP partnerships. To support authorities, the department is investing £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists and introducing a National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) at leadership level.

School and multi-academy trust leaders should promote collaborative working and drive inclusive practices across local areas. The department's expectations for high-quality, inclusive education are set out in the 'High Quality Trust Framework' and enforced through the inspections under Ofsted's 2019 Education Inspection Framework.

The department is also investing in specific programmes designed to help schools develop their inclusive practice. For example, the Universal Services Programme helps the school and FE workforce to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, earlier and more effectively. As part of the Programme, over 135,000 professionals have undertaken autism awareness training. And to support schools to create calm, safe and supportive environments for all pupils, the department has invested £10 million in the Behaviour Hubs programme.

Supporting children and young people with SEND is embedded in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and the professional standards that teachers are expected to adhere to throughout their careers. The Teachers' standards define the minimum level of practice expected of all teachers. This includes Teachers Standard 5, which requires all teachers to adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

The government does not prescribe the curriculum of ITT courses. However, the mandatory ITT Core Content Framework (CCF) (2019) sets out the minimum entitlement of knowledge, skills and experiences that all trainees need to enter the profession in the best position possible to teach and support their pupils. This core content must be covered in full for all ITT courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Once they have been awarded QTS at the end of their ITT course, all early career teachers are entitled to a new two-year induction underpinned by the Early Career Framework (ECF).

Following the ITT CCF and Early Career Framework (ECF) review in 2023, the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF), which was published in January 2024, contains significantly more content related to adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND. The adaptive teaching content includes, for example, developing an understanding of different pupil needs, and learning how to provide opportunities for success for all pupils.

■ St Leonard's Catholic School

Mary Kelly Foy:

[20106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has placed a ban on all inter-year transfers to St Leonard's Catholic School in City of Durham.

Damian Hinds:

The Secretary of State for Education would not have powers to place a ban on inter-year transfers to St Leonard's Catholic School in the City of Durham.

Parents can apply for a place for their child at any school at any time. An application after the start of the school year for a place in the normal year of entry (usually Year 7 in a secondary school), or for any other year group, is called an “in-year” application. The School Admissions Code sets out requirements in relation to in-year admissions.

Where an application is received for a year which is not the normal year of entry, the admission authority can only refuse if the admission of another child would “prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources”.

Where in-year applications are received for the normal year of entry, the admission authority must admit children up to the Published Admission Number (PAN).

If an admission authority (in this case, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Academy Trust) wishes to change the PAN for Year 7, they would need to submit a request to vary the published admission arrangements (which include the PAN) to the Secretary of State for Education.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Electricity: North of England

Alexander Stafford: [\[20119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an assessment of the impact of trends in the level of standing charges on the affordability of electricity bills in (a) Yorkshire and (b) the North East.

Alexander Stafford: [\[20120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if she will make an assessment of potential merits of introducing a fixed national standing charge for consumers.

Amanda Solloway:

Ofgem launched a call for input on standing charges, which closed on Friday 19 January 2024, looking at how it is applied to energy bills and what alternatives could be considered.

Ofgem is currently analysing the responses and will publish its response in due course.

On 30 March, my Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State and I wrote to the Chief Executive of Ofgem, highlighting the importance of keeping standing charges as low as possible.

■ Electricity: Standing Charges

Alexander Stafford: [\[20118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions she has had with Ofgem on discrepancies in the cost of electricity standing charges across the country.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[20121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has had discussions with Ofgem on trends in the level of standing charge prices across (a) England and (b) Yorkshire.

Amanda Solloway:

DESNZ Ministers and officials regularly discuss with Ofgem issues relating to the energy retail market.

Standing charges are a commercial matter for suppliers, although Ofgem regulates standing charges as they do with other elements of billing. This includes setting a cap on standing charges as part of the overall default tariff cap.

The variance in standing charge is mainly due to regional differences in energy distribution costs. These costs reflect the expenses of maintaining and upgrading the distribution network in a specific area, and the number of consumers those costs are spread across.

On 30 March, my Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State and I wrote to the Chief Executive of Ofgem, highlighting the importance of keeping standing charges as low as possible.

■ **Energy: Payments**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[19567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made a recent estimate of the total cost to (a) consumers and (b) the Exchequer of issuing curtailment payments to energy companies in the last 12 months.

Graham Stuart:

The System Operator is responsible for managing constraints on the networks. It does this by curtailing a type of generation, for example wind, and turning up an alternative generation, as needed. Costs are funded through electricity bills, not through the Exchequer. Annual network constraint costs for 2023 were £1.4bn (2023 prices).

To manage the level of constraints on the system and ensure the UK's homes can be powered by clean, green energy in future, government is working with Ofgem, network owners and others to halve the build process from 14 years to 7 through our Transmission Acceleration Action Plan.

■ **Energy: Standing Charges**

Keir Mather:

[\[19995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the daily standing charges for gas and electricity in Ofgem's (a) Yorkshire and (b) Northern regions.

Amanda Solloway:

DESNZ Ministers and officials regularly discuss with Ofgem issues relating to the energy retail market.

Standing charges are a commercial matter for suppliers, although Ofgem regulates standing charges as they do with other elements of billing. This includes setting a cap on standing charges as part of the overall default tariff cap.

The variance in standing charge is mainly due to regional differences in energy distribution costs. These costs reflect the expenses of maintaining and upgrading the distribution network in a specific area, and the number of consumers those costs are spread across. On 30 March, my Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State and I wrote to the Chief Executive of Ofgem, highlighting the importance of keeping standing charges as low as possible.

Renewable Energy: Community Development**Selaine Saxby:**[\[19987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero during Consideration of Lords message on the Energy Bill [Lords] on 18 October 2023, Official Report, column 352, when she plans to publish the consultation on barriers to developing community energy projects.

Graham Stuart:

We have been codesigning the consultation on the barriers to community energy schemes with the Community Energy Contact Group. We intend to publish the consultation as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**Agriculture: Nature Conservation****Steve Reed:**[\[17346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help farmers secure long term private finance for nature restoration.

Mark Spencer:

As we set out in our Agricultural Transition Plan update in January, we want farmers and land managers to be able to confidently and securely access payments from both the public and private sector for the environmental benefits they produce.

The Government is:

- supporting farmer-led innovation through Round 3 of the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund and two rounds of Landscape Recovery. These schemes will further test how nature markets and private investment can work with public funds and provide examples of how farmers can access both sources of income and deliver more for the environment.

- developing standards for high integrity private investment into nature through the BSI nature investment standards programme.
- committing £30 million of investment into a blended finance Big Nature Impact Fund, which will unlock significant private investment into UK nature projects (e.g. tree planting) that can provide a return on investment.
- designing the environmental land management offer to make it easier for farmers to identify what private sector income they can access alongside any public payments.
- helping farmers with advice and support on accessing nature markets; for example, Defra supported the Green Finance Institute to develop a Farming Toolkit for Assessing Nature Market Opportunities, which was published in January.
- exploring with industry representatives ways to provide clarity on the taxation of nature markets.

We published an update on 12 March on progress to implement other measures in the Nature Markets Framework, and we will consult on specific steps and interventions needed to support growth of high integrity carbon and nature markets in the coming months.

■ Agriculture: Water

Emma Hardy:

[\[19944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of lowering the minimum investment requirement for the Water Management grant.

Mark Spencer:

Our grant offers are kept under review between rounds. We will be reviewing the Water Management Grant ahead of a further round expected to be launched later this year. As part of this review, my officials will be looking at the minimum grant and whether it needs to be adjusted.

■ Animal Welfare: Charities

Derek Thomas:

[\[19420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of provisions in the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill on the work of animal rescue charities.

Mark Spencer:

The Government supports the Private Members' Bill, Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill introduced by Selaine Saxby MP on restricting the importation and non-commercial movement of pets. The Bill completed second reading in the House of Commons on 15 March 2024.

In August 2021 we launched a consultation on the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain. It was a wide-ranging consultation with excellent engagement with key stakeholders including animal rescue charities. We are carefully reviewing the feedback from our consultation and wider engagement with stakeholders, and the consultation response will be published soon.

■ Biodiversity

Steve Reed:

[\[17340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help tackle biodiversity decline.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government is committed to turning the tide on nature's decline. That is why, in England, we have set four legally binding targets for biodiversity. We have legislated to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 and to reverse species decline by 2042; to reduce the risk of species extinction; and to restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats.

These targets, alongside other targets, on water and air quality for example, will drive action to create and restore habitats, reduce pressures on nature, and recover species. We have set out our plan to deliver on these ambitious targets, along with our other environmental targets, in the [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) (EIP23) published 31 January 2023. Here we link the different objectives, plans and mechanisms for recovering nature.

We have introduced significant new funding for nature - for woodland and peatland restoration, for green recovery and for landscape scale nature recovery - and we are developing new land management schemes that reward environmental benefits. In the update to our Agricultural Transition Plan, published in January this year, we announced premium payments for actions that will achieve greater environmental benefits, supporting habitats and species.

In November we announced the 34 projects selected for the £25 million second round of our Landscape Recovery scheme. These projects will collectively restore more than 35,000 hectares of peatland, create over 7,000 hectares of new woodland and benefit more than 160 protected sites (SSSIs).

In June last year we also launched a £25 million Species Survival Fund to provide early progress towards our species abundance targets and support the recovery of declining species. The fund will support projects focussed on the creation and restoration of wildlife-rich habitats, including on protected sites. Successful applications to the fund will be announced this month.

■ Bluetongue Disease

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[18820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to mitigate the threat from bluetongue virus as the midge vector increases in activity.

Mark Spencer:

Defra and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) officials took robust action following findings of cases of Bluetongue virus, following our well-established processes for managing cases of disease. We are planning for a possible resurgence of the disease over the coming months as the weather warms, and the risk of infected midges blowing over from northern Europe increases. We recently held a Ministerial roundtable with key industry stakeholders to discuss the options and understand their priorities over the coming months. Surveillance of susceptible animals and epidemiological assessments continue, and we are actively engaging with vaccine manufacturers on the development of BTV-3 vaccines for use in the UK. We are modelling the risk of incursion and proactively raising awareness with animal keepers in higher-risk areas, and are monitoring vector activity.

■ Cocoa: Agriculture

Holly Lynch:

[\[19996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that smallholder cocoa farmers will not be faced with additional costs when the deforestation requirements of the Environment Bill 2021 come into force.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK recognises the importance of promoting sustainable trade and development alongside action to prevent deforestation. We will continue working with producer countries to ensure that their views inform the Government's delivery of the forthcoming Forest Risk Commodities scheme, including in respect of smallholder farmers of cocoa and other commodities. The UK will also provide support to help countries to adapt to the new requirements, and benefit from the opportunities which this presents to increase trade in legally-produced commodities. This includes funding a new ten-year £500m phase of the UK's Investments in Forests and Sustainable Land Use programme, which work with the private sector to mobilise investment into legal and sustainable commodity production; and provide support to smallholder farmers and poor rural communities who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The UK is committed to scaling up this work in future.

■ Dangerous Dogs: Euthanasia

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[19238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many XL Bully dogs have been seized by the police since 1 January 2024; and how many and what proportion of those seized have been euthanised.

Mark Spencer:

Defra does not hold data on XL Bully dogs which have been seized by the police. This information would be held by individual police forces.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Domestic Visits****Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[19363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on how many occasions Ministers from his Department have visited (a) Wales, (b) Scotland and (c) Northern Ireland in each of the last three financial years.

Mark Spencer:

The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

Across the UK Government we are committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for all citizens, no matter where in the country they call home. All citizens contribute to the strength of the United Kingdom which is the most successful political and economic union the world has ever seen.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Press****Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[15896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what subscriptions to (a) newspapers, (b) magazines and (c) online journals his Department has paid for in each of the last three financial years.

Mark Spencer:

The following is a combined list of subscriptions that the Defra Library and Communications have paid for over the last three financial years. Some are in print and some are online. Not everything on the list was purchased in all three years – subscriptions change on demand and to reflect usage. Information on any subscriptions from other team budgets is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

Defra Library purchases magazines and journals for Defra, Animal and Plant Health Agency and Natural England staff to support them in their role. The Communications team purchases newspapers for monitoring the media coverage of issues in Defra's remit.

ANGLING TIMES MAGAZINE	ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE	LYELL COLLECTION
Animal Health Research Reviews	Estates Gazette	Materials Recycling World
Argus Fertilizer Europe	Ethical Consumer	Microbiology Society
Avian Pathology	Executive Support magazine	New Zealand Veterinary

ANGLING TIMES MAGAZINE	ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE	LYELL COLLECTION
BioOne	Farmers Guardian	Planning Resource
Bird Study Pack	Farmers Weekly	Privacy and Data Protection
Bloomberg	Financial Times	Professional Update
British Archaeology magazine	Fishing News Weekly	Responsible Investor
British Poultry Science	Freedom of Information Journal	Royal Forestry Society
British Wildlife Magazine	Fresh Produce	Sunday Times
Conservation Land Management	Geoheritage	Telegraph
Daily Express	Goat Veterinary Journal	The Economist
Daily Mail	Guardian	The Grocer Magazine
Daily Mirror	Habitats Regulations Assessment	The Sun
Daily Telegraph	Harvard Business Review	The Times
Dairy Industry Newsletter	Horticulture Week	UK Livestock magazine
Dods People and Monitoring	I	Veterinary Pathology
Econlit	ICES Journal of Marine Science	Washington Trade Daily
Elsevier Freedom Collection	iNews	Water Report
Ends Europe	Inside Housing	Wiley STM Collection
Ends Report	Insurance Post	Yorkshire Post
Ends Waste & Bioenergy	Nature.com	
Environment Complete	Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation	

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Written Questions

Emma Hardy:

[19694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to Questions 18568, 18569 and 18570 tabled by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle for answer on 18 March 2024.

Robbie Moore:

The Answer to Question 18568 was published on 20 March 2024.

The Answers to Question 18569 and 18570 were published on 25 March 2024.

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member.

■ Deposit Return Schemes**Carolyn Harris:**[\[16973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Welsh Government on a potential exclusion from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 in the context of the inclusion of glass in a deposit return scheme.

Robbie Moore:

We have always maintained that deposit return schemes across the UK should be interoperable to reduce complexity for businesses and consumers, and to avoid unnecessary barriers to trade. We want to ensure that the schemes operate seamlessly for businesses and consumers across the UK.

Defra is working closely with devolved administrations on the next steps to achieve interoperable schemes that work across the UK.

There has been no recent discussion with the Welsh Government on a potential exclusion from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 in the context of the inclusion of glass in a deposit return scheme.

■ Dogs: Smuggling**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[19938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing sanctions for cases of puppy smuggling.

Mark Spencer:

In August 2021, the Government launched a consultation on proposed restrictions, including enforcement measures, to the commercial import and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain. We are carefully reviewing the feedback gathered from our consultation and wider engagement with stakeholders, and a summary will be published soon.

The Government supports the Private Members' Bill, Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, introduced by Selaine Saxby MP on restricting the importation and non-commercial movement of pets. The Bill will contain powers that will enable future regulations, including penalties and offences, for non-compliant commercial and non-commercial movements of pets into the United Kingdom.

■ Dogs: Theft**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[19814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to address dog thefts in (a) Romford constituency and (b) England.

Mark Spencer:

We fully understand the devastating impact the theft of a pet can have, which is why in 2016 we made it compulsory to microchip all pet dogs in England and have extended this legislation to include cats from 10 June 2024.

On 29 March, we published the Government's response to a consultation on cat and dog microchipping that sets out how we will address a number of recommendations made in the Pet Theft Taskforce report. This includes developing a new single point of search portal to make it easier to search compliant databases for a microchip record and strengthening the process for changing keepership.

We are also already supporting Anna Firth's Pet Abduction Bill through parliament. This Private Member's Bill is looking to introduce new offences for dog and cat abduction. Alongside this, police forces are working together to better coordinate and share best practice and advice on the steps owners can take to protect their pets.

This package of measures will help protect dogs and cats across England, including in the Romford constituency.

■ Domestic Waste and Recycling: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**[\[17527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council with (a) recycling and (b) rubbish collections.

Robbie Moore:

The Government is introducing Simpler Recycling to ensure that across England, people will be able to recycle the same materials, no longer needing to check what their council will accept for recycling. The costs to deliver the new duties on local authorities for this reform will be funded by a combination of Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility payments provided to local authorities for the cost of collecting and managing household packaging waste through efficient and effective services, and reasonable new burdens funding from the Government to provide weekly food waste collections. We have brought forward up to £295 million in capital funding to roll out weekly food waste collections across England. This will cover the cost of additional bins and vehicles. Initial grants have now been issued to local authorities, including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, for their transitional capital funding allocation for financial year 2023/24. Transitional resource costs will be paid from the 2024/25 financial year and ongoing resource costs paid from 1 April 2026.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[12866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many vaping products were registered with the Environment Agency; how much was received by Government in UK WEEE Regulations Compliance Fees for vaping products; and if he will make an estimate of how many vaping products were (a) recycled and (b) incorrectly disposed of in each of the last five years.

Robbie Moore:

Vape producers need to register with the Environment Agency under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations and report the tonnage of vapes that they place on the market each year. Prior to 2022, vapes were not reported at a product specific level; they were reported as Category 7 EEE, which encompasses all Toys, Leisure, and Sports Equipment. Therefore, within the data the Environment Agency received from registered producers, it is not possible to identify the types of products that a company handles and thus it is not possible to determine how many vaping products were reported as being placed on the market.

For 2022 and 2023, the Environment Agency requested Compliance Schemes in England to submit data on the tonnage of vapes that their producer members placed on the market. For 2022, the total is 1,637 tonnes. The 2023 data is pending. Producers that register directly with the Environment Agency rather than with Compliance Schemes still include vapes within their Category 7 data, meaning the Environment Agency does not collect or hold vape specific data for direct registrants.

The Government does not hold detailed data on compliance fee payments under the UK WEEE Regulations, as this is managed independently of government. Compliance fee payments are broken down by categories, laid down in the WEEE Regulations and not by individual product level.

Treatment sites that recycle WEEE submit recycling data to the Environment Agency. This data is also not product specific and thus it is not possible to determine how many vaping products have been recycled. The Environment Agency does not collect or hold data on incorrect disposal of vapes.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Waste Disposal

Peter Gibson:

[\[10924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the challenges faced by local authorities to properly dispose of disposable vapes.

Robbie Moore:

Earlier this year, Defra published a report outlining the environmental concerns of disposable vapes. These products are an inefficient use of resources, are frequently disposed of incorrectly, can be harmful when littered and are difficult and costly to recycle. That is why on 29 January the Government confirmed that we would

introduce a ban on single-use vapes. Draft regulations for the ban were published on 11 March with a proposed coming into force date of 1 April 2025 pending parliamentary procedures.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[11835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take legislative steps to minimise harm to the environment as a result of improper disposal of vapes.

Robbie Moore:

Following the consultation on creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping, the recently published government response confirmed that the UK Government intends to bring forward legislation as soon as possible to ban the sale and supply of disposable vapes in England. Scotland and Wales also confirmed they intend to bring forward similar legislation and Northern Ireland is considering next steps following the consultation.

■ Fisheries: Imports

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[19049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to ensure that imported fisheries products are not produced through the use of (a) illegal, (b) unreported and (c) unregulated fishing practices.

Mark Spencer:

Imports and direct landings of fish into the UK are required to be accompanied by catch certificates. This ensures traceability throughout the supply chain to mitigate the risk of the fish having been derived from illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing.

The UK has powers to apply import restrictions to countries identified as non-cooperative in tackling IUU fishing. At present, the UK does not permit the import of fishery products from Comoros, Cambodia or Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Import restrictions can also be implemented at vessel level. Any vessel that has been identified as associated with IUU fishing activities, can be placed on the UK's IUU Vessel List meaning it is not eligible to import fishery products into the UK. Advice and guidance for importers of fish and fisheries products is available on GOV.UK.

■ Flood Control: Costs

Emma Hardy: [\[19692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Seventh Report of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 2023-24 on Resilience to flooding, HC 71, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the increase in construction costs on investment in flood defence maintenance; and what discussions he has had with the Environment Agency on any impact on its target of maintaining 98% of its high consequence flood defence assets at required condition.

Robbie Moore:

At the last Spending Review the Government increased funding for maintenance of flood defences by £22 million per year. This funding ensures flood defences are kept in good working order. In 2023/24, the Government has gone even further, including switching £25 million from the capital programme to fund maintenance, so that the total allocation for this year is over £220 million.

Defra and the Environment Agency (EA) are assessing the effects of inflation on the EA's ability to maintain its flood and coastal risk management assets at the required condition. The effects of inflation and the recent winter storms have had an impact on flood defence condition.

As of Q3, 97.2% of EA maintained assets in high consequence systems were at or above the required condition. Where assets are not in required condition, this identifies that work is required. It does not mean that there is a risk of asset failure or that performance in a flood is compromised.

The EA are currently funded to maintain between 94-95% of high consequence EA assets at their target condition. The long-term target is to ensure 98% of all such assets are at required condition. Future flood defence maintenance budgets will be determined as part of the next Spending Review.

■ Flood Control: Finance**Steve Reed:****[19368]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of the flood and coastal erosion risk management budget has been (a) allocated and (b) spent in each of the last four years.

Robbie Moore:

In March 2020, the Government doubled its investment in flood defences to a record £5.2 billion between 2021 and 2027 to better protect communities across England from flooding and coastal erosion. We are in the third year of this [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management investment programme](#). Since April 2021, approximately £1.5 billion of this funding has been invested in over 200 flood protection schemes, better protecting over 71,000 properties.

The table summarises the amount of flood and coastal erosion risk management budget that has been spent in each of the last 4 years:

2015-2021 FLOOD AND COASTAL EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT PROGRAMME				2021-2027 FLOOD AND COASTAL EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME
April 2019 to March 2020	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2021 to March 2022	April 2022 to March 2023	
Grant in Aid expenditure (millions)	£ 501	£ 610	£ 742	£ 754

Defra publishes central government expenditure figures for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) annually on gov.uk. [Funding for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-for-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-in-england). This publication shows both resource and capital spend on FCERM for each financial year since 2005/06, as well as indicative allocations for the following financial year.

Steve Reed: [19369]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of the total flood and coastal risk management budget has been allocated to each (a) region, (b) constituency and (c) local authority.

Steve Reed: [19370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of the total flood and coastal risk management budget has been spent in each (a) region, (b) constituency and (c) local authority.

Steve Reed: [19371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the amount and proportion of the total flood and coastal risk management budget that has been allocated but not spent in each (a) region, (b) constituency and (c) local authority.

Robbie Moore:

In March 2020, the Government doubled its investment in flood defences to a record £5.2 billion between 2021 and 2027 to better protect communities across England from flooding and coastal erosion. We are in the third year of this [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management investment programme](#).

Since April 2021, approximately £1.5 billion of this funding has been invested in over 200 flood protection schemes, better protecting over 71,000 properties.

Below is a table which shows the actual spend between 2021 and 2023, the allocation between 2023 and 2025, and an indicative allocation from 2025 to 2027 by ONS region. An indicative range is given for 2025 to 2027 because the programme is reviewed and refreshed annually as projects progress. This allows for flexibility to manage change and introduce new schemes or urgent works if necessary.

GRANT IN AID (MILLIONS)	ACTUAL SPEND		ALLOCATION		INDICATIVE ALLOCATION RANGE
	April 2021 to March 2022	April 2022 to March 2023	April 2023 to March 2024	April 2024 to March 2025	April 2025 to March 2027
ONS Region					
East Midlands	£71.3	£76.5	£64.1	£600.3	£146 to £206
East of England	£73.7	£79.2	£107.0	£111.9	£168 to £254
London	£32.7	£34.3	£47.3	£15.5	£18 to £36
North East	£13.6	£15.5	£17.4	£32.0	£68 to £94
North West	£107.6	£95.4	£95.4	£98.8	£256 to £356
South East	£115.3	£130.8	£134.7	£108.1	£226 to £330
South West	£95.2	£95.6	£109.0	£155.9	£293 to £417
West Midlands	£37.2	£35.2	£36.1	£40.9	£67 to £99
Yorkshire	£128.7	£114.9	£104.5	£117.4	£246 to £350
Projects in more than one ONS region	£66.9	£76.8			£342 to £418*

** Projects in more than one ONS region indicative allocation range is inclusive of April 2023 to March 2027*

Investment is allocated where the flood risk is highest and the benefits of flood resilience are the greatest. A consistent methodology is used, applying a national funding formula under the partnership funding policy, to allocate funding to schemes proposed by all risk management authorities. This ensures a fair distribution of funding based on agreed priorities, principles and needs. The availability of feasible projects also influences the distribution of investment. There are therefore no specific regional investment targets.

The table attached (with data caveats) also shows the allocation and spend by local authority and constituency between 2021 and 2025.

See table attached.

Each year the Environment Agency also produces a [summary](#) of flood and coastal erosion risk management work carried out by risk management authorities in England. This is required under Section 18 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. When the current FCERM investment programme ends, after March 2027, the Environment Agency will publish a report with a breakdown of spending, similar to the report published in [2022](#) after the 2015-2021 investment programme.

Attachments:

1. 19369 19370 19371 Attachment [19369 19370 19371 attachment.xlsx]

Steve Reed:

[\[19372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of the flood and coastal risk management budget that will be spent by 2027.

Robbie Moore:

In March 2020, the government doubled its investment in flood defences to a record £5.2 billion between 2021 and 2027 to better protect communities across England from flooding and coastal erosion. We are in the third year of this [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management investment programme](#).

Since April 2021, approximately £1.5 billion of this funding has been invested in over 200 flood protection schemes, better protecting over 71,000 properties.

Over £800 million will be invested in the current financial year until March 2024 and the remaining budget from the £5.2 billion investment is allocated to projects until the end of March 2027.

■ **Forests and Land: Environment Protection**

Steve Reed:

[\[19072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on forests and land use, what steps he has taken to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030.

Rebecca Pow:

At COP26 in Glasgow, over 140 world leaders committed to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. This commitment was reiterated at COP28, marked by the conclusion of the first Global Stocktake of the world's efforts to address climate change under the Paris Agreement. The UK Government committed to tackling illegal deforestation in UK supply chains through the Environment Act in 2021 and announced further details of the secondary legislation at COP28 in December 2023.

This law will make it illegal for organisations with a global annual turnover of more than £50m to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. Initial secondary legislation will focus on four commodities identified as key drivers of deforestation: cattle products (excluding dairy), cocoa, palm oil and soy. Organisations in scope will also be required to undertake a due diligence exercise on

their supply chains and to report on this exercise annually. Organisations using 500 tonnes or less of each regulated commodity in the reporting period will be able to submit an exemption. Businesses in scope that do not comply with these requirements may be subject to fines and other civil sanctions.

The secondary legislation, which is part of a wider package of measures, will be laid in the near future.

■ Horses: Northern Ireland

Carla Lockhart:

[\[16046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the cost associated with veterinary checks on horses moving from (a) Great Britain to Northern Ireland and (b) Northern Ireland to Great Britain since the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Mark Spencer:

The Government's Movement Assistance Scheme is available to reimburse costs (including veterinary checks), in line with the terms of the scheme, for horses moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. Horses moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain have unfettered access.

■ Housing: Flood Control

Emma Hardy:

[\[19693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Seventh Report of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 2023-24 on Resilience to flooding, HC 71, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) location of housing developments (i) allocated in local plans and (ii) given planning consent that will not take place due to the reduction in the number of properties to be protected by new flood defence projects.

Robbie Moore:

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, including floodplains. Where development needs to be in locations where there is a risk of flooding as alternative sites are not available, local planning authorities and developers should ensure development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant, safe for its users for the development's lifetime, and will not increase flood risk overall.

In March 2020, the Government doubled its investment in flood defences to a record £5.2 billion between 2021 and 2027 to better protect communities across England from flooding and coastal erosion. Since April 2021, over £1.5 billion has been invested in over 200 flood protection schemes, better protecting over 71,000 properties.

Delivery is the Government's key priority, and we are working with the Environment Agency to review the programme in light of the impacts of inflation and the pandemic. More information will be available in due course.

■ Import Controls

Stella Creasy:

[19616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2024 to Question 18133 on Import Controls, what standards goods will be required to demonstrate they meet via an export health certificate in order to be eligible for import into the UK.

Mark Spencer:

Specific requirements will vary by commodity, with details available on the Gov.uk pages for certification [Import goods into the UK: step by step - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/import-goods-into-the-uk)

The BTOM will operate a sophisticated approach to risk categorisation, with the intensity of controls calibrated to the level of risk presented by each commodity.

For high-risk and medium-risk goods, we will retain health certification and BCP inspection, albeit with frequently lower inspection rates than under the EU model. Documentary-only checks will be performed remotely instead of all regulated goods having to present documents at a BCP.

For low-risk animal products as a matter of routine we will only require electronic pre-notification, which is already in place. Low-risk plant produce (fruit and vegetables with no known specific disease or pest risk associated) will be removed from import health control requirements altogether. There will no longer be any requirements for pre-notification, with enhanced inland monitoring and surveillance in place to ensure it is compliant with the UK's high food safety and standards and to keep track of any issues. We will simplify Export Health Certificates and make health certificates digital wherever possible.

For medium-risk goods, we will extend the well-established concept of trusted trader into the SPS sphere, by working with industry to pilot new trusted trader authorisations for SPS goods.

■ Import Controls: Disease Control

Stella Creasy:

[19617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2024 to Question 11320 on Import Controls: Disease Control, which categories of consignment will be required to pay the Common User Charge, by risk level.

Mark Spencer:

Defra has consulted on its proposed methodology and rates to inform charging levels and will publish an update on the Common User Charge shortly. This will include the

Government response to the Common User Charge consultation. Further information on the policy and rates will be included in the upcoming publication.

■ **Import Controls: Fees and Charges**

Stella Creasy:

[19614]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2024 to Question 17736 on Import Controls, whether the common user charge will include costs related to the processing of imports via the Border Target Operating Model.

Mark Spencer:

Port Health Authorities (PHAs) have charging mechanisms in place for covering the costs of checking SPS consignments, and the Government, in conjunction with devolved administrations, is working with them to review fee levels and support the implementation of new checks of imports from the EU in early 2024.

Commercial BCP fees are a business decision for the operators of those sites.

The Common User Charge is to recover the costs of operating government-run BCP facilities in England. Defra has consulted on its proposed methodology and rates to inform charging levels. Defra has used feedback to inform the final policy and rates, which we expect to publish shortly.

PHAs or local authorities undertake checks on animal products and High-Risk Feed or Food Not of Animal Origin (HRFNAO) at BCP. APHA is the competent authority with responsibility for the inspections of plants and plant products at all BCPs and control points.

Stella Creasy:

[19615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2024 to Question 17736 on Import Controls, if he will publish a list of all Border Control Posts where imports will (a) be subject to the Common User Charge and (b) subject to other charges.

Mark Spencer:

The Common User Charge for the recovery of BCP operating costs applies only to government-run BCPs in England. Commercial operators will independently set charges for their own BCP facilities.

Defra has consulted on its proposed methodology and rates to inform charging levels. Defra has used feedback to inform the final policy and rates, which we expect to publish shortly.

■ Imports: Disease Control

Stella Creasy: [\[19854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2024 to Question 14058 on Imports: Disease Control, when he will publish the Government response to the Common User Charge consultation.

Mark Spencer:

Defra has consulted on its proposed methodology and rates to inform charging levels and will publish an update on the Common User Charge shortly. This will include the Government response to the Common User Charge consultation.

■ Inland Waterways: Pollution Control

Andrew Rosindell: [\[19818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with relevant authorities to improve the condition of waterways in (a) Romford constituency and (b) the UK.

Robbie Moore:

The Government is committed to improving the condition of waterways in England as set out in our [Plan for Water](#) published in April 2023. The Plan for Water marks a step-change in how we manage our waters. It is delivering more investment, stronger regulation and tougher enforcement to tackle pollution and clean up our water.

With respect to the Romford constituency, the Environment Agency is working collaboratively with partners within the Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne Catchment Partnership to improve the water quality and biodiversity of waterbodies.

This includes carrying out river maintenance work such as vegetation management, operational checks on flood defence assets, treatment of invasive non-native species, bridge inspections, and inspection and maintenance of public safety measures. The Environment Agency also worked closely with the local council to form the rivers policy in their Local Plan, which now influences developments adjacent to Havering's rivers and river corridors.

■ Landscape Recovery Scheme

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[19842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of hectares of land managed by each applicant to the Landscape Recovery scheme.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[19843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of applicants to the Landscape Recovery scheme were entering land on which they are (a) tenants and (b) owners.

Mark Spencer:

Landscape Recovery offers farmers and land managers the opportunity to co-design a bespoke, long-term agreement to produce environmental and climate goods whilst supporting environmentally sustainable domestic food production across landscape-scale projects.

Landscape Recovery Round 1 supports 22 projects. Project areas range between 500 and 5,000 hectares, covering a total of over 40,000 hectares. Round 2 is expected to support 34 projects, covering a total of over 200,000 hectares. Rounds 1 and 2 include over 250 and over 700 land managers, respectively. The majority of projects currently in Round 1 involve at least one tenant, and it is expected that over three quarters of Round 2 projects will include tenants. We want to make Landscape Recovery work in a range of contexts, especially where there is a diversity of land managers. We are closely monitoring how the scheme works for tenants in light of the findings and recommendations of the Rock Review.

We have a legal duty to assess the impact of all our Environmental Land Management schemes, including Landscape Recovery, on food production. All Landscape Recovery projects are required to assess their impact on food production in detail during the project development phase. We also introduced a food production criterion at the application phase in Round 2, through which we assessed how bidders were taking into consideration food production in their plans, mitigating any negative impact where possible and supporting sustainable food production.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fishing Vessels**Henry Smith:**[\[19593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to prohibit the use of bottom-towed fishing gear in Marine Protected Areas.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[19598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ban fishing using bottom trawling apparatus in marine protected areas.

Mark Spencer:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for North Devon, on 22 January 2024, PQ UIN [9706](#).

A byelaw restricting the use of bottom-towed fishing gear in 13 Marine Protected Areas mentioned in that answer came into force on 22 March 2024.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[19597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the cumulative days of fishing by vessels carrying (a) bottom trawls, (b) dredges and (c) other bottom-towed gear in the UK's 63 offshore benthic MPAs in 2023.

Mark Spencer:

The designation and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is a devolved competency and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Estimates of fishing effort in offshore MPAs are made as part of the Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) work to assess and manage the impacts of fishing in all English offshore MPAs. These estimates have been published in economic and fisheries assessments on GOV.UK alongside byelaws for the first two stages of the MMO's four stage programme to manage fishing activity in all English offshore MPAs. MMO is currently undertaking further analysis covering 43 offshore MPAs which will be published in due course, alongside consultations on any proposed byelaws.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Territorial Waters**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[19587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of classifying all territorial waters as Marine Protected Areas.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK has signed up to the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 (30by30 target). Domestically, we have designated a comprehensive network of MPAs covering 40% of English waters, based on recommendations from our scientific advisors (Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee). Our priority is to ensure all sites are managed appropriately to meet our statutory MPA target.

■ Members: Correspondence**John Penrose:**[\[19018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to reply to the letters of 12 January and 14 February 2024 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of a constituent about e-collars.

Mark Spencer:

A reply to the hon. Member is being prepared and will be issued in due course. I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member.

The hon. Member's constituent asks about the Government's position on electronic shock collars, known as e-collars. I can confirm that the Government remains committed to introducing a ban on the use of e-collars. We will pursue new regulations to deliver this commitment on a revised timeline. The full reply to the hon. Member's letters will explain the reasoning behind this position.

■ Methane: Pollution Control

Matt Hancock:

[19338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to help reduce methane emissions from (a) anthropogenic sources, (b) landfills and (c) fossil fuel production.

Rebecca Pow:

In the UK, overall greenhouse gas emissions from the waste sector have decreased by 74% since 1990. This is mostly due to the implementation of methane recovery systems at UK landfill sites, increasing landfill methane capture rates, and reductions in the amount of biodegradable waste disposed of at landfill sites. In 2022, the waste sector accounted for 4.6% of total UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions, with landfill methane emissions responsible for 80% of the sector's emissions.

We are committed to tackling these remaining emissions and are exploring options for the near elimination of municipal biodegradable waste being sent to landfill in England from 2028, in line with the commitment in the Net Zero Strategy. Under the Government's Simpler Recycling reforms, set out within new s45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021), all households, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises will be required to arrange for the collection of food waste for recycling or composting. Recycling via anaerobic digestion will produce biogas and significant carbon savings over sending food waste to landfill. To explore further measures to achieve our commitment we issued a call for evidence on 26 May 2023 to support detailed policy development. A summary of responses to this call for evidence and further information will be published in due course.

We are undertaking research to quantify site-specific methane emissions from landfill and update our understanding of residual (non-recyclable) waste composition. Both of these projects will support efforts to further reduce methane emissions from landfill sites and report our emissions in line with UNFCCC guidelines.

Defra considers that Methane Suppressing Feed Products (MSFPs) are an essential tool to decarbonise the agriculture sector. In England, our objective is to establish a mature market for these products, encourage uptake and mandate the use of MSFPs in appropriate cattle systems as soon as feasibly possible and no later than 2030. We are committed to working with farmers and industry to achieve this goal, and in early March convened the inaugural meeting of a Ministerial-led industry taskforce on MSFPs.

The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR) provide wide-ranging powers to control emissions to air, water and land from regulated installations through permits. Methane is a pollutant under the EPR and, where relevant, industrial installations must comply with EPR permit conditions to control and monitor methane.

In the 2020 Energy White Paper, the Government committed to the World Bank's 'Zero Routine Flaring by 2030' initiative which aims to eliminate routine flaring from oil production globally.

Through the North Sea Transition Deal and the industry's subsequent Methane Action Plan, UK industry has committed further to accelerate compliance with the World Bank's initiative where possible, set a 50% methane reduction target by 2030 (against a 2018 baseline) and have adopted the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative's methane intensity target of 0.2% by 2025.

Emissions associated with methane venting and flaring are accounted for in our binding domestic carbon budgets.

The North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) already expects methane emissions to be as low as possible, and for all new developments to be developed on the basis of zero routine flaring and venting, (and to be either electrified or electrification-ready).

All platforms are expected to have zero routine flaring and venting from or before 2030.

The consenting process for flaring and venting is administered by the NSTA, which is working with industry to keep non-routine flaring and venting to a minimum.

The NSTA recently consulted on its draft OGA Plan, which included a section on flaring and venting. It is due to publish its response and the final OGA plan soon.

Matt Hancock:

[19339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the usage of emerging technologies that help directly reduce methane levels in the atmosphere.

Rebecca Pow:

Methane reduction technologies are within scope of Defra's £270 million Farming Innovation Programme and were in scope of its predecessor, Farming Innovation Pathways.

Defra's evidence programme includes Research & Development exploring ways to reduce emissions from livestock. The portfolio includes research on nutrient and livestock management, feed and grazing regimes, methane suppressing feed products, ways to identify and selectively breed for more sustainable and productive animals, and ways to better manage manures.

Defra considers that Methane Suppressing Feed Products (MSFPs) are an essential tool to decarbonise the agriculture sector. In England, our objective is to establish a mature market for these products, encourage uptake and mandate the use of MSFPs in appropriate cattle systems as soon as feasibly possible and no later than 2030. We are committed to working with farmers and industry to achieve this goal, and in early March convened the inaugural meeting of a Ministerial-led industry taskforce on MSFPs.

The UK catalysed action on methane during our COP26 Presidency, including being one of the first countries to support the Global Methane Pledge - a collective commitment to reduce global methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030, against 2020 levels. As part of its commitment to the Global Methane Pledge, the UK published a Methane Memorandum in November 2023 during COP27. The Memorandum outlines how the UK has achieved a robust track record in reducing methane emissions and how it continues to explore and implement measures to secure future progress. We were pleased that methane emissions were prioritised at COP28, with more countries joining the Pledge and a particular focus on mobilising finance to support developing countries with their methane emissions. The UK committed £2 million to the Methane Finance Sprint.

Matt Hancock:

[\[19340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of funding is the Government investing in methane reduction technologies.

Rebecca Pow:

As announced in the Government's Net Zero Strategy 2021, we are bringing forward £295 million of capital funding which will allow local authorities in England to prepare to implement free weekly separate food waste collections for all households in England. This will deliver significant carbon savings over sending food waste to landfill.

Methane reduction technologies are within scope of Defra's £270 million Farming Innovation Programme and were in scope of its predecessor, Farming Innovation Pathways.

While primarily a safety focussed programme, the Health and Safety Executive-led Iron Mains Risk Reduction Programme (IMRRP) is expected to invest approximately £4 billion in replacing iron gas mains with plastic pipework over the current Ofgem price control period (2021-2026), improving safety and reducing methane emissions. By the conclusion of this programme in 2032, it is estimated that the IMRRP will have achieved a 66% reduction in CO2 equivalent emissions from the gas distribution network since the programme commenced in 2013.

■ **Parrots: Non-native Species**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[19969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 4 October 2022 to Question 46153 on Parrots: Non-native Species, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of ring-necked parakeets on other native wildlife.

Rebecca Pow:

An assessment carried out in 2021 concluded there was sufficient evidence to warrant the inclusion of ring-necked parakeet as a target species on the General Licence to kill or take wild birds for conservation purposes.

A prior risk assessment for ring-necked parakeets was published by the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat in March 2011 (See risk assessment here: [RA_Psittacula_krameri_\(Ring-necked_Parakeet\)\(nonnativespecies.org\)](https://nonnativespecies.org/RA_Psittacula_krameri_(Ring-necked_Parakeet)_)). The conclusion of this assessment was that this species posed a medium risk (with low uncertainty), with the potential to negatively impact populations of cavity nesting birds.

These risk assessments may be updated when substantive new scientific evidence is made available that could alter the outcome of the risk assessment. The assessment has already concluded that this species poses a conservation threat. Defra is not aware that there is new evidence currently that would alter the conclusion of the risk assessment. Therefore, there are no immediate plans for a re-assessment of ring-necked parakeets.

■ Pets and Wildlife: Crime

Sir Greg Knight: **[19561]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the use of catapults to (a) kill and (b) maim (i) wildlife and (ii) pets.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government takes crimes against wildlife and against pets seriously, including those involving the use of catapults. Under provisions in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 and Animal Welfare Act 2006, there are a range of offences around deliberate attempts to kill, injure or inflict harm on wildlife and in the event that a member of the public believes such an offence has taken place, they are encouraged to report the matter to the police so they can investigate. In particular where pets are concerned, it is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to cause an animal any unnecessary suffering. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 realises the Government's manifesto commitment to increase the sentences available to our courts for the most serious cases of animal cruelty by increasing the maximum penalty for this offence to 5 years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

■ Plastics: Pollution

Afzal Khan: **[19452]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether a Minister from his Department plans to attend the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, INC4, taking place in Ottawa, Canada, in April 2024.

Rebecca Pow:

At the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on plastic pollution the UK will be represented in the negotiations by a delegation of UK Government officials. A Defra Minister is also planning to attend high-level ministerial events immediately prior to the negotiations.

■ **Plastics: Treaties**

Afzal Khan:

[19451]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his policy is on a global plastics treaty.

Robbie Moore:

The UK is a leading voice in tackling marine plastic pollution, and co-sponsored the proposal to prepare a new international, legally binding plastics treaty. The UK is a member of the High ambition coalition to end plastic pollution and has taken an ambitious stance in negotiations, supporting a treaty that will address the full life cycle of plastic including restraining and reducing the production and consumption of plastic to sustainable levels, addressing plastic design and encouraging more recycling and re-use of plastic.

■ **Power Stations: Air Pollution and Carbon Emissions**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[18246]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what account his Department takes of emissions from (a) wood chip and (b) multifuel power plants in overall (i) air quality and (ii) carbon budget assessments.

Robbie Moore:

Our accredited official statistics provide data on the emissions of key air pollutants. This includes emissions from the combustion of wood chips and other fuels in energy industries. Estimates of emissions for 'wood chip' are included in the total for emissions from the combustion of 'wood' more broadly and the data can be found [here](#), and information on each pollutant can be found [here](#).

The [Pollutant Release and Transfer Register](#) also provides information on the emissions from specific power stations and industrial combustion plants.

Performance against carbon budgets is assessed based on the UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory, which includes all emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels at power stations. In accordance with UNFCCC guidelines, carbon dioxide emissions from biomass use are reported as a change in carbon stocks in the Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry sector of the country where the biomass is harvested. They are also reported as a memorandum item in the country where the biomass is used, but are not counted in that country's total emissions to avoid double counting.

■ **River Mersey: Water**

Navendu Mishra:

[17003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of water in the River Mersey.

Robbie Moore:

We are committed to continue to improving water quality and are delivering the record investment, the stronger regulation and the tougher enforcement to improve

our water for our own health, for nature and the economy. For example, on 20 February we announced plans to more than quadruple Environment Agency (EA) water company inspections, strengthening oversight, reducing the reliance on self-monitoring.

The EA has been working with United Utilities in Stockport and in the upstream catchments of the River Tame and River Goyt. Within the current investment programme (2020-2025) there are improvements due to be completed at 2 storm overflows and at 6 of the wastewater treatment works in the upstream catchments. EA has also been working with United Utilities on their investment programme for 2025-2030.

The EA also have national programmes investigating persistent chemical failures and historic sources of chemicals across the Mersey catchment.

■ **River Test: Ammonia and E. coli**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Environment Agency is taking to monitor levels of (a) ammonia and (b) e-coli in the River Test.

Robbie Moore:

The Environment Agency (EA) has deployed a real time Water Quality monitor both upstream and downstream of Fullerton storm overflow in February 2024. The real time monitor is providing data on the ammonium levels in the river Test.

Data from upstream and downstream is being collected and analysed regarding the impact on the overall water quality of the river along with other parameters such as turbidity.

The EA has confirmed that there is no requirement to monitor e-coli in this instance as the ammonium data is the key indicator of water quality that may be compromised by organic material from an anthropogenic process, entering the watercourse.

■ **Rivers: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[16448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of water in rivers and streams in Lincolnshire.

Robbie Moore:

We are committed to continue to improving water quality and are delivering the record investment, the stronger regulation and the tougher enforcement to improve our water for our own health, for nature and the economy. For example, on 20 February we announced plans to more than quadruple Environment Agency (EA) water company inspections, strengthening oversight, reducing the reliance on self-monitoring.

The EA is conducting a major investigation into potential widespread non-compliance by water and sewerage companies at sewage treatment works and has issued 7 warning letters to Anglian Water this financial year for serious or significant offences.

Through the Asset Management Plan (AMP), Anglian Water have an obligation to improve their water recycling centres to good ecological status under the Water Framework Directive. A total of 41 phosphorous and 3 ammonia improvements will be delivered by March 2027. A total of 56 phosphorous, 1 ammonia and 1 BOD improvements are planned between 2030-2035.

In June 2023 Omex were fined £510,190 for their pollution of the River Witham. Omex have spent over £3 million in making good damage caused by their pollution, including river remediation works under the Environmental Damage Regulations.

Finally, the EA also work closely with external partner organisations to deliver projects that have benefits around water quality, with regional examples including Water Friendly Farming and the Limestone Becks restoration.

■ Rivers: Pollution

Rachael Maskell:

[18741]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, by what criteria he grades the cleanliness of rivers.

Robbie Moore:

The cleanliness of rivers in England is graded through the assessment of their ecological and chemical status as set out here: [River basin planning process overview - 3. Defining and describing the water environment - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/river-basin-planning-process-overview-3-defining-and-describing-the-water-environment-guidance).

■ Rivers: Repairs and Maintenance

Daisy Cooper:

[20109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with (a) the Environment Agency and (b) local authorities on the effectiveness of mechanisms to enforce the responsibilities of riparian owners for the maintenance of river banks.

Robbie Moore:

Ministers regularly meet with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders to discuss flood and water management matters.

Riparian landowners, those whose land adjoins a watercourse, are required under common law to maintain watercourses, including the removal of debris and blockages, which could cause an obstruction to the flow of water on their land, or downstream if washed away, as well as maintenance of the bed and banks, and any trees or shrubs growing on the banks. Where a stream or culvert becomes silted up, choked with weeds, or the flow of water has been obstructed causing flood risk to others, the Environment Agency and local authorities have statutory powers to

require the relevant person to maintain the flow of the watercourse. The Environment Agency has published guidance on owning a watercourse on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). By April 2024, new engagement guidance will be published to help Risk Management Authorities, Environment Agency staff, and landowners have more effective conversations on this matter.

The Government's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Policy Statement sets out what we expect from those responsible for all assets and watercourses – including risk management authorities, other public and community organisations, the private sector and riparian owners – to invest in ongoing maintenance and ensure timely repairs where necessary.

Defra has commissioned an independent review of statutory powers and responsibilities associated with FCERM assets across all flood risks and coastal erosion. The review started work in 2021 and is expected to report this spring. This will review whether current mechanisms and legal powers are clear and effective and relevant expertise is shared; this includes the non-statutory powers and responsibilities of riparian landowners and asset owners. The review team is working closely with key stakeholders to ensure that it considers good practice and practitioner concerns, within the sector. Defra will consider its findings after publication.

■ Rivers: Sewage

Rachael Maskell: [\[15951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what compensation do water companies who have released sewage into the river pay to (a) residents and (b) businesses when they flood with contaminated water.

Rachael Maskell: [\[18745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure water companies provide compensation for (a) businesses and (b) residential properties flooded with sewage in the water.

Robbie Moore:

The Government considers the level of sewage being discharged to our waterways to be unacceptable. However, sewage is sometimes released to waterways under strict conditions to avoid it backing up into peoples' homes and businesses.

Water companies are obliged to provide sewerage services under the Water Industry Act 1991. If a water company has failed to provide minimum standards of service to consumers, consumers are entitled to complain to their provider. We expect companies to respond to complaints appropriately and in a timely manner.

This Government is acting to drive down flood risk from every angle. At the last spending review the government increased funding for maintenance of flood defences by £22 million per year, so now over £200 million per year goes on maintenance. This funding ensures flood defences are kept in good working order.

Homeowners and businesses should contact their insurance provider if their property has been flooded. Flood Re is a joint government and insurance industry re-insurance scheme for UK households at high flood risk, available via more than 85 insurance brands.

■ **Sewage: Microplastics**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[19297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the average amount of microplastics present in sewage sludge.

Robbie Moore:

Research has been performed to improve the understanding of microplastics in sewage sludge. Defra has contributed to the design and development of the UK Water Industry Research funded and led [Chemicals Investigation Programme \(CIP\)](#) in this area. While the third CIP phase, reported in 2022, estimated an average mass of microplastics in final sludge products (generated from the sewage treatment processes), it was noted there could be large differences in the estimated values, and in sludge products from different works, and between sludge product samples taken at different occasions from the same treatment works.

■ **Sewage: Repairs and Maintenance**

James Murray:

[\[19486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will issue guidance to (a) local authorities and (b) water companies on their obligations to enforce sewage misconnection rectifications where the property owner does not rectify the faults as requested.

Robbie Moore:

Under Section 59 of the Building Act 1984, local authorities can require property owners to rectify unsatisfactory drainage. If a property owner fails to act, the local authority can carry out the works itself and then recover its costs. The Secretary of State and his officials regularly meet with water companies to discuss their obligations, including around drainage performance.

■ **Sewage: Rivers**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[18743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he expects sewage releases into (a) the River Foss, (b) the River Ouse and (c) their tributaries to stop.

Robbie Moore:

The Government is clear that the amount of sewage currently being discharged into our waters is unacceptable. Through the government's Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, we have set stringent targets for water companies to reduce the use

of storm overflows. Our Plan will eliminate ecological harm from all storm sewage discharges by 2050.

In 2023 the Environment Agency carried out 17 targeted compliance inspections of Yorkshire Water's waste-water treatment works which discharge into the Foss/Ouse and their tributaries.

Within the current Price Review Period, which runs from 2020 to 2025, Yorkshire Water will be improving Hutton and Stillington treatment works, which discharge into the Foss catchment, in order to ensure they comply with requirements under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). These improvements should reduce Phosphorus from the final effluent, and drive improvement of the WFD status.

■ Southern Water: Infrastructure

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Southern Water on updating its sewage infrastructure, in the context of recent sewage discharges into the River Test.

Robbie Moore:

The Secretary of State has regular engagement with water companies to discuss a range of issues including measures to reduce sewage discharges, and improvements to water company infrastructure.

For example, in December 2023, he wrote to all water company Chief Executives, requesting that they improve sewer maintenance programmes over the next twelve months to help prevent storm overflow discharges.

Southern Water's forward investment plan for sewage infrastructure, including planned improvements near the Test, is detailed in their draft business plan for the next Price Review period, which will run from 2025 - 2030. This is currently being reviewed by Ofwat. Ofwat's determination will be issued later this year.

■ Thames Water: Standards

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[20098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the (a) continuity and (b) quality of water services for people served by Thames Water.

Robbie Moore:

Whilst the Government recognises Thames Water needs to take significant steps to improve its performance, Thames Water nonetheless provides some of the highest quality drinking water in the world along with other water companies in England.

Regulators ensure that companies have yearly performance commitment targets for continuity and quality of supply and hold companies to account when these targets are not reached. Government Ministers will shortly be meeting with Thames Water to

reassert the importance of meeting all targets set by the regulators and ensure no customer is affected by failure to do so.

■ Tree Planting

Mr Toby Perkins:

[19841]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many hectares of trees have been planted in each year since 2005.

Rebecca Pow:

The Forestry Commission produces a time series of statistics on all new planting of woodland for the UK. These can be found in [Forestry Statistics](#) on the Forest Research website. These statistics are reported for each financial year in thousands of hectares. The latest available figures are for 2022-23 published in September 2023.

■ Veterinary Medicine: Labour Turnover

Dr Neil Hudson:

[19981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help increase staff retention in the veterinary sector.

Mark Spencer:

Defra is aware of the challenges facing the veterinary sector, including retention of qualified veterinary surgeons. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, as the regulator for the veterinary profession, published its Workforce Action Plan in 2022 to progress issues of recruitment, retention and return. Defra works closely with the RCVS on issues concerning the veterinary profession and continues to keep reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, where amendments might support increases in recruitment and retention, under review.

■ Water Charges

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[17276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department have made an assessment of the increase in water costs for metred properties against unmetered properties.

Robbie Moore:

Customers with water meters installed are charged based on the volume of water consumed, while those without a meter are charged for their water and sewerage services based on the rateable value of their property.

The Government has asked water companies to increase smart metering and has enabled compulsory metering in areas of water stress, where there is consumer support and it represents value for money, as set out in the [Plan for Water](#). This can allow bill payers to cut costs by using water more efficiently where possible and assist

in reducing overall water consumption by enabling water companies to reduce leakage, further reducing bills for customers.

Some water companies also offer a lowest bill guarantee for consumers who switch to a metered charge, which guarantees the best value price for the first few years of installation and the option to switch back to unmetered charges if the meter is not helpful.

■ Water Companies: Debt Collection

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19139]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department provides guidance to water companies on best practice for debt collection.

Robbie Moore:

Guidance on best practice for debt collection by water companies was published in May 2022 by Ofwat, the independent economic regulator, in its [Paying Fair Guidelines](#). These guidelines include best practice principles and minimum expectations for the provision of support to customers who are in debt and to those who are facing debt recovery action.

■ Water Companies: Investment Income

Steve Reed:

[19375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the total dividends paid to shareholders by water companies in each year since 2010.

Robbie Moore:

Based on data from Ofwat the total dividends paid to shareholders by water companies in England between 2010 and April 2022 amounts to just under £23.4 billion. In each year since privatisation, investment has been greater than dividends paid.

We are clear water companies must not profit from environmental damage and through the Environment Act 2021 have given Ofwat increased powers that will better enable them to hold companies to account for their performance.

Using these powers, Ofwat introduced a new licence condition last year to require companies to demonstrate dividends are linked to performance for customers and the environment. Ofwat now intends to issue updated guidance to provide greater clarity on how it assesses companies' dividend decisions and compliance with their licence. This will include a clear reminder that companies carefully consider serious criminal breaches of the law when taking account of their performance and potential dividend payments.

Where this guidance is not followed, Ofwat will not hesitate to undertake enforcement action.

■ Water Supply

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[20099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with regulators to (a) safeguard the interests of consumers and (b) help ensure the financial stability of the water sector.

Robbie Moore:

The five yearly Price Review process is currently underway for the period 2025-30, in which Ofwat sets an overall cap on the total amount that each water company may recover from their customers. As part of this process, Ofwat balances the interests of consumers with the ability of companies to finance the delivery of their services.

Regarding safeguarding consumer interests, Government is mindful consumers are concerned about their bills. For this reason, Defra expects all water companies to make customers aware of available support, including WaterSure, social tariffs, payment breaks, and debt management assistance. We are continuing to work with industry to explore options to improve existing social tariff arrangements and welcome the planned household charging trials in 2024-25.

Regarding financial stability, Ofwat assesses and monitors the financial resilience of each company on an individual and ongoing basis and challenges companies where they identify this is needed. As part of this work, Ofwat produces an annual 'Monitoring Financial Resilience Report' to provide a publicly available assessment of the financial resilience of each water company. Through this publication, Ofwat aims to promote a focus on efficient investment that secures long-term resilience and delivers long-term value for money for customers and the environment.

■ Water: Havering

Andrew Rosindell:

[17817]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress his Department has made on improving water quality in (a) Romford constituency and (b) the London Borough of Havering.

Robbie Moore:

We are committed to continue to improving water quality and are delivering the record investment, the stronger regulation and the tougher enforcement to improve our water for our own health, for nature and the economy. For example, on 20 February we announced plans to more than quadruple Environment Agency (EA) water company inspections, strengthening oversight, reducing the reliance on self-monitoring.

The EA is working with Thames Water under the Water industry National Environment Programme' (WINEP) scheme on improved monitoring for the two wastewater treatment works in Havering that discharge to the River Ingrebourne, and in Brentwood on a scheme to reduce phosphorous.

Thames Water were required to install 'Event Duration Monitoring' (EDM) at all storm overflows on their sewerage network before the end of 2023; the two sites requiring EDM in Havering have had these since 2019.

Further schemes are ongoing with Groundwork East to deliver a combined Yellowfish and Junior River Wardens project working with schools along the River Ingrebourne, with potential to expand this scheme to cover the River Rom.

■ **Wheat: Agriculture**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19928]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) support and (b) promote sustainable and regenerative wheat farming practices.

Mark Spencer:

We understand the increasing importance of farmers having access to crop varieties that are resistant to climate change and variable weather conditions, to maintain crop quality and yields.

The recent Precision Breeding Act is a major step in unlocking growth and innovation in technologies like gene editing and supports Defra's efforts to reinforce food security in the face of climate change. Through the Act we want to encourage researchers and commercial breeders to be at the forefront of capturing the potential benefits of precision breeding for British farmers and consumers. For instance, research into wheat that is resilient to climate change is currently underway at the John Innes Centre. Gene editing techniques have been used to identify a key gene in wheat that can be used to introduce traits such as heat resilience whilst maintaining high yield. This could help to increase food production from a crop that 2.5 billion people are dependent on globally.

Our Genetic Improvement Networks also provide a platform for knowledge exchange for breeders, producers, end users and the research base, and a means for the delivery of scientific knowledge, resources and results to add value to UK crops.

The £270 million Farming Innovation Programme supports industry-led research and development in agriculture and horticulture. All projects support productivity and environmental outcomes that will benefit farmers and growers in England. In our latest 'climate smart' farming themed competition, we awarded over £11 million to projects investigating novel approaches to growing and managing crops. Previous competitions have also supported crop-related research.

■ **White Fish: Monitoring**

Daniel Zeichner:

[19881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack were sampled by his Department for (a) length and (b) sex in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (i) VI and (ii) VII in 2019.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not sampled pollack from Area VI.

- a) In 2019, 6709 pollack length measurements were made by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.
- b) It is not possible to provide data on sex as fish are gutted when sampled in markets and examination of gonads is required to accurately determine sex.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[19882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack were sampled by his Department for (a) length and (b) sex in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (i) VI and (ii) VII in 2023.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not sampled pollack from Area VI.

- a) In 2023, 3726 pollack length measurements were made by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.
- b) It is not possible to provide data on sex as fish are gutted when sampled in markets and examination of gonads is required to accurately determine sex.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[19883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were collected by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2019.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not collected pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2019, 781 otolith bones were collected by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[19884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were collected by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2020.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not collected pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2020, 739 otolith bones were collected by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[19885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were collected by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2021.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not collected pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2021, 825 otolith bones were collected by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[19886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were collected by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2022.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not collected pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2022, 660 otolith bones were collected by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[19887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were collected by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2023.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not collected pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2023, 643 otolith bones were collected by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[19888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were analysed by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2023.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not analysed pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2023, 643 otolith bones were analysed by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[19889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were analysed by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2022.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not analysed pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2022, 656 otolith bones were analysed by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[19890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were analysed by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2021.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not analysed pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2021, 818 otolith bones were analysed by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[19891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were analysed by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2020.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not analysed pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2020, 732 otolith bones were analysed by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[19892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many pollack otolith bones were analysed by his Department in International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas area (a) VI and (b) VII in 2019.

Mark Spencer:

Data is provided only for International Centre for the Exploration of the Seas Area VII. My department has not analysed pollack otolith bones from Area VI.

In 2023, 778 otolith bones were analysed by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

■ Wildlife: Crime**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[19982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with (a) the police and (b) animal welfare stakeholders on the actions of people involved in catapult groups on social media.

Rebecca Pow:

The use of catapults against animals, and the sharing of disturbing imagery associated with such use on social media, is an issue that has been relayed to my officials by certain local police forces and the National Wildlife Crime Unit. I am informed a new national group has recently been created to address the catapulting of wildlife, focusing on education, prevention, detection and justice. Officers from Essex Police and the Metropolitan Police are leading the group, named Operation Lakeshot, and they are working in partnership with the RSPCA and Nature Watch.

The government takes wildlife crime seriously and it is a matter of concern. Under provisions in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006, there are a range of offences around deliberate attempts to kill, injure, or inflict harm on wildlife. Furthermore, the Online Safety Act 2023 will also require social media firms to take action to tackle content that results in the unnecessary suffering of animals, or that encourages activity that causes the unnecessary suffering of an animal. This includes removing such content.

■ Zane Gbangbola**Ellie Reeves:**[\[19924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of opening an independent public inquiry with full powers to compel disclosure into the death of Zane Gbangbola in 2014.

Robbie Moore:

The Surrey Senior Coroner has already carried out a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding Zane Gbangbola's death, taking into account a considerable amount of evidence. The Coroner, as an independent judicial office holder, drew his own conclusions based on this evidence.

If there is a belief that the evidence was not considered properly during the original inquest, or that there is new evidence available, the correct process is for an application to be made to the Attorney General asking her to apply to the High Court to quash the inquest and order a fresh investigation. The High Court would take this course of action if it believed that it would be in the interests of justice.

I believe that this remains the proper process to follow. An assessment of the merits of an inquiry should be made at the appropriate time if, and when, the legal processes have been exhausted.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Alaa Abdel Fattah****Caroline Lucas:**[\[19839\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make representations to his Egyptian counterpart on including Alaa Abdel Fattah Alaa in this year's Presidential pardon list.

Caroline Lucas:[\[19840\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help secure the release of Alaa Abdel Fattah in Egypt.

David Rutley:

Ministers and officials continue to raise Mr Alaa Abd El-Fattah's case at the highest levels with the Egyptian government. They have been consistently clear in calling for his release and continue to press for urgent consular access, utilising a variety of mechanisms, including through public and private engagement.

The Foreign Secretary raised this case with Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry on 22 February. As Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon raised this case with Foreign Minister Shoukry on 28 March and with the Egyptian Ambassador on 20 February. Both Lord Ahmad and the Foreign Secretary discussed Mr El-Fattah with FM Shoukry and President Sisi in December 2023. The Prime Minister also spoke to President Sisi about Mr El-Fattah on 1 December 2023.

■ **Armed Conflict: International Law****Liam Byrne:**[\[19285\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what the priority areas of work are for the International Humanitarian Law Compliance Assessment Process Cell in his Department.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Ministers regularly review advice about Israel's adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and act in accordance with that advice. The Foreign Secretary has been clear that Israel is the occupying power, it is responsible and that has consequences, including when we look at if Israel is compliant with international humanitarian law. We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law to be respected and civilians to be protected.

Liam Byrne:[\[19286\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what (a) staff and (b) legal resources have been committed to the International Humanitarian Law Compliance Assessment Process Cell in his Department.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO currently has a small bespoke capability, including legal resources, to look specifically at international humanitarian law issues in the context of the Israel/Gaza conflict. This is part of a larger team in the UK and across our overseas network actively delivering the Government's goals of ending the conflict and reaching a lasting peace.

Liam Byrne:[\[19287\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will publish the findings of each assessment by the International Humanitarian Law Compliance Assessment Process Cell in his Department of Israel's compliance with such law.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Legal advice to Ministers and policy assessments related to it are confidential. We therefore do not publish the International Humanitarian Law Cell's assessments of Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). It is for Ministers to decide what to say publicly about each assessment.

Liam Byrne:[\[19288\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department has previously established a country-specific cell similar to the International Humanitarian Law Compliance Assessment Process Cell.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Cell's approach to assessment of IHL compliance by Israel is informed by a methodology adopted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office following a request by the Campaign Against Arms Trade in 2017 for a judicial review of export licensing decisions for Saudi Arabia during the conflict in Yemen.

I refer the honourable member for Hodge Hill to the then Secretary of State for International Trade's statement of 7 July 2020 following the High Court judgment on military export licences to Saudi Arabia [Volume 678:Column 32-34WS].

■ Azerbaijan: Motor Vehicles**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[19433\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department is taking steps with counterparts in Azerbaijan to track the final destinations of UK exported vehicles.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has banned the direct export of thousands of goods to Russia, including luxury vehicles. UK Regulations also prohibit the circumvention of our sanctions. We have been clear to UK business that they need to satisfy themselves that their goods will not end up in Russia. With EU and US partners, we are engaging a range of third countries to reduce the risk of sanctioned goods reaching Russia.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Sexual Offences**

Mohammad Yasin: [\[19658\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of trends in the number of British citizens who have reported being victims of sex crimes in foreign countries over the last five years; and what support his Department provides to those people (a) in situ and (b) on their return to the UK.

David Rutley:
FCDO data for the past five years on the number of rape and sexual assault cases where consular assistance was provided to British nationals is presented in the table below.

The FCDO takes all reports of rape and sexual assault seriously. Consular staff are available to provide immediate support by telephone 24/7 and will try to see a victim to provide in person assistance as soon as possible, depending on location and timing. The FCDO's public guide "Support for British National Abroad" outlines the support available, including through organisations funded by FCDO to support victims on their return to the UK, where the FCDO can continue to support victims in relation to any ongoing investigation abroad.

CALENDAR YEAR	NUMBER OF RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES WHERE CONSULAR ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED TO BRITISH NATIONALS (TOTAL)
2019	365
2020	137
2021	138
2022	343
2023	388*

* Figures from 16 October 2023 are subject to a different reporting methodology due to a change in case management system.

■ **China: Fisheries**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[19047\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of fishing by China's state-sponsored distant water fleet in the (a) Andaman Sea and (b) Gulf of Thailand.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
The UK is committed to engaging with other countries, including China, to sustainably manage fisheries, protect ecosystems and combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. We support ocean protection through appropriate funding.

For example, at the G7 Leaders Summit in Cornwall, the Government pledged £500 million to create our Blue Planet Fund to help developing countries protect the ocean from pollution, overfishing and habitat loss. We also push for multilateral action internationally, including through Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, the Convention of Biological Diversity and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. The UK remains committed to international law and UNCLOS.

China is building a network of fishing bases in developing countries across four continents. Comprising ports, boats, and fish processing plants, the bases service China's distant-water fleet: an armada of over 4,600 vessels (potentially many more) that operates in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of 42 countries and accounts for 14 percent of worldwide marine catch by value.

■ **Darfur: Sexual Offences**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[19538\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what support his Department provides for the survivors of rape and sexual abuse by Arab militias in West Darfur.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Since the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, there has been a significant escalation of gender-based violence (GBV) in Sudan. The UK has pivoted our programme delivery to focus on GBV prevention, and protection and care for rape survivors. We have also integrated specific measures to address conflict-related sexual violence into the humanitarian system, making use of Women's Centres, mobile clinics and internally displaced person's gathering points, for community engagement and service provision. In 2023, over 83,399 consultation providing sexual and reproductive health services were delivered, over 104,225 people were given mental health and psychological support, and over 9,000 people benefitted from risk mitigation and response services.

■ **Developing Countries: Solar Power**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[18682\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how much the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment has spent on increasing the capacity of solar photovoltaic manufacturing.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) is a G7 initiative. The G7 plan to report in 2025 on amounts invested and mobilised. The UK is on track to meet our up to \$40 billion contribution to the \$600 billion target through our British Investment Partnerships work, which is supporting numerous renewable energy initiatives. In 2022, we improved access to clean energy for over 6 million people. Our investments include: \$69 million by the Private Infrastructure Development Group; support by British International Investment to a \$36 million solar PV storage plant in

Mozambique; eight solar projects through Manufacturing Africa unlocking £26.7 million, and £6 million through the Transforming Energy Access platform.

■ **Development Aid: Polio**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[19537\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the correspondence from the WHO Director for Polio Eradication to the Minister of State for Development and Africa of 19 March 2024, if he will take steps to increase funding for programmes for the eradication of polio.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is proud to be a longstanding supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), having contributed £1.4 billion since 1995. Building strong and resilient health systems and reducing the risk of future global health threats are priorities for the UK. The UK is committed to being a supportive partner to the GPEI in the future and will take every opportunity to ensure every child everywhere is safe from Polio.

■ **East Africa: Disinformation**

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[19860\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what support his Department is providing to partners in East Africa to tackle Kremlin-backed online disinformation campaigns.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK has consistently made clear that malign activity by Russia and its proxies, including disinformation campaigns, exploits and exacerbates instability in sub-Saharan Africa. We draw on a range of levers to strengthen security and stability in sub-Saharan Africa. HMG is working with regional and international partners to coordinate activity to counter Russian disinformation and broader foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) targeting African audiences. We also support our African partners through strategic security and defence relationships with countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana, coordinating closely with likeminded states and international organisations.

■ **Gaza: Food Supply**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[19314\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will seek legal advice on the potential implications for his policies of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Famine Review Committee's report entitled Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, March 2024 – Conclusions and Recommendations, published on 18 March 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is also doing all it can to get as much food into Gaza as possible. We recently announced that more than 2,000 tonnes of UK-funded food aid are being distributed by the World Food Programme on the ground. This is our largest delivery of aid to Gaza in this crisis. This follows 750 tonnes of UK funded food aid arriving in Gaza in December, delivered through the World Food Programme and a second delivery of 315 tonnes in January.

We and our partners are stepping up efforts to get aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air.

Israel must take action to allow more aid into Gaza, including scaling up the Jordan corridor, opening a crossing in northern Gaza (Karni, Erez or a new crossing point), fully opening Ashdod Port for aid delivery and increasing screening capacity at Kerem Shalom and Nitzana to seven days a week and extended hours.

Caroline Lucas:[\[19590\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Famine Review Committee's report entitled Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, March 2024 – Conclusions and Recommendations, published on 18 March 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is doing all it can to get as much food into Gaza as possible. We recently announced that more than 2,000 tonnes of UK-funded food aid are being distributed by the World Food Programme on the ground. This is our largest delivery of aid to Gaza in this crisis. This follows 750 tonnes of UK funded food aid arriving in Gaza in December, delivered through the World Food Programme, followed by a second delivery of 315 tonnes in January.

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

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**Andrew Selous:**[\[19563\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on opening up the port of Ashdod to aid supplies for Gaza.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The British Government has repeatedly called on Israel to open fully Ashdod Port for aid delivery.

Emma Hardy:[\[19942\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2023 to Question 403 on Gaza: Humanitarian Aid, what

recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of aid supplies to the Gaza strip; and what recent steps he has taken to support (a) Islamic Relief, (b) the Egyptian Red Crescent and (c) other aid agencies to deliver aid.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Palestinians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. We trebled our aid commitment this financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air.

We need a humanitarian pause now to allow humanitarian actors and Gazans to operate and move safely, and enable hostages to be released.

We are also calling on Israel to increase access for aid through land routes and fully open Ashdod Port, scale up the Jordan corridor to the 500 trucks a week with a streamlined screening and delivery process, open a crossing in northern Gaza (Karni, Erez or a new crossing point), and increase screening capacity at Kerem Shalom and Nitzana to seven days a week and extended hours.

In addition, we want to see an expansion of the types of aid allowed into Gaza and Israel authorise at least 200,000 litres of fuel per day, as well as the provision of electricity, water and telecommunications, to both the north and the south of Gaza.

On 13 March the Foreign Secretary announced an additional £10 million to bring UK support to more than £100million this financial year. UK funding has supported the work of partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF and Egyptian Red Crescent Society. On 20 March the Foreign Secretary also announced that more than 2,000 tonnes of UK-funded food aid will be distributed by the World Food Programme. This will be the largest UK aid delivery so far and will support 275,000 people.

■ **Gaza: Israel**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[19310\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has sought recent legal advice on the Israeli government's compliance with (a) international law and (b) the International Court of Justice's decision in the case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel) in the context of trends in the level of food insecurity in Gaza.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We regularly review advice about Israel's capability and commitment to International Humanitarian Law. We act in accordance with that advice. We are clear that as the occupying power in Gaza, Israel has to make sure that humanitarian aid including food, water and shelter is available to people in Gaza.

Sir Michael Ellis:

[\[19347\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the analysis of

casualty figures in Gaza by the Professor of Statistics and Data Science at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, published on 7 March 2024.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Like many of our partners, we routinely use reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to monitor daily figures for casualties in Gaza. OCHA rely on reporting from the Hamas-run Ministry of Health in Gaza. Casualty figures are only one data point of many we use to understand the scale of the conflict and its impact on civilians. Satellite imagery of building damage, eye-witness accounts from hospitals and data on living conditions all feed into our assessment.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[19710\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make representations to his Israeli counterpart on immediately rehabilitating (a) horticulture, (b) livestock farming, (c) fishing and (d) other food production systems in Gaza.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

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

The UK is doing all it can to get as much food into Gaza as possible. We recently announced that more than 2,000 tonnes of UK-funded food aid are being distributed by the World Food Programme on the ground. This is our largest delivery of aid to Gaza in this crisis. This follows 750 tonnes of UK funded food aid arriving in Gaza in December, delivered through the World Food Programme, followed by a second delivery of 315 tonnes in January. Last month the UK and Jordan also air-dropped life-saving food and medicines directly to the Tal Al-Hawa hospital in northern Gaza.

■ **Global Partnership for Education**

Munira Wilson:

[\[19970\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent steps the Department has taken to support the work of the Global Partnership for Education.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Ensuring access to quality education is an FCDO priority. The UK is a founding member and top bilateral donor to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). GPE estimates that its support will help partner countries get 40 million more girls into school and support 17 million more girls to read in low and lower-middle income countries by 2025. In 2021, the UK co-hosted the Global Education Summit, helping to raise a historic \$4 billion in donor pledges for GPE, including the UK's pledge of £430 million to GPE over five years. So far, the UK has disbursed £60 million in line with the FCDO Spending Review allocation.

■ Hong Kong: Asylum

Jim Shannon:

[\[19056\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether Ministers in his Department have plans to meet with Hong Kong activists (a) Nathan Law, (b) Finn Lau and (c) Christopher Mung.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We will not tolerate any attempt by any foreign power to intimidate, harass or harm individuals or communities in the UK. Officials in Hong Kong, Beijing and London have raised the issuing of arrest warrants and bounties for these individuals with the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities. As the Foreign Secretary said on 14 December, the Hong Kong Police are deliberately targeting individuals for exercising their right to freedom of expression. We have called for the repeal of the National Security Law and continue to make clear our strong objections, including to its extraterritorial reach. That extends to the decisions by the Hong Kong Police to issue arrest warrants and bounties for activists. We call on Beijing to repeal the National Security Law and end its persecution of political activists.

■ Hong Kong: Civil Liberties

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[19258\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the passing of Article 23 in Hong Kong.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Hong Kong's reputation as an international city was founded on respect for the rule of law, the independence of its institutions, its high degree of autonomy, and protection of the rights and freedoms afforded to all people living and working there. The Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, rushed through the legislative process despite its significance, will have far-reaching implications for all of these areas. That is why the Foreign Secretary on 19 March urged the Hong Kong authorities to respect rights and freedoms and act in accordance with its international commitments and legal obligations.

■ Hong Kong: Human Rights

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19438\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the potential impact of Article 23 on the (a) civil liberties and (b) human rights of people in Hong Kong.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19439\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he plans to take to support UK (a) nationals and (b) businesses in Hong Kong, in

the context of the external interference offence included in the Article 23 legislation passed in Hong Kong on 19 March 2024.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Hong Kong is required to ensure national security legislation complies with international standards and upholds rights and freedoms, as set out in the Joint Declaration, the Basic Law, and international law. Hong Kong's reputation as an international city was founded on respect for the rule of law, the independence of its institutions, its high degree of autonomy, and protection of the rights and freedoms afforded to all people living and working there. The Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, rushed through the legislative process despite its significance, will have far-reaching implications for all of these areas. That is why the Foreign Secretary on 19 March urged the Hong Kong authorities to respect rights and freedoms and act in accordance with its international commitments and legal obligations. We continue to analyse the extent of the impact this will have on British nationals and businesses in Hong Kong, and have updated our Travel Advice and Overseas Business Risk accordingly.

■ **India: Elections**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[19257\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with his Indian counterpart on Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata party's receipt of donations through the electoral bond scheme in the context of the Indian Supreme Court's ruling on that matter in February 2024.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In February 2024, the relevant Supreme Court of India judgment included an order to publish electoral bond data. Since then, the data, provided by the State Bank of India (SBI), has been published by the Election Commission.

■ **Indonesia: Demonstrations**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19679\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made representations to his counterpart in Indonesia on the use of excessive force by security personnel during protests.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We regularly monitor ongoing tensions in the event of large-scale protests in Indonesia. Protests following the election on 14 February in Jakarta have been significantly smaller and more peaceful than those seen following previous elections. We have worked throughout the electoral process to support civil society in strengthening Indonesia's democracy.

■ Indonesia: Indigenous Peoples

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19680\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Indonesia on the rights of indigenous tribes in the context of the dismissed lawsuit brought by the Auyu tribe against palm oil development in Tanah Merah.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has regular dialogue with the Government of Indonesia on forestry and land use (FOLU) issues, including through its Memorandum of Understanding on FOLU issues signed in 2022. The Second Permanent Secretary of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office visited Indonesia in February 2024 and met with conservation organisations, civil society groups and business owners to observe efforts to progress sustainable forestry policy.

■ International Waters: Marine Protected Areas

Afzal Khan:

[\[19454\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he has taken with his international counterparts to create marine protected areas in the high seas in preparation for ratifying the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK will continue to be proactive in preparing for implementation and entry into force and will work with international partners and stakeholders to identify potential areas for High Seas Marine Protected Areas. The UK is also funding a project to develop a shortlist of potential area-based management tools that could be developed into future proposals once the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement comes into force.

■ Israel: Arms Trade

Fleur Anderson:

[\[19484\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether there are pending applications for arms export licences for arms to Israel.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Government publishes data on export licensing decisions on a quarterly basis in the Official Statistics, including data on outcome, end user destination, overall value, type (e.g. military, other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This data is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>. The most recent Official Statistics cover the period 1 April - 30 June 2023. Information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 July - 30 September 2023 will be published after April 2024 and information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 October - 31 March 2024 will be published later this year.

■ Israel: Hamas**Sir Michael Ellis:**[\[19346\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent Hamas rocket fire into Israel.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

As the Government has stated previously, for there to be a lasting peace Israel's security must be assured. Removing Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel and Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza are among the vital elements for a lasting peace.

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

Caroline Lucas:[\[19591\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March 2023 to Question 17856 on Israel: Hamas, when he last made an assessment of Israel's (a) capability and (b) commitment to International Humanitarian Law.

Caroline Lucas:[\[19592\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to his oral contribution in response to the question from the hon. Member for Hodge Hill, during the Urgent Question on Israel and Gaza of 19 March 2024, Official Report, column 820, how many occasions he has (a) received and (b) made a Statement to the House on the Law Officers' advice in relation to the Israeli Government's compliance with international humanitarian law.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We have previously assessed that Israel is committed and capable of complying with International Humanitarian Law. We regularly review our assessment.

■ Khalifa Haftar**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[19539\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what report he has received of HM Ambassador to Libya's meeting with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar.

David Rutley:

The British Ambassador to Libya met Khalifa Haftar on 18 March, the discussion focused on the need for engagement with the UN's political process. The UK is committed to supporting progress on the political process as an essential step to ensuring Libya's long-term stability, security and prosperity.

■ Libya and Tunisia: Borders

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[19540\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the closure of the Ras Jedir border crossing.

David Rutley:

The Ras Jedir border crossing was closed in both Libya and Tunisia because of recent security disturbances. The UK is monitoring the situation to ensure that we are able to respond appropriately. To foster long-term stability and address the drivers of conflict in Libya, the UK is working alongside our regional and international partners in support of the UN process.

■ Nature Conservation: Finance

Steve Reed:

[\[19373\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2024 to Question 18175 on Nature Conservation: Finance, if he will publish a detailed breakdown of how the budget for climate change interventions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity was spent in the (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 financial years.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Later this year we will publish a detailed breakdown of all International Climate Programme spend, including those that protect and restore nature and biodiversity, through the UK's first Biennial Transparency Report under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. This will cover calendar years 2021 and 2022. Future years spending will be published in future Biennial Transparency Reports.

■ North Korea: Human Rights

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[19859\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of progress on human rights in North Korea since the publication of the UN Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea -- A/HRC/25/63.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is deeply concerned about the appalling human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as documented by the 2014 UN Commission of Inquiry Report on Human Rights in the country. The UK has responded to the report's recommendations by continuing to press for an annual debate in the UN Security Council, and working to secure a robust resolution on the DPRK at the UN Human Rights Council. On 17 August 2023, at the first UNSC open meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK since 2017, the UK highlighted inextricable links between the DPRK's human rights violations and its illegal weapons programme, and called on the DPRK to engage with the UN Special Rapporteur. This

year, the UK will again work closely with partners to secure a strong resolution which stresses the importance of following-up recommendations from the COI Report and provides the basis for further work on a credible framework for accountability for human rights violations in the DPRK.

■ North Korea: Sanctions

Sir Robert Buckland:

[19858]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he plans to impose sanctions on (a) officials and (b) entities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for supplying weapons to Russia.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK strongly condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) export and Russia's procurement of DPRK ballistic missiles and Russia's decision to use DPRK-supplied missiles in recent attacks against Ukraine, as fifty Foreign Ministers made clear in their 9 January joint statement. The transfer of these weapons increases the suffering of the Ukrainian people, supports Russia's war of aggression, and undermines the global non-proliferation regime. It also violates multiple UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) - which Russia itself voted for. On 22 February the UK designated a number of targets including Azia Shipping Company and Ibex Shipping INC, involved in the transfer of weapons from the DPRK to Russia. The UK will continue to work with our partners to hold the DPRK to account for supporting Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. We keep all evidence and potential designations under close review. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ Pakistan: Security

Sir Robert Buckland:

[19861]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what diplomatic support his Department is providing to the Pakistani Government to help deescalate tensions in North Waziristan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Pakistan faces a range of challenges to its security and stability, including terrorism. We support efforts by the Governments of Pakistan and its neighbours to constructively build stability in the region, and UK assistance to Pakistan has focussed on protecting civilians, strengthening rule of law and developing civilian counter-terror institutions.

■ Papua: Biofuels

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19681]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed bio-ethanol food

estate in West Papua on (a) the environment and (b) local (i) communities and (ii) ecosystems.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government is aware of proposals for the Food and Energy Estate programme in Merauke. We work closely with the Government of Indonesia to help increase the sustainability of commodity production, including by limiting deforestation and other environmental impacts, and supporting local communities' access to livelihoods.

■ **Papua: Civil Liberties**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19678\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help promote freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in West Papua, in the context of recent reports of political imprisonment in that region.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government remains committed to upholding and defending human rights, freedom of speech and equality at home and overseas. We are aware of increased tensions in the Papua region and we continue to monitor developments closely. We have raised the issue of Papua with the Indonesian Embassy in London. Officials from the British Embassy in Jakarta visited Papua in March 2022 and met with officials, police, local business, human rights defenders, environmentalists and religious leaders. They also visited the region in February and July 2023.

■ **Papua: Internally Displaced People**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19677\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the number of internally-displaced people in West Papua since December 2018; and whether his Department is taking diplomatic steps to help support those people.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We continue to monitor the ongoing issue of internal civilian displacement caused by clashes between separatists and Indonesian security forces in Papua. We have raised our concerns with the Indonesian Embassy in London. Officials from the British Embassy in Jakarta have also visited Papua in March 2022 and met with officials, police, local business, human rights defenders, environmentalists and religious leaders. Embassy officials also visited the region again in February and July 2023.

The UK's longstanding position is to respect the territorial integrity of Indonesia, which includes the region of Papua. Within this framework, we strongly support the efforts of the Indonesian authorities and civil society to address the legitimate concerns of the people of Papua, including strengthening human rights protections,

providing humanitarian assistance and ensuring that all Papuans benefit from the sustainable and equitable development of their province.

■ **Russia: Freezing of Assets**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[20005\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of EU proposals to send profits generated from frozen Russian assets to Ukraine.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

We continue to work closely with allies, including the EU Commission, to explore all lawful routes by which immobilised Russian sovereign assets can be used to support Ukraine. G7 Leaders reaffirmed this on 24 February, instructing relevant ministries to continue their work to that end and report back ahead of the G7 Summit in June. We will keep the House updated as this work develops.

■ **Russia: Sanctions**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19434\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will hold discussions with international partners on strengthening multilateral approaches to prevent the circumvention of sanctions against Russia through third countries.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK coordinates closely with the EU, US, G7 and other international partners to tackle circumvention via multilateral fora and strategic consultations. Senior officials attend the Sanctions Coordinators Forum in Brussels, most recently in February 2024 focusing on strengthening enforcement of Russia sanctions. With the EU, US and Japan we have agreed a list of 50 Common High Priority items; battlefield-critical components we are targeting through joint diplomatic engagement with third countries. With the US and EU we have jointly engaged with the UAE, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, and Serbia, to highlight circumvention risks and offer technical support.

■ **Thailand: Fisheries**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19045\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the fisheries transparency reforms introduced by Thailand's government in 2015 on fish stocks in the region.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19046\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will hold discussions with representatives of Thailand's government on its proposed fishing reforms.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are monitoring developments regarding proposals to reform Thailand's Fisheries Act and are engaging with relevant organisations to understand the potential impact of these reforms. The UK complies with its international obligations to maintain labour, maritime and environmental standards, and we encourage other countries to do the same.

■ UNRWA: Finance**Steve McCabe:**[\[18834\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what proportion of UK aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is spent on (a) food, (b) medicines, (c) other essentials, (d) salaries and (e) other costs for (i) UNRWA personnel and (ii) other employees.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

UK funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was disbursed before the allegations that UNRWA employees were involved in the appalling 7 October terror attack against Israel came to light. No more British funding is due this financial year and we are pausing any future funding of UNRWA.

We provided £19 million of unearmarked funding this financial year to UNRWA's programme budget. This enabled UNRWA to deliver education, health, relief and social services and protection to 5.9 million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. The UK also provided £16 million to UNRWA's Flash Appeal in response to the Gaza Crisis, supporting UNRWA to deliver humanitarian assistance, food, shelter, and non-food items for refugees in Gaza.

Our decision to pause future funding to UNRWA has no impact on the UK's contribution to the humanitarian response.

Our commitment to trebling aid to Gaza still stands and we are supporting partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and Egyptian Red Crescent Society to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

Steve McCabe:[\[18835\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what proportion of his Department's aid to Gaza is channelled through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

UK funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was disbursed before the allegations that UNRWA employees were involved in the appalling 7 October terror attack against Israel came to light. No more British funding is due this financial year and we are pausing any future funding of UNRWA.

The UK provided £16 million this financial year to UNRWA's Flash Appeal in response to the Gaza Crisis, which constitutes 22% of the UK's total humanitarian allocations to Gaza. Our decision to pause future funding to UNRWA has had no impact on the UK's contribution to the humanitarian response. We are doing everything we can to get more aid into Gaza as quickly as possible by land, sea and air, working with partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and Egyptian Red Crescent Society to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

■ Vietnam: Politics and Government

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[20004\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of political instability in Vietnam.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We closely monitor political developments in Vietnam, including the recent resignation of President Vo Van Thuong. The UK continues to work with Vietnam and other partners across the Indo-Pacific on long-term strategic priorities such as energy transition and adaptation to climate change, maritime security in line with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, illegal immigration, deepening trade, technology and investment co-operation, and on education and research partnerships.

■ VIGINUM

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[19866\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve cooperation with VIGINUM.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The UK works closely with international partners to counter Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) by hostile actors, including bilaterally with France and its agencies. We regularly engage with Viginum at official working level and within the G7, including through the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, which strengthens G7 coordination to identify and respond to foreign threats to democracies. We intend to build on cooperation with G7 members over the course of 2024 on countering FIMI and will therefore be looking to continue engaging France on information threats.

■ West Bank: Violence

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[20107\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of alleged settler violence in the village of Um al-Khair in the southern West Bank.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK continues to take a strong stance against settler violence. Extremist settlers, by targeting and attacking Palestinian civilians, are undermining security and stability for both Israelis and Palestinians.

On 12 February, the Foreign Secretary announced new sanctions against four extremist Israeli settlers who have violently attacked Palestinians in the West Bank. These measures are part of wider UK efforts to support a more stable West Bank, which is vital for the peace and security of both Palestinians and Israelis.

We continue to urge Israel to take stronger action to stop settler violence and hold the perpetrators accountable. We will consider additional actions, including further sanctions, as necessary. The UK continues to work with allies and partners, including across the region, to find a path towards a sustainable ceasefire and permanent peace.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Agency Nurses: Expenditure**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[14504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England spent on agency nurses in each of the last five years.

Andrew Stephenson:
[Holding answer 22 February 2024]: The amount spent on agency nurses by year for each of the last five years is set out in the table below.

FINANCIAL YEAR	AGENCY (NURSING) SPEND
2018-19	£843 million
2019-20	£879 million
2020-21	£838 million
2021-22	£1.1 billion
2022-23	£1.37 billion

The Long Term Workforce Plan sets out a path to reduce the National Health Service’s reliance on agency. We estimate that the reliance on temporary staffing in FTE terms will reduce from 9% in 2021/22 to around 5% from 2032/33 onwards, with mostly bank staff fulfilling the requirement for temporary staffing.

■ Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates

Rachael Maskell:

[\[16684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to provide the same (a) terms and conditions and (b) job evaluation systems to (i) Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates and (ii) junior doctors.

Andrew Stephenson:

The role of medical associates is to work with and support doctors and not to replace them. Physician Associates, Anaesthesia Associates, and doctors in training are employed under different contractual arrangements. Physician Associates and Anaesthesia Associates are employed on the Agenda for Change (AfC) contract. Doctors in training follow a distinct medical training pathway, and are employed on the NHS Doctors and Dentists in Training (2016) contract.

The National Health Service contracts reflect the different needs of different members of the workforce, and are managed by different collective bargaining structures. The AfC contract is managed by the NHS Staff Council and is underpinned by the NHS Job Evaluation Scheme. There is no equivalent job evaluation scheme for doctors and dentists' terms and conditions.

There are currently no plans for Physician Associates, Anaesthesia Associates, and doctors in training to be employed under the same terms and conditions, with the same job evaluation system.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Children

Jim Shannon:

[\[18705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people under the age of 18 were diagnosed with ADHD in the last 12 months.

Maria Caulfield:

Data on the number of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is not held centrally, but may be held locally by individual National Health Service trusts or commissioners.

The Department is exploring options for improving data collection and reporting on waiting times for ADHD assessments and diagnoses, to help improve access to ADHD assessments in a timely way and in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines. In line with this, the National Institute for Health and Care Research has commissioned a research project to provide initial insights into local ADHD assessment waiting times data collection, and NHS England is currently scoping a national programme of work on ADHD, to understand more about the issues relating to ADHD service provision across the country.

■ Bereavement Counselling: Departmental Coordination

Peter Gibson:

[\[19964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress the cross-government bereavement working group has made on ensuring support is available to bereaved people.

Andrew Stephenson:

The cross-Government bereavement group was established in preparation for publication of the UK Commission on Bereavement's (UKCB), Bereavement is Everyone's Business report, from October 2022. The group includes representatives from over 10 Government departments.

The cross-Government bereavement group enables Government departments to share the best practice about bereavement support in the sectors for which they are responsible. The UKCB Steering Group has presented to the cross-Government working group on several occasions, and last attended a meeting of the group in September 2023.

■ Blood: Contamination

Paul Girvan:

[\[15976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what psychological support is available for people infected and affected by contaminated blood and blood products in South Antrim.

Maria Caulfield:

Health Services in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Government.

In Northern Ireland, specialist clinical psychological support has been available for all infected and affected individuals impacted by contaminated blood since January 2019. The service was initially provided within the existing Clinical Health Psychological Services. After receiving the non-recurrent funding from the Department of Health as part of the inquiry process, a dedicated regional psychological service, providing assessment, psychological therapies, liaison and sign posting as appropriate, for those individuals who were infected and affected, as well as their relatives, has been made available. This includes HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C infected or affected individuals. A patient and family information leaflet is available within clinics and to clinicians, to discuss referral to this service with patients and their families.

■ Blood: Donors

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of plasma donation points.

Andrea Leadsom:

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) are responsible for plasma collection in England. There are currently three plasma specific donation centres in Birmingham, Reading, and Twickenham. NHSBT will increase the number of plasma collection points over the coming years, and are currently assessing the optimum locations for this new capacity.

■ **Brain: Tumours**

Sir Charles Walker: [\[15848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of NHS funding for brain tumour research compared to research into other cancers; and if she will provide the quantum of NHS research funding into brain tumours for each of the last five financial years.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 1 March 2024]: The Department invests over £1 billion per year into health research, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), whose research spending for all cancers was £121.8 million in 2022/23. Funding for the delivery of brain cancer studies in the National Health Service cannot be disaggregated from other studies, but to indicate scale, in 2022/23 the NIHR Clinical Research Network supported 61 brain cancer studies and recruited 4,317 participants to these studies.

Over the past five financial years, the NIHR has spent over £11.3 million in funding for brain cancer research. The following table shows the amount of funding awarded for brain cancer research, from 2018/19 to 2022/23:

FINANCIAL YEAR	FUNDING AMOUNT
2018/19	£2.9 million
2019/20	£150,000
2020/21	£2.2 million
2021/22	£5.3 million
2022/23	£750,000
Total	£11.3 million

Note: the amount of funding awarded will differ to actual spend in a given year, as total spending will include that of multi-year awards made in previous years.

The NIHR funds research in response to proposals received from scientists, rather than allocating funding to specific disease areas. It is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. Applications are subject to peer review and

judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

To increase the quality, diversity, and number of brain cancer research proposals, the NIHR is working with the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission and the research community, to develop research capacity in the brain cancer community.

■ Continuing Care: Expenditure

Caroline Lucas:

[\[19309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 12 October 2021 to Question 51702 on NHS: Expenditure, how much and what proportion of the NHS budget was spent on continuing healthcare in each financial year between 2015-16 and 2021-22.

Helen Whately:

NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) spend data includes Standard CHC, Fast Track CHC and Personal Health Budgets (PHBs). This data for the requested period is shown in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) spend data [TABLE FOR PQ19309.docx]

■ Dental Services

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[15133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much (a) NHS and (b) private work was completed by GDC registered dentists who qualified (i) in the UK, (ii) overseas and (iii) in total in each of the last 10 years.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 26 February 2024]: Primary care dentistry in the National Health Service is delivered through contracts structured around Units of Dental Activity (UDAs). Each treatment is allocated a number of UDAs in proportion to the complexity and amount of work required. The following table shows the number of UDAs delivered by dentists who have qualified within the United Kingdom and outside thereof whilst working in the NHS in England for 2016/17 onwards:

YEAR	UK QUALIFIED UDA DELIVERED	NON-UK QUALIFIED UDA DELIVERED	OTHER UDA DELIVERED	TOTAL UDA DELIVERED
2016/17	48,825,392	26,394,403	10,644,608	85,864,403
2017/18	48,640,153	26,323,343	8,363,069	83,326,565
2018/19	49,482,862	27,192,292	6,528,618	83,203,772
2019/20	48,144,326	27,032,548	4,666,855	79,843,728

YEAR	UK QUALIFIED UDA DELIVERED	NON-UK QUALIFIED UDA DELIVERED	OTHER UDA DELIVERED	TOTAL UDA DELIVERED
2020/21	15,260,168	8,265,064	927,591	24,452,823
2021/22	35,781,811	20,777,093	1,210,218	57,769,122
2022/23	43,918,652	25,763,340	486,695	70,168,687

Source: NHS Business Services Authority

Notes:

1. The dentist's region of qualification is based on that as provided on the General Dental Council (GDC) register. It is important to note that not all dentists have a country of qualification on the GDC register as supplied to the NHS Business Services Authority, and so these dentists are placed into "other" as their region of qualification.
2. The Department does not hold data on how much private dental work was completed in the last 10 years.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[18761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many extra (a) appointments and (b) treatments will be delivered through each element of the dentistry recovery plan.

Andrea Leadsom:

We want to make sure that everyone needing a National Health Service dentist can access one. Our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry will make dental services faster, simpler, and fairer for patients and will fund approximately 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment.

The methodology underpinning this modelling has been shared with the Health and Social Care Select Committee and has also been placed in the libraries for both Houses. This includes information on the estimated number of treatments and appointments delivered by each of the interventions in our dentistry recovery plan.

■ Dental Services: Contracts

Rachael Maskell:

[20072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS dental contracts have been handed back 7 February 2024.

Rachael Maskell:

[20073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS dental contracts have been changed following a request from dental practices since 7 February 2024.

Rachael Maskell:

[20074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many units of dental activity her Department (a) had estimated would be and (b) have been undertaken between 7 February and 22 March 2024.

Rachael Maskell:

[20075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an estimate of the number of dental practices that have announced that they plan to withdraw from NHS contracts since 7 February 2024.

Andrea Leadsom:

Monthly data on the Units of Dental Activity (UDA) delivered is published by the NHS Business Services Authority, although this data has an approximate two-month time lag, and therefore we expect data for February 2024 to be published around Mid-May. Otherwise, UDA delivery data is available at the following link:

<https://opendata.nhsbsa.net/dataset/english-contractor-monthly-general-dental-activity>

■ Dental Services: Finance

Preet Kaur Gill:

[16179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mechanism she plans to use to ringfence NHS dentistry budgets in financial year 2024-25.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 4 March 2024]: We currently invest more than £3 billion in National Health Service dental services each year. We are committed to protecting this funding for dentistry purposes and we will ringfence this funding in 2024 to 2025. We will issue guidance to integrated care boards (ICBs) shortly through NHS England's 2024 to 2025 revenue finance and contracting guidance. To ensure compliance against this requirement, and to strengthen oversight of funding that is used to deliver access to NHS dental care, NHS England will meet with and collect monthly returns from all ICBs to establish current and planned spend against the ringfenced dental allocations budget.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[18762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much additional funding will be provided to integrated care boards through the dentistry recovery plan by area.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 19 March 2024]: We currently invest more than £3 billion in National Health Service dental services each year. Our plan to recover and reform NHS

dentistry is backed with £200 million, delivering new initiatives to address the challenges facing NHS dentistry.

The amount spent by each integrated care board (ICB) will depend on a number of factors, including how many new patients are seen in each ICB, whether any practices in the ICB will benefit from the increase to the minimum Unit of Dental Activity value, and where Golden Hello payments are offered.

■ Dental Services: Migrant Workers

Rachael Maskell:

[\[20076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dentists were recruited from overseas by the NHS in the last 12 months; and if she will make an estimate of the number of dentists that will be recruited from overseas by the NHS in the next 12 months.

Andrea Leadsom:

To legally practise dentistry in the United Kingdom, a dentist must be registered with the General Dental Council (GDC), the independent regulator of dentistry. Once registered with the GDC, dentists can choose whether to practise in the National Health Service or privately. To practise in the NHS, dentists must be on the dental performers list.

The Department does not hold the information requested on the number of overseas-qualified dentists that have joined the performers list in the last 12 months. No estimate has been made of the number of overseas-qualified dentists that will join the performers list in the next 12 months.

■ Dental Services: Rural Areas

Rachael Maskell:

[\[20077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether dentists working in dental treatment vans will be offered one-off payments of up to £20,000.

Andrea Leadsom:

We will offer Golden Hellos of £20,000 to up to 240 dentists who join existing National Health Service practices, in areas where recruitment is particularly challenging. Golden Hello payments will be phased over three years, and require a commitment to stay in that area delivering NHS work for at least three years.

We will also be deploying dental vans offering appointments to patients in need, including targeted rural and coastal communities who have the most limited access to dentistry, starting later this year. We are working with NHS England and the integrated care boards on the precise nature of the contracting and payment model for dental vans.

■ Dental Services: Standards

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

[\[19344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how her Department determines the performance target for units of dental activity for each dental practice.

Andrea Leadsom:

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England.

The current General Dental Service (GDS) contract and Personal Dental Service (PDS) agreement were introduced in 2006. The majority of contracts which deliver routine, or mandatory, dental services are legacy arrangements from pre-2006, and the contracted Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) under these contracts generally reflect the treatment volumes that were required from each practice prior to the new arrangements coming into force.

Activity levels for any new GDS contracts or PDS agreements would be determined as part of the procurement process, taking into account oral health needs assessments undertaken by ICBs, to identify areas of need and to determine the priorities for investment.

Contractors are expected to deliver 96 to 102% of their agreed activity each year. Where contracts deliver less than 96%, the value of the undelivered activity is recouped from the contractor. Undelivered activity between 96 to 100% may be carried forward into the next financial year. Activity greater than 100% may be funded to 110%, if there is a local arrangement with the ICB, or may be deducted from the activity requirements of the next financial year.

■ Dental Services: Wellingborough

Gen Kitchen:

[\[19754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to NHS Dentistry in Wellingborough constituency.

Andrea Leadsom:

On 7 February 2024, we published *Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry*, which is backed by £200 million and will fund approximately 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment. The plan sets out our actions to improve dental access for patients across the country, and to address the challenges facing National Health Service dentistry, including in Northamptonshire.

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board is responsible for having local processes in place to identify areas of need, and determine the priorities for investment across the ICB area.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Darlington

Peter Gibson:

[\[18613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much her Department spent in Darlington constituency in each financial year between 2019-20 and 2022-23.

Andrew Stephenson:

Information on spending in the Darlington constituency is not available in the format requested. However, the following table shows the spend of the organisations that are the closest approximation to the Darlington constituency, each year from 2019/20 to 2022/23:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
NHS Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	£177,000,000	0	0	0
NHS Tees Valley CCG	0	£1,293,000,000	£1,502,000,000	£341,000,000
NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)	0	0	0	£5,171,000,000

The number and commissioning responsibilities of the CCGs, now ICBs, have changed during the period requested, and expenditure levels set out in the table are not directly comparable year-on-year. On 1 July 2022, the NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB replaced and took on responsibility for eight CCGs, including Tees Valley, which is reflected in the higher level of spend in 2022/23.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Fraud and Maladministration

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[\[17203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the amount of money lost to fraud and error by her Department in each of the last three financial years.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 12 March 2024]: Fraud and error losses in the Department for each of the last three financial years are shown in the table:

PERIOD	DETECTED FRAUD (£M)	DETECTED ERROR (£M)
2020/21	£3.01	£1.51
2021/22	£10.43	£77.35
2022/23	£46.07	£1.59

Notes:

1. Figures shown in this table are gross losses that do not include monies subsequently recovered as a result of loss recovery activity.
2. Over the corresponding 3 year period £65.95m was recovered, this figure does not relate directly to the loss figures shown in the table as recovery action may involve funds lost over multiple years.
3. Figures are rounded to two decimal points.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Staff**

Neil O'Brien:

[\[19714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what staff networks there are in her Department.

Andrew Stephenson:

The following staff-led support networks currently operate in the Department:

- EnABLE, a disability and long-term conditions network;
- Autism Network;
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Network;
- Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network;
- Race Equality Matters Network;
- Prism, an LGBT+ network;
- Women's Network;
- Parents' Network;
- Age Diversity Network;
- Carers' Network;
- Care Leavers' Network;
- Social Mobility Network;
- Men's Health Network;
- Christian Network;

- Jewish Network;
- Muslim Network;
- Hinduism and Sikhism Group;
- Humanists Network;
- Diversity and Inclusion Analytical Network;
- Domestic Abuse Support Group;
- Working Through Cancer Network; and
- Mental Health First Aid.

The following networks support and promote professional development and operational delivery:

- International Network;
- Flexible Working Network;
- Green Network;
- Social Workers Network;
- Health Science and Engineering Network;
- IT User Engagement Group;
- Clinicians' Network;
- Nutritionist Network;
- Perspectives Network;
- History Network;
- Culture and Engagement Champions Network;
- Active Travel Network;
- International Network;
- First Aid Network;
- Administrative Officer and Executive Officer Network;
- Personal Assistant Network;
- Senior Executive Officer and Higher Executive Officer Network;
- G6 and G7 Network; and
- Direct Appointment Scheme Network.

■ Domestic Abuse: Data Protection

Peter Gibson:

[19963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that providers of NHS services are protecting the whereabouts of domestic abuse victims from perpetrators.

Andrew Stephenson:

There are security and legislative protections in place to protect patient data, and ensure data is used across the health and social care system in a safe, secure, and legal way. This includes data protection rules which prevent National Health Service employees from disclosing addresses of victims of domestic abuse.

Each organisation's terms and conditions of employment include strict guidelines on how staff handle and protect patients' information. Staff must also be regularly trained in information governance responsibilities. Professional bodies such as the General Medical Council also set out standards which their members must meet.

General practices have two options if they are worried that having access to their record might cause harm to a patient or another individual. They can either redact specific items on the record, or disable patient access entirely.

■ Drugs: Death

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[20090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to her Department's press release entitled £5 million fund to tackle fatal drug deaths across the UK, published on 29 August 2023, how this funding will be distributed; and what criteria her Department is using to select projects for this funding.

Andrea Leadsom:

As part of the Reducing Drug Deaths Innovation Challenge, which aims to reduce drug-related deaths across the United Kingdom, the Department is investing in 12 projects to develop technologies aimed at improving detection, response, or intervention in potential drug-related deaths.

Applicants submitted proposals, and these were assessed by an independent panel. Detailed assessment criteria were worked up by NHS Five, and then moderated before awards were made. They included how well the project met the challenge described in the competition scope, the main technical challenges addressed, what similar products were available and how the proposal differentiated from them, project plan and milestones, expertise, cost, and commercial potential. We awarded funding to 12 projects, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/5-million-fund-to-tackle-fatal-drug-deaths-across-the-uk>

This funding supports wider Government initiatives to tackle drug misuse in society. The UK's drugs strategy, published in December 2021, has a key objective to prevent

1,000 drug deaths in England by 2025. This aligns with work within and across the four nations of the UK to improve systems of support and reduce drug-related deaths.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Adam Afriyie:

[19834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate her Department has made of the number of adult vapers that may return to tobacco products as a result of the disposable vapes ban.

Andrea Leadsom:

The health advice on vaping is clear, vaping can play a role in helping adult smokers to quit, but if you don't smoke, don't vape, and children should never vape. However, youth vaping has tripled in the last three years, and one in five children have now used a vape. We know that disposable vapes have played a significant role in this rise, with 69% of 11 to 17-year-olds who vape now using disposables, compared to just 7% in 2021. Disposable vapes also cause significant environmental harm, with five million disposable vapes thrown away every week.

To protect children and the environment, the Government has taken the decision to ban the sale and supply of disposable vapes.

The Impact Assessment on the disposable vape ban, published by the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs on 11 March 2024, states that it is difficult to quantify the number of people switching either between different types of vapes, disposable to reusable, switching from vaping to smoking cigarettes, or stopping vaping or smoking altogether, as a result of a ban on disposable vapes.

However, reusable and refillable vapes will still be available for adult smokers to use as a quit aid and as a more affordable option than smoking. Therefore, it will not be necessary for adult vapers to return to tobacco products because refillable vapes will remain easily available to them, at a small cost relative to most tobacco products.

Rachael Maskell:

[19908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of taking steps to create a vape-free generation.

Andrea Leadsom:

Smoking is the number one cause of ill-health, disability, and death, responsible for approximately 80,000 deaths a year in the United Kingdom, causing around one in four cancer deaths. It costs our country £17 billion a year, and puts a huge burden on the National Health Service. There is no more dangerous product that is legally sold in our shops than tobacco, a product that will kill two thirds of its users.

The health advice on vaping is clear, vaping can play a role in helping adult smokers to quit, but if you don't smoke, don't vape. Vaping should never be used by, or targeted at, children, especially given the highly addictive nature of nicotine.

This is why we have announced strong measures to reduce the appeal, availability, and affordability of vapes to children, whilst ensuring that vapes remain an available

quit aid for adult smokers. We will also ban the sale and supply of disposable vapes, which are clearly linked to the recent rise in vaping in children.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Genetics**

Rachael Maskell: [\[19905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has she made of the potential implications for her policies of the findings of the research article by University College London entitled Cigarette smoking and e-cigarette use induce shared DNA methylation changes linked to carcinogenesis, published on 19 March 2024.

Rachael Maskell: [\[19906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has commissioned research into cellular changes in lung tissue for those who vape to assess the risks of future cancer.

Rachael Maskell: [\[19907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the research article by University College London entitled Cigarette smoking and e-cigarette use induce shared DNA methylation changes linked to carcinogenesis, published on 19 March 2024, if she will ban advertising for vapes.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Government's position on vaping remains unchanged, if you don't smoke, don't vape, and children should never vape. Studies are important in helping to better understand the long-term health risks associated with vaping, but the mentioned study, that was carried out by University College London, corroborated by Cancer Research UK, does not demonstrate a causal relationship between vaping and cancer.

Overall, studies on the effects of vaping have so far shown that vapes are less harmful than smoking and can help people quit, although the long-term risks are unknown. Vaping is never recommended for children, and carries potential harms of future addiction while their lungs and brains are still developing. There is a lack of research on the potential long-term harms from vaping, and we are exploring future opportunities with the United Kingdom's research councils.

Otherwise, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 February 2024 to Question [12629](#), as our position on the advertising of vapes remains unchanged.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Sales**

Peter Gibson: [\[19966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if a Minister from her Department will visit Darlington to hold discussions with (a) the Police and (b) Trading Standards on the joint steps they are taking to help tackle the sale of illegal vapes and illicit tobacco.

Andrea Leadsom:

Ministers in the department are always happy to consider meetings and visits to understand the impact of their policy areas, and we recommend reaching out to Ministers' offices directly.

A strong approach to enforcement is vital if the smokefree generation policy is to have real impact. My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care recently visited a cargo warehouse at Heathrow Airport with Hillingdon Trading Standards to see first-hand the work they are doing to seize illicit vapes at the border, and prevent these products from being sold in the United Kingdom.

Underage and illicit sales of tobacco products, and more recently vaping products, is undermining the work the Government is doing to regulate the industry and protect public health. It also deprives the UK of vital money that could be used to fund essential public services, instead, putting it in the hands of criminals.

This is why alongside the measures in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, we are supporting enforcement agencies with up to £30 million a year, to scale up their existing activities. This increased investment will help to stamp out criminal activity by boosting enforcement capacity, and help local trading standards tackle underage sales at a local level. Of this funding, over £100 million over five years will support HM Revenue and Customs and Border Force's new illicit tobacco strategy. As is the case with existing age of sale legislation, breaches of the new law will primarily be dealt with by local authority trading standards, rather than by local police forces.

■ Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Trading Standards**Adam Afriyie:**[\[19831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding will be allocated to each local authority trading standards for enforcing the (a) disposable vapes ban and (b) generational tobacco ban.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Government has committed to increasing investment for enforcement agencies by £30 million per year. The additional funding in England will boost agencies such as local trading standards, to enforce the new age of sale and vaping measures. It will also scale up HM Revenue and Customs and Border Force activity, to stamp out opportunities for criminals in the illicit tobacco trade.

Of this funding, over £100 million over five years will support HM Revenue and Customs and Border Force's new illicit tobacco strategy, published on 29 January 2024. We are working closely with Trading Standards to consider how the new funding can best support their programmes of local-level enforcement.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Sales**Adam Afriyie:**[\[19830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the number of non-compliant vapes sold on the UK market.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, Trading Standards, and other regulatory enforcement agencies to ensure that products sold in the United Kingdom comply with regulations for all e-cigarette products, and that non-compliant products are removed from the market.

In April 2023, the Government announced £3 million investment over two years to enhance work on illicit vape enforcement. Led by National Trading Standards, this builds on existing work by local trading standards officers across the country.

Through this work, they identified that 2.1 million illicit vapes were seized across England by Trading Standards between 2022 to 2023.

To strengthen our enforcement activity, the Government will also provide an additional £30 million of funding per year for enforcement agencies, including Trading Standards. This increase in investment will help to stamp out criminal activity by boosting the enforcement of illicit tobacco and vapes.

Adam Afriye:[\[19832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many non-compliant disposable vaping products have been seized through Operation Joseph.

Andrea Leadsom:

Data on the number of illicit vapes seized through Operation Joseph in the financial year 2023 to 2024 will be published shortly.

Operation Joseph has identified that in the year before the Operation, 2.1 million illicit vapes were seized across England by Trading Standards from 2022 to 2023.

Adam Afriye:[\[19833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish a breakdown of the allocation of £3million government funding for Operation Joseph.

Andrea Leadsom:

Operation Joseph was established to enforce the rules on vaping, and tackle illicit vapes and underage sales. It supplements work being undertaken by local authorities using existing local government funding. The £3 million of funding has been allocated over two years, from 2023/24 to 2024/25. A grant was provided to the National Trading Standards to commission specific areas of work, and to support local authorities. The following table shows the budget of each work area as of February 2024, as well as the total allocated:

WORK AREA	BUDGET
Business Education	£88,800
Professional Training and Upskilling	£164,400
Intelligence and Data	£500,000

WORK AREA	BUDGET
Supporting storage and disposal costs for local authority seizures	£600,000
Online test purchasing and website takedowns	£80,000
Market Surveillance and testing of vaping products	£140,000
Tackling the import of illegal vapes	£1,087,000
Programme Governance Communications and Evaluation	£281,000
Contingency	£58,800
Total Allocated	£3,000,000

Note: The figures shown are based on allocations in February 2024, and may be subject to change.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[19918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to tackle the sale of illegal vapes on the black market.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 26 March 2024]: The Government is concerned about the worrying rise in vaping among children, with youth vaping tripling in the last three years, and one-in-five children having now used a vape. Underage sales and illicit vapes are undermining the work the Government is doing to protect our children's health.

To address this, in April 2023, the Government announced a £3 million investment over two years to enhance work on illicit vape enforcement. Led by National Trading Standards, this builds on existing work by local trading standards officers across the country to ensure that vapes sold in the United Kingdom comply with The Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016, as well as other relevant legislation that applies to vaping products. Activities include data collection and analysis to understand the scale of illegal products and sales, and market surveillance work. Through this work, they identified that 2.1 million illicit vapes were seized across England by trading standards from 2022 to 2023.

To strengthen our enforcement activity, the Government will also provide an additional £30 million of funding per year for enforcement agencies, including trading standards. This increase in investment will help to stamp out criminal activity by boosting the enforcement of illicit tobacco and vapes.

■ Euthanasia: Health Services

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[18831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on NHS services of the introduction of legislation to permit assisted dying.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made.

■ Gender Dysphoria: Children

Royston Smith:

[\[20081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children of which biological sex were prescribed puberty blockers in each year since 2010.

Maria Caulfield:

Gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists or 'puberty blockers' are used to treat several medical conditions in children and young people. These include precocious puberty, some forms of cancer, endometriosis and gender dysphoria. Information on biological sex is not held in the format requested.

■ Gender Dysphoria: Medical Treatments

Neale Hanvey:

[\[18617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what further steps she plans to take to ensure that clinicians operating in (a) the NHS and (b) private practice adhere to the NHS clinical guideline not recommending puberty suppressing hormones as a routine commissioning option for the treatment of children and adolescents who have gender incongruence or dysphoria.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 March 2024]: We have always been clear that children's safety and well-being is paramount, so we welcome this landmark decision by the National Health Service. Ending the routine prescription of puberty blockers will help ensure that care is based on evidence, expert clinical opinion and is in the best interests of the child.

We expect the private sector to follow suit. There are no private providers registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to prescribe puberty blockers to children under the age of 16. If a private organisation registered with the CQC fails to meet the conditions of its registration, then the regulator can take enforcement action.

■ General Practitioners: Labour Turnover

Wes Streeting:

[\[19410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding NHS England plans to allocate to Integrated Care Boards for local GP retention schemes for 2024-25;

and through what mechanism that funding will be allocated following the closure of the General Practice Fellowship and the Supporting Mentors schemes.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 26 March 2024]: In 2022, we saw the highest ever number of doctors accepting a place on general practice (GP) training, a record of 4,032 trainees, up from 2,671 in 2014.

From April 2024, integrated care boards (ICBs) will take on greater autonomy to make decisions that serve the best interests of local people and communities. This means that, while the General Practice Fellowship and Supporting Mentors schemes will no longer operate in their current national form, NHS England will work with ICBs to put in place support that reflects their local approaches and needs. It will be for ICBs to decide how funding operates at a local level, and the amount of funding they are able to devote to the schemes. NHS England will, however, continue to support people currently on the General Practice Fellowship throughout 2024/25, and ministers will shortly be beginning a series of roundtables with GPs on the future for GP practice, that will also consider ideas for retention and training.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine and HIV Infection: Training**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[19424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of NHS England funding the training of specialists in (a) genitourinary and (b) HIV care.

Andrea Leadsom:

The sexual and reproductive healthcare workforce is diverse as services are offered across primary care, community and sexual health clinic settings, other public health settings as well as acute and ambulatory care settings.

The Department is consulting with NHS England to reform the funding of specialist training in genitourinary and HIV care to increase the ability of specialists to train and then practice in areas of greatest need.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine: Health Professions**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[19422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of sexual and reproductive health professionals in (a) post and (b) training in the context of trends in the level of sexually transmitted infection rates.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[19423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of (a) genitourinary and (b) HIV care for the next five years; and if she will make an estimate of the number of consultants specialising in (i) genitourinary and (ii) HIV care who will be employed in the NHS in 2029.

Andrea Leadsom:

NHS workforce statistics show that in November 2023, there were 243 full time equivalent (FTE) consultants working in the specialty of genito-urinary medicine (GUM) in NHS trusts and other core organisations in England, and 133 FTE consultants working in the specialty of community sexual and reproductive health in NHS trusts and other core organisations in England.

NHS England is responsible for providing HIV care and in March 2024 published the NHS England national service specification for adult specialised services for people living with HIV. Specialised adult inpatient and outpatient HIV services aim to provide specialist assessment and ongoing management of HIV, and associated conditions, to support individuals to stay well, remain engaged in care, and to reduce onward transmission. The services will ensure that outcomes, wellbeing, and quality of life are maximised, that they are culturally competent, in recognition of the disproportionate number of people from diverse backgrounds who access HIV care, and that people are central to decisions about the management of their health and social care.

The Department is consulting with NHS England to reform the funding of specialist training in genito-urinary and HIV care, to increase the ability of specialists to train and then practice in areas of greatest need. We are committed to achieving no new HIV transmissions within England by 2030. As part of the plan, we are investing an additional £20 million for new research, which will involve an expansion and evaluation of bloodborne virus opt-out testing in 47 additional emergency departments in areas of England with high HIV prevalence. This is expected to deliver approximately 1.5 million more HIV tests to help us get people with the virus into care. The Department is also allocating over £3.5 million to deliver a National HIV Prevention Programme between 2021 and 2024 to raise awareness of HIV, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, and prevention strategies, targeting populations most at risk of HIV, including young people.

We continue to support the delivery of local sexual health services, providing guidance and data through the UK Health Security Agency and the Department. In March 2023 we published the Integrated Sexual Health Service Specification to support local authorities in comprehensive commissioning of services, and providing advice and guidance on managing STIs outbreaks.

Health Professions: Recruitment and Training**Rachael Maskell:****[19089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to (a) recruit and (b) train more (i) medical physicists and (ii) clinical engineers.

Andrew Stephenson:

The number of Scientist Training Programme (STP) trainees in Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering has tended to increase, with larger increases in recent years. The number of Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) trainees has remained

fairly constant. The following two tables show the number of trainees in the Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering STP each year since 2011, and the number of Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering trainees in HSST each year since 2014, respectively:

YEAR	MEDICAL PHYSICS STP	CLINICAL ENGINEERING STP
2011	61	8
2012	60	14
2013	67	13
2014	72	18
2015	72	8
2016	66	9
2017	73	20
2018	76	16
2019	86	13
2020	77	17
2021	83	25
2022	103	12
2023	118	21
2024	117	15

Note: The data for 2024 is subject to change, and without the Wales numbers.

YEAR	MEDICAL PHYSICS HSST	CLINICAL ENGINEERING HSST
2014	14	1
2015	29	1
2016	26	2
2017	23	2
2018	12	2
2019	15	4
2020	16	0

YEAR	MEDICAL PHYSICS HSST	CLINICAL ENGINEERING HSST
2021	15	2
2022	11	N/A
2023	17	2
2024	8	2

Notes:

- the data for 2024 is subject to change, and without the Wales numbers; and
- data is not available for the year 2022.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan sets out the future National Health Service workforce requirements, and includes healthcare science figures, though this is not broken down into Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering workforce targets. The plan assesses that education and training places for healthcare scientists need to increase by 20 to 34%, reaching between 930 and 1,039 places by 2033/34. The ambition set out in this plan is to increase training places for healthcare scientists by 32%, to over 1,000 places, by 2031/32. We will work towards achieving this ambition by increasing training places by 13%, to over 850, by 2028/29.

The workforce plan also sets out the ambition to retain up to 130,000 more staff across the NHS over the next 15 years, through measures to improve staff's experience of working in the NHS. This applies to all NHS staff groups, including medical physicists and clinical engineers.

■ **Health Services: Databases**

Dawn Butler:

[\[18872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS plans to expand the use of System One computer software.

Andrew Stephenson:

The procurement of electronic patient record systems is conducted at an integrated care board or trust level, following specific procurement criteria. Consequently, decisions regarding software adoption and expansion will be made by National Health Service trusts. All procurement activity for patient record systems is conducted in compliance with regulations, which means that the outcome of future procurements cannot be known at this point.

Dawn Butler:

[\[18873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance her Department issues on the (a) adoption by and (b) use in the NHS of System One computer software.

Andrew Stephenson:

Decisions on the procurement, adoption, and use of SystmOne are made locally as part of standard procurement procedures, which adhere to compliant procurement guidelines. No additional guidance has been provided by the Department on the adoption or usage of SystmOne in the National Health Service.

Health Services: Finance**Simon Jupp:****[19986]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help support applicants for continued healthcare funding who appeal a decision to (a) NHS England and (b) the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Helen Whately:

A public information leaflet is on the GOV.UK website in multiple languages, explaining the full process for appealing to NHS England or to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, as well as the eligibility decisions for NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC). This leaflet is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-continuing-healthcare-and-nhs-funded-nursing-care-public-information-leaflet>

CHC guidance, named the National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care, states that any individual being considered for CHC at the screening or referral stage should be given a copy of this leaflet, along with any relevant local information about processes and contact details. This guidance is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64b0f7cdc033c100108062f9/National-Framework-for-NHS-Continuing-Healthcare-and-NHS-funded-Nursing-Care_July-2022-revised_corrected-July-2023.pdf

NHS England has also commissioned a free Information and Advice Service for CHC from Beacon. This service provides independent and high-quality support on navigating CHC assessments and care planning, or to appeal against a decision about CHC eligibility. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://beaconchc.co.uk/how-we-can-help/free-information-and-advice-on-nhs-continuing-healthcare/>

Health Services: Greater London**Dr Matthew Offord:****[19330]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to publish all responses made to the Start Well public consultation on proposed changes to maternity, neonatal and children's surgical services in North Central London.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the NHS' planned timetable is for a decision on the Start Well public consultation on the future of maternity, neonatal and children's surgical services in north central London.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Start Well public consultation on proposed changes to maternity, neonatal, and paediatric surgical services in North Central London closed on Sunday 17 March 2024. The responses received will now be analysed by an independent research agency, who will produce a report for the consulting bodies, North Central London Integrated Care Board, on behalf of the local integrated care system, and NHS London Specialised Commissioning. This report will be published and, along with a wide range of evidence and information, will be used to develop a decision-making business case for consideration by the integrated care board.

North Central London Integrated Care Board expect it will take some months to develop the decision-making business case. The meeting will be held in public, with further details published later this year.

■ Health: Social Media

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to develop tools on social media to improve health literacy for (a) men and (b) women.

Andrew Stephenson:

The National Health Service website and the NHS App are our main digital tools available to citizens, to support them in accessing services and making decisions about their health.

These are supported by the Department and NHS social media channels through a range of proactive media campaigns to help citizens make and sustain healthy behaviour changes, as well as receive the care they need by accessing the NHS at the right time, in the right way.

Clinicians across the NHS also support patients' health literacy by providing clear information, increasing patients' knowledge, and sharing decision making on their care.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Andrew Western:

[\[19511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department has taken to restore the availability of data on the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers on the Healthy Start website.

Andrew Western:

[\[19512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department has taken to restore the availability of data on Healthy Start uptake on the Healthy Start website.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department for Work and Pensions has identified an error in their data that means that the data published for Healthy Start uptake from July 2023 onwards was incorrect. It is important to state that the data used to calculate the uptake rate is not used as part of the live check to determine eligibility for individual applicants to Healthy Start, and no individual applicants or beneficiaries have been impacted. The Department for Work and Pensions has fixed the issue, and additional checks have been added to the process to ensure the issue does not occur in the future.

The incorrect data has been removed from the NHS Healthy Start website by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA), who run the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care. Corrected and updated data for March 2024 will be published by the NHS BSA shortly.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[19621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much her Department spent on the Healthy Start Scheme in the (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 financial year.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 25 March 2024]: The cost of operating the Healthy Start scheme was £78,148,555 in 2021/22 and £78,761,339 in 2022/23.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[19622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were eligible for Healthy Start vouchers in January (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

Andrea Leadsom:

The number of those eligible for Healthy Start in January 2022 was 553,601, and the number of those eligible in January 2023 was 578,067.

■ Heart Diseases: Research

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[19822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she has taken to support (a) research into and (b) treatment of heart disease in (i) England and (ii) Romford constituency.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department supports research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including those relating to heart disease. Over the past five financial years, the NIHR has spent over £64 million on heart-disease related research projects. In addition, the NIHR infrastructure provides clinical expertise,

specialist facilities, workforce, and support services to support research across a range of clinical areas, including heart disease.

The Be Part of Research campaign makes it easier for people to find out about, and take part in, health and care research. Currently, there are seven high quality studies related to heart and circulation, which are being supported by the NIHR and are within five miles of Romford.

The NHS Long Term Plan sets out that by 2028 the proportion of patients accessing cardiac rehabilitation will be amongst the best in Europe, with up to 85% of those eligible accessing care. This will prevent up to 23,000 premature deaths and 50,000 acute admissions over 10 years. The NHS Health Check programme is a core component of England's cardiovascular diseases prevention pathway. Over 15 million people are eligible for an NHS Health Check every five years, and it delivers 1.3 million checks a year, preventing an estimated 500 heart attacks and strokes.

■ Heavy Menstrual Bleeding: Health Services

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[19729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will set a target time for women to receive treatment from specialist referred services after they first present symptoms of heavy menstrual bleeding in primary care.

Maria Caulfield:

We recognise the severe impact that heavy menstrual bleeding can have on women and girls, which is why improving care for menstrual problems, including heavy menstrual bleeding, is among our 2024 priorities for the Women's Health Strategy.

Many women can have heavy menstrual bleeding managed in a general practice and women's health hubs. We are investing £25 million in women's health hubs, so that women can get better access to care for essential services in the community. One of the core services of women's health hubs is menstrual problems assessment and treatment, including for women experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding.

Accessing treatment at a health hub can avoid the need for a referral to secondary care, and therefore cut waiting times, one of the Prime Minister's top priorities. We are making good progress on tackling the longest waits, to ensure patients get the care they need when they need it. The main standard in elective performance is the referral-to-treatment standard. The NHS Constitution sets out that a minimum of 92% of patients waiting for their first definitive elective treatment, including patients with heavy menstrual bleeding, should have been waiting no more than 18 weeks from referral.

■ Hospitals: Dorset

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[19766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the extra allocations of money made from the discharge fund to

the (a) NHS and (b) local authorities in Dorset in the 2023-24 financial year on the (i) timeliness and (ii) effectiveness of the discharge of patients from NHS hospitals.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 26 March 2024]: The Government is investing an additional £600 million for 2023/24 and £1 billion for 2024/25, through the Discharge Fund, to support the National Health Service and local authorities in ensuring timely and effective discharge from hospital. As part of their allocations for 2023/24, NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board received £5.7 million, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council received £1.9 million, and Dorset Council received £1.7 million. There will be an independent evaluation of the Discharge Fund for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Nationally, this funding has supported more people to be discharged more quickly with more appropriate support. The number of people discharged from hospital with packages of health and social care support increased by 10% between the end of February 2023 and the end of February 2024. Thanks to this improved patient flow hospitals have been able to admit and treat more patients during this period.

■ **Hospitals: Homelessness**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[19661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to prevent patients (a) experiencing and (b) at risk of homelessness from being discharged from hospital to no fixed abode.

Helen Whately:

The Department is committed to promoting safe and timely discharge for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, to appropriate accommodation. Between 2020 and 2022, the Department delivered £16 million to 17 local sites, to pilot Out of Hospital Care Models to people experiencing homelessness following a hospital stay. These models provide interim accommodation, care, and support while full assessments of individual needs are carried out. There are positive preliminary findings, and a final evaluation is due next month. From this we will share learning to encourage local areas to adopt similar models.

Improving how discharges are arranged for people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, is also supported by our wider work to improve discharge processes. We have ensured every acute hospital has access to a care transfer hub to manage discharge for people with more complex needs, who need extra support. Furthermore, in January 2024 the Department published guidance on discharging people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to support staff involved in planning safe and supportive discharge of these patients from hospital. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness>

■ Kidneys: Transplant Surgery

Sir John Hayes:

[\[18354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to help reduce waiting times for children in need of kidney transplants.

Andrea Leadsom:

We are working with NHS Blood and Transplant to help reduce waiting times for children in need of kidney transplants. This includes implementing initiatives to improve the use of living donor kidney transplantation in paediatric centres, engaging with transplant centres to review patients who are too unwell to receive a transplant, and reducing long waiters, which are patients who wait more than 104 days for a transplant.

Nation-wide campaigns have been developed to increase paediatric registrations on the organ donor register, for example Ralph's campaign, and the school's education programme has been refreshed for younger children. A paediatric perfusion programme is also being developed to increase the use of kidneys from donors after circulatory death for paediatric patients.

■ Long Covid: Drugs

Ellie Reeves:

[\[19672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to review the eligibility criteria for antivirals for those suffering from long covid.

Andrew Stephenson:

Decisions on the eligibility criteria for treatment with antivirals are made by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), based on an assessment of their costs and benefits, developed in line with marketing authorisations issued by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

The NICE has published guidance that recommends the antivirals Paxlovid, Veklury, and Lagevrio for the treatment of COVID-19, both in the community, and for patients in hospital. This guidance sets out the eligibility criteria and ensures that patients who are at the highest risk of developing severe disease from COVID-19 have access to clinically and cost-effective treatments. Patients with long COVID have not been identified as a distinct group that would be eligible for treatment, and there are currently no licensed antivirals for the treatment of long COVID. The NICE therefore has no current plans to review the eligibility criteria in its guidance. The NICE maintains surveillance of new evidence that may affect its published guidance, and would consult on proposed changes if significant new evidence were to emerge.

■ Lung Cancer: Screening

Karin Smyth:

[\[18731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated to (a) implementing the national roll-out of lung cancer screening and (b)

increasing CT scanner capacity to support the national roll-out of lung cancer screening in each financial year until 2027-2028.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 19 March 2024]: The Targeted Lung Cancer Screening Programme, once fully rolled out in 2030, will offer people aged 55 to 74 who are at high risk of lung cancer, screening every 2 years and will detect around 9,000 cancers earlier each year.

Plans for 2024/25 are currently being finalised by NHS England, including delivery trajectories. Over £100 million of revenue funding is available to support the implementation of the NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme in 2024/25.

Plans for 2025/26 and beyond will be subject to the outcome of a future Spending Review.

Assessing the funding required for computed tomography scanner capacity specifically is not possible as much of this capacity is commissioned by NHS England as part of a wider service, using broader programme funds.

■ **Medicine: Training**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[19968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information her Department holds on the average distance that medical students allocated a placement under the UK Foundation Programme travel from their medical school to their allocated placement; and what the (a) shortest and (b) longest distance is for those students allocated a placement in 2024.

Andrew Stephenson:

The information requested is not held by the Department.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[19620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when her Department plans to respond to the correspondence of November 2023 to the Minister for Primary Care and Public Health from public healthcare professionals on the Healthy Start scheme.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 25 March 2024]: The Department has received the correspondence and will respond in due course. The Healthy Start scheme is an important nutritional safety net for families who need support and the interest from public healthcare professionals is welcomed.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Wes Streeting:

[15712]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the number of patients (a) waiting for mental healthcare and (b) on NHS waiting lists for physical conditions who are also waiting for mental healthcare.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 4 March 2024]: There is currently no waiting times standard covering all mental health service areas. For services where a waiting times standard does exist, the latest position over the period from November 2023 to January 2024 was published by NHS England on 14 March 2024.

Information on routine and urgent referrals to children and young people's eating disorder services and referrals to the early Intervention in Psychosis pathway is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics/performance-january-2024>

Information on referrals to NHS Talking Therapies is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-talking-therapies-monthly-statistics-including-employment-advisors/performance-january-2024>

For referrals to adult community mental health services waiting for a second contact, referrals to children and young people's community mental health services waiting for a first contact and Accident & Emergency attendances for mental health or self-harm, information is being collected to prepare for the proposed new waiting time standards being developed as part of the Clinically-led review of National Health Service access standards but these are NOT yet associated with a target. The latest position over the period from November 2023 to January 2024 is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics/performance-january-2024>

Information on the number of patients on NHS waiting lists for physical conditions who are also waiting for mental healthcare is not held centrally.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are expanding and transforming NHS mental health care so that more people can get the support that they need more quickly. Between 2018/19 and 2023/24, the NHS forecasts that spending on mental health services has increased by £4.6 billion in cash terms, compared to the target of £3.4 billion in cash terms set out at the time of the NHS Long Term Plan. All integrated boards are also on track to meet the Mental Health Investment Standard in 2023/24.

■ Mental Health Services: Wellingborough

Gen Kitchen:

[\[19753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to mental health services in Wellingborough constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 March 2024]: Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are expanding and transforming National Health Service mental health care in England, including in the Wellingborough constituency. Between 2018/19 and 2023/24, NHS spending on mental health has increased by £4.7 billion in cash terms, as compared to the target of £3.4 billion set out at the time of the NHS Long Term Plan. All integrated care boards are also on track to meet the Mental Health Investment Standard in 2023/24, including the Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board.

This has enabled 3.6 million people to access mental health support in 2022/23, a 10% increase from 2021/22. To support this expansion, our aim is to grow the mental health workforce by an additional 27,000 staff by spring 2024. In September 2023, there were over 146,000 full time equivalents in the mental health workforce. This is over 10,300, or 7.6%, more than September 2022.

■ NHS 111: Dental Health

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[19659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2024 to Question 13013 on NHS 111: Dental Health, how many calls NHS 111 received relating to the categories of (a) Toothache without Dental Injury, (b) Dental Problems, (c) Other Dental Problems- Fillings, Crowns Bridges, Appliances etc, (d) Dental Module, (e) Dental Bleeding, (f) Toothache After Dental Injury, (g) Dental Injury and (h) Total volume of Triages with a Dental Symptom in each financial year since 2010-11.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 25 March 2024]: On 7 February 2024, we published Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry, which is backed by £200 million and will fund approximately 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment. The plan sets out our actions to improve dental access for patients across the country, and to address the challenges facing National Health Service dentistry.

The following table shows how many NHS 111 calls were received, broken down into the mentioned categories, each year since 2018, the earliest year this data is available:

SYMPTOM GROUP	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Toothache	625, 582	629, 306	928,000	794,024	868, 527

SYMPTOM GROUP	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Dental Problems	2,270	16, 533	34, 377	54,738	58, 512
Other Dental Problems, such as fillings, crowns, bridges, appliances, etc.	84,095	67, 876	101,822	72,474	70,380
Dental Module 67		30	738	955	139
Dental Bleeding	14, 166	13, 362	17, 962	13, 916	16, 736
Toothache after Dental Injury	12,047	11,621	12, 584	13, 863	15, 154
Dental Injury	184	205	558	484	118
Total Triages with a dental symptom	738, 611	738, 933	1,096,041	950, 454	1,029,566

The above table provides the same information as for PQ13013, with one error to be corrected shortly on Hansard.

■ NHS North Central London: Databases

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the North Central London Integrated Care Board's consultation entitled Start Well which closed on 17 March 2024, whether she has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the patient flow modelling methods used within that consultation.

Andrew Stephenson:

The North Central London Integrated Care Board advise that the patient flow modelling approach was based on the combination of geographical proximity and service user choice.

The patient flow approach was tested with the Clinical Reference Group, Finance and Analytics Group, and Start Well Programme Board. The outputs were also tested with

the Strategy Leads from each organisation, and the approach reviewed and assured by the London Clinical Senate and NHS England.

■ NHS Walk-in Centres

Simon Jupp:

[\[6645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make it her policy to establish walk-in clinics in each Integrated Care Board; and what estimate she has made of the cost of doing so.

Helen Whately:

The commissioning of establishing local services in the National Health Service is a matter for integrated care boards. The Government has no plans at this time to roll out hubs nationally.

Based upon current schemes which are either operational or under development in England, and assuming a facility floorplan of 3,000 square metres, the construction of a single walk-in hub service would cost £21.4 million in 2024/25 prices. Ongoing running costs for each building could be approximately £2 million to £2.3 million dependent on whether it was operational seven days a week and included wider primary care services such as dentistry.

■ NHS: Databases

Wes Streeting:

[\[17432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to include all patient records held by GPs in the NHS federated data platform.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 13 March 2024]: The Federated Data Platform is a vital upgrade for the National Health Service, allowing it to be much more effective in how it handles its data. It will bring together information about staff, waiting times, equipment and medicines to improve patient outcomes.

Based on agreements between general practices' data controllers and integrated care boards, the Federated Data Platform will have the capability to include elements of local primary care data. This would be limited to the information required to support the provision of care and would only be utilised by local organisations within the local tenants of the Federated Data Platform, and not be shared beyond a local level.

Wes Streeting:

[\[17632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many trusts have agreed to join the federated data platform as of 7 March 2024.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 14 March 2024]: The Federated Data Platform is a vital upgrade for the National Health Service, allowing it to be much more effective in how it handles its data, to improve outcomes for patients. It will allow information about staff, waiting

times, equipment and medicines to be brought together, to allow better planning of how the NHS uses its resources.

41 trusts have agreed to join the Federated Data Platform, by means of transitioning from their participation in one of the pilot programmes. In parallel, the programme is actively engaging with 29 new trusts, regarding joining the Federated Data Platform in 2024. We are working with regions and local organisations to plan their implementation timeline.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[19562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of when data will be placed into the federated data platform for NHS trusts and integrated care systems.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 25 March 2024]: The Federated Data Platform will allow the National Health Service to make better use of data to improve outcomes for patients, including reducing waits and discharging people quicker from hospital.

45 organisations who participated in the NHS England pilot, broken down into 42 trusts, two integrated care boards, and the City Healthcare Partnership Community Interest Company, have begun to transition into the Federated Data Platform, in a sequence of waves scheduled between March and May 2024. NHS England aims for all trusts and integrated care boards who wish to use the platform to do so within the next three years.

■ NHS: Digital Technology

Wes Streeting:

[\[19412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the (a) final outturn spend for 2022-23, (b) forecast outturn for 2023-24 and (c) planned budget for 2024-25 for the NHS England Frontline Digitisation programme budget.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 25 March 2024]: The final outturn spend for 2022/23 is £472.8 million. Outturn for 2023/24 is to be confirmed once the final accounts have been approved. Final confirmation of the budgets for 2024/25 is pending, and will be confirmed imminently.

■ NHS: Health Professions

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to help raise awareness of careers in (a) medical physics and (b) clinical engineering.

Andrew Stephenson:

Promoting healthcare science careers is a vital part of our NHS Health Careers team's work, covering 350 careers in the National Health Service. Almost 240,000 people accessed information on healthcare science careers over the last 12 months.

As part of National Careers Week and Healthcare Science Week, an estimated 10,000 students heard directly from a range of NHS staff, including an apprentice Clinical Engineer and other healthcare scientists, as their stories were shown in classrooms across the country.

We will continue to promote all healthcare science careers, including Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering, as part of our work to raise awareness of all careers in the NHS, and encouraging people to join the NHS workforce. There are several case studies promoting careers in Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering on the National School of Healthcare Science website.

■ **Nurses: Schools**

Caroline Lucas: [\[19035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent qualified school nurses are working in a public health-commissioned (a) school nursing service, (b) zero to 19 service and (c) five to 19 healthy child programme in each local authority area.

Andrew Stephenson:

Since April 2013, local authorities have held responsibility for commissioning public health services for school-aged children. These services may be commissioned from a range of providers both inside and outside of the National Health Service. NHS England publishes monthly workforce data which includes information on the number of school nurses directly employed by NHS trusts and other core NHS organisations in England. This data will not represent the total number of school nurses delivering local authority commissioned services, as it will excludes places where services are commissioned outside of the NHS. It is not possible to identify the specific service or programme that these staff are working within.

While data is not available at a local authority level, the following table shows full-time equivalent (FTE) school nurses working within NHS trusts and other core organisations in England by Government Office Region, as of November 2023:

GOVERNMENT OFFICE REGION	FTE SCHOOL NURSES
East Midlands	140
East of England	161
London	325
North East	55
North West	434
South East	291
South West	81

GOVERNMENT OFFICE REGION	FTE SCHOOL NURSES
West Midlands	286
Yorkshire and The Humber	207

■ Nutrition

Rachael Maskell:

[19909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward further policies to help reduce the (a) sugar, (b) fat and (c) salt content in diets.

Andrea Leadsom:

Restrictions on the advertising and volume price promotions, such as buy-one-get-one free or three for £2 offers, for less healthy foods will come into force on 1 October 2025. The advertising legislation will lead to the introduction of a 9:00pm television watershed and restrict paid-for advertising of less healthy products online, United Kingdom wide.

Impact assessments already published for these measures show that the volume price promotions restrictions are expected to accrue health benefits of £2 billion, and National Health Service savings of £180 million over 25 years. The advertising restrictions are expected to deliver health benefits of £2 billion, and NHS savings of £50 million over the next 100 years.

Voluntary guidelines to reduce levels of sugar and salt in, and improve the labelling of, commercial baby food and drink aimed at those aged up to 36 months old, are currently being finalised and will be published in the spring.

Businesses are being given until the end of 2025 to deliver the sugar and calorie reduction targets through the voluntary reformulation programme. These targets were due to be delivered earlier than this, but businesses have been given additional time because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food system. The Government will continue to monitor this area, but will explore other levers if progress is not made. Through the sugar reduction workstream of the overarching reformulation programme, between 2015 and 2020 reductions in sugar levels were delivered in breakfast cereals, yogurts, and pre-packed flavoured milk based drinks of 14.9%, 13.5%, and 29.7%, respectively.

Discussions are also underway to establish a Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP). This is a multi-year partnership between the Government, industry, and civil society to improve access to, and the availability of, data to build consistent reporting requirements for businesses on key health and sustainability objectives.

Rachael Maskell:

[19911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has had recent discussions with the food and drink sector on taking steps to provide healthy alternatives to products that are high in (a) fat, (b) sugar and (c) salt.

Andrea Leadsom:

Discussions have been held by officials with the food and drink sector on taking steps to provide healthier alternatives to products that are high in salt since 2004, high in sugar since 2014, and high in calories since 2017. Provision of healthier alternatives to products that are high in saturated fat have been part of those discussions.

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care meets regularly with external stakeholders on a variety of issues. These ministerial meetings are routinely published on a quarterly basis in arrears on the GOV.UK website. However, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care will recuse herself on departmental issues relating to outside interests, all of which have been declared to the House and under the Ministerial Code.

■ Obesity

Rachael Maskell:

[19910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of obesity; and what steps her Department is taking to help tackle obesity.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Government is delivering a wide range of measures to reduce the numbers of both adults and children who are overweight, or living with obesity. To date this includes legislative measures to limit the advertising, and location and price promotion, of less healthy products, and to ensure calorie levels are provided on menus when eating out of the home. Impact assessments for the legislated measures suggest there will be substantial health benefits, as well as savings to the National Health Service, accrued.

We have seen important successes through the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL), which between 2015 and 2020 has seen sugar levels reduced by 46% in, and over 46,000 tonnes of sugar removed from, products in scope of the levy. Data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey from 2019 shows that sugar intakes have fallen for some age groups. In older children and adolescents, this appears to be partly driven by soft drinks contributing less to sugar intakes, likely as a result of the changes made to drinks included in the SDIL. Further information from the survey is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ndns-results-from-years-9-to-11-2016-to-2017-and-2018-to-2019>

A paper on the association of obesity in primary school children and the SDIL suggests that the reduction in the sugar content of soft drinks delivered by the SDIL

could have prevented up to 5,000 cases of obesity in girls in the last year of primary school. Reductions were greatest in girls who attended schools in the 40% of the most deprived areas. Further information from the paper is available at the following link:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1004160>

The voluntary reformulation programme requires businesses reduce levels of sugar, salt, and calories in everyday food and drink. Levels of sugar have reduced in breakfast cereals, yogurts, and pre-packed milk-based drinks by 15%, 13.5%, and 29.7% respectively, between 2015 and 2020. Levels of salt have reduced in some products by 20%.

■ Obesity: Children

Mary Glendon:

[20058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to tackle childhood obesity; and if she will take steps to work with (a) other Departments and (b) community organisations to provide access to safe recreational spaces for children.

Andrea Leadsom:

Addressing obesity remains a priority for the Government and we are taking strong action to support people, including children and their families, in achieving and maintaining a healthier weight. This action includes: the introduction of restrictions on the promotion by location of less healthy products in key selling locations in store and online; working with the food industry to make further progress on reformulation and making healthier choices easier; the introduction of out of home calorie labelling regulations for food sold in large businesses, including restaurants, cafes, and takeaways; and supporting three million children through the Healthy Food Schemes.

The Government has taken steps towards providing access to open spaces for communities including children, this includes putting policies in place to require local authorities to provide access to open spaces for sport and physical activity, which is important for the health and well-being of communities. This includes a duty for all local councils to produce a design code for their local area. Design codes will be prepared locally, reflect the local context, and be based on effective community involvement. Officials in the Department are engaging with stakeholders, including those across Government, on a wide range of issues, to promote healthier places.

■ Obesity: Health Services

Mary Glendon:

[20054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure adequate oversight of how primary care settings deliver equitable access to weight management services in line with NICE Guidance.

Andrea Leadsom:

Local authorities and the National Health Service provide a range of Weight Management Services (WMS) to support their communities to achieve and maintain a healthier weight. Generally, WMS delivered in the community are behavioural services provided by local authorities or the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme, rather than in primary care.

Local commissioners and WMS providers are expected to take National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines into account, alongside the individual needs, preferences, and values of their patients or service users. The NICE's guidelines provide recommendations on best practice in terms of both the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions and services. It is not mandatory to apply the recommendations, although health and care commissioners are expected to take them fully into account.

Although primary care services are not a main provider of WMS, general practice (GP) is an important source of referrals to WMS. The Department funds the GP Weight Management Enhanced Service, which incentivises GPs to develop and implement a proactive approach to identifying and engaging with patients living with obesity, including the referral to WMS where appropriate. The service delivery specification for this enhanced service includes minimum standards such as undertaking training to have sensitive conversations about weight, and the review and restoration of the practice obesity register.

Mary Glendon:**[20055]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to improve access to weight management services in areas of socioeconomic deprivation.

Andrea Leadsom:

Local authorities and the National Health Service provide weight management services to support their communities to achieve and maintain a healthier weight. These range from behavioural weight management programmes to specialist services for those living with obesity and associated co-morbidities.

Local authorities are able to spend funding from the Public Health Grant on behavioural weight management services in line with local population need, including in areas of socioeconomic deprivation. Integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning NHS specialist weight management services in line with local population need, as well as determining the criteria for access to these services in line with relevant guidance.

NHS England commissions the Digital Weight Management Programme nationally for people living with obesity and an existing comorbidity of either diabetes, or hypertension, or both. The 12-week programme is available via direct referral from any general practice or Community Pharmacy.

The programme provides three levels of intervention at varying intensities, and patients less likely to complete a behavioural programme of this nature, for instance those of a younger age, from ethnic minority backgrounds, from a more deprived area, or who are male, are offered a higher level of intervention and support to retain their engagement on the programme. Approximately 50% of total referrals are from the two most deprived socioeconomic quintiles.

Mary Glendon:

[20056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress NHS England has made on integrating Wegovy to existing weight management structures within primary care settings.

Andrew Stephenson:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance on semaglutide, the active ingredient in Wegovy, for managing overweight and obesity was published in March 2023, and updated in September 2023. It recommends semaglutide as a treatment option for patients that meet specified eligibility criteria, and recommends that the treatment is provided within specialist weight management services. These services are typically provided in secondary rather than primary care settings. The Government is committed to the safe introduction of new weight loss drugs into the National Health Service, and is exploring ways to increase access to more people, who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

Mary Glendon:

[20057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that Tier 2 weight management services are sufficiently (a) resourced and (b) integrated with (i) primary care networks, (ii) community health hubs and (iii) other relevant providers to offer comprehensive support for people living with obesity.

Andrea Leadsom:

The National Health Service and local government provide a range of free tier two weight management services (WMS), to help eligible people living with obesity to lose weight. These are multi-component programmes, including dietary approaches and physical activity, with behaviour change support. The length of support can vary, but guidance from the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence suggests these should last at least three months.

The NHS offers the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme, which is a tier two service aimed at adults living with obesity, who also have type 2 diabetes or hypertension, or both, as well as NHS staff living with obesity. The 12-week programme is directly commissioned and managed by NHS England nationally, and is available via direct referral from any general practice or Community Pharmacy

Local authorities are able to spend funding from the Public Health Grant on weight management services in line with local population need. They may be delivered as a standalone service or as part of an integrated service, for example with smoking cessation support. Where local authorities commission these services, they are

responsible for determining the required resourcing and interaction with other services, along with weight management service providers

Local authorities are part of integrated care systems (ICSs), which are partnerships of organisations that come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services, and to improve the lives of people who live and work in their area. ICS membership also includes the NHS, social care providers, charities, and other organisations. Being a member of the ICS will help local authorities to work more closely with partner organisations and offer integrated support for people living with obesity.

■ Ophthalmology: Training

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[19459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new training places there will be for ophthalmologists as part of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 26 March 2024]: As part of the historic expansion of medical school places set out in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, we will ensure that there is adequate growth in foundation placement capacity, as those taking up these new places begin to graduate, and a commensurate increase in specialty training places is required. A decision regarding which specialities these places will be allocated to will be made nearer the time that the places are required for the expanded workforce. NHS England will work with stakeholders to ensure this growth is sustainable and focused in the service areas where need is greatest.

In 2023, the General Medical Council reported that there are 592 doctors in ophthalmology specialty training across England, which is 34, or 6.1%, more than in 2019. As of November 2023, there are 3,058 full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors working in the specialty of ophthalmology in National Health Service trusts and other core organisations in England. This is 214, or 7.5%, more than in 2019. This includes 1,465 FTE consultants, which is 125, or 9.4%, more than in 2019.

■ Opioids: Overdoses

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[20086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department is taking steps to improve how it collects data on non-fatal overdoses involving synthetic opioids.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department has a longstanding surveillance system in place to collect information on the nature and location of novel drug use, drug markets, and reports alerting us to drug harms experienced. We continue to monitor the threat posed by synthetic opioids, and are working to improve drug surveillance on synthetic opioids through development of an early warning system. The early warning system

dashboard will pull together overdose-response data from ambulances, toxicology labs, and other key sources, so we know in near-real time where to target responses.

We know that most overdoses take place when individuals are alone or accompanied by others also using drugs. This means they are largely transitory and hidden events with no opportunity for sampling. A key indicator, therefore, are those who do come into contact with first responders, who are administered the lifesaving opioid reversal drug naloxone, or who are admitted to hospital. Ambulance data represents an opportunity for rapidly identifying local spikes in overdoses and, for this purpose, we are establishing data feeds with ambulance trusts in England on callouts where naloxone has been administered.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[20089]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to provide public health interventions for people at risk of overdosing on (a) naloxone and (b) other synthetic opioids.

Andrea Leadsom:

The Department is actively monitoring, and responding to, the continued threat posed by the growing levels of potent synthetic opioids such as nitazenes and illicit fentanyl in the United Kingdom. A core part of this response is expanding access to naloxone, which is a lifesaving medicine that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. The Government recently consulted on proposed amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 so that more professionals and services can give out take-home supplies of naloxone to those at-risk of an overdose, as well as their friends and family. This consultation closed on 6 March 2024, and we will publish the next steps in due course.

For those using opiates, treatment is the safest place to be. The Government is investing an additional £780 million over three years, through to 2024/25, to create a world-class treatment and recovery system, the largest ever single increase in treatment and recovery funding in England. £532 million is being invested specifically to improve drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services. This funding is in addition to the Public Health Grant, and will grow the capacity and quality of the drug treatment system.

■ Oral Cancer: Diagnosis

Jim Shannon:

[19359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people diagnosed with mouth cancer in the last twelve months.

Andrew Stephenson:

The information requested is not available for the last twelve months. The most recent data available from 2021 shows 9,018 people were diagnosed with mouth cancer in England. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/cancer-registration-statistics/england-2021---summary-counts-only>

■ **Ovarian Cancer: Diagnosis**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department plans to shorten the diagnostic pathway for ovarian cancer by allowing the CA125 blood test and ultrasound to be undertaken at the same time.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department is supporting NHS England in developing Best Practice Timed pathways, to support the ongoing improvement effort to shorten diagnosis pathways, reduce variation, improve patient experience of care, and meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard. This standard ensures patients are told they have cancer, or that cancer is ruled out, within 28 days of urgent cancer referral from general practice or screening service.

In March 2023, NHS England published guidance for local health and care systems to implement a timed gynaecological cancer diagnostic pathway, including for ovarian cancer. The gynaecological pathway ensures that at day zero, when presenting with symptoms, an ultrasound and a minimum data set is obtained, which includes a full blood count. For patients with suspected ovarian cancer, the minimum dataset should also include tumour marker CA125, with confirmation of suspicious features of ovarian cancer on ultrasound.

The guidance further ensures that patients with persistent abdominal symptoms, raised CA125, and a normal pelvic scan should be referred through the non-specific symptoms rapid diagnostic centre pathway. Women over 50 years old with elevated CA125 and palpable mass or ascites, or both, or with a previous ultrasound with risk of malignancy, should be referred straight to a computed tomography scan.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to reduce regional variations in early diagnosis of ovarian cancer.

Andrew Stephenson:

Reducing inequalities and variation in cancer treatment is a priority for the Government, as is increasing early cancer diagnosis, as both are key contributors to reducing cancer health inequalities. The National Health Service is improving cancer pathways to get people diagnosed faster once referred, and is looking into alternative routes into the system, including non-specific symptom (NSS) pathways for patients who do not fit clearly into a single urgent cancer referral pathway, but who are at risk of being diagnosed with cancer. This will help support faster ovarian cancer diagnosis. 113 NSS pathways are currently operational, with more in development.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to help ensure patients diagnosed with Parkinson's disease receive an appointment with a specialist within six weeks.

Andrew Stephenson:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance, Parkinson's disease: Diagnosis and management in primary and secondary care, updated in 2017, sets out best practice for clinicians in the identification and treatment of Parkinson's disease in line with the latest available evidence. The guidance states that if Parkinson's disease is suspected, people should be referred quickly and without treatment to a specialist with expertise in the differential diagnosis of this condition.

We expect integrated care boards (ICBs) and National Health Service trusts to have due regard to relevant NICE guidelines. It is the responsibility of ICBs to make available the appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, in line with these NICE guidelines.

More generally, cutting waiting lists is one of the Prime Minister's top priorities. We are making good progress on tackling the longest waits, to ensure patients get the care they need when they need it. Ambitions to eliminate long waits were set out in the elective recovery plan, with the overall aim of eliminating waits of over a year for elective care, by March 2025.

To facilitate this across elective services, we are increasing activity, with plans to spend more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25. This includes expanding capacity through the creation of a new network of community diagnostic centres, and maximising all available independent sector capacity.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Warm Home Prescription

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of issuing warm home prescriptions to patients with Parkinson's disease.

Helen Whately:

We have made no specific assessment. The Government recognises that warm home prescription schemes can be effective in helping to protect vulnerable people and households from the health impacts of living in a cold home. These schemes are good examples of local collaboration between the National Health Service, local government, and other partners.

■ Pharmacy: Licensing

Darren Henry:

[\[19731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to reduce the time taken to grant licences to pharmacies applying to open new premises.

Andrea Leadsom:

Pharmacies that want to provide National Health Service pharmaceutical service must submit an application to the integrated care board (ICB). ICBs determine applications having regard to Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments (PNAs), undertaken by local authorities. Applications can also be made to provide benefits that were not foreseen in the PNA. If the applicant or another contractor wishes to appeal the decision of the ICB, then they can appeal the decision. Appeals are dealt with by NHS Resolution on behalf of my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Together with Community Pharmacy England, the representative body of all pharmacy contractors in England, we keep the market entry system and underpinning processes under review, and streamline and expedite the processes where possible. For example, in May 2023, we removed the requirement for an applicant to provide fitness information if they already operate another pharmacy in the area, and the ICB already holds their up-to-date fitness information, and shortened the work history that needs to be provided to the last seven years. Applicants can also speed up the process by ensuring they provide all the right information with their application in a timely manner.

■ Pharmacy: Training

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[18084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many training places for pharmacists in England there were in each year since 2010.

Andrea Leadsom:

The number of training places for pharmacists in England is uncapped and determined each year by health education providers. The following table shows the number of starters on the Foundation Pharmacist Training Scheme, which is the final year of training and must be completed by all pharmacists before they can sit their registration exam, for each year since 2010/2011:

TRAINING YEAR	STARTERS ON PHARMACIST FOUNDATION TRAINING SCHEME
2010/2011	2367
2011/2012	2518
2012/2013	2600

TRAINING YEAR	STARTERS ON PHARMACIST FOUNDATION TRAINING SCHEME
2013/2014	2619
2014/2015	2767
2015/2016	2768
2016/2017	2785
2017/2018	2845
2018/2019	2854
2019/2020	2566
2020/2021	2583
2021/2022	2392
2022/2023	2598
2023/2024	2626

Source: General Pharmaceutical Council

Note: Data may include trainees studying in England, but upon successful completion, they may register in other areas of the United Kingdom.

As set out in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, the ambition is to expand training places for pharmacists by 29% to approximately 4,300 by 2028/29, and to almost 5,000 by 2031/32.

■ Polio

Ms Anum Qaisar:

[\[19226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information her Department holds on the number of patients who (a) have had polio and (b) have post-polio syndrome in the latest period for which data is available.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department does not hold data on the number of patients who have had polio or post-polio syndrome. However, the Department does hold data on the number of admissions to hospital, where polio or post-polio syndrome was recorded as a diagnosis, from 2018 to 2023:

- in 2018/19, there were 176 admissions to National Health Service hospitals in England where polio was recorded as the diagnosis, and 797 admissions where post-polio syndrome was recorded as the diagnosis;

- in 2019/20, there were 187 admissions to NHS hospitals in England where polio was recorded as the diagnosis, and 813 admissions where post-polio syndrome was recorded as the diagnosis;
- in 2020/21, there were 107 admissions to NHS hospitals in England where polio was recorded as the diagnosis, and 522 admissions where post-polio syndrome was recorded as the diagnosis;
- in 2021/22, there were 115 admissions to NHS hospitals in England where polio was recorded as the diagnosis, and 630 admissions where post-polio syndrome was recorded as the diagnosis; and
- in 2022/23, there were 104 admissions to NHS hospitals in England where polio was recorded as the diagnosis, and 632 admissions where post-polio syndrome was recorded as the diagnosis.

It is important to note that the number of admissions does not represent the number of patients, as a person may have more than one admission within the period. It is estimated that there are approximately 120,000 people living in the United Kingdom who survived polio when they were younger. Some of these have, or will develop, post-polio syndrome.

■ Postural Tachycardia Syndrome

Catherine West:

[19656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to support people with postural tachycardia syndrome.

Andrew Stephenson:

Services for postural tachycardia syndrome (PoTS) are locally commissioned and, as such, it is the responsibility of the local commissioning teams within integrated care boards to ensure that their locally commissioned services meet the needs of their local population.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has produced a clinical knowledge summary, last revised in November 2023, which outlines the method healthcare professionals should follow for diagnosing PoTS. This summary is available at the following link:

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/blackouts-syncopal-episodes/diagnosis/assessment/>

Clinical knowledge summaries are evidence-based summaries designed to support healthcare professionals in primary care, by providing them with a readily accessible summary of the current evidence base and practical advice on best practice.

■ Radiology: Greater London

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many 24-hr interventional radiology services are available in the North Central London area; and at what locations are those services.

Andrew Stephenson:

Twenty-four-hour interventional radiology services are available on site in two hospitals in the North Central London area, namely the Royal Free Hospital and University College London Hospital. There are agreed referral pathways in place between providers across North Central London to access these services.

■ Respiratory Diseases: Health Services

Paul Blomfield:

[\[20039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2023 to Question 4959 on Respiratory Diseases: Health Services, how many Acute Respiratory Infection hubs were operating in winter 2023/24.

Andrew Stephenson:

During winter 2022/23, 363 Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) hubs were implemented by integrated care systems (ICSs). The Department does not hold recorded information on the number of ARI hubs in 2023/24, as this information is held instead by local health bodies. The ambition in the recovery plan for urgent and emergency care is that each local area that would benefit from an ARI hub, has one in place ahead of winter. Evaluations from NHS England suggest that ARI hubs may save general practitioner appointments and accident and emergency attendances.

■ Sexual Assault Referral Centres

Jess Phillips:

[\[19379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS England has completed its review of service provision of June 2022 to determine whether forensic and medical interventions for non-fatal strangulation which occur in domestic abuse should form part of the core offer for sexual assault referral centres or should be cared for elsewhere.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Sexual Assault Referral Centre's (SARC) Service Specification, as reviewed and updated in June 2023, now reflects the offence of non-fatal strangulation (NFS). The specification states: Appropriate medical and forensic interventional support is provided to all service users presenting with sexual assault and/or sexual abuse where the presenting need also indicates non-fatal strangulation. It is widely acknowledged that many victims of sexual assault will have also experienced domestic abuse.

For cases of non-fatal strangulation not associated with sexual assault, victims' immediate healthcare needs can be treated in other acute healthcare settings such as emergency departments. The Institute for Addressing Strangulation recently published guidelines for clinical management of non-fatal strangulation in acute and emergency care services.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Research

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[19821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she has taken to support (a) research into and (b) treatment of sickle cell disease in (i) England and (ii) Romford constituency.

Andrew Stephenson:

We're working hard to support research, and provide the best possible care to those living with sickle cell disease (SCD) across the country. The Department funds health and care research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Over the past five financial years, the NIHR has invested more than £8 million in funding and support for SCD research.

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) is the largest provider of apheresis services, a blood transfusion used to treat SCD. NHSBT will be delivering projects over the next 12 months that will increase both nursing capacity and the physical space in which apheresis occurs. We are also working to increase Ro subtype blood donation numbers, the blood type used to treat SCD, identify opportunities to improve clinical pathways, and deliver world-leading treatments, such as the new blood matching genetic test announced by NHS England earlier this year, which will reduce the risk of side effects and offer more personalised care.

NHS England's Chief Executive Officer has committed to improving the treatment and outcomes of patients with SCD, and has commissioned a Sickle Cell Pathway Quality Improvement work package. A quality improvement review of existing processes has led to a range of improvements including awareness, education, and training of both patients and professionals.

The National Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Programme (HiQiP) has recently introduced a number of initiatives as part of the wider aim of tackling inequalities for people living with SCD. This includes: piloting of urgent and emergency department bypass units in London and Manchester, which will ensure people with SCD with an uncomplicated vaso-occlusive crisis are assessed and given pain relief in a timely manner; the provision of a credit card sized Sickle Cell Alert Card to all people with SCD, to alert medical and clinical staff that the carrier is a registered SCD patient and that they should be managed as a medical emergency; a London wide commissioning for the design and upload of a patient care record onto an interoperable digital platform which, when fully operational, will give clinicians and medical personnel in different regions access to a patient's personalised care and analgesia record, removing ambiguity on effective treatment; and several products to

support the above, including a communications campaign to raise awareness of existing NHS England arrangements to support people with SCD to save money on the costs of regular prescriptions, as well as the Can you tell it's Sickle Cell campaign and an e-learning module, both from NHS England. Further information on the Can you tell it's Sickle Cell campaign and the e-learning module is available respectively, at the following links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2022/06/nhs-launches-lifesaving-sickle-cell-campaign/>

<https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/health-inequalities/>

■ Smoking

Andrew Lewer:

[18598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of (a) vapes, (b) vapes with flavoured e-liquids and (c) vapes with fruit, dessert and sweet flavoured e-liquids at successful tobacco smoking cessation.

Andrew Lewer:

[18599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions officials in her Department have had with the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities on the findings in it's Vaping in England review, published on 29 September 2022, that non-tobacco flavours may play a positive role in helping people switch from smoking to vaping.

Andrea Leadsom:

Due to the nicotine content and the unknown long-term harms, vaping carries risks to health and lifelong addiction for children. Vaping is, therefore, only recommended for adult smokers who wish to quit smoking. Young people and people who have never smoked, should not vape.

Our youth vaping call for evidence, published in 2023, demonstrated that the flavours are one of the main reasons that vapes appeal to children. However, as set out in the 2022 Nicotine vaping in England review, we also recognize that there is some evidence that non-tobacco flavours can play a positive role in smoking cessation. This is why it is critical we strike the balance between restricting flavours in vapes to reduce their appeal to young people, whilst also ensuring that vapes remain available for adult smokers as a viable smoking cessation tool.

In the upcoming Tobacco and Vapes Bill, we will introduce powers to restrict vape flavours. Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Department will then undertake further analysis and consultation before introducing any specific flavour restrictions. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) is an internal part of the Department, and OHID officials are leading on our smokefree generation and youth vaping work.

■ Social Services: LGBT+ People**Anneliese Dodds:** [19698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with Skills for Care on levels of take up of their LGBT+ Learning Framework, published in February 2023.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department has had no recent discussions around levels of take up of the LGBTQ+ learning framework.

■ Suicide**Daisy Cooper:** [20110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2024 to Question 16027 on Suicide, how much of the £57 million allocated for suicide (a) prevention and (b) bereavement services has been allocated to local authorities; and by what date must the funds be spent.

Maria Caulfield:

The £57 million of funding was made available across the period from April 2019 to March 2024. Neither the Department nor NHS England holds information centrally on how much of this funding has ultimately gone to local authorities. NHS England allocates funding to integrated care boards, who in turn commission activities across local authority and health settings.

■ Surgery**Sir John Hayes:** [17035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information her Department holds on the number of operations that were (a) cancelled and (b) delayed by more than two months due to the industrial action by junior doctors in 2023.

Andrew Stephenson:

The number of operations that were cancelled due to the industrial action by junior doctors in 2023, was 157,570. Data is not held regarding operations delayed by more than two months. The National Health Service is prioritising urgent, emergency, and cancer care, and will continue to do its best to maintain appointments and elective procedures wherever possible. Cancelled appointments that need to be rescheduled, will be done so as a priority. Data on the impact of industrial action is available here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/preparedness-for-potential-industrial-action-in-the-nhs/#heading-3>

■ Surgery: Wellingborough**Gen Kitchen:** [20125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting time for elective surgeries for people in Wellingborough constituency.

Andrew Stephenson:

Cutting waiting lists is one of the Prime Minister's top priorities. To reduce the National Health Service's waitlist, the Department plans to spend more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25. This funding will expand capacity by creating a new network of community diagnostic centres, and maximising all available independent sector capacity. In addition, we are managing demand through specialised advice in primary care, and giving patients more control over where they receive their care.

To reduce waiting times for elective surgeries specifically, we are transforming the way the NHS provides elective surgeries, by increasing activity through dedicated and protected surgical hubs. £1.5 billion of funding has been awarded for the development of new surgical hubs and the expansion of surgical hub sites, as well as increased bed capacity and equipment, to help elective services recover. The hubs will focus on providing high volume low complexity surgery, as recommended by the Royal College of Surgeons of England. There are currently 100 elective surgical hubs that are operational across England, as of March 2024. These surgical hubs help to separate elective care facilities from urgent and emergency care.

■ Tobacco and Vapes Bill**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[19767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Regulatory Policy Committee's revised opinion on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill is published by 16 April 2024.

Sir Christopher Chope:[\[19768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish the Regulatory Policy Committee's original opinion on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill submitted to her Department on 12 February 2024; if she will outline the changes she has made to that Bill since receiving that opinion; and what discussions she has had with the Regulatory Policy Committee on the expected timetable for their submission of the revised opinion.

Andrea Leadsom:

[Holding answer 26 March 2024]: Smoking is responsible for approximately 80,000 deaths a year in the United Kingdom, and causes around one in four cancer deaths in the UK. It also costs our country £17 billion a year, and puts a huge burden on the National Health Service. That is why we have introduced the Tobacco and Vapes Bill to create the first smokefree generation, and enable us to further crack down on youth vaping. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill is available at the following link:

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3703>

On 12 February 2024 the Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC) gave opinion on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill impact assessment and rated it green (fit for purpose). However, on 19 March 2024, ahead of the introduction of the bill, a revised version was sent to the RPC for comment. This included changes to reflect the inclusion of Northern Ireland in the bill, following the formation of a Northern Ireland Executive,

and a power in the bill to enable the current notification system for nicotine vapes to also cover non-nicotine vapes and other consumer nicotine products, for instance nicotine pouches. The RPC have publicly stated that they welcome the resubmission of the revised impact assessment, and we expect a revised opinion to be issued shortly. The statement from the RPC is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-tobacco-and-vapes-bill-statement-from-the-rpc>

■ Tuberculosis: Vaccination

Simon Jupp:

[20115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of making access to Bacillus Calmette-Guérin vaccinations available to farming and agricultural families that regularly interact with livestock.

Maria Caulfield:

The Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccination is not usually recommended for people aged over 16 years old, unless the risk of exposure is great. The vaccination can be offered to veterinary staff and those who handle animals or animal materials, for instance abattoir workers, which could be infected with tuberculosis (TB). Based on the current available evidence, only a very small subset of farmers may be at high risk of TB exposure and therefore eligible for vaccination. This does not include farmer's household contacts or children who would not constitute a risk sufficiently high enough to warrant a recommendation for the vaccine. If the level of risk should increase, then the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation could be asked to review this.

Eligibility for the BCG vaccination as an occupational health vaccine should be based on an individual risk assessment. Those eligible would need to access the vaccine through a private occupational health provider, and may seek further advice from the National Farmers Union. Non-National Health Service providers can charge for this service.

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH), all new employees, including farmers, should undergo a pre-employment health assessment, which should include a review of immunisation needs. The COSHH risk assessment will indicate which pathogens staff are exposed to in their workplace, such as bovine TB. Staff considered to be at risk of exposure to pathogens should be offered routine pre-exposure immunisation as appropriate. This decision should also take into account the safety and efficacy of available vaccines.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Age Assurance****Sir John Hayes:****[19252]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of young asylum seekers have been identified as being over the age of 18 following (a) age verification and (b) identity checks in each of the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the [‘Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release’](#). Data on asylum applications by age is published in table Asy_D01 of the [‘Asylum applications, decisions and resettlement detailed datasets’](#). The latest data relates to 2023.

Data on age disputes is published in table Asy_D05 of the [‘Age disputes detailed dataset’](#). The latest data relates to the year ending September 2023.

Information on how to use these datasets can be found in the ‘Notes’ page of each workbook. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the [‘summary tables’](#). The ‘contents’ sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum applications by age and age disputes.

Please note that an age dispute could, for example, be resolved following: a Merton compliant age assessment; receipt of credible and clear documentary evidence of age; a judicial finding on age; following a determination by two Home Office officers that the person’s physical appearance and demeanour very strongly suggests they are significantly over the age of 18; or, where the reasons for raising an age dispute no longer apply.

■ Asylum: Housing**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[19922]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of whether private providers responsible for running asylum accommodation are meeting their contractual requirements.

Tom Pursglove:

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts (AASC) Statement of Requirements below gives a detailed breakdown of all of the services to be undertaken by our accommodation providers and to the standards we expect:

[AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#).

Home Office accommodation providers are required to visit each property at least monthly, and assurance that contractual requirements are met is tested by the Home Office Contract Assurance Team, which inspects properties and undertakes other assurance activities on an intelligence-led basis. Formal governance mechanisms are in place, to oversee performance and delivery against contractual requirements.

Attachments:

1. AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements [AASC_-_Schedule_2_-_Statement_of_Requirements (3).pdf]

■ **Asylum: Rwanda****Stephen Kinnock:****[19626]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will publish details on the (a) level of financial and (b) other incentives his Department plans to offer to asylum seekers to encourage them to voluntarily relocate to Rwanda.

Michael Tomlinson:

Voluntary relocation to Rwanda builds on our already widely used voluntary returns scheme – details of this can be found at the following link:- [Voluntary and assisted departures.docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

■ **British National (Overseas): Airports****Daisy Cooper:****[19475]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will set a target date for British National (Overseas) passport holders to be able to use eGates at the UK border.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government regularly reviews eGate eligibility for all nationals arriving in the UK, including British National (Overseas) passport holders.

In the New Plan for Immigration, the Government set out our ambition to digitise the border. To deliver this we aim to increase the use of eGates at the border by those currently eligible and investigate options to extend eGate eligibility to those unable to use them. Any shorter-term changes need to be balanced against the impact these have on delivering the longer-term ambition.

■ **Crime: Children****Feryal Clark:****[19491]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many crimes were committed by children under the age of 10 in England in (a) 2018 and (b) 2023.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the investigative outcomes of crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales. This includes the number of cases that were closed due to offender being below the age of criminal responsibility. This is recorded in the official statistics as outcome 11 “prosecution prevented: suspect under age” and the latest data can be accessed here:

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

This will not cover all offences committed by children under 10, as the Home Office recorded crime collection does not include all summary only offences, that is those that can only be dealt with at Magistrates Courts.

■ Delivery Services: Undocumented Migrants

Stephen Kinnock: [19758]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department holds information on illegal working via the use of rented profiles on food delivery apps.

Michael Tomlinson:

The HO holds some information in relation to individuals who rent profiles on food delivery apps. However, we do not routinely publish the information you have requested and we are unable to provide this information, as it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Stephen Kinnock: [19761]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he is taking steps to regulate the use of rented profiles on food delivery apps.

Stephen Kinnock: [19762]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has had discussions with representatives of food delivery companies on the use of rented profiles on food delivery apps.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Government is engaging constructively with food delivery platforms, calling on them to end the use of unverified substitution. Unchecked account sharing places the public at risk, enables – and therefore encourages – illegal migration and leads to the exploitation of workers.

In November 2023, the Home Office secured agreement from the firms to strengthen their recruitment and on-boarding processes, in order to prevent unchecked sharing of accounts.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/food-delivery-companies-urged-to-end-unchecked-account-sharing>.

■ Detention Centres: Women

Ellie Reeves: [19666]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department is taking steps to reduce the number of vulnerable women held in immigration detention.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Home Office are committed to ensuring the proper protection and treatment of women, including vulnerable women, in detention and will seek to facilitate voluntary return as an alternative to detention and enforced removal. Further information can be found in published operational guidance [DSO 06/2016 Women in the Detention Estate](#).

We fully accept that some groups of individuals can be at particular risk of harm in immigration detention. This is the basis of the adults at risk in immigration detention

policy [DSO 08/2016 Management of adults at risk in immigration detention](#), which strengthens the presumption against detention for vulnerable individuals.

Women who are victims of torture, trafficking or sexual violence are all covered by the adults at risk in immigration detention policy. Anyone who falls within the scope of the policy is regarded as unsuitable for detention unless the specific immigration circumstances in their case are considered to outweigh the vulnerability issues.

Plans are in place to convert Derwentside immigration removal centre (IRC) from a female only centre, into a detained facility for men, reducing female capacity across the existing estate.

■ Drugs: Sales

Andrew Rosindell:

[19816]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help tackle the sale of illegal drugs on (a) social media and (b) other websites.

Chris Philp:

Drugs ruin lives and devastate communities. The Government is committed to driving down drugs supply in the UK through tough law enforcement against the sale of drugs online.

Our Online Safety Act will introduce measures requiring platforms, including social media sites, to remove content relating to the sale of illegal drugs online. Under this ground-breaking piece of legislation, tech companies must proactively tackle this type of content and prevent users from being exposed to it. If they fail to comply, they risk stiff financial penalties or in the most serious cases, having their sites blocked by the independent regulator, Ofcom. The Online Safety Act delivers the government's manifesto commitment to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online.

We also recognise that social media, gaming sites and other online platforms are critical enablers in the targeting, grooming and facilitation of county lines exploitation. Through the County Lines Programme, we are developing a better understanding of how these platforms are being used and how to disrupt harmful activity.

Considering other websites, the National Crime Agency, along with policing colleagues across the UK and internationally, is mapping and targeting key offenders operating online. Dedicated teams use a range of tools and techniques generally unavailable to most investigators and we make sure they have the resources and powers they need to keep our country safe.

Law enforcement agencies work with internet service providers to shut down UK-based websites found to be committing offences such as selling controlled drugs. To support this, proposals are also being taken forward in the Criminal Justice Bill to create a new power enabling law enforcement to suspend IP addresses and/or domain names being used for criminal purposes. This new power will allow agencies to obtain a court order to formally request action by organisations both domestically and outside of the UK.

Furthermore, the Government has commissioned the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) to undertake a review into internet-facilitated drug markets. The ACMD ran a call for evidence which closed in January and expects to publish its findings later this year.

■ Gender Based Violence: Victims

Ellie Reeves:

[\[19667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled Tackling violence against women and girls strategy, published on 21 July 2021, what progress his Department has made on ensuring support is provided to survivors of gender-based violence.

Laura Farris:

We have completed or closed over half of all cross-government commitments in the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy (2021) and Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (2022).

This includes:

- Allocating £6.6 million to deliver interventions that improve our understanding of 'what works' to prevent violence against women and girls.
- Ensuring consistency in support services through introducing national commissioning standards through the Victims Funding Strategy.
- Launching the VAWG Support and Specialist Services Fund with £8.3m of funding support victims facing the greatest barriers.
- Supporting the passage of the Worker Protection (Amendment of the Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 which places a new duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees.
- Invested over £150m of funding through Safer Streets and Safety of Women at Night fund on a range of projects focused on improving public safety, including for women and girls.
- Doubled funding for the National Domestic Abuse helpline and other helplines such as the Revenge Porn Helpline and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust's National stalking helpline.
- Relaunched the Flexible Fund in January 2024 with a further £2m investment to help remove barriers to domestic abuse victims leaving their abusers, after its successful £300,000 pilot in 2023.

■ Immigration

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[19815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help promote the integration of immigrants.

Tom Pursglove:

All refugees and those granted protection in the UK should be able to fully integrate into British life and become self-sufficient, providing for themselves and their families, and contributing to the economy.

Refugees, as well as individuals arriving through refugee resettlement schemes with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK, have access to the labour market and to mainstream benefits and services to enable their integration. We are working across Government to ensure these services meet the needs of refugees.

We recognise that the ability to speak English is key to helping refugees integrate into life in England, as well as to breaking down barriers to work and career progression. The Home Office works closely with other Government departments to ensure mainstream English language provision meets the needs of refugees.

■ Immigration: Applications**Duncan Baker:****[19971]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March 2024 to Question 18307 on Immigration: Applications, whether pictures of language certificates can be used when applying for (a) citizenship and (b) settlement status.

Tom Pursglove:

Pictures of language certificates can be used when applying for citizenship and settlement status. The Home Office may request original documents if they are not satisfied that the documents provided are sufficient to demonstrate that English language requirements are met.

■ Knives: Crime**Feryal Clark:****[19492]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the charge rate for knife crime offences was in England in (a) 2018 and (b) 2023.

Chris Philp:

Overall levels of violent crime experienced by the general population are down by 51% since 2010, according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales. Levels of serious youth violence, as measured by the number of under-25 hospital admissions following an assault with a knife or other bladed instrument, are down by 25% in England and Wales compared with the year ending 2019.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the investigative outcomes of crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales. These data can be found in the Home Office Open Data Tables, available here: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-and-data-sets/policy-research-and-statistics/open-data-tables).

■ Marriage: Passports

Daisy Cooper:

[\[20108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason people born after 1 January 1983 are required to provide a valid passport when giving notice of marriage.

Tom Pursglove:

Every person who gives notice to marry or to form a civil partnership in England and Wales must provide evidence of their given name, surname, date of birth, and nationality. A valid passport or another specified document can be used as evidence of nationality.

■ Migrant Workers: Domestic Service

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[19376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the conclusions of the Independent Review of the Overseas Domestic Workers Visa by James Ewins, published on 16 December 2015, relating to protection of employment rights of migrant workers in private households, if he will (a) review and (b) reverse changes to the rules for that visa.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[19377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when his Department last reviewed the potential risk of abuse and exploitation of migrant workers under the overseas domestic worker visa rules.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[19378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Independent Review the Overseas Domestic Workers Visa by James Ewins, published on 16 December 2015, what the Government's policy is on the implementation of proposed changes in that review to the overseas domestic worker visa rules that have not yet been implemented.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office keeps immigration route policy under review, including that for the Overseas Domestic Worker route. We have introduced a number of reforms to the route for overseas domestic workers since 2015; designed to build on existing safeguards and in line with the broader immigration system. Employers of overseas domestic workers must act in accordance with UK employment law, and workers who find themselves a victim of modern slavery are protected by the National Referral Mechanism and may be eligible to apply for permission to stay as a domestic worker who is a victim of modern slavery.

■ Migrant Workers: Sponsorship**Martyn Day:** [\[19913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many certificates of sponsorship have been (a) suspended and (b) revoked in each year for which data is available.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office do not suspend or revoke Certificates of Sponsorship, therefore we do not hold the requested data.

Martyn Day: [\[19914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many certificates of sponsorship which have been (a) suspended and (b) revoked have been successfully appealed in each year for which data is available.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office do not suspend or revoke Certificates of Sponsorship, therefore we do not hold the requested data.

■ Migrants: Domestic Abuse**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[19997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will remove the reservation on Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention.

Laura Farris:

The reservation on Article 59 will be kept in place at this time but kept under review as the policies which address support for migrant victims of domestic abuse develop.

We continue to be committed to supporting migrant victims of domestic abuse. This includes the recently expanded Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession, the immediate settlement provisions under Appendix Victim of Domestic Abuse and the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme.

■ Migrants: Health Services**Claire Hanna:** [\[19735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the immigration health surcharge for people who already (a) work and (b) pay taxes in the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government has no plans to remove the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) for temporary migrants who work and pay taxes in the UK.

It is right those granted temporary immigration permission for more than six months should contribute to the sustainability of our NHS. Having paid the IHS, temporary migrants can access the NHS as soon as they arrive in the UK and will only be

charged for services that a permanent resident would also pay for, such as prescription charges in England.

Although some temporary migrants will pay tax and National Insurance contributions after they start work in the UK, they will not on average have made the same financial contribution to the NHS which most UK nationals and permanent residents have made, or will make, over the course of their working lives. It is an individual's immigration status, not their tax and National Insurance contributions, which governs their access to the NHS.

■ Official Visits: Rwanda

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[20093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department takes to assess the (a) potential impact and (b) value for money of (i) his visit to Rwanda in December 2023 and (ii) other ministerial overseas visits.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[20094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons he used a private charter flight for his visit to Rwanda in December 2023; and whether his Department made an assessment of the potential merits of using alternative forms of transport.

Michael Tomlinson:

All Government spend goes through thorough due diligence to ensure best value for money.

Stopping the boats is one of our top priorities. The cost of the asylum system could reach up to £11 billion per year by 2026, so bold solutions like our partnership with Rwanda are required.

Various elements, such as security and timing, will be taken into consideration when looking at Government travel, including use of the Government's plane.

On the visit, the Home Secretary signed a joint treaty with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Dr Vincent Biruta, strengthening the UK and Rwanda's Migration and Economic Development Partnership and directly addressing the concerns of the Supreme Court.

■ Opioids

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[20087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to tackle the importation of nitazenes into the UK.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[20088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to his Department's press release entitled More synthetic opioids banned to protect

communities, published on 20 March 2023, what assessment he has made of the impact of the change in legal status on the (a) spread and (b) use of these substances.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[20091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions he has had with (a) the National Crime Agency and (b) local police forces on collaboration on tackling dark net markets involved in the distribution of synthetic opioids.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[20092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how his Department plans to assess the impact of the Synthetic Opioid Taskforce on the (a) supply and (b) demand for these drugs.

Chris Philp:

Tackling Class A drugs, including synthetic opioids, is a priority for the Government due to the harm caused to users, society and the economy.

The HMG Synthetic Opioids Taskforce is working with partner agencies such as the National Crime Agency (NCA), the Department for Health and Social Care and the National Police Chiefs Council to deliver an evidence-based response to the level of risk posed by synthetic opioids, and implement policies to stem the demand and supply of these dangerous substances.

As of 20 March, 15 dangerous synthetic opioids have come under the tightest controls as Class A drugs. An impact assessment has been published which outlines the potential impacts of the legislation, and which includes a qualitative assessment of the potential use and spread of these substances.. By controlling these substances, we anticipate an increase in public awareness of their harms and that law enforcement are able to respond to the supply and production of these drugs.

To stem the supply of illicit synthetic opioids to and within the UK, the NCA, Police and Border Force are working together in a zero-tolerance approach, ensuring all lines of enquiry are prioritised and vigorously pursued. This involves mapping and targeting key offenders, including dark net markets. Dedicated teams use a range of tools and techniques generally unavailable to most investigators and we make sure they have the resources and powers they need to keep our country safe.

Border Force are leading on a series of intensifications at the border to strengthen our intelligence on how these substances reach the UK. Furthermore, Home Office supports the NCA's International Liaison Officer network and Border Force's international work through funding posts in key transit and source countries to stop drugs from coming to the UK in the first place.

■ Police Custody: Women

Rachael Maskell: [\[20078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will take steps to ensure that women who are held in police cells are supported by at least one officer who is a woman.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to ensuring that custody is a safe and dignified environment for all detainees, visitors and staff which operates professionally, respectfully and lawfully.

Police custody is governed by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Codes of Practice which sets out the legal framework for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers. PACE Code C requires that as soon as practicable after arrival at the police station, each detainee must be given an opportunity to speak in private with a member of custody staff of the same sex as them about any matter concerning their personal needs relating to their health, hygiene and welfare that might affect or concern them whilst in custody. Arrangements must also be made for ensuring that a girl under the age of 18 is placed under the care of a female member of staff.

As policing is operationally independent of Government, Chief Constables and elected Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for the operational management of custody suites.

■ Police: Retirement**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[19487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when retired police officers subject to immediate detriment will be contacted with the resolution.

Chris Philp:

The relevant legislation provides that all eligible members of the police pension scheme will be given a choice to remedy the discrimination set out in the McCloud judgment and that information should be provided to eligible members by 1 April 2025.

Adjustments to individual members' benefits are an administrative matter, and the police pension scheme is locally administered by each of the separate police forces in England and Wales. The Home Office does not hold information on administrative processes in forces.

■ Sexual Offences: Prosecutions**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[20095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to ensure the (a) integrity and (b) confidentiality of digital evidence in sexual assault cases.

Laura Farris:

The Government's Rape Review highlighted the importance of digital forensics and disclosure of digital material in improving our response to sexual offences.

We have legislated to put the Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) and code of practice on a statutory footing. Compliance with the FSR's code will ensure the integrity of

digital evidence presented to the courts, helping to maintain public confidence in our systems.

Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022), we introduced a clear statutory basis for requesting devices from victims of crime so that information is only shared with their agreement and where necessary and proportionate and in response to a reasonable line of enquiry. This helps forces to ensure that the high standards of Data Protection Act are met when processing sensitive personal information belonging to victims of crime.

We are also working across the system to ensure that police forces have the technology and capabilities they require. In 23/24, the Home Office invested £8.2m to increase capacity and speed in digital forensics, including supporting selective extraction and examination of data on digital devices to better protect victims from intrusive investigations.

To drive further improvements in the response to sexual offences, we invested £9.4m in Operation Soteria, bringing together police and academics to develop a new national operating model for the investigation of rape which is currently being implemented by all police forces in England and Wales.

■ Shoplifting

Andrew Rosindell: [\[19824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he has taken with relevant authorities to reduce shop lifting in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[19825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking with relevant authorities to help reduce instances of car theft in (a) Romford constituency and (b) England.

Chris Philp:

The Government recognises the significant impact theft has on businesses, communities, and consumers. The Crime Survey for England and Wales shows neighbourhood crime is down 51% compared to findings from the year ending March 2010.

We have recently taken significant steps to improve the police response to acquisitive crime, including car theft and shoplifting. The National Police Chiefs' Council has made a commitment that police forces across England and Wales will follow up all crimes where there is actionable evidence and the chance of identifying an offender. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have commenced a thematic inspection on the effectiveness of police investigations which will include an assessment of how police forces are implementing the reasonable lines of enquiry commitment.

The Government is working closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, chaired by ACC Jennifer Sims, the National

Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime, to take forward a programme of work to prevent and reduce vehicle crime nationally. A network of vehicle crime leads has been established in every police force in England and Wales, ensuring forces share information about emerging trends in vehicle crime and are better able to tackle regional issues. The Metropolitan Police Service are represented on the Working Group and have an established vehicle crime lead.

We are legislating through the Criminal Justice Bill to create two new offences where a person possesses, makes, adapts, supplies or offers to supply electronic devices where there are reasonable grounds to suspect they will be used in vehicle theft. The legislation will make it easier for police to prosecute criminals making and supplying these devices, as well as vehicle thieves.

In October 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) published the [Retail Crime Action Plan - October 2023.pdf \(nbcc.police.uk\)](#). Through this Plan, all forces across England and Wales have committed to prioritise police attendance at the scene where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured and can only be done by police personnel. Additionally, where CCTV or other digital images are secured, police will run this through the Police National Database to aid efforts to identify prolific offenders or potentially dangerous individuals.

We are continuing to work closely with retail businesses, security representatives, trade associations and policing through the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG), which meets on a quarterly basis, to ensure the response to retail crime, including shoplifting, is as robust as it can be.

■ **Speed Limits: Cameras**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19683]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he is taking steps to ensure that drivers are aware of the introduction of new ultra speed cameras.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19685]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department had discussions with (a) road safety groups and (b) the public prior to the (i) approval and (ii) rollout of VECTOR-SR cameras.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[19686]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the VECTOR-SR speed cameras are (a) visible to road users and (b) compliant with regulations.

Chris Philp:

The Government's Home Office Type Approval (HOTA) process oversees the accuracy and reliability of vehicle speed measurement devices to ensure they meet the specified requirements.

It is up to the traffic authority, the police and other agencies to decide whether to install speed cameras and how they wish to operate them.

This is a local decision in which the Department does not become involved.

■ Spiking

Rachael Maskell:

[\[20079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will issue guidance to the police on ensuring that people providing statements are asked whether they have had their drink spiked.

Laura Farris:

The Home Office does not intend to issue guidance as described, as it would not be appropriate for such a question to be asked to all individuals providing statements to the police.

All incidents are taken seriously by the police, and officers will always seek to follow relevant lines of enquiry. The questions asked by the police will therefore be specific to the circumstances of each particular incident, including the individual's version of events.

If there is anything to indicate that there is an element of spiking it will be fully investigated.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[20080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training is provided to police officers on the impact of the spiking of drinks on victims of that crime.

Laura Farris:

Each Police force has a dedicated spiking lead who all meet regularly to share learning. At present, forces design and deliver their own spiking training and this is informed by NPCC and Home Office policies.

Some forces, including Cumbria Police and the Metropolitan Police Service, are in the process of reviewing their spiking training.

■ UK Border Force: Complaints

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[19705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many grievances have been raised by Heathrow Border Force staff in response to the Heathrow Change Programme; how many of these have been rejected; and what proportion of grievances were raised by (a) women and (b) disabled people.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office would not disclose information which is considered likely to cause prejudice to the effectiveness of public affairs.

■ UK Border Force: Conditions of Employment

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[19702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Heathrow Border Force staff have been asked to accept new terms and conditions as part of the Heathrow Change Programme; and how many such staff are (a) women and (b) disabled people.

Tom Pursglove:

No members of staff have been asked to accept new terms and conditions. All staff were given a range of options on which they could make the decision which best suited them.

■ UK Border Force: Pay

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[19704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Heathrow Border Force staff have gone down a pay grade as part of the Heathrow Change Programme; and what proportion of such staff are (a) women and (b) disabled people.

Tom Pursglove:

No members of staff have gone down a pay grade as part of the Heathrow Change Programme.

■ UK Border Force: Reasonable Adjustments

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[19708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Heathrow Border Force staff had reasonable adjustments before the Heathrow Change Programme; and what proportion of such staff were (a) women and (b) disabled people.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office do not hold the requested information on how many people working for Border Force at Heathrow prior to the Change Programme had reasonable adjustments, in an accessible format.

■ UK Border Force: Redundancy

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[19703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Heathrow Border Force staff have taken voluntary exit as a result of the Heathrow Change Programme; and how many such staff are (a) women and (b) disabled people.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office can confirm 158 staff have indicated they wish to take the voluntary exit scheme. 54% of those staff who have indicated taking the voluntary exit are female. 18% of staff who have indicated, wishing to take the voluntary exit scheme, have a disability.

■ UK Border Force: Staff

Anneliese Dodds: [19706]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people worked for Heathrow Border Force before the Heathrow Change Programme; and what proportion of these were (a) men and (b) women.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office would not disclose information which is considered likely to cause prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs.

Border Force staffing numbers can be obtained from the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023 (www.gov.uk).

Anneliese Dodds: [19707]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many disabled people worked for Heathrow Border Force before the Heathrow Change Programme.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office do not hold the requested information on how many people working for Border Force Heathrow prior to the Change Programme had declared a disability, in an easily accessible format.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Aviation

Andrew Rosindell: [19813]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate he has made of the number of illegal immigrants who gain entry to the United Kingdom via air travel; and what steps he has taken to tackle illegal immigration to the United Kingdom via air travel.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office publishes statistics on detected irregular arrivals to the UK in the [‘Irregular migration to the UK’ statistics release, available on gov.uk](#). Data on irregular arrivals by method of entry is published in table Irr_D01 of the ‘Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets’, with the latest data up to the end of September 2023.

■ Visas: Graduates

Alex Sobel: [19517]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether UK Visa and Immigration is meeting the eight-week service standard for processing graduate visas.

Tom Pursglove:

We are operating within the eight-week service standard for Graduate applications.

Some applications may take longer if we have requested further information, or if their personal circumstances are complex. Further details can be found at [Visa processing times: applications inside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Visas: Skilled Workers

Deidre Brock:

[19383]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Migration Advisory Committee's Rapid review of the Immigration Salary List, published on 23 February 2024, for what reason his Department has not implemented the recommendation on the use of the Immigration Salary List beyond the skilled worker route for asylum seekers.

Tom Pursglove:

Replacing the Shortage Occupation List with the new Immigration Salary List will maintain the important principles that underpin our approach to permission to work and is in line with wider changes to the Immigration Rules.

Unrestricted access to employment could act as an incentive for more migrants to choose to come here illegally, with many making dangerous journeys across the Channel and supporting the business model of evil people smugglers, rather than claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

The Government considers it important to distinguish between those who need protection and those seeking to work here who can apply for a work visa under the Immigration Rules. Aligning asylum seekers' permission to work with the Skilled Worker route could undermine the legal routes for those seeking to work in the UK.

■ Women's Aid: Finance

Alex Sobel:

[20103]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department plans to provide funding to Women's Aid in the next three financial years.

Laura Farris:

Tackling violence against women and girls is a government priority. Our strategies aim to transform the whole of society's response to these crimes with actions to prevent abuse, support victims and ensure more perpetrators are brought to justice.

The Home Office has provided funding to Women's Aid of up to £1.34m until March 2025 to deliver the Flexible Fund. This fund will help hundreds of domestic abuse victims next year who will receive lifeline payments to help escape tormenting and often life-threatening abuse, providing the chance to rebuild their lives. We are also investing £753k into Women's Aid next year to improve the awareness of domestic abuse amongst young people.

Funding beyond March 2025 is subject to future budgets which will be set through the next Spending Review process.

JUSTICE**■ Convictions: Young People****Sir Mark Hendrick:****[18978]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions of young people there were in (a) the North West, (b) Lancashire and (c) Preston in each of the last five years; and what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the trend in the number of such convictions.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice holds information on convictions by age group and Police Force Area, covering the period requested. The latest data available, until year ending June 2023, can be obtained in the following published tool: [Outcomes by Offence tool: June 2023](#).

The tool linked above will allow you to select particular age groups of interest through the age group filter, and areas of the country through the police force area filter.

It is not possible to separately identify all convictions in Preston courts specifically, as those at magistrates' courts in Preston are counted within the wider geographical area of Lancashire outlined in the first part of the question. Figures for the rest of 2023 will be available in the next update of the Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly publication, expected in May 2024.

The Ministry of Justice has not carried out any recent location-specific assessment of on how our policies have influenced the trend in the number of children convicted since 2019 in Preston, Lancashire and the North West. However, there has been analysis of the broader national trend, which is a fall in the overall number of children entering the criminal justice system more generally in recent years. Since 2012, the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system has declined by 72%. This can be attributed to a number of drivers. These include changes to policing and criminal justice practices intended to increase police discretion to divert children who had committed low-level offences from the formal justice system, prevention programmes to support vulnerable families and Youth Offending Teams undertaking prevention work with children perceived to be at risk of offending.

■ Crimes of Violence: Convictions**Jim Shannon:****[19357]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions for aggravated assault there have been in the last 12 months.

Gareth Bacon:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of convictions for criminal offences, including various assault offences, covering the time period requested. The latest data available, until year ending June 2023, can be obtained in the following published tool: [Outcomes by Offence tool: June 2023](#).

Information relating to aggravating factors for assault offences is only available centrally where this forms a specific offence in legislation, including those listed below. Information on other aggravating factors may be held on court records but to examine individual court records to identify all aggravated assaults would be of disproportionate costs.

- 8.06 Racially or religiously aggravated assault occasioning actual bodily harm
- 8.07 Racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating

■ Domestic Abuse: Convictions

Jim Shannon:

[19356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions for domestic abuse there have been in the last 12 months.

Laura Farris:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of convictions for criminal offences covering the period requested. The latest data available, until year ending June 2023, can be obtained in the following published tool: [Outcomes by Offence tool: June 2023](#).

However, it is not possible to separately identify convictions for ‘domestic abuse’ because the information held centrally is related to the offence in law for which a defendant is convicted for. Domestic abuse related offences can be prosecuted under a wide range of legally defined offences. This information may be held on court records, but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

■ Family Conciliation Services

Sir Stephen Timms:

[19764]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 21 March 2024 to Question 18955 on Family Conciliation Services, whether his Department monitors the number of therapists offering reunification therapy services in England and Wales who help with cases of family breakdown.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice does not hold data on the number of therapists offering reunification therapy in England and Wales.

■ Gender Based Violence: Criminal Proceedings

Dr Rupa Huq:

[902214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reform the criminal justice system to help tackle violence against women and girls.

Bill Esterson:

[902215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reform the criminal justice system to help tackle violence against women and girls.

Andrew Jones:

[902220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to tackle violence against women and girls through the criminal justice system.

Laura Farris:

This Government has introduced a comprehensive legislative framework to prevent violence against women, including our landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

We have pioneered the creation of new offences including coercive control, non-fatal strangulation and intimate image abuse; more than doubled the number of adult rape cases reaching court compared to when we commissioned our End-to-End Rape Review; and made sure that sentences for adult rape are almost 40% longer than they were in 2010.

And through our Sentencing Bill, we will ensure that rapists and serious sexual offenders spend the entirety of their custodial sentence behind bars, without possibility of parole.

■ Legal Profession: Digital Technology

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[20096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he is taking steps to help ensure digital (a) literacy and (b) understanding among legal professionals.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice is driving the digital transformation of the legal sector by providing £6 million for the LawtechUK programme, which aims to increase innovation and adoption of lawtech in the delivery of UK legal services. Lawtech describes technologies which aim to support, supplement, or replace traditional methods for the delivery of legal services.

LawtechUK offers a range of free education programmes designed to help organisations interested in harnessing the benefits of innovation for their legal operations. This includes Lawtech Bridge which brings together startups and established legal businesses to explore approaches to digital innovation.

LawtechUK also organises events aimed at raising awareness and increasing understanding of lawtech. For example, a recent Lawtech Student Fair brought together law firms, alternate legal service providers and lawtech providers with students and junior lawyers to help ensure the next generation of lawyers are digitally literate and embracing technology.

Whilst the Government aims to support a flourishing and innovative legal sector, the legal profession in England and Wales, together with its regulators, operate independently of the Government. The Solicitor's Regulation Authority, the approved regulator for solicitors, supports innovation in the legal sector through their Innovate programme by helping law firms run their business creatively, supporting technology firms looking to develop products for legal businesses and bringing together law firms and innovators.

■ Ministry of Justice: Written Questions

Neil O'Brien:

[19463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to respond to Questions 3012, 3013, 3020, 3022, 3028, 3030, 3032, 3033, 3034, 3035, 3036, 3037, 3038, 3040, 3041 and 3043, which were tabled on 21 November 2023.

Gareth Bacon:

The Ministry of Justice attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and the Department remains committed to providing the highest level of service.

I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to these PQs. The information requested in these PQs is detailed and complex, and we have been working hard to identify what information we can provide to accurately answer the questions raised. We hope to be able to provide an answer shortly

■ Offenders: Asylum

Sir John Hayes:

[19256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2024 to Question 17782 on Asylum, how many asylum seekers were charged with a criminal offence since entering the UK in each year since 2015.

Edward Argar:

I refer the right honourable Member to the answer given by the Home Office to Question [17782](#), published on 19 March 2024 and subsequently corrected on 21 March 2024. Data on charges is held by the police and published by the Home Office.

■ Prison Accommodation

Ruth Cadbury:

[19627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the (a) locations and (b) number of places per location of all planned prison places.

Edward Argar:

To date, we have delivered c.5,900 places. This includes our two new prisons HMP Five Wells and HMP Fosse Way. By the end of 2025, we are on track to have delivered around 10,000 places in total. This will include our third new prison, HMP Millsike, delivering c.1,500 places, new houseblocks at HMPs Stocken and Rye Hill, as well as hundreds more Rapid Deployment Cells.

Under current plans, we are scheduled to deliver at the following sites from 21 March 2024:

PROGRAMME	SITE	PLACES
New Prisons	HMP Millsike	1,468
	Garth Wymott 2*	1,715
	Gartree 2	1,715
	Grendon 2	1,468
	HMP Gartree Houseblock **	247
Private prisons – houseblock	HMP Fosse Way Houseblock	245
	HMP Rye Hill	458
	HMP Parc**	320
	HMP Bullingdon	247
	HMP Channings Wood	494
Houseblocks	HMP Elmley	247
	HMP Hindley	494
	HMP Highpoint	741
	HMP Wayland	121
	HMP Guys Marsh	180
Refurbishments	HMP Stocken	214
	HMP Birmingham	301
	HMP Norwich	171
	HMP Liverpool	350***
	HMP Erlestoke	40
Rapid Deployment Cells	HMP Foston Hall	40
	HMP The Verne	40
	HMP Northumberland	60
	HMP Springhill	40
	HMP Kirklevington Grange	153
Category D	HMP Prescoed	80
	HMP Hatfield	60
	HMP Leyhill **	240
	HMP Springhill **	180
	HMP Sudbury	120
Small Secure Houseblocks	HMP Ford **	420
	HMP Stanford Hill **	240
	HMP Brinsford	120
	HMP Humber	120
	HMP Lancaster Farms	240
	HMP Morton Hall	60
	HMP Northumberland	240
	HMP Onley	180

HMP Ranby	120
HMP Erlestoke	180

- * This site is subject to an ongoing planning appeal.
- ** Delivery at these sites is subject to planning permission.
- *** A wing-by-wing refurbishment is ongoing, with some places already delivered.
- Any additional sites not listed here are commercially sensitive and information released about these would prejudice the department's negotiating position and ability to achieve value for money in these developments.

Mr Louie French:

[\[902218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to increase prison capacity.

Edward Argar:

The Government is currently delivering 10,000 new prison places by the end of 2025 and have a long-term commitment to build 20,00 places overall, which is the largest prison building programme in Britain since the Victorian era. We have already delivered c.5,900 of these, including through our two brand new modern and secure prisons. A third prison will open next year, and two more have planning permission; as a result, the total number of prison places is significantly higher than in 2010 and will rise further.

Meanwhile, with a new prisoner transfer agreement with Albania and expansion of the Early Removal Scheme, strong and decisive action is being taken to drive down the number of Foreign National Offenders in our prisons.

■ Prison and Probation Service: Labour Turnover

Chi Onwurah:

[\[902217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to help increase the retention rate of staff in HM Prison and Probation Service.

Edward Argar:

Safe, decent, rehabilitative prisons require excellent and experienced staff, as does supervising offenders in the community to keep the public safe.

We want them to stay in the Prison Service and to support retention, we have:

- Accepted every penny of the Prisons Service PRB pay recommendations for 2023/24.
- Injected extra funding of more than £155 million a year since 2021 to support Probation staff to deliver more robust supervision.
- Rolled out BWV to every officer, to help protect staff by defusing volatile situations.

- Introduced a New Colleague Mentor scheme to help new recruits feel supported in their early weeks and months.

Retention for prison officers is improving, with the staff resignation rate dropping from around 10.7% to around 8.3% over the last year to December 2023.

■ Prisoners' Release: Drugs

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[19895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps HM Prison and Probation Service take to ensure prisoners released on end of custody supervised licence can continue to access drug addiction treatment programs when they are released from prison.

Edward Argar:

We know that supporting offenders to engage in drug and alcohol treatment is vital to reduce reoffending and we are working with health partners on a range of interventions to strengthen continuity of care for prison leavers. We have recruited over 50 Health and Justice Co-ordinators nationwide to improve links between prison and community treatment services, procured 650 laptops to enable prisoners to speak to community treatment providers before release and we are rolling out the Probation Notification Actioning Project (PNAP) which will make probation aware of prison leavers who have been referred to community treatment so probation can support continued engagement.

The lower-level offenders released on ECSL will have a release plan put together by probation, and where appropriate this release plan will include access to drug and alcohol treatment. It remains at the discretion of the prison service to block or delay the ECSL release of any prisoners where doing so would result in losing access to essential services such as drug and alcohol treatment.

■ Prisons: Drugs and Mobile Phones

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[19817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the smuggling of (a) drugs and (b) communication devices into prisons.

Edward Argar:

We are committed to tackling the smuggling of all illicit items into prisons, including drugs and communication devices such as mobile phones.

We completed the £100 million Security Investment Programme in March 2022, which included funding to bolster physical security measures. This investment delivered 75 additional X-ray body scanners, resulting in full coverage across the closed adult male estate. As of October 2023, we had recorded 46,925 positive indications, helping to tackle the supply of drugs and mobile phones into prisons. We also deployed Enhanced Gate Security to 42 high-risk prisons under this investment, implementing routine searching of staff and visitors. This included 659 dedicated staff, 154 drug sniffing dogs and over 200 pieces of equipment.

We have 165 drug trace detection machines across the prison estate to prevent the smuggling of drugs, such as psychoactive substances, through the mail. The rollout of an additional 20 next-generation devices was completed in March 2024, meaning every public section prison now has this next-generation equipment.

X-ray baggage scanners have been installed at 49 sites (45 prisons and 4 learning centres) building on the rollout of our X-ray body scanners, gate security and drug trace detection machines.

New airspace restrictions took effect on 25 January 2024 to create 400 metre flight restriction zones around all closed prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales. These will ensure swift action is taken against criminal drone activity, including the smuggling of illicit items.

■ Prisons: Travellers

Ruth Cadbury:

[19893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of the treatment of (a) Romani, (b) Roma and (c) Irish Traveller people in the prison estate.

Edward Argar:

His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) pursues an evidence-based approach to improving treatment and outcomes for prisoners, people on probation and children in our care from Romani, Roma, and Traveller Communities.

The HMPPS Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy, first produced in May 2023, was drawn up, and continues to be developed, in consultation with Third Sector partners. It is informed by a range of internal and external reports and data. The strategy is implemented via a comprehensive action plan, which targets key areas for development, including data improvement, family interactions and health inequalities.

Some specific examples of activity include the further expansion of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) Forums in prisons. Forums are being regularly held in several establishments across the prison estate, providing a supportive platform for communications and helping to respond to local needs. Staff awareness continues to be improved, with Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller specific information embedded into various guides across the organisation, improving the capability of staff to respond to individuals' needs.

■ Probation: Resignations

Ruth Cadbury:

[19896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of new probation officers left the service within a year of joining in each year since 2014.

Edward Argar:

A considerable majority of Probation Officers first join the Probation Service as Trainee Probation Officers. During their time as a trainee, they will spend around 15-

21 months training before potentially taking up a post as a Band 4 Probation Officer. As a result of this trainee pipeline, there will only be new Probation Officers with less than one year in the Probation Service if they joined the service as a qualified Probation Officer and then left within 12 months.

Retention of Probation staff is a priority for the service. A national standardised approach to exit interviews has been implemented to better understand the key drivers of attrition and feedback from these interviews helps shape and determine retention interventions at a local and national level.

The Probation Service is in its second year of a multi-year pay deal for staff. Salary values of all pay bands will increase each year, targeted at key operational grades to improve a challenging recruitment and retention position. The pay increases differ for each job role, but to provide an example Probation Officers will see their starting salary rise from £30,208 in 2021/22 to £35,130 by 2024/25.

The table below shows only those Probation Officers who joined the service as qualified Probation Officers and so will not include any Probation Officers who joined as trainees (who will all have been in the service for longer than a year by the time they qualify as a Probation Officer). The Probation Service unified in June 2021, bringing together the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies. As a result, figures pre- and post-June 2021 are not comparable because of the change in the workforce makeup.

Table 1 - Number of Band 4 Probation Officer joiners to HMPPS and those who left HMPPS within 1 year: 2022-2023

YEAR	ALL JOINERS	STAFF WHO LEFT WITHIN 1 YEAR
2022	42	3
2023	44	5

■ Rape: Prosecutions

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[20097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to help support the mental health of victims while they wait for rape trials.

Mike Freer:

Supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse is an absolute priority for this government.

We have taken a number of steps to support the mental health of victims while they wait for rape trials.

In December 2022, the Ministry of Justice launched the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line to provide victims and survivors access to vital help and information whenever they need it.

In August 2023, we launched the recommissioned Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund, providing £26 million to over 60 specialist support services.

The Government is also quadrupling funding for victim and witness support services by 2024/25, up from £41 million in 2009/10. This includes additional ringfenced funding to increase the number of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) to around 1,000 by 2024/25 - a significant increase on the number of ISVAs and IDVAs.

■ Secure Accommodation

Rachael Maskell:

[19101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of moving children from youth offenders institutes into secure children homes.

Edward Argar:

The youth secure estate currently has three distinct types of establishments: young offender institutions (YOIs), secure training centres and secure children's homes (SCHs). We will also open a Secure School this spring, which is also a registered SCH. This enables the Youth Custody Service (YCS) to make placements that are best suited to the needs of the individual child or young person. SCHs accommodate boys and girls aged between 10 and 17 who have complex needs. These placements can be made by local authorities. In addition, children and young people who have been sentenced or remanded to custody may be placed by the YCS in eight of the 14 SCHs in England and Wales. A SCH can decline to accept a placement if it feels it is not able to meet the needs of the individual child, or if accepting the placement would inhibit its ability to meet the needs of other children already accommodated at the home.

The YCS Placement Team considers each child's placement on a case-by-case basis. It reviews information provided by the child's Youth Offending Team, looking at the child's needs, as well as any possible risks to, or originating with the child. The team will also try to consider geographical location and proximity to home as part of their decision making, though other factors may take precedence in terms of decision making. This evidence, together with the child's immediate presentation following the court appearance, is considered in order to identify a placement that will meet the best interests of the child.

Children and young people are likely to be more suited to one type of accommodation than another. For example, a SCH placement could be more suitable for children with a lower level of maturity, or with complex needs that require a higher level of support; a YOI placement might be considered appropriate where the young person has been observed to pose a risk towards peers and/or members of staff, or needs to access a specific programme or programmes provided at the YOI.

■ Young Offenders: Women**Samantha Dixon:**[\[902219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of accommodating young female offenders in all-male young offender institutions on the wellbeing of those female offenders.

Edward Argar:

The safety of all those in our custodial estate, including young female offenders is a key priority.

Girls currently make up less than 1% of children and young people within the youth estate which has a range of mixed gender settings. In HMYOI Wetherby, girls live separately from boys but attend education and activities together, as occurs in the community.

Girls in the youth estate can communicate trauma-related stress through internalising behaviours such as self-harming. Professionals work hard to deliver effective care.

The YCS is further developing gender-responsive guidance and training both at HMYOI Wetherby and for the wider youth estate.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Affordable Housing: Construction****Caroline Lucas:**[\[19036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2024 to Question 17100 on Affordable Housing, how many thousands of affordable homes he expects the Affordable Homes Programme to deliver; and what large number of such homes will be for social rent..

Jacob Young:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [17100](#) on 13 March 2024. Further data will be published in due course.

■ Building Safety Fund**Mike Amesbury:**[\[19950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications to the Building Safety Fund there were (a) in the initial phase from July 2020 and (b) since it reopened in July 2022.

Mike Amesbury:[\[19951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications to the Building Safety Fund have been rejected (a) in the initial phase from July 2020 (b) since the Fund reopened in July 2022.

Mike Amesbury:

[19952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what information his Department holds on the total funding allocated to date under the Cladding Safety Scheme.

Mike Amesbury:

[19953]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to publish the total funding allocated to date under the Cladding Safety Scheme in their monthly Building Safety Remediation reporting.

Mike Amesbury:

[19954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what information his Department holds on the number of buildings under the (a) aluminium composite material cladding programme and (b) building safety fund that also require remediation of non-cladding defects (i) under the developer self-remediation contract and (ii) unfunded by any scheme.

Mike Amesbury:

[19955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's Building Safety Remediation: monthly data release - February 2024, published on 21 March 2024, what proportion of enforcement action taken by local authorities on high-rise buildings under the Housing Act 2004 relates to buildings that are not supported by any remediation funding scheme.

Lee Rowley:

As at 29 February 2024, there have been 3,628 buildings that have applied to the Building Safety Fund. Of these, 3,488 buildings applied in the first tranche of opening and 140 applied in the second tranche of opening. Of the total that applied: 1,096 are ineligible – 1,089 are from the first tranche of opening and seven are from the second tranche. Further information about the status of buildings can be found at the following [link](#).

The Cladding Safety Scheme via Homes England provides details on allocated spend for each building. Since its launch in July, it has interacted with over 1,000 buildings. 450 are currently engaging with the application process, carrying out technical reports to enable eligibility assessment. Within its first nine months, 170 buildings have been deemed eligible via technical assessment and can now progress with the relevant support and funding to procure construction contracts and start remediation works. To date, £28.25 million has been provided for this work to take place. To be allocated further funding, eligible applicants need to procure the works required and submit a package of funding for approval. We are awaiting the outcome of this procurement activity in the market for 165 buildings to enable the next steps to be taken. The five applicants where their works have been approved amount to an allocation of £11 million.

As at 29 February 2024, there are no buildings being monitored exclusively by the ACM programme and there are 15 buildings being monitored exclusively by the BSF

programme that are having non-cladding defects remediated under the developer remediation contract. In addition, there are two buildings which are being monitored by both schemes. We do not have an estimate for the number of buildings in the ACM programme and BSF that are having non-cladding remediation works undertaken outside of the developer remediation contract.

Information on enforcement action taken by local authorities on high-rise residential buildings under the Housing Act 2004 by buildings in: i) the ACM programme, ii) the BSF programme and iii) neither programme, is published in table Enforcement_1 of the monthly data release.

■ Buildings: Insurance

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions officials in his Department have had with their counterparts in the Treasury on the potential merits of introducing a Government-sponsored building safety insurance pooling scheme.

Lee Rowley:

The Government is very aware that leaseholders in some affected buildings have been burdened with paying extremely high premiums for too long. We have repeatedly called for an industry-led scheme.

It has taken far too long but the Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility is due to launch on 1 April and the Government will monitor the implementation and impact of the Facility and will remain engaged with industry regarding whether any further steps may be required.

■ Buildings: Safety

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many residents have been displaced from their homes due to (a) building safety evacuations and (b) fires that have spread to more than one floor due to building safety defects since 15 June 2017.

Lee Rowley:

Major decants are a local operational matter, and decisions on enforcement action are made by local regulators, local authorities and Fire and Rescue Services.

Where there are major decants, the department does offer support where appropriate, such as pressing building owners and developers to fulfil their obligations. Since December 2023 the department has assisted local regulators in preventing at least 800 residents from being decanted by identifying mitigating measures (such as a waking watch), allowing these residents to remain safely in their homes.

■ Flats: Fire Prevention

Gareth Johnson:

[\[19315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to support leaseholders living in buildings below 11 metres in height with fire remediation costs.

Lee Rowley:

The responsibility for the costs of fixing historical building safety defects should rest with building owners. They should not pass these costs on to leaseholders but should seek to recover costs from those who were responsible for building unsafe homes.

We have undertaken extensive work over the last two years to review buildings under 11 metres which have been reported to us as having potential building safety issues. Almost all have proven not to need any intervention following detailed review.

In rare cases where remediation work is required in buildings under 11 metres, the Government has retrospectively extended the limitation period under Section 1 of the Defective Premises Act 1972 enabling legal action against developers and contractors where works completed in the last 30 years made a dwelling not “fit for habitation”.

These rights include:

- extending the Defective Premises Act to 30 years retrospectively, so compensation can be sought from developers where homes have not been built to the appropriate standard and are not fit for habitation; and,
- civil claims where products have caused or contributed to a dwelling being ‘not fit for habitation’.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many local authority owned buildings under 11 metres are being considered for demolition as a result of the costs to remediate life-critical fire safety defects.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many and what proportion of fire risk appraisal of external wall construction assessments that stated that building safety remediation work is required for a building under 11 metres have had an audit by his Department (a) commissioned and (b) completed since June 2022.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the average length of time taken was between (a) a leaseholder or building owner notifying his Department of a building under 11 metres with a fire risk appraisal of external wall construction assessment stating that building safety remediation work is required and (b) an audit being completed, in the latest period for which that information is available.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on how many under 11 metre buildings require building safety remediation work according to a Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls audited by his Department; and of those buildings, how many have had confirmation that the fire-safety defects will be remediated and paid for by the developer.

Lee Rowley:

Following the passing of the Building Safety Act, we sought representations from leaseholders in buildings under 11 metres who believed there were building safety concerns. Potential issues with 160 buildings have been raised with the department so far.

Having reviewed the cases raised with us, 31 required Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls (FRAEW) audits, which we have commissioned and 27 of those audits have been completed. In many cases, the concerns raised with us were found either not to be building safety remediation issues or works were not actually proposed by the freeholder.

With regards to the average time taken for the audit to be completed by the department, this will depend upon how quickly the relevant information for the audit to proceed is received. Audits are dependent on the information from third parties like the resident, freeholder or managing agent. Where a FRAEW is provided, our assessor will usually complete an audit within two weeks.

To date, our audits have found that only three buildings under 11 metres require remediation.

We are in conversation with building owners and developers about funding solutions that protect leaseholders. We stress that the responsibility for the costs of fixing historical building safety defects should rest with building owners. They should not pass these costs on to leaseholders but should seek to recover costs from those who were responsible for building unsafe homes.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an estimate of the number of homes in England that have the same type of cladding installed as the residential building in the Campanar neighbourhood of València which was engulfed by fire on 22 February 2024.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to undertake a lessons learned exercise from the residential building fire in Campanar, Valencia.

Lee Rowley:

The UK Government and Fire Services have offered our assistance to the Spanish authorities of the lessons we have learned from the Grenfell Tower fire and our subsequent work. It is our intention to work with them to understand the precise details of the fire in Valencia and to consider what lessons might be learned.

The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) has been closely following the terrible event in Valencia. We understand that the investigations into the incident remain ongoing and BSR will continue to monitor any findings to ensure that any applicable learnings are made.

■ Holiday Parks: Marketing**Cat Smith:**[\[19630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of the potentially misleading marketing of homes on holiday parks as residential properties on consumers.

Lee Rowley:

We expect that the marketing of all properties accords with the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, which prohibits misleading omissions of key information about the property.

Estate agents' compliance with the law is overseen by the National Trading Standards Estate and Letting Agent Team, who can issue warning or banning orders to agents who fail to comply.

Consumers should make sure they are clear about any restrictions on the property before purchasing, informed by checks on the property title carried out by their conveyancing solicitor before contracts are exchanged.

■ Holiday Parks: Park Homes**Cat Smith:**[\[19631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of people living permanently in holiday park homes.

Lee Rowley:

The data requested is not held centrally.

■ Landlords and Letting Agents: Databases**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[19844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of (a) the number of private rented sector properties with an outstanding mortgage and (b) the cost per landlord of measures in the Renters' Reform Bill in the (i) short, (ii) medium and (iii) long term.

Mr Toby Perkins: [19845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the reasons for private rented sector tenants becoming homeless.

Mr Toby Perkins: [19846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the timeframe for court digitisation being sufficiently progressed to allow for implementation of a ban on section 21 no fault evictions.

Mr Toby Perkins: [19847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many entries are on the Database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents as of 21 March 2024.

Mr Toby Perkins: [19848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps is he taking to (a) promote the use of the Database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents and (b) remind local authorities of their responsibilities in respect of this tool.

Mr Toby Perkins: [19849]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, who will have access to information on the Privately Rented Property Portal; and whether he plans to take steps to protect the privacy of tenants' information stored on the Privately Rented Property Portal from other Departments and enforcement agencies.

Jacob Young:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is working with the Ministry of Justice, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and the Judiciary to drive improvements to the county court possession process.

We will set out more details about our implementation plans in due course.

Local authorities are under a duty to record any banning orders against landlords or property agents on the Database; and are responsible for uploading and maintaining records. Guidance for local authorities on the use of the database can be found [here](#).

Our latest data from the English Private Landlord Survey shows that in 2021, 57% of landlords had a buy-to-let mortgage. The impact assessment for the Renters (Reform) Bill is available online.

The Government publishes quarterly homelessness statistics, including causes of homelessness. This includes a breakdown of the reported reason for homelessness for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness due to end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. The data is available [here](#).

Local authorities will have access to the full range of information recorded on the Property Portal. We do not have plans to record Tenants' information on the Property Portal.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Leasehold reforms give more rights and protections to homeowners, published on 27 November 2023, when he plans to bring forward legislative measures to amend the Building Safety Act 2022 to make it easier to ensure that those who caused building-safety defects in enfranchised buildings are made to pay.

Lee Rowley:

Under Part 5 of the Building Safety Act 2022 leaseholders in enfranchised buildings, either individually or collectively, can pursue developers – and their associated companies – via a remediation contribution order, for funds they have spent or will spend remediating their buildings for relevant defects.

We are building on the legislation brought forward by the Act. The Government has tabled several amendments for the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill to clarify and extend the protections in some specific areas. These amendments will further prevent freeholders and developers from escaping their liabilities to fund building remediation work – protecting leaseholders by allowing the Building Safety Act 2022 to operate as intended, as well as adding further protections in some specific scenarios.

For example, we have made clear that a remediation contribution order can, among other things, order the landlord or developer to make payments for the costs of:

- steps which reduce the risk of a relevant defect;
- obtaining an expert report; and,
- temporary alternative accommodation and associated costs in connection with a decant from a building in connection with a relevant defect.

■ Shared Ownership Schemes: Older People

Peter Aldous:

[\[19337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many homes have been delivered through the Homes England Older People's Shared Ownership scheme in each of the last ten years.

Lee Rowley:

The figures in the table below represent the number of shared ownership homes aimed at older persons by shared ownership providers, the majority of which, but not all, will be provided through the Older Persons Shared Ownership (OPSO) scheme.

YEAR	ACTUAL COMPLETIONS
2013/14	235
2014/15	36

YEAR	ACTUAL COMPLETIONS
2015/16	253
2016/17	214
2017/18	170
2018/19	316
2019/20	224
2020/21	314
2021/22	270
2022/23	176

■ Sleeping Rough: Foreign Nationals

Sir John Hayes:

[19255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of people sleeping rough that are not British nationals.

Felicity Buchan:

The annual rough sleeping snapshot provides information about the estimated number of people sleeping rough on a single night between 1 October and 30 November each year. This is data from local authorities and includes some basic demographic details including nationality. Details can be found at: [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2023 - GOV.UK](#).

■ Urban Areas: Newton-le-Willows

Conor McGinn:

[19387]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to paragraph 5.140 of the Spring Budget 2024, HC 560, when plans to publish details of funding for Newton-Le-Willows.

Jacob Young:

The Prime Minister's Long Term Plan for Towns will see up to £20 million of funding and support from the Government for Newton-Le-Willows over the next decade. I wrote to the Member for St Helen's North and the Leader and Chief Executive of St Helen's Borough Council on 19 March 2024 setting out next steps for developing the Long Term Plan for their town. This included details of the funding that will be provided for Newton-Le-Willows.

■ Urban Areas: Tree Planting

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to increase potential opportunities for planting in National Planning Policy Framework street design.

Lee Rowley:

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that trees have an important role to play in the design of new development, not only to improve the character and quality of our urban environment but also to help address the challenges of climate change. The Framework therefore encourages that tree planting is incorporated in new developments, including as part of street design, and that their long-term maintenance is secured.

■ Urban Areas: Walls and Fences

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the cost of maintaining (a) city walls and (b) city walls that people can walk around on the availability of local authority funding for other services.

Simon Hoare:

The cultural significance of York City Walls is recognised nationally through the designation of many sections as Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments, yet their maintenance remains the responsibility of their owners.

The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 makes available up to £64.7 billion, an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £4.5 billion or 7.5% in cash terms on 2023-24. This is an above-inflation increase.

For York this represents an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £11.32 million or 7% – making available a total of up to £172.5 million in 2024-25.

The majority of the funding provided through the Local Government Finance Settlement is unringfenced and local authorities are able to spend the money as most appropriate for their local area, according to local priorities.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Breast Cancer: Research

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[19897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if her Department will meet with the Lobular Moon Shot Project to discuss lobular breast cancer research.

Andrew Griffith:

I have recently met with the Lobular Moon Shoot Project to discuss how government can support lobular breast cancer research.

■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage: Research**Neale Hanvey:**[\[19482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much her Department has spent on research into carbon capture utilisation and storage in each (a) research institution and (b) science and technology cluster in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland in the last three years.

Andrew Griffith:

UK Research and Innovation has a list of research in carbon capture and storage by area. It is available at

<https://gow.epsrc.ukri.org/NGBOChooseTTS.aspx?Mode=ResearchArea&ItemDesc=Carbon+Capture+and+Storage>

■ Digital technology: Disadvantaged**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[19689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she is taking steps with (a) tech companies and (b) non-profits to improve the accessibility of digital content for people facing literacy barriers.

Saqib Bhatti:

This Government has been clear that ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital age is a key priority and continues to take steps to offer needed support, including through the new Cross-Whitehall Ministerial Group for Digital Inclusion.

Our 2021 Online Media Literacy Strategy seeks to support organisations to undertake activity in a more coordinated, wide-reaching, and high-quality way. Over the last year, we have funded 13 media literacy projects aimed at vulnerable and/or hard-to-reach citizens, including young women excluded from mainstream education and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The Online Safety Act empowers Ofcom to request information from in-scope companies about their media literacy activities to allow better visibility of tech industry efforts.

■ Members: Correspondence**Sir Simon Clarke:**[\[19697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when she plans to respond to the correspondence of 4 December 2023 from the Rt hon. Member for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland relating to a constituent, reference SC3361 and SC6612.

Julia Lopez:

DSIT attaches great importance to providing timely responses to Members' correspondence so we apologise for the delay in these cases. We replied to case reference SC3361 on 27 March and will ensure a response is issued to SC6612 as a matter of urgency.

Public Telephones**Ian Byrne:**[\[19506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many and what proportion of public phone boxes were removed in (a) Liverpool and (b) England in (i) 2023, (ii) 2022, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2020 and (v) 2019.

Julia Lopez:

Ofcom, the UK's telecommunications regulator, is responsible for the regulation of public call boxes (PCBs). Under the telephony universal service obligation (USO), communication providers (CPs) such as BT and KCOM are required to provide telephony services throughout the UK, including PCBs. Ofcom have told us that they do not hold data on the number of PCBs removed by city or country.

In June 2022, Ofcom amended the rules regarding the removal of PCBs. Ofcom removed the local veto process and replaced it with a set of strengthened criteria which would ensure PCBs that are still needed are protected from removal. In this way, the removal of PCBs would become more efficient, while protecting the public's needs. These criteria protect PCBs where:

- they do not have coverage from all four mobile network providers; or
- are located in an area with a high frequency of accidents or suicides; or
- they have made 52 or more calls over the past 12 months (i.e. the equivalent of one call per week); or
- there is other evidence of a reasonable need for the PCB, for example, if it is likely to be relied upon in the event of a local emergency, such as flooding, or if it is used to call helplines.

If a public call box that is the last at a site does not meet any of these four criteria, CPs can consult with the relevant local authority on removing it. CPs must still take account of any views and evidence received from this consultation before deciding whether to remove the box.

Public call boxes that are not the last at a site can be removed by BT and KCOM without consultation.

■ Research: Finance

Conor McGinn:

[19390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding her Department has provided to research projects based in (a) St Helens North constituency, (b) the North West and (c) the UK in the last 12 months.

Andrew Griffith:

In the 12 months leading to the start of January 2024, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) awarded:

- None to organisations located in St Helens North constituency during this period;
- £264m to organisations performing research projects in the North West of England
- £4.9bn to organisations performing research projects in the UK.

These figures include a range of investments made via UKRI's Research Councils and Innovate UK, but the figure excludes formula-based block grants deployed through universities which will also have gone to research projects in this region.

■ Social Media: Mental Health

Rachael Maskell:

[19903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with social media companies on the potential effects of social media on mental health.

Saqib Bhatti:

Ministers hold regular meetings and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, including social media platforms, on a range of issues. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

While most children have a positive experience online, using the internet to connect with peers and to access educational resources, information, and entertainment, the government is concerned about the impact of harmful and age-inappropriate content and activity online.

The Online Safety Act places robust, much-needed responsibilities on technology companies – including social media platforms – to keep all users, but particularly children, safe online.

■ Technology: Research

Sir Robert Buckland:

[19864]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how she plans to promote research into new models of (a) assessment and (b) support.

Andrew Griffith:

The government's November 2023 '*Response to the Independent Review of the RDI Organisational Landscape*' announced the creation of a new Metascience Unit, jointly

run across the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), with an initial funding commitment of £10m. The unit will deliver a competitive grants programme and will also conduct experiments to test and robustly evaluate the effectiveness of changes in the funding processes delivered by UKRI.

This programme of work is intended to generate evidence on more effective ways of funding and supporting scientific research.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure

Preet Kaur Gill:

[19660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 31 January 2024 to Question 11162 on Telecommunications: Infrastructure, how many notices her Department has received from Ofcom of instances of operators not complying with their statutory duties in the last 12 months.

Julia Lopez:

Ofcom is an independent regulator and, as such, does not discuss open cases with the Department. Where there are issues of non-compliance with statutory duties, Ofcom will deal with these cases directly with the operator. If Ofcom were to find, following an investigation, that any operator had failed to comply with its regulatory obligations it would publish that information on its [Enforcement Bulletin](#).

I would, however, reiterate that I am aware of ongoing concerns about operator compliance with their duties under the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003 (“the 2003 Regulations”) and particularly about new pole installations.

I recently met Melanie Dawes, CEO of Ofcom, to discuss this, and to explore ways DSIT and Ofcom can work together to raise awareness of statutory roles and responsibilities and ensure better compliance. This work is being taken forward by officials and I will be monitoring progress.

I also wrote to all fixed line operators on 14 March, setting out the government’s concerns and emphasising the importance of infrastructure sharing. Specifically, I have asked them to do everything possible to share existing telegraph poles before installing new ones. You can find a copy of the letter [here](#).

The government has already taken steps to support this through measures in the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022 making it easier for operators to upgrade and share the use of existing infrastructure.

Separately, DSIT will be meeting with operators in the near future to discuss revisions to [the Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice](#) and how these can be delivered to promote better working practices.

I also met with interested MPs on Monday 25 March 2024. I remain keen to hear and understand the concerns shared by MPs and their constituents, to inform our ongoing

work, as well as to keep you informed of the progress that is being made and the next steps we have planned.

TRANSPORT

■ **Avanti West Coast: Contracts**

Fabian Hamilton: [\[20006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the decision of the Transport for the North Board to write to him requesting the end of the Avanti West Coast contract.

Huw Merriman:

The challenges faced on the West Coast will remain regardless of the operator, including longstanding restrictive working practices which require the agreement of unions to amend. To place West Coast Partnership under the Operator of Last Resort would remove the opportunity to retain private sector expertise in both the West Coast as an operator and in the HS2 Shadow Operator function. A full response will be provided to the Transport for the North Board in due course.

■ **Blue Badge Scheme: Theft**

Ruth Cadbury: [\[20067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost to individuals of replacing blue badges lost due to theft.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[20068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the Home Office on the theft of blue badges.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[20069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of blue badge thefts in the last 12 months.

Guy Opperman:

The Department sets the legislation that governs the Blue Badge scheme and provides guidance for local authorities who are solely responsible for administering the scheme.

Current legislation provides local authorities with the means to tackle abuse of the Blue Badge scheme locally, such as the power to retain and cancel badges found to be stolen.

Data on the number of Blue Badges stolen in the last 12 months are not currently available. The latest published statistics show that in the year ending 31st March 2023, 1700 Blue Badges were reported stolen in England. The figures reflect cases that have been recorded in the Blue Badge Digital Service database. It is possible

that not all instances of loss or theft will be reported and recorded, and therefore will not be included in these figures.

■ **Delivery Services: Driving**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[19775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with the Home Office on tackling the matter of delivery drivers who are in the UK illegally.

Guy Opperman:

DfT ministers and officials engage with the Home Office on this matter. The Department sits on the cross-government ministerial Taskforce on Immigration Enforcement, which ensures that every available power across government is utilised to support law enforcement activity to identify and reduce illegal migrants in the UK, and ensures only those eligible can work, receive benefits or access public services. The Department and its agencies continue to support the Home Office on the wider issue of illegal working in the UK.

■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Europe**

Grahame Morris:

[\[20036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the roads good vehicles travelling to Europe statistics for April 2023 to March 2024; and when this series will conclude.

Guy Opperman:

The Road Goods Travelling to Europe statistical series is currently undergoing a quality review due to a potential supplier data issue. We are working with our data supplier to assess this issue, and updates to this statistical series will resume once the matter has been resolved. Dates for future publications will be communicated via our release calendar (available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics>) as soon as possible. There are no immediate plans to cease this statistical series, and any future variation would be consulted on as per Code of Practice for Statistics.

■ **Public Transport: Tickets**

Anna Firth:

[\[20123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his planned timetable is for introducing contactless ticketing in Southend West constituency.

Huw Merriman:

We have announced that Contactless Pay as you go (PAYG) ticketing will be rolled out to Chalkwell and Leigh-on-Sea in during 2024. This is part of our commitment to rollout contactless PAYG to more stations across the south east. Further details on the exact date for launch will be announced in due course.

■ Railways: Finance

Grahame Morris:

[\[20038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 120953 on Network Rail: Finance and pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2024 to Question 18100 on Railways: Finance, what assessment he has made of the causes of the differential in the rail enhancements budget for 2019 to 2024.

Huw Merriman:

The answer provided 25 November 2020 to Question 120953 on “Network Rail: Finance” referred to the budget for rail enhancements during the years 2019-2024. The answer provided 12 March 2024 to Question 18100 on “Railways: Finance” referred to the spend on rail enhancements in each year of that period. The comparison is therefore of a budget, stated as £9.4bn after Spending Review 2020, to the spend against that budget estimated at £8.63bn over the same period. There is no differential in the rail enhancements budget implied by that comparison. The difference in the figures comes from a degree of underspending against budget in each year of the first 4 years of the period.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[19819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken with relevant authorities to improve the condition of roads in (a) England and (b) Romford constituency.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is providing an unprecedented £8.3 billion of additional funding over this year and the next decade to local highways authorities in England to enable them to transform the condition of their local roads. £150 million of this has already been allocated in 2023/24 with a further £150 million to follow in 2024/25. All of this has been made possible by reallocating funds that would have otherwise been spent on the HS2 programme.

The Romford constituency is in the London Borough of Havering, which will receive a minimum of £10.4 million of additional funding over the 11-year period. £333,000 of that has been allocated in 2023/24 with a further £333,000 to follow in 2024/25. All funding allocations can be found on gov.uk.

■ Shipping: Conditions of Employment

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to help ensure greater job security for seafarers in the last two years.

Guy Opperman:

In July 2023 we launched the Seafarers’ Charter, which among other measures requires that operators who obtain full Charter status do not use voyage contracts except in exceptional circumstances. This means that seafarers aboard ships run by

a Charter operator can be confident that in most cases after their period of time aboard a vessel has ended, they will continue to have work without needing to reapply. I am pleased that 5 of the 6 major international ferry companies operating from the UK have now committed to meeting the Charter requirements.

Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' might be if a seafarer has been taken ill and the operator needs to bring someone onboard at short notice to cover the position, or if a piece of machinery has broken and they brought an additional seafarer onboard to fix it while the vessel was underway.

We continue to work to improve seafarer protections in the UK and around the world.

TREASURY

■ Audiobooks: VAT

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[20033\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of charging VAT on (a) academic and (b) other educational audiobooks on access to education for people with (i) dyslexia, (ii) sight loss and (iii) impairment who cannot hold books.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[20034\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made representations to the Minister for Women and Equalities in support of a 0% VAT rate on audiobooks to prevent discrimination against people with (a) dyslexia, (b) sight (i) loss and (ii) impairment and (c) disabilities preventing them from holding a physical book.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to supporting those with disabilities who may struggle to access physical books and therefore rely more heavily on audiobooks. In line with its statutory obligations under the Equality Act, the Government carefully considers the impact of VAT policy on those with disabilities.

However, there is never any guarantee that any VAT cut is passed onto consumers. It is therefore not clear that cutting the VAT on audiobooks would actually benefit consumers, including those with disabilities.

Given this, the government does not currently have any plans to change the VAT treatment of audiobooks.

■ Defence: Finance

Giles Watling:

[\[19462\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of when defence spending will reach 2.5% of GDP; whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of raising defence spending to 3% of GDP; and if he will have discussions with the

Leader of the House on finding time to debate the Early Day Motion in the name of the hon. Member for Clacton, number 455, on Future defence spending.

Laura Trott:

The government has consistently prioritised defence spending. The Ministry of Defence was the first department to get certainty on its budgets in this Parliament. This settlement was the largest sustained spending increase in defence since the end of the Cold War, with a £24 billion uplift in cash terms over the four-year period. In March 2023, we also provided an extra £11 billion for defence and national security priorities over the next five years, with £4.95 billion over the next two years.

The government's aspiration over the longer-term is to invest 2.5% of GDP on defence, when the fiscal and economic circumstances allow.

■ **Economic Growth**

Simon Jupp:

[20116]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the evidential basis is for his Department's tweet of 29 September 2023 that the UK was the fastest growing European G7 country since 2010.

Bim Afolami:

The calculations underlying this statistic were based on public information available on the 29 September 2023, including quarterly GDP data published by the Office for National Statistics for the UK and OECD data for the remaining G7 European economies.

The data showed that cumulative GDP growth in the UK from the beginning of 2010 (change on 2009 Q4) through to 2023 Q2 of 24.2% was greater than that of France (16.4%), Italy (3.5%) and Germany (21.2%).

■ **Export Controls**

Liam Byrne:

[19290]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to section 8.2 of the UK strategic export controls annual report 2022, published on 19 July 2023, HC1681, what the (a) value and (b) destination country of each compound settlement issued by HMRC was.

Nigel Huddleston:

Information on Compound Settlements issued by HMRC are available here:

[UK strategic export controls annual report 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118442/uk-strategic-export-controls-annual-report-2022.pdf)

Liam Byrne:

[19291]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to table 8.4 of the UK strategic export controls annual report 2022, published on 19 July 2023, HC1681, of the voluntary disclosures received, how many and what proportion related to (a) export controls and (b) sanctions violations; and what the destination country for each case was.

Nigel Huddleston:

Information on voluntary disclosures relating to trade sanctions and strategic export controls is available here:

[UK strategic export controls annual report 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118441/uk-strategic-export-controls-annual-report-2022.pdf)

Liam Byrne:**[19292]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to table 8.5 in the UK strategic export controls annual report 2022, published on 19 July 2023, HC1681, of the strategic exports and sanctions seizures in each year, how many and what proportion related to (a) strategic exports controls seizures and (b) goods subject to trade sanctions; what the destination countries were for each seizure; and in each case, (i) what and (ii) how many items were seized.

Nigel Huddleston:

Information on seizures of goods subject to sanctions and strategic export controls is available here: [UK strategic export controls annual report 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118441/uk-strategic-export-controls-annual-report-2022.pdf)

Income Tax: G7**Simon Jupp:****[20117]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the evidential basis is for his Department's tweet of 6 January 2024 that the UK had the lowest effective average personal tax rate in the G7; and what the effective average personal tax rate is in each G7 country.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to rewarding hard work through a fair and simple tax system that is also competitive internationally. The Government is taking a responsible approach by delivering tax cuts within the fiscal rules.

The tweet of 6 January 2024 was based on the most recently published data from the [OECD's Taxing Wages 2023](https://www.oecd.org/tax/taxing-wages-2023/) publication. This shows the total personal tax liability divided by salary for a single employed individual with no children on average earnings for Germany (37.4%), Italy (28.8%), France (27.7%), Canada (25.6%), the US (24.8%) and Japan (22.3%). Following the 2p NICs cut made at Autumn Statement, the effective personal tax rate for an employee on £44,300 (the OECD's figure for UK average earnings) reduced from 23.6% to 21.5%, which would be the lowest rate in the G7, according to the latest available OECD data. This has fallen to 20.1% following the further 2p NICs cut made at Spring Budget.

Mortgages**Beth Winter:****[20113]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the number of (a) mortgage term extensions, (b) interest-only payment switches and (c) repossession in relation to a mortgaged property since the publication of the Mortgage Charter on 26 June 2023.

Beth Winter: [20114]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the Mortgage Charter on levels of (a) forbearance, (b) arrears and (c) repossessions.

Bim Afolami:

The Government's Mortgage Charter - in addition to the significant safeguards already in place - is providing support to vulnerable households, and mortgage arrears and repossessions remain low.

On 22 March the Financial Conduct Authority published data on the uptake of the Mortgage Charter since July 2023. (<https://www.fca.org.uk/data/mortgage-charter-uptake>).

More broadly, there is a wide variety of data and statistics about the mortgage market in the UK available from the Bank of England (<https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/statistics>), the Financial Conduct Authority (<https://www.fca.org.uk/data>) and UK Finance (<https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/data-and-research/data>).

■ Payment Methods

Adam Afriyie: [19835]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the National Payments Vision.

Adam Afriyie: [19836]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which stakeholders he is consulting on the National Payments Vision.

Adam Afriyie: [19837]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the National Payments Vision results in meaningful competition in retail payments.

Bim Afolami:

Payments are essential to the UK's economy, both for individuals and for businesses, and are a cornerstone of growth and competitiveness. The government is committed to maintaining the UK's reputation for a world-leading payments ecosystem and will publish the National Payments Vision as soon as possible later this year.

■ Social Services: Finance

Vicky Foxcroft: [19406]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of funding for social care.

Laura Trott:

The government has made available up to £8.6bn in additional funding over this financial year and next to support adult social care and discharge. This includes

£500m announced in January which has specifically been made available to support local authorities with the cost of social care in 2024-25 in response to representations from local government stakeholders. This funding will enable local authorities to buy more care packages, help people leave hospital on time, improve workforce recruitment and retention, and reduce waiting times for care.

At Spring Budget, the government announced it is investing £165 million over the next 4 years to significantly expand the capacity of the children's home estate in England, improving outcomes for looked after children and unlocking productivity savings by reducing local government reliance on emergency provision. The government is also exploring further ways to combat profiteering and bring down costs in the children's care market. This is in addition to the £200 million the government has already committed in response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

■ Tax Avoidance

Daisy Cooper:

[\[20111\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 21 March 2024 to Question 19192 on Tax Avoidance, whether it is his Department's policy to cease recovery of any liabilities incurred before December 2010 in cases where a taxpayer has not received an update for a period of 12 months or more from the initial date of an open enquiry or assessment.

Nigel Huddleston:

In the 2019 Independent Loan Charge Review, Lord Morse recommended that the Loan Charge should only apply to loans made on or after 9 December 2010. The Government accepted this recommendation.

Lord Morse was also clear that, for years before this date, where there is an open enquiry or assessment under appeal, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) should still have the ability to pursue the tax due under the existing rules. HMRC has proceeded on this basis and it is its policy to collect tax where it has the ability to do so.

As part of its overall compliance processes and its commitment to update taxpayers at least annually, all of these taxpayers should have received correspondence from HMRC in the last 12 months.

When HMRC opens an enquiry, the information sheet provided includes information about a taxpayer's right to apply to the First Tier Tribunal for the enquiry to be closed. One of the grounds for making such an application is where there has been an excessive delay during which a taxpayer has not received any communication from HMRC.

■ Tourism: VAT

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[19823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions has he had with businesses on tax-free shopping for international visitors.

Nigel Huddleston:

As the UK's economic and finance ministry, HM Treasury has regular discussions with representatives from a wide range of industries including travel and retail as well as business representative organisations covering many sectors.

■ **Treasury: Visits Abroad****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[20032\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's publication entitled HMT ministers' overseas travel, published on 21 March 2024, how much of the £15,991 spent on his visit to the USA from 20 to 22 October 2023 was spent on air travel.

Gareth Davies:

The Government publishes details of Ministerial travel on GOV.UK. As has been the case under successive administrations, the Government does not publish granular detail on Ministers' travel either at home or abroad.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES■ **Equal Pay: Ethnic Groups****Anneliese Dodds:**[\[19447\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the recommendation on ethnicity pay gap reporting in paragraph 35 of the guide entitled Considering Social Factors in Pension Scheme Investments, published by Taskforce on Social Factors in October 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government published guidance in April 2023 which sets out how employers can measure, report on, and address any unfair ethnicity pay gaps within their workforce. This was an action from our ambitious Inclusive Britain strategy, published in March 2022.

We have no plans to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay reporting. Instead, we want to encourage and support those employers who want to use ethnicity pay reporting to improve transparency and build trust among their employees.

■ **LGBT+ People: Health****Neale Hanvey:**[\[19730\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on supporting the wellbeing of gay, lesbian and bisexual young people.

Stuart Andrew:

Equality Hub Ministers regularly engage with their counterparts across Government on matters relating to LGB equality. This is because this Government is committed to

improving the health and well-being of young people and we recognise that gay, lesbian and bisexual young people often face specific challenges.

This is why spending for children and young people’s mental health services has increased from £841 million in 2019/20 to just over £1 billion in 2022/23.

A further £3 million of funding has also been divided between five anti-bullying organisations to tackle bullying in schools. This includes projects that target homophobic and biphobic hate-related bullying.

In October 2022, we launched a Victim Support Service for anyone affected by or at risk of conversion practices, regardless of their sexual orientation, sex or transgender identity. The helpline can provide a safe, confidential listening and information service to anyone over the age of 13.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Alison McGovern: [\[20043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) planned spending is for and (b) expected number of beneficiaries are of the Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme in each of the next five years.

Jo Churchill:
The Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES) programme is due to end on 21 September 2025. The forecasted spending for the 2024/2025 tax year and the beginning of the 2025/2026 tax year until the programme ends is shown in the table below.

FORECAST 2024/2025	FORECAST 2025/2026 (UP TO 21 SEPT 2025)
£4.0m	£0.5m

We do not produce a formal forecast of the number of participants for the IPES programme per year. The last intake of participants to the programme was December 2023. As of 29 February 2024, the total number of participants was 3,820. This number will decline as participants complete the programme, until September 2025 when the programme is due to end.

Please Note

- The figures in the table have been rounded to the nearest million.
- The data recorded in the IPES dataset does not meet the standards required to be included in the Official Statistics. Please treat the total number of participant value as a guide figure rather than an actual figure.

■ **Employment Schemes: Young People**

Sir David Evennett: **[19808]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many starts have been recorded for the Youth Offer in (a) Greater London, (b) Bexley Borough and (c) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency as of 21 March 2024.

Mims Davies:
The Youth Offer launched 20 September 2020 and provides support for 16–24-year-olds who are on Universal Credit to help them move into employment. It includes three elements:

- The Youth Employment Programme, which provides young people dedicated intensive Work Coach support in finding & applying for jobs, with additional assistance available for those who have recently begun their Universal Credit claim.
- Youth Hubs, which bring together in one location DWP services with local support provided by youth experts. This ensures that the needs of young people are matched to services that help them tackle barriers to employment.
- Youth Employability Coaches, who are focused on supporting young people furthest from the labour market overcome complex challenges so that they can move into work.

As of 01 March 2024, there have been 1,123,000 starts on the Youth Offer. Starts in the requested areas can be found in the table below.

THE NUMBER OF YOUTH OFFER STARTS IN (A) GREATER LONDON, (B) BEXLEY BOROUGH AND (C) BEXLEYHEATH AND CRAYFORD CONSTITUENCY AS OF 1ST MARCH 2024

Greater London	166,800
Bexley	3,700
Bexleyheath and Crayford	1,500

1. A claimant may take part on the Youth Offer multiple times. Each of these starts is recorded as a start on the Youth Offer.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100. Therefore, the individual elements in the table may not sum to the total figure.
3. Figures are subject to retrospective revision.
4. Youth Offer starts are categorised as “unknown” in cases where limited data is available.
5. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics but is provided in the interests of transparency.

Attached are tables listing the number of Youth Offer starts to date by Region, Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency.

Attachments:

1. Youth Offer Starts [UIN 19808.xlsx]

■ **Employment: Autism**

Sir Robert Buckland:

[19863]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the time taken to make an autism assessment on employment rates.

Mims Davies:

There are no plans for DWP to make this specific assessment. Whilst we recognise the importance of early identification of autism, a diagnosis is not required to be eligible for reasonable adjustments and the provision of workplace support. These are made, in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, based on functional need.

We are, as you know, encouraging employers to adopt more neuro-inclusive working practices, which benefit neurodiverse employees irrespective of whether they have a diagnosis.

The SoS and I were delighted to see the launch of your excellent Review into Autism Employment on the 28th of February, which has created a focus for action to improve the recruitment and retention of autistic people. It has identified workplace barriers, and the working practices and initiatives that can reduce them, to create a more inclusive working environment for autistic employees and autistic jobseekers.

We now look towards supporting how the 19 recommendations in the report can be implemented to encourage a more neuro-inclusive culture in the workplace.

This is supported by Disability Confident, our scheme to increase employers' understanding of how to recruit, retain and support disabled employees and the Support with Employee Health and Disability online service which guides employers through health and disability scenarios at work, including making reasonable adjustments.

■ **Jobcentres: Pilot Schemes**

Alison McGovern:

[20045]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the (a) fiscal cost to the public purse and (c) savings associated with the rollout of Additional Jobcentre Support.

Alison McGovern:

[\[20046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an estimate of the total number of work coaches required to implement the roll-out of Additional Jobcentre Support.

Jo Churchill:

A 12-month extension was announced in Spring Budget 2024, which will enable us to better understand the impact of Additional Jobcentre Support.

■ **Jobseekers' Allowance and Universal Credit**

Alison McGovern:

[\[20047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential (a) fiscal and (b) economic impact of the reduction in the permitted period during which (i) Universal Credit and (ii) Jobseeker's Allowance claimants can limit their work search to their preferred sector or pay level.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Mining: Industrial Diseases**

Keir Mather:

[\[19994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral contribution by the Leader of the House in Business Questions on 21 March 2024, what progress his Department has made on the case of Mr Anthony Rock.

Mims Davies:

I cannot comment on individual cases for data protection reasons. A response to your letter of 22 February 2023, was sent to you on 11 March 2023 advising you of the actions we were taking on your constituent's claim.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Mental Health**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to ensure that the sanctions regime does not disadvantage those who experience mental health challenges.

Jo Churchill:

Customers in the No Work Related Requirements Group, for example those with a severe mental health condition or disability, are not subject to conditionality requirements and therefore not subject to sanctions.

Customers are only ever sanctioned if they fail to meet their agreed requirements without good reason and they are given every opportunity to explain why they failed to meet their agreed conditionality requirement before a decision is made. We recognise the importance of understanding how a mental health condition impacts

someone's ability to search for or prepare for work and Claimant Commitments are set in discussion with the claimant and tailored to their capability and circumstances, making them realistic and achievable.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Import Controls: Occupied Territories

David Linden:

[\[19153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the legality of imports from illegal Israeli settlements.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 26 March 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Greg Hands:

The UK's position on settlements is clear: they are illegal under international law and undermine the prospect of a two-state solution.

Under the existing UK-Israel trade agreement, goods originating from illegal Israeli settlements are not entitled to tariff and trade preferences under either the agreement between the UK and Israel, **n** or the agreement between the UK and the Palestinian **Authority** ~~Liberation Organization~~.

~~I can confirm that t~~ **T**his will not change in the upgraded FTA with Israel. The UK will not compromise on any of our longstanding positions on the Middle East Peace Process throughout this negotiation, including with respect to settlements.