



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 March 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:53 P.M., 26 March 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Arms Trade: Israel

**Chi Onwurah:** [19867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the value of arms exports to Israel was in each of the last five years.

**Chi Onwurah:** [19868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what data her Department holds on the use of (a) arms and (b) non arms exports to Israel.

**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>.

#### ■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Repayments

**Andrew Western:** [19751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to recover repayments of Bounce Back Loans under £50,000.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Lenders are responsible for the recovery of these loans in line with the standards and legal obligations set out under the schemes. The Department and the British Business Bank continue to work closely with UK Finance and accredited scheme lenders to support a consistent approach to the management of outstanding loans.

Lenders' performance is subject to a robust audit programme overseen by the British Business Bank. If lenders do not meet their obligations, the government has the right not to pay out on any guarantee claims on the loans in scope.

The Department is also working with lenders to pilot greater use of third-party debt collection specialists, and compulsory liquidation for recovery and enforcement in fraud cases.

#### ■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Intellectual Property

**David Linden:** [19155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact on smallholder farmers of the measures in the Intellectual Property Chapter of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for

Trans-Pacific Partnership relating to the requirement for signatory countries to ratify the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants 1991.

**Greg Hands:**

The UK's accession to CPTPP will not change the UK's existing commitments under the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV).

The Government does not foresee any impacts on UK small farmers due to the UK's legal obligations under CPTPP Article 18.7.2 because there will be no changes to the UK's existing legislative framework in this area.

UPOV provides for plant breeders' rights, aiming to encourage the development of new varieties of plants, with benefits such as food security and mitigating climate change.

Mechanisms are available within CPTPP to discuss issues raised by signatory countries.

■ **Consumer Goods: Safety**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[19838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the goods sold by online marketplaces are compliant with the General Product Safety Regulations 2005.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Office for Product Safety and Standards leads a national programme of regulatory action to tackle risks from unsafe and non-compliant goods, including from online marketplaces.

This includes test purchasing to assess compliance and removal of non-compliant products; engagement with marketplaces to understand the steps they are taking to meet their responsibilities under law; and taking enforcement action including serving Withdrawal Notices.

The recent Product Safety Review consultation includes additional proposals to ensure products bought online are as safe as on the high street. A Government response will be published this year.

■ **Employment Tribunals Service**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[19629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made a recent assessment of the use of compensatory uplifts by Employment Tribunals.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Under section 207A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, Employment Tribunals have the power to increase an employee's compensation by up to 25% if an employer unreasonably fails to comply with a relevant Code of Practice.



The use of compensatory uplift by Employment Tribunals is a matter of judicial discretion based on the facts of each case.

Data on the use of compensatory uplifts by Employment Tribunals is not collected.

## ■ Foreign Investment in UK: Renewable Energy

**Ian Lavery:** [\[19876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's statistics entitled DBT inward investment results 2022 to 2023, published on 27 June 2023, if she will publish a breakdown by technology of the 67 Foreign Direct Investment renewable energy projects.

**Ian Lavery:** [\[19877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's statistics entitled DBT inward investment results 2022 to 2023, published on 27 June 2023, if she will list the 67 Foreign Direct Investment renewable energy projects by value.

**Ian Lavery:** [\[19878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to her Department's Inward investment results 2022 to 2023, published on 27 June 2023, what the value of the 67 foreign direct investments into renewable energy were, by technology type.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Department for Business and Trade does not publish value and type information in the annual foreign direct investment publication at sector level due to data availability and confidentiality issues.

As there are gaps in the completeness of the value information across projects across sectors, DBT excludes value information to the publication. The impact of these gaps is greater when the data is divided into specific sector areas. However, at an aggregate level it is possible to add value related data.

Additional breakdowns describing the type or nature of an investment increase the opportunity to identify individual companies, to which DBT offer full confidentiality.

## ■ Foreign Investment in UK: Science and Technology

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[19873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department supports foreign investment in science and technology by region.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Investment is at the very heart of the UK economy - it supports economic growth, creates jobs and enables improvements in productivity for new and existing firms. It is also essential for successful delivery of the Government's objective to make the UK a science and technology superpower by 2030.

The Department for Business and Trade promotes a range of investment opportunities across the science & technology sector. DBT works to attract foreign

corporates to the UK, developing compelling investment propositions for DBT's international network to bring to prospective investors, this includes both sector-wide and place-based opportunities. DBT has dedicated based staff across the UK who work with the DAs/their agencies, wider DBT teams, Office for Investment and other UK government departments to deliver investment in priority areas, including science and technology. DBT teams work closely with partners to deliver events to attract investment, such as the Northern Ireland Investment Summit that was held in Belfast, September 2023.

The UK has 13 new Investment Zones which will benefit from £160 million each of Government funding to unlock foreign investment across priority sectors, especially science and technology, with a focus on driving innovation and creating quality jobs. These will be new hubs for investment and innovation across the UK and the funding spread over 10 years, will be spent on fiscal incentives and/or flexible spend to support attracting FDI. In line with the government's levelling up objectives, they are established in places with significant unmet productivity potential, where existing strengths and assets aligned to priority sectors can be leveraged to increase opportunities for local communities. Investment Zones will be established in partnership between central government, local government, research institutions and the private sector. The Investment Opportunity Fund is intended to double down on the objectives of Freeports and Investment Zones by providing a flexible, agile pot of funding that government can use to secure and respond to opportunities in these areas as they emerge.

## ■ 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.

**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, or the agreement between the UK and the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

I can confirm that this 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.

## ■ Industry: Government Assistance

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[19723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Scottish Government has made a formal request for the transfer of the (a) powers and (b) associated budget to

provide financial assistance to industry under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 to the Scottish Parliament.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The power under s.8 so far as it is exercisable in or as regards Scotland, was transferred to Scottish Ministers by section 53 of the Scotland Act 1998, effective from 01/07/99. As such, no formal request for transfer of powers or associated budget is required. The power remains exercisable in Scotland by the UK Secretary of State by virtue of section 56(1)(h) of the 1998 Act; and can also be exercised concurrently by the Secretary of State and Scottish Ministers in relation to financial assistance for shipping services carrying passengers between the Highlands and Islands and Northern Ireland by virtue of S.I. 2002/1630(S. 6).

■ **Iron and Steel: China**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[19932]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) impact of trends in the level of Chinese steel exports in the first two months of 2024 on the UK steel industry and (b) merits of taking additional steps to help protect the industry from potential global oversupply pressures.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

HMRC Trade Information ([www.uktradeinfo.com/trade-data/](http://www.uktradeinfo.com/trade-data/)) currently provides data up to and including January 2024. In the first month of 2024, China represented c.6% of all UK steel imports in volume terms.

We recognise that global economic conditions continue to be challenging for the steel industries across the globe.

This is why we have put in place a robust trade remedies framework to provide appropriate protection for domestic industries, including steel, against surges of imports and unfair practices. The UK has 10 anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures on 8 different steel products from China.

This year, the UK is chairing the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity, which seeks to find shared international solutions to the issue of over-capacity.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[19933]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to help support (a) sustainable growth and (b) competitiveness of the steel sector in the context of recent trends in the level of Chinese steel exports.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

Our support to the UK steel sector is clear, we have introduced effective safeguards against non-market economies, helped public projects procure more UK made steel and we are launching the British Industry Supercharger to bring energy costs closer in line with those charged across the world's major economies.

This Government has agreed a £500m grant as part of a larger £1.25bn commitment by Tata Steel to transform and secure a sustainable future at their Port Talbot works. We have also offered a generous support package to British Steel.

More widely, the UK has a highly skilled workforce, a supportive tax and business environment which is more competitive than our EU neighbours, an increasingly decarbonised energy grid for green steel, and plentiful supplies of steel scrap.

#### ■ Office for Product Safety and Standards

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[19811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, on how many occasions the Office for Product Safety and Standards removed unsafe products from sale in 2023.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) publishes details of all formal enforcement actions it has taken on gov.uk, every six months.

In addition, information on specific products that present a risk to health and safety and have been removed from sale is published on the OPSS Product Safety Alerts, Reports and Recalls page on gov.uk.

#### ■ Public Holidays: St George's Day

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[19214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will establish an additional public holiday for St George's Day.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government regularly receives requests for additional bank and public holidays to commemorate a variety of occasions – such as cultural, historical, military and religious events.

While an additional bank holiday may benefit some communities and sectors, the cost to the economy of an additional bank holiday remains considerable. The latest analysis estimates the cost to the UK economy for a one-off bank holiday to be around £2bn.

The current pattern of bank holidays is well established and accepted and we have no plans to change it.

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Blood: Contamination

**Dame Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[19115\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an estimate of the number of people that would be eligible for compensation under the terms of the

recommendations of the second interim report of Infected Blood Inquiry, published on 5 April 2023, in Morley and Outwood constituency.

**Dame Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[19116\]](#)

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

**Dame Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[19117\]](#)

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

**John Glen:**

The Statistical Expert Group, established by the Infected Blood Inquiry, has provided valuable insight into the numbers of infections from blood and blood products in the UK between 1970 and 1991 and subsequent survival rates. However, the requested information is not available by Parliamentary constituency. There is also considerable uncertainty over the number of people, especially those affected, who might be eligible under Sir Brian Langstaff's recommendations. Therefore I am not able to provide a substantive response to the Honourable Member's questions on her constituency. Since October 2022, the Government has paid over £400 million in interim compensation payments to those infected or bereaved partners registered with the UK Infected Blood Support Schemes, totalling over 4000 individuals.

**Taiwo Owatemi:** [\[19208\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to ensure infected blood interim compensation payments are made to bereaved parents and children through the England Infected Blood Support Scheme.

**John Glen:**

In October 2022, we made interim payments of £100,000 available to those infected 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.

**Taiwo Owatemi:** [\[19209\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a draft amendment on infected blood compensation at Report Stage in the House of Lords for the Victims & Prisoners Bill in advance of that Report Stage.

**John Glen:**

During Committee Stage of the Victims and Prisoners Bill, the Government committed to tabling amendments at Report Stage and this remains the

Government's intention. Amendments tabled by the Government will be publicly available in advance of the relevant stage of the Bill, as is standard procedure.

## ■ Customs: Digital Technology

**Stella Creasy:** [\[19853\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 21 February 2024 to Question 14056 on Customs: Digital Technology, when he will publish the Government's response to the UK Single Trade Window: Consultation on Features to Inform Design and Legislation.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The Government published full details of the Border Target Operating Model in August 2023 and the third stage, which involves the single trade window, is scheduled for 30 October, with the arrangements being made by Statutory Instrument rather than primary legislation. The Cabinet Office is considering whether a response to the UK Single Trade Window: Consultation on Features to Inform Design and Legislation should be published and when that would be most useful to all concerned.

## ■ Import Controls

**Stella Creasy:** [\[19855\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2024 to Question 11319 on Import Controls, whether the 17.4m additional safety and security declarations projected to be required is inclusive of the 4.5m consignments subject to sanitary and phytosanitary checks.

**Stella Creasy:** [\[19856\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2024 to Question 11319 on Import Controls, what checks will be carried out on consignments which require a safety and security declaration but which are not subject to sanitary and phytosanitary requirements.

**Stella Creasy:** [\[19857\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2024 to Question 11319 on Import Controls, whether consignments requiring a Safety and Security declaration but not subject to SPS requirements will be required to pay the Common User Charge.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The forecast number of Safety & Security (S&S) declarations includes declarations for those goods which will also be subject to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements. The numbers referred to by the Hon Lady are not directly comparable, as a single S&S declaration may correspond with multiple SPS requirements for the same shipment.

All goods, including those not subject to SPS requirements, will be subject to occasional intelligence-led checks by Border Force. S&S declarations are an

important part of Border Force's frontier risk assessment processes. The data gathered informs intelligence-based checks to identify and seize illicit goods. Increased S&S data will help us better target illicit goods, and allow legitimate goods to continue to move freely.

If a consignment is not subject to SPS requirements, it will not be subject to the Common User Charge.

## ■ **Veterans: Housing**

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[18970\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on accommodation for veterans in (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, (c) 2021-22 and (d) 2022-23.

**Johnny Mercer:**

This Government is committed to supporting all veterans with securing appropriate accommodation.

In 2023, we launched Op FORTITUDE, the dedicated referral scheme for veterans facing homelessness and rough sleeping, which is part of a broader £8.55 million of funding for specialist help and wrap-around support for veterans in more than 900 supported housing units.

This is in addition to establishing the Veteran Capital Housing Fund, which is dedicating £20 million over three years to fund the refurbishment of existing affordable and social rental properties and the development and delivery of new build projects.

Through these programmes, the Government is not only supporting the sustainable supply of veteran housing, but also ensuring that no veteran is forced to sleep rough due to a lack of provision.

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

## ■ **Clergy: Universal Credit**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[16862\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Commissioners have had discussions with the Department of Work and Pensions on the potential impact of the migration of claimants of Child Tax Credit to Universal Credit on the financial position of members of the clergy.

**Andrew Selous:**

The Ministry Development Team of the Archbishops' Council estimates that around 1,800 clergy families are currently in receipt of child tax credits. As has been reported, some of these may stand to lose up to £10,000 a year as a result of the planned migration to Universal Credit.



Representations have been made to the Department of Work and Pensions about the impact on clergy who have savings or property for retirement, of the ineligibility for Universal Credit for those with assets or savings over the £16,000 threshold. A key concern is that this will not only affect living standards for clergy families reliant on stipendiary income but will have an adverse effect on all people in tied accommodation seeking to make adequate provisions for their retirement.

The Ministry Development Team also estimates that around 400 of the 1,800 clergy families receiving child tax credits have more than two children and are therefore also likely to be affected by the two-child cap on Universal Credit.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Arts: Equality

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[18763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure equitable access to the arts across communities in the UK.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[18765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to (a) tackle disparities in access to the arts and (b) promote cultural engagement among underrepresented communities.

**Julia Lopez:**

The arts are for everyone, and His Majesty's Government is deeply committed to supporting access to high-quality arts and culture across the country.

At the last Spending Review, the Government increased the Grant in Aid available to Arts Council England, and asked it to spend that increased amount more equitably across the country. Through Arts Council England's new (2023–26) National Portfolio, increased funding of £444.6 million per annum is now funding a record 985 organisations in more parts of the country than ever before. This is an increase from £410 million per annum going to 814 organisations under the previous portfolio. Of the 275 new organisations joining the funding portfolio, 214 are from outside London.

As well as the Arts Council's existing Priority Places (one of which is Slough), DCMS and the Arts Council also agreed 109 Levelling Up for Culture Places, which partially overlap with the Priority Places, and which were identified as places of historically low investment and engagement in arts and culture. These places are targeted for additional engagement and investment. In Slough, our new joiners are:

- Amina Khayyam Dance Co
- Art classes group
- Resource Productions

In February, DCMS launched the fourth round of the Government's Cultural Development Fund, which is open to every part of England. In this round we are



particularly keen to fund activity in areas of low cultural investment. To date, the Cultural Development Fund has provided £76 million of capital investment to 20 transformative, place-based creative and cultural initiatives across the country.

Tackling disparities in opportunity and outcome in cultural education is also one of the overarching objectives of DCMS and the Department for Education's forthcoming Cultural Education Plan, which aims to give support for all children and young people (age 0–18) to access a broad range of high-quality cultural education subjects, activities and experiences in and out of school. This will promote access, participation and progression within the arts.

## ■ BBC Arabic Service

**Sir Michael Ellis:**

[\[19345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has held with the BBC on the appearance of Major General Wasef Eriqat on BBC Arabic.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Ministerial team regularly meets with BBC leadership, including members of the Board, to discuss a range of issues.

The BBC has a duty to provide accurate and impartial news and information. In delivering that duty, the BBC is editorially and operationally independent and decisions around its editorial policies and guidelines are a matter for the BBC. Ofcom is the external independent regulator responsible for ensuring BBC coverage is duly impartial and accurate under the Broadcasting Code and BBC Charter.

The Secretary of State has repeatedly made clear that the BBC's accuracy and impartiality is critical to viewer trust. It is particularly important when it comes to coverage of highly sensitive events, such as the terrorist acts committed in Israel on 7 October and the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The Secretary of State has regularly stated that point in meetings with the BBC.

## ■ Community Wealth Funds

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[19879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department will publish a response to the Technical consultation on a Community Wealth Fund in England, which closed on 19 October 2023.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The government is grateful to all those who took the time to respond to the technical consultation. Officials from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are carefully considering all of the responses received. The government response will be published in due course.

## ■ Sports: Artificial Intelligence

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[19358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of artificial intelligence on the sporting industry.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The government is committed to using technology to help drive increased participation at every level, as well as economic growth in the sector.

The government will continue to work with both the technology and the sport sectors to help identify innovative, inclusive digital solutions which help increase participation and activity.

On artificial intelligence specifically, for the development of the National AI Strategy and the AI regulation white paper, the government engaged with hundreds of businesses across a range of sectors, including civil society. We will continue this engagement to understand the impacts AI may have on different industries.

## DEFENCE

## ■ Armed Forces

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[19435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to evaluate (a) the UK's military readiness and (b) the adequacy of the volunteer force structure to deter potential aggression from state actors.

**James Heappey:**

Our readiness to deter will be increased through investment in the resilience of the UK's munitions infrastructure, including storage facilities and stockpiles. The £1.95 billion for resilience and readiness will be spent on measures to address gaps in our capabilities. We are transforming the Department's workforce model to attract and retain the talent needed. Our Regular and Reserve Armed Forces are fully committed to defending our country and its allies.

## ■ Armed Forces: Apprentices

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[19790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for the (a) Army, (b) Navy and (c) Royal Air Force apprenticeship scheme was in each financial year since 2019-20.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Armed Forces Apprenticeship Programme is intrinsically linked to and overlaps with professional trade training. There is no separate apprenticeship budget and therefore it is not possible to disaggregate the costs. Expenditure will reflect Armed Forces recruitment figures rather than a fixed number of apprenticeship places.

## ■ Armed Forces: Finance

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

[\[902182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to the armed forces.

**Grant Shapps:**

UK defence spending is at its highest level in history and increasing in real terms. We have increased the budget for our Equipment Plan and set out our longer-term aspiration to invest 2.5% of GDP on defence.

We continue to meet all operational commitments, including participating in every single NATO mission and tackling attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

## ■ Armed Forces: Housing

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[19180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he last had discussions with representatives of (a) VIVO, (b) Amey and (c) Pinnacle on the maintenance of service accommodation properties.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Secretary of State for Defence has not engaged directly with representatives from VIVO, Amey and Pinnacle on the maintenance of Service accommodation. However, I have engaged with VIVO, Amey and Pinnacle representatives in summer 2023 regarding overdue Landlord Gas Safety Inspections and Electrical Insulation Condition Reports.

In addition to this, Defence Infrastructure Organisation officials are in daily contact with VIVO, Amey and Pinnacle regarding delivery and performance.

## ■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

**John Healey:**

[\[19777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were recruited into the full time (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) Royal Air Force by (i) parliamentary constituency and (ii) region in each year since 2010.

**John Healey:**

[\[19778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were recruited into the (a) Army Reserves, (b) Maritime Reserves and (c) RAF Reserves by (i) constituency and (ii) region in each year since 2010.

**Dr Andrew Morrison:**

Official Statistics on intake to the Regular Forces by Parliamentary Constituency and region are included in the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Annual Location Statistics (ALS). The same information on Reserves is not collected or published by the MOD, and producing these figures would incur disproportionate cost.

The latest edition (1 April 2023) of the ALS can be found at the following website, noting that the relevant Tables are 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-statistics-for-uk-regular-armed-forces-and-civilians-2023>. Figures included in the ALS extend from the 12 months ending 31 March 2015 to the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, and are split by Service. Earlier figures are not available, except for 2013-14 for the Army, which were provided on 19 April 2021 in the answer to Question 180391.

The next edition of the ALS (1 April 2024) will cover the 12 months ending 31 March 2023 and 2024 and is expected to be published in June.

## ■ Defence Equipment & Support: Staff

**Maria Eagle:** [19543]

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

**Maria Eagle:** [19544]

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

**Maria Eagle:** [19545]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the A400M and Voyager Team at Defence Equipment and Support on average in each year from 2019 to 2024 as of 20 March.

**Maria Eagle:** [19546]

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

**Maria Eagle:** [19547]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed in the Strategic Planning 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 A400 and Voyager, Air ISTAR, Air Transport, Multi Mission and Strategic Planning 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	A400 AND VOYAGER DELIVERY	STRATEGIC PLANNING	AIR ISTAR DELIVERY	AIR TRANSPORT DELIVERY	MULTI MISSION DELIVERY
2018-19	104.7	Team did not exist	188.9	161	43.74
2019-20	110.4	18.3	186.67	181.97	45
2020-21	109.5	20.5	180.73	157.92	55.5
2021-22	151.4	18.3	164.15	168.65	74.2
2022-23	177.6	16.9	143.86	165.9	80.18

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[19789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were employed to the Equipment Plan Finance 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 (FTE) employed within the Equipment Plan Finance 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	EQUIPMENT PLAN FINANCE TEAM
2018-19	32.86
2019-20	30.79
2020-21	26.78
2021-22	27.34
2022-23	24.34

## ■ Defence Nuclear Biological and Chemical Centre: Staff

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[18997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people have been employed at the Defence, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centre in each year since 2019.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The table below shows the total number of permanent military and civilian personnel employed at the Defence, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centre in each year since 2019.

YEAR	PERSONNEL
2019	65
2020	67
2021	70
2022	60
2023	62
2024	60

Please note the following notes/caveats:

1. These figures are single Service estimates based on management information which is not gathered for statistical purposes or subject to the same level of scrutiny as official statistics produced by Defence Statistics.
1. The figures for 2024 are correct as of 29 February 2024. The figures are for permanent staff members only and do not include contractors.

■ **HMS Queen Elizabeth: Fires**

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[19716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the (a) damage caused and (b) injuries sustained by staff working on the HMS Queen Elizabeth as a result of the fire on 8 March 2024.

**James Heappey:**

I can confirm that no injuries were sustained by staff working on the HMS Queen Elizabeth as a result of the fire on 8 March 2024. There was also no permanent damage caused and the fire will have no impact on HMS Queen Elizabeth's current programme. An investigation is underway to establish the cause of the fire and this will seek to identify any appropriate lessons that can be implemented in future instances of this nature.

■ **Middle East: International Assistance**

**Paul Howell:**

[\[902173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on helping to ensure stability in the Middle East.

**Grant Shapps:**

The UK is working tirelessly to preserve stability in the Middle East and as such I have regular discussions with regional partners and our international allies including with NATO. These discussions cover a range of topics, including the conflict in Gaza and requirement for humanitarian assistance to our work with partners on protecting and deterring Houthi attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea.

■ **Military Bases: Gosport**

**Dame Caroline Dineneage:** [\[902178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on the disposal of Fort Blockhouse in Gosport.

**James Cartlidge:**

The MOD continues to work closely with Gosport Borough Council and wider stakeholders to realise the full opportunities and constraints for this site locally. This has included extensive surveys into influencing factors such as heritage, flood risk, and habitats. Our focus, however, at present remains the critical repair works following the damage inflicted on the historic sea walls by Storm Ciaran.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Expenditure**

**Maria Eagle:** [\[18654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget was for the Future Capability Group in each year since 2019.

**James Cartlidge:**

The DE&S Future Capability Group delivery team total spend on equipment by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2019-20	42.955
2020-21	30.030
2021-22	45.781
2022-23	198.298

The Future Capability Group delivery team total spend on operating costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2019-20	5.882
2020-21	7.641

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2021-22	8.943
2022-23	11.342

The Future Capability Group 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 Future Capability projects across Defence which would not be held centrally and would not be answerable without a disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Finance

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[18863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the budget for the future capability group at Defence Equipment and Support is in the (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26 financial year.

**James Cartlidge:**

The figures presented in this table represent the projected annual operating expenditure budget and forecast costs for the Future Capability Group team at Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S).

The Future Capability Group forecast equipment costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2023-24	54.96
2024-25	47.77
2025-26	8.76

The Future Capability Group team forecast operating costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2023-24	7.89

Notes:

- It should be noted that the annual operating costs 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: Staff**

**Maria Eagle:** [\[19001\]](#)

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

**Maria Eagle:** [\[19261\]](#)

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

**James Cartlidge:**

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in the naval ships delivery group and the salvage and marine operations team in each financial year 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	NAVAL SHIPS DELIVERY GROUP	SALVAGE AND MARINE OPERATIONS
2018-19	228.4	186.8
2019-20	263	112
2020-21	253.4	73
2021-22	330.5	85.8
2022-23	322.1	99.4

**■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions**

**Maria Eagle:** [\[18992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December to Question 5777 on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, when he plans to send the response letter to the Rt hon. Member for Garston and Halewood.

**James Cartlidge:**

I will respond to the right hon. Member shortly.

**Maria Eagle:** [\[18993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December to Question 5777 on Armed Forces: Housing, 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. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Maria Eagle:**[\[18994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 December to Question 7163 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. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

**■ NATO: Security****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[19436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with his NATO counterparts on the potential impact of (a) conscription and (b) total defence models on improving NATO's collective security.

**James Heappey:**

The UK discusses a broad range of issues with counterparts on improving NATO's collective security. NATO is undertaking a once-in-a-generation transformation, agreeing a new generation of warfighting plans, to ensure that the Alliance can deter and defend seamlessly across all domains.

The UK has committed almost all our Armed Forces across the full spectrum of capabilities under the NATO Force Model - our strongest ever force contribution to the Alliance.

However, the Government has no current plans to reintroduce National Service or any form of conscription.

**■ Nuclear Weapons****John Healey:**[\[19787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 57 of the Defence Command Paper 2023: Defence's response to a more contested and volatile world, published on 18 July 2023, CP 901, on what date he plans to publish the Defence Nuclear Strategy.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Ministry of Defence published the Defence Nuclear Enterprise Command Paper – “Delivering the UK’s Nuclear Deterrent: A National Endeavour” on 25 March 2024.

## ■ Radar: Wind Power

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[19467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on installing military radars that are not affected by floating offshore wind installations.

**James Heappey:**

Through the Air Defence and Offshore Wind Task Force, Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials are working closely, and collaboratively, with colleagues from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Scottish Government, the Crown Estates and windfarm industry stakeholders to address the problems that future windfarms would cause to MOD's radars.

This joint work is essential to ensure air security of the United Kingdom and supporting the deployment of offshore windfarms that are essential for our nation's future energy security and decarbonisation.

MOD has established Programme NJORD to deliver the technical solutions needed to address the problems that future offshore windfarms, including Floating installations, would have on MOD's Air Defence Radar. A commercial framework of potential suppliers is now in place and MOD will launch the first call-off competitions within this framework later this year.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[19468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has (a) raised objections to and (b) taken steps to mitigate the potential impact on radar systems of the proposed floating offshore wind around RAF Lossiemouth.

**James Heappey:**

Without details of the specific development being referred to, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) are unable to confirm whether we have been consulted upon this particular development.

If the MOD is consulted upon the development of wind farms, it carries out assessments to determine whether they will affect defence radars, including those located at RAF Lossiemouth.

When a proposed wind farm development will impact the effective operation of a specific radar(s), the MOD will register an objection. If the developer wants to propose mitigation, this will be considered by the MOD.

## ■ Veterans: Identity Cards

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[18969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 9 May 2023 to Question 183286 on Veterans: ID cards, how many veteran ID cards have been distributed by local authority area as of 18 March 2024.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

It is taking time to collate the required information to answer the hon. Member's Question. I will write to him when the information is available, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

**Steve McCabe:**[\[18971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2024, to Question 17492 on Veterans: Identity Cards, what progress his Department has made on reaching this month's production target for veterans' ID cards.

**Steve McCabe:**[\[18972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2024, to Question 17492 on Veterans: Identity Cards, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of assessing the effectiveness of the advertising of the veterans' ID cards application service.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card Scheme has had a two-phase rollout. Phase 1 is complete; all Service leavers since December 2018 automatically receive a Veteran Card from Ministry of Defence (MOD) as part of their Service Leaver Pack.

Phase 2 extends access to the Veteran Card to those who left before December 2018. The new digital application and verification service launched at 00:01 on 28 January 2024 allowing pre-2018 veterans to apply for the card.

As of 18 March 2024, there have been a total of 90,381 Phase 2 applications received, and 71,752 cards issued. During March 2024, 12,907 applications have been received and 9,807 posted.

Extensive communications have been issued by both MOD and the Office for Veterans' Affairs in relation to the application service. This included significant social media activity, bespoke videos, a GOV.UK news article and an article in the Sunday Express. Applications have also now opened for veterans in prison as part of the rehabilitation process. MOD has partnered with the Ministry of Justice to communicate availability of the cards to every prison in the UK.

**EDUCATION****■ Apprentices: South Holland and the Deepings****Sir John Hayes:**[\[19527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) Level 4 and (b) Level 5 apprenticeships have been started in South Holland and the Deepings constituency since 2019 as of 20 March 2024.

**Robert Halfon:**

Level 4 and 5 apprenticeship starts in South Holland and The Deepings constituency can be found in the following table:

ACADEMIC YEAR	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
2018/19	70	50
2019/20	40	60
2020/21	50	60
2021/22	60	70
2022/23	80	60
2023/24 reported to date	50	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>330</b>

Note:

(1) Figures for 2023/24 are provisional and cover the first two quarters (Aug 2023 to Jan 2024). All other years are final, full-year figures.

(2) Apprenticeship start volumes are rounded to the nearest 10.

(3) The data source is the Individualised Learner Record.

Further information on apprenticeship starts can be found in the apprenticeships publication, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships>.

## ■ Children in Care: Supported Housing

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[19102]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on ending the use of unregulated accommodation for children.

**David Johnston:**

Every child growing up in care should have a stable, secure environment where they feel supported. In October 2023, the department introduced The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023. These regulations set out national standards that are required to be met for semi-independent accommodation, now known as ‘supported accommodation’, regulated against by Ofsted. This means for the first time all provision offering care and support for under-18s is required to be registered and regulated with Ofsted.

The national standards will ensure that supported accommodation provision is more consistently of the high quality that the department expects, delivering lasting change for children in care and care leavers. The regulations also empower Ofsted to take action against poor quality and unregistered providers.

Introduction of the standards was part of a programme of reforms to drive up quality and improve consistency within previously unregulated accommodation provision.

The reforms also included the prohibition of children aged under 16 being placed in independent or semi-independent accommodation from 9 September 2021.

■ **Department for Education: Personnel Management**

**Neil O'Brien:** **[19713]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the job titles are of people working in her Department's Human Resources and Transformation Directorate.

**Damian Hinds:**

The job titles for everyone working in the Human Resources & Transformation Directorate are as follows:

- Business Partnering and Organisation Development
- HR
- HR Services & Specialist Advice
- Payroll, Reward, Policies and ER
- Transformation
- Workforce, Skills and Strategy

■ **Further Education and Higher Education: Young People**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** **[19149]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support young people in receipt of Carer's Allowance in (a) further and (b) higher education.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department is determined that all young carers and young adult carers get the support they need to succeed in all stages of education.

The department provides a range of financial support for students who need it to enable them to participate in further education. This includes free meals, bursaries to help with the cost of education, such as travel, books, equipment, and trips, plus support for childcare and residential costs where required.

Disadvantaged English domiciled 18-year-olds are now 74% more likely to enter higher education than they were in 2010.

In the 2023/24 academic year, over £160 million of bursary funding has been allocated to institutions to help disadvantaged 16 to 19 year olds meet costs, which is nearly 12% higher than published allocations for last year. Institutions decide which young people receive bursaries and determine the level of financial support they receive. They can develop their own eligibility criteria for access to the discretionary bursary fund, including setting a household income threshold appropriate to their area and must publish information on this for students.

In November 2021, the department asked the Office for Students (OfS) to refocus the access and participation regime in higher education to create a system that supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds throughout their education. This regime should include support for disadvantaged students before entry to higher education (HE) and be set out in new access and participation plans. Providers should be working meaningfully with schools to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, including young carers, are encouraged and supported to achieve the highest possible grades and move up the ladder of opportunity whether that be an apprenticeship or higher technical qualification, or a course at university.

Furthermore, in March 2023, the OfS launched an Equality of Opportunity Risk Register, which can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/equality-of-opportunity-risk-register/>. It focusses on students least likely to experience equal opportunity in HE with references to young carers in six of the key sector risks set out in the register.

HE providers are expected to refer to the register when writing access and participation plans.

## ■ Hearing Impairment: Children

**Christian Wakeford:**

**[19225]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of access to auditory-visual therapy for deaf children; and what steps she is taking to ensure sufficient access to that therapy as part of SEND support in schools.

**David Johnston:**

The department's ambition is that all children and young people, no matter their needs, receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The department is creating a new single national special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision system for how needs are identified and met across education, health and care. This new single national system will set standards on what support should be made available in mainstream settings, including for children with hearing impairments.

Early intervention of SEND can allow children to thrive and the early years sector plays an important role in ensuring that the right support is put in place for children as they prepare for school. That is why Level 2 and 3 early years educator qualifications include SEND content. Alongside this, the Early Years Education Recovery Programme includes training for up to 7,000 early years special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and a variety of training offers with SEND content, including Child Development Training and the national professional qualification in early years leadership.

The department is committed to ensuring a steady supply of teachers of children with hearing impairments in both specialist and mainstream settings. To teach a class of pupils with hearing impairments, a teacher is required to hold the relevant Mandatory Qualification for Sensory Impairment (MQSI). There are currently six providers of the MQSI, with a seventh from September 2024. In addition, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) is developing a new occupational standard for teachers of Sensory Impairment, expected to be available from September 2025. Finally, children and young people with special educational needs have more access to assistive technology (AT) following investment in remote education and accessibility features, which can reduce or remove barriers to learning.

### ■ Holidays: Children and Young People

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[19103]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will have discussions with Ofsted on steps it is taking to (a) take account of and (b) reward inclusion of children and young people when inspecting residential holiday schemes for disabled children.

**David Johnston:**

Ofsted currently inspects residential holiday schemes for disabled children against the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF). The department also publishes the Residential Holiday Schemes for Disabled Children National Minimum Standards. All settings should ensure they satisfy these standards. They include child focussed standards that promote inclusive behaviours. The department will have discussions with Ofsted to ensure the National Minimum Standards remain appropriate for these settings and allow inclusion to be considered appropriately in inspections of residential holiday schemes for disabled children.

### ■ Internet: Older People

**Catherine West:**

**[19418]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2024 to Question 15588 on Digital Technology: Disadvantaged, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of availability of free or low cost internet training for people aged 65 and over to tackle digital exclusion.

**Robert Halfon:**

The government recognises that digital skills are important for adults of all ages, and we are committed to improving their level of digital skills to support active participation in society.

From August 2020, the department introduced a digital entitlement for adults with no or low digital skills to undertake specified digital qualifications, up to level 1, free of charge. The new entitlement mirrors the existing legal entitlements for English and maths, and puts essential digital skills on an equal footing in the adult education system, as a third basic skill. The department introduced new Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs) at entry level and level 1 from August 2020, funded under the



digital entitlement. EDSQs are based on the new national standards for essential digital skills and are designed to meet the diverse needs of adults with no or low digital skills, reflecting different learning needs, motivations and starting points.

To further enhance the essential digital skills offer for adults, from August 2023 the department introduced new digital Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs), which have replaced FSQs in Information and Communication Technology. Digital FSQs have standardised content and assessment, providing a benchmark of digital skills for employers. The department published the final subject content for digital FSQs in October 2021.

The government recognises that formal qualifications are not appropriate for everyone. That is why the department also funds community learning and other non-regulated learning, such as building confidence in essential digital skills, through the Adult Education Budget. Many local authorities and other further education providers are already delivering these courses that help equip adults with the essential digital skills they need for work, life and further learning.

More information about essential digital skills and other government funded training opportunities can be found here:

<https://www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/pages/skills-for-life>.

## ■ Literacy

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[19687]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on levels of adult literacy in the UK; and what steps she is taking to increase adult literacy levels.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department recognises the importance of good literacy skills, both in work and everyday life. Securing good levels of literacy has a positive impact on participation in society, improves earnings and employment opportunities and opens doors to further learning.

The department participates in the OECD's International Survey of Adult Skills, which was last conducted in England and 24 other countries in 2011-12. The results show that 16% of 16-65-year-olds have the literacy skills of an 11 year old, or lower. The next survey is due to report in late 2024. A link to view the OECD adult skills surveys can be found here: <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>.

The government has also conducted the Skills for Life survey in 2011 which provided a national profile of adult literacy, numeracy, and ICT skills, and assessed the impact that different levels of skills had on people's lives. The survey findings were published in 2012 and reported that, in England, 15% of the working age population have the literacy skills of an 11 year old, or lower (an estimated 5 million people).

The department also gathers data annually from providers delivering government funded adult further education (FE) and skills provision in England. The latest

statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-march-2024>.

To improve essential literacy and numeracy skills, a legal entitlement was introduced through the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (Sections 87-89). This legal entitlement can be viewed here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/part/4/chapter/1/crossheading/education-and-training-for-persons-aged-19-or-over-etc>.

Through its legal entitlement, the department provides fully-funded study for adults who do not have essential literacy skills up to the equivalent of a GCSE grade 4/C or higher. In the 2022/23 academic year, around 223,000 learners participated in a literacy course funded through the entitlement.

The department supports all adults for whom English is not their first language to secure the English language skills they need. Adults are fully-funded or co-funded to study English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses and qualifications up to and including GCSE 4/C equivalent. The number of learners participating in ESOL courses and qualifications continues to grow, with around 144,000 learners in the 2022/23 academic year. Already, round 120,000 learners have participated in ESOL courses in the first two quarters of this academic year.

The department recognises that community learning within its Adult Education Budget (AEB) can play a valuable role in helping individuals improve their literacy, particularly for learners where a qualification is not the most appropriate first step.

Currently 60% of the AEB has been devolved to 9 Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and delegated to the Mayor of London, working where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are responsible for the provision of adult education and allocation of the AEB in their local areas, including funding of English and maths statutory entitlements. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas where colleges and other training providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their AEB to best meet the needs of their communities.

## ■ Pre-school Education: Finance

**Helen Hayes:**

**[19917]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding her Department plans to provide for the early years free hours entitlement to each local authority; and what guidance her Department has issued to providers on the costs that this funding should cover.

**David Johnston:**

The department is determined to support as many families as possible with access to high quality, affordable childcare, which is why the 2023 Spring Budget announced significant new investments to expand the free early education entitlements from April 2024. Further, at the 2024 Spring Budget the department committed to increasing the national average hourly funding rate to deliver the entitlements in line with the metric

used at Spring Budget 2023, in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years to reflect key cost providers face, at an estimated £500 million of additional investment over the two financial years, based on current forecast.

The department expects to provide over £4.1 billion by the 2027/28 financial year to facilitate the expansion and to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year overall on free hours and early education entitlements. This is the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever.

In 2024/25 alone, the department expects to provide over £1.7 billion to support local authorities and providers to deliver the expansion. On top of this, the department is increasing the 2024/25 hourly rates to local authorities for the existing and new entitlements by over £400 million.

To ensure local authorities are fully supported in delivering the new entitlements, the department is funding local authorities an additional four weeks in the 2024/25 financial year, at an estimated cost of £120 million, for the under 2s working parent entitlement starting in September 2024.

Indicative funding allocations for individual local authorities for 2024/25 were published in December 2023 and can be found at:

<https://skillsfunding.service.gov.uk/view-latest-funding/national-funding-allocations/DSG/2024-to-2025>. Funding allocations for local authorities for 2025/26 will be announced in the autumn.

The department's statutory guidance for local authorities sets out that government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week (for 38 weeks of the year) of free, high-quality, flexible childcare. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2>.

The funding should cover the cost, including core business costs, of delivering this provision. The funding is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, such as nappies and sun cream, additional hours or additional services, such as trips and specialist tuition. However, as set out in paragraph A1.33 of the guidance, such charges for consumables or additional services should not be made a condition of accessing a free place. The statutory guidance for local authorities also specifies that local authorities ensure that providers do not charge parents top-up fees or require parents to pay a registration fee as a condition of taking up their child's place. Providers who choose to offer the free entitlements are responsible for setting their own policy on providing parents with options for alternatives to additional charges, including allowing parents to supply their own meals or nappies, or waiving or reducing the cost of meals and snacks.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Care Homes

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[19100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help reduce the use of out of area residential accommodation for children with additional needs.

**David Johnston:**

The needs of the child are paramount when deciding the right care placement. Though the department wants to reduce out of area placements, sometimes circumstances make it the right decision for a child to be placed elsewhere, for example when they are at risk from domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, trafficking or gang violence.

Moving a child away is not a decision to be taken lightly, and there are legislative safeguards around this. Directors of Children's Services are required to sign off each such decision, and Ofsted can challenge where they believe poor decisions are being made. This is to encourage local authorities to place children locally wherever possible.

The department recognises, however, that there are issues in the placement market, which is why the department has announced over £400 million in capital funding to help local authorities create more beds in their local areas. This will help create 560 additional placements across England.

The department is also investing £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 taking steps to retain the carers already in place.

**ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO****Carbon Emissions****Alan Brown:**[\[19393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many additional skilled workers will be needed to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government's policy and spending ambitions will support up to 480,000 jobs in 2030, with over 80,000 green jobs currently being supported or in the pipeline across the UK as a result of new government policies and spending.

We have not made an assessment of the number of additional skilled workers needed to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

**Carbon Emissions: Penrith and the Border****Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[19983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps she is taking to support low income households in Penrith and The Border constituency to transition to net zero.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is allocating around £20 billion over this Parliament and next improving energy efficiency and low carbon heating of homes, reducing reliance on

fossil fuel heating and reducing household energy bills for low income households in Penrith and The Border constituency as well as other constituencies.

The Government will deliver upgrades to over half a million homes in the coming years through Social Housing Decarbonisation, Home Upgrade Grant Schemes and Energy Company Obligation Schemes.

The Government has spent over £2 billion to support transition to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs), focusing on reducing barriers to adopting ZEVs, including offsetting higher upfront cost, and accelerating rollout of chargepoint infrastructure.

## ■ Energy Supply: Investment

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[19570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to encourage investment in the energy supply chain industry.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The recently published BloombergNEF (BNEF) *Energy Transition Investment Trends Report (2023)* reported that total public and private investment in UK low-carbon sectors in 2023 reached £60 billion rising from £35 billion in 2022. The Government understands the importance of growing domestic energy supply chains, therefore at Spring Budget 2024 £120m funding to the Green Industries Growth Accelerator (GIGA) was announced, in addition to the £960m already allocated. This will support investments in manufacturing capabilities for the clean energy sectors where the UK has clear strengths: carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS), hydrogen, offshore wind, electricity networks, and nuclear. The Government is also providing up to £160 million to leverage private investment into the port infrastructure required to support floating offshore wind deployment at scale.

## ■ Energy: Infrastructure

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**

[\[19518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the cost to consumers was of energy network improvements by Distribution Network Operators in each of the last five years.

**Graham Stuart:**

Ofgem is responsible for regulating networks through a price control process that enables the investment needed to deliver a secure, resilient, net zero network in an efficient way, protecting consumers from excessive costs. Costs for network investment are recovered through electricity bills over a period of 45 years. The previous price control, covering the period between 2015 and 2023, enabled over £24bn of Distribution Network Operator expenditure. The cost impact on consumer bills remained broadly flat for this period.

**■ Energy: National Grid**

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[19569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made an estimate of the number of energy projects waiting to be connected to the national grid.

**Graham Stuart:**

Data from the Electricity System Operator (ESO) shows that there were 1530 energy projects in the transmission connection queue at the end of February 2024.

**■ Energy: Planning Permission**

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[19568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on steps to improve the efficiency of processing planning applications for large energy projects.

**Graham Stuart:**

My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with ministerial colleagues on a number of issues. Planning reform is discussed regularly at Cabinet level and there have been major Government announcements recently on this issue as part of the Autumn Statement and Spring Budget.

**■ Heat Pumps**

**Alan Brown:** [\[19395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate her Department has made of how many heat pumps will be installed by 2028 at the current rate of deployment.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government remains fully committed to supporting heat pumps and aims to grow the market to 600,000 installations per year by 2028. The Micro Generation Certification Scheme (MCS) estimate that around 40,400 heat pumps were installed in 2023, however new build and installations not using Government funding are not generally recorded by MCS.

Deployment will accelerate with Government support through measures including the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, the Heat Training Grant to support installers, and the Clean Heat Market Mechanism, which the Government plans to bring in in 2025. The Future Homes Standard will drive installations for new build homes.

**■ HyNet: North West**

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[19311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the heads of terms agreement between her Department and Eni on the HyNet North West project, if she will publish the economic, regulatory and governance terms.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The Energy Act 2023 establishes an economic licensing requirement for carbon dioxide transport and storage. The Department published indicative Heads of Terms for the economic licence in December 2023. Ahead of granting an economic licence, the Secretary of State will give notice of her intent to do so in line with the requirements of the Act.

**Caroline Lucas:**[\[19312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what comparative assessment she has made of the effectiveness of (a) the HyNet North West project and (b) other carbon capture and storage projects of similar size and scale.

**Andrew Bowie:**

Track-1 of the Cluster Sequencing process, which was launched in 2021, assessed five CCUS clusters against five key evaluation criteria. Hynet and the East Coast Cluster were the best performing in the assessment and were taken forward to project selection and negotiations.

**Caroline Lucas:**[\[19313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate her Department has made of how much carbon dioxide will be emitted from blue hydrogen production at the HyNet North West project.

**Andrew Bowie:**

Hynet Hydrogen Production Plant 1(HPP1) will have an initial production capacity of 350MW and will capture around 600,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year, according to Hynet. All CCUS-enabled hydrogen projects seeking government subsidies will need to demonstrate compliance with the Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard, which sets a threshold of 20gCO<sub>2</sub>e/MJ of hydrogen.

**■ Methane: Pollution Control****Matt Hancock:**[\[19341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made an assessment of the effectiveness of recent global action on reducing levels of methane emissions.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is committed to the Global Methane Pledge, collectively to reduce global methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030.

COP28 mobilised action, with countries including Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan joining the Pledge. We also welcomed new regulatory initiatives, companies committing to the Oil and Gas Decarbonisation Charter, and the Methane Finance Sprint mobilising funding. The UK committed £2 million to help developing countries address energy-related methane emissions.

The International Energy Agency has recently reported that methane emissions from fossil fuels are set to decline once recent announcements are implemented.



■ **Mineworkers' Pension Scheme**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[19812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of reviewing the surplus-sharing arrangements of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**  
The Government considers the current arrangements to be working well for all parties. We will consider any suggested changes to the arrangements in the usual way.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Agriculture: Christchurch**

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[14784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will list all Government investments in the farming sector in Christchurch constituency since 1 April 2023.

**Mark Spencer:**  
The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has supported the farming and rural sector through payments under a range of schemes.  
Since 1 April 2023, the RPA has released through schemes and grants approximately £326k in the Christchurch constituency. A breakdown of these figures is in the table below.

BASIC PAYMENT SCHEME	COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME	ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	SUSTAINABLE FARM INCENTIVE	OTHER GRANTS	TOTAL
£218,516	£57,616	£21,286	£5,602	£22,802	£325,822

There are no species recovery or landscape recovery projects funded within the Christchurch constituency.

There are no live Conservation and Enhancement Scheme agreements.

The Dorset peat project is Defra funded. However, there are no peat restoration sites within the constituency boundary – sites at Cannon Hill and Holt Heath are close to the boundary.

The only project to highlight which falls within the constituency is the Salisbury to sea (Christchurch Harbour) fish barrier removal study, which also incorporates floodplain reconnection opportunities funded by Network Rail but is being managed and contracted by Natural England in partnership with the Environment Agency.



Except for New Forest Higher Level Stewardship there are no other funds that Natural England is aware of linked to New Forest National Park which overlaps at the east boundary of the constituency.

There are Countryside Stewardship agreements funded and associated investment of time by Natural England staff locally on agri agreements and Catchment Sensitive Farming (Stour and Avon catchments) within the Christchurch constituency.

## ■ Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[18722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many studies the Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has (a) conducted and (b) completed using close-kin DNA analysis; and on what species those studies focused.

**Mark Spencer:**

Close-kin DNA analysis is a relatively new scientific method for assessing the genetic profile and abundance of animal populations. While it has been used in fish populations elsewhere, including on thornback ray in the Bay of Biscay, the planned scientific study with pollack in the English Channel would be the first time Cefas have used it in the UK.

## ■ Dogs: Imports

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:**

[\[19937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the commercial movement of pregnant dogs into Great Britain; and whether he plans to take legislative steps to curb this practice.

**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 will contain powers that will enable future regulations for commercial and non-commercial movements of pets into the United Kingdom including prohibiting the import of heavily pregnant dogs over 42 days gestation.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:**

[\[19939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) increasing the age at which puppies can be imported to six months and (b) reintroducing rabies blood tests for imported puppies.

**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 will contain powers that will enable future regulations for commercial and non-commercial movements of pets into the United Kingdom including prohibiting the import of puppies under six months old.

There are already strict legal controls on the entry of animals into Great Britain aimed at preventing the introduction of rabies. All dogs, cats and ferrets entering Great Britain must be vaccinated against rabies. We are not currently proposing any changes to the animal health requirements for dogs, cats and ferrets entering Great Britain. The Government monitors disease risk carefully. If the disease risk changes, or an immediate public health risk is identified, appropriate action will be taken.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[19940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of importing pregnant dogs on the welfare of those dogs; and whether he has received representations from animal welfare organisations on this matter.

**Mark Spencer:**

In August 2021, the Government launched a consultation on proposed restrictions to the commercial import and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain including restricting the import of heavily pregnant dogs. It was a wide-ranging consultation with excellent engagement with key stakeholders including animal welfare organisations. We are carefully reviewing the feedback gathered from our consultation and wider engagement with stakeholders, and a summary will be published soon. We continue to engage with stakeholders on this issue.

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 for commercial and non-commercial movements of pets into the United Kingdom including prohibiting the import of heavily pregnant dogs over 42 days gestation.

## ■ Dogs: Imports and Sales

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[19941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of prohibiting the (a) importation and (b) sale of dogs with (i) cropped ears and (ii) docked tails.

**Mark Spencer:**

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it is already an offence in England and Wales to carry out a non-exempted mutilation, including the cropping of a dog's ears or the docking of their tails. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 creates tougher penalties for anyone convicted of such an offence face, either being sent to prison for up to five years, or receiving an unlimited fine, or both.

In August 2021, the Government launched a consultation on proposed restrictions to the commercial import and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain including restricting the import of dogs with cropped ears and docked tails. 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 for commercial and non-commercial movements of pets into the United Kingdom including prohibiting the import of dogs with cropped ears and docked tails.

## ■ Fishing Vessels: Regulation

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[19586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to prohibit bottom trawling.

**Mark Spencer:**

Bottom trawls are used by all parts of the fishing fleet, from small day boats to large offshore vessels. In 2021, fishing with bottom towed gears in the UK Exclusive Economic Zone by the UK fleet represented approximately 30% of the total tonnage, by value this was 45%. The economic importance to coastal communities varies, but there are significant trawler fleets in the South West of England. There is currently no commercially viable replacement for bottom trawling to catch the high-value species targeted (e.g. cod, haddock, scallops). There is work underway to progressively address the environmental effects of bottom trawling, working alongside the fishing industry, academia, and other stakeholders including through Fisheries Management Plans, the first of which were published in December 2024. The issue needs to be approached carefully to ensure the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainability are balanced.

## ■ Landfill: Regulation

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[19923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the regulation of landfill sites.

**Robbie Moore:**

The vast majority of landfill sites do not cause problems and the regulatory framework serves them and their local communities well. Where poor performance does occur the Environment Agency has a range of powers to bring sites back into compliance and, where necessary, to take enforcement action against operators.

## ■ Landfill: Safety

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[19663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Environment Agency has made a recent assessment of the safety of historic landfill sites that are in close proximity to urban areas.

**Robbie Moore:**

Local Authorities have the statutory duty to inspect their Areas to identify contaminated land (including historic landfills and non-permitted sites) in accordance with a written inspection strategy which they must publish and maintain.

The Environment Agency has responsibility to require those responsible to remediate historic landfills and non-permitted sites if they have been determined as contaminated land and designated as a 'special site' by the local authority under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Since 2000, 54 sites have been designated as special sites including 13 historic landfills [Contaminated Land Special Sites - data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk/datasets/contaminated-land-special-sites)

**■ Marine Protected Areas: Fishing Vessels****Mr Virendra Sharma:****[19585]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of bottom trawling on Marine Protected Areas.

**Mark Spencer:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Slough, on 6 July 2023, PQ UIN [192154](#).

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

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Developing Countries: Debts****Ms Lyn Brown:****[19579]**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the oral contribution of the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of 12 March 2024, Lords Official Report, column 1910, if he will publish a summary of Treasury advice received by his Department on legislation concerning private creditors.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The Government recognises the importance of private sector lending to low-income countries. The UK, alongside international partners, expects private creditors to participate in debt restructurings on terms at least as favourable as bilateral (i.e. country) creditors.

At this time, the Government is focused on delivering a market-based (contractual) approach to private sector participation in debt restructuring, which the IMF have found to be largely effective in recent years. As part of this, the UK has led the development of Majority Voting Provisions for private syndicated loans. We engage regularly with the Treasury on this issue.

## ■ Falkland Islands

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[19058\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his European Union counterparts on the July 2023 summit declaration between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States that referred to the Falklands Islands as Islas Malvinas.

**David Rutley:**

We engage in multilateral and bilateral fora, including with the European Union and its Member States, in support of the Falkland Islanders' right of self-determination. Following publication of the EU - Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summit communiqué, the EU publicly clarified their position has not changed. We will, in all fora at which the UK is present, continue to insist on the use of the name that the Islanders recognise and wish to use: the Falkland Islands. This reflects the UK's unequivocal commitment to upholding the Falkland Islanders' right of self-determination, including in our discussions with the EU and its Member States.

## ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Shell

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[19308\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 February 2024 to Question 15265 on Shell: Nigeria, on what dates he has had meetings with Shell on the risks of pollution from oil production in the Niger Delta since 2021; who attended those meetings; and if he will publish the minutes of those meetings.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK continues to encourage a coordinated effort between the Nigerian Government, oil and gas companies, and communities to bring an end to all forms of oil contamination in Nigeria. In the most recent meeting with representatives from Shell, which took place in January, the British High Commissioner discussed the future of environmental clean-up in the Niger Delta. We do not routinely publish details of meetings with external stakeholders.

## ■ Gaza: Ceasefires

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[19711\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make it his policy to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, in the context of potential famine.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

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

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 is in addition to the 150 tonnes of aid the Government announced 13 March.

## ■ Gaza: Israel

**Fleur Anderson:** [19210]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Compliance Assessment Process has made of (a) Israel's commitment and capability to comply with International Humanitarian Law and (b) its past record of compliance with IHL.

**Fleur Anderson:** [19211]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what is the value of the (a) 28 extant and (b) 28 pending arms export licences to Israel identified in the Change of Circumstances review in 2023.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We have previously assessed that Israel is committed and capable of complying with International Humanitarian Law. We regularly review our assessment.

The Government operates a robust and thorough assessment of licence applications against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. We regularly publish data on export licensing decisions on the dedicated gov.uk site:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>. That data covers export licensing decisions made to the end of June 2023. Information regarding export licensing decisions made since 1 July 2023 has not yet been published.

## ■ Israel: Arms Trade

**Marsha De Cordova:** [19712]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will hold discussions with Cabinet colleagues on (a) suspending arms exports to and (b) reviewing trade agreements with Israel.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The Government operates a robust and thorough assessment of all licence applications against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

The UK's strategic partnership with Israel includes trade. As the Secretary of State for Business and Trade told the House on 7 March, Israel remains a part of the FTA programme, negotiations continue, and she has recently discussed with the Israeli Minister of Economy our existing trading relationship as well as how Israel is managing the challenges of working on an FTA while fighting a war.

## ■ Israel: Foreign Relations

**David Linden:**

[\[19154\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential risks of (a) existing and (b) enhanced (i) security, (ii) defence, (iii) science and (iv) technology relationships with Israel under the 2030 roadmap.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We enjoy a close strategic partnership with Israel on a wide range of issues. The Memorandum of Understanding we signed in 2021 demonstrated our intent to deepen and expand cooperation across our mutual priorities for our mutual benefit. The subsequent 2030 roadmap outlines how this strategic partnership will continue to serve our collective interests, deepening UK-Israel cooperation across the breadth of our relationship, including science and tech, research and development and security, health, climate and gender.

## ■ Luis Carlos Pineda

**Kim Johnson:**

[\[19734\]](#)

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 murder of Luis Carlos Pineda in Caquetá on 9 March 2024.

**David Rutley:**

During my visit to Colombia earlier this month, I [Minister Rutley] raised the human rights situation with Vice Foreign Minister Coy. At the UN Security Council on 11 January and during the visit of the UN Security Council in February, we stressed the importance of security guarantees for former combatants and reiterated our commitment to supporting efforts to tackle the root causes of violence in Colombia. We will continue to support the Colombian Government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Agreement and ensure the protection and safety of signatories of the Agreement.

## ■ Nigeria: Shell

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[19589\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 February 2024 to Question 15265 on Shell: Nigeria, whether his Department has had discussions with Shell on its divestment from its onshore oil operations in Nigeria.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

UK Government officials have had discussions with Shell regarding their divestment from onshore oil operations in Nigeria. In the most recent meeting with representatives from Shell, which took place in January, the British High Commissioner discussed Shell's divestment from onshore oil operations and the future of environmental clean-up in the Niger Delta.



## ■ UNRWA

**Brendan O'Hara:** [19880]

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department has received the interim report of the (a) UN Office of Internal Oversight Services and (b) Independent Review Group.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We are aware that the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services and Catherine Colonna have now provided their interim reports to the UN Secretary-General.

We want UNRWA to give detailed undertakings about changes in personnel, policy and precedents to ensure this can never happen again. We are working with allies to try to bring this situation to a rapid conclusion - not least because UNRWA have a vital role to play in providing aid and services in Gaza.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Asthma

**Jim Shannon:** [19057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance her Department plans to issue to asthmatic people on projected high pollen levels this summer.

**Maria Caulfield:**

At present, NHS England has no plans to issue guidance to asthmatic people on projected high pollen levels this summer. However, the National Health Service website contains advice on asthma, which includes advice on understanding and managing triggers, such as pollen. The NHS site also links to Asthma and Lung UK's advice on asthma management, which contains more detailed information on managing triggers, and how best to reduce risk when pollen levels are high.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has new capabilities for monitoring real-time pollen levels for this year's pollen season. This adds to the UKHSA's Real-time Syndromic Surveillance, which includes the monitoring of presentations of asthma to the NHS. The UKHSA also provides weekly updates via publicly available surveillance bulletins, which are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/syndromic-surveillance-systems-and-analyses>.

In addition to this work, the Met Office provides alerts and advice when pollen levels are high. These alerts provide valuable information on pollen levels over the next five days for asthmatics and hayfever sufferers, so they can appropriately modify their planned future activities, and ensure they use or have their medication with them.



## ■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs

**Beth Winter:**

[\[19219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure adequate availability of (a) atomoxetine, (b) lisdexamfetamine, (c) methylphenidate and (d) other Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder medication within (i) NHS Wales and (ii) Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[19220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has had recent discussions with the Welsh Minister for Health and Social Services on the availability of (a) atomoxetine, (b) lisdexamfetamine, (c) methylphenidate and (d) other ADHD medication.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[19221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 January 2024 to Question 8042 on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs, whether it remains her Department's policy to resolve disruptions with the supply of ADHD medication by April 2024.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Disruptions to the supply of medicines used for the management of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have been primarily driven by issues which have resulted in capacity constraints at key manufacturing sites. The Department has been working hard with industry to help resolve those issues and expedite deliveries to boost supplies of medicines used for the management of ADHD, as quickly as possible. We have been informed that these should largely be resolved by April or May 2024.

As a result of our ongoing activity and intensive work, some issues have been resolved. Certain strengths of lisdexamphetamine, guanfacine, and all strengths of atomoxetine capsules are now available. While supply issues remain for some ADHD medicines, we continue to escalate these issues with manufacturers to ensure action is taken to resolve regulatory issues and expedite deliveries, to alleviate these shortages as soon as possible.

Health is a devolved matter and as such decisions on availability of medicines in Wales are a matter for the devolved administrations. However, the Department works closely with suppliers, NHS England, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the devolved administrations, and other stakeholders to ensure patients continue to have access to the treatments they need.

The Department's officials regularly discuss a range of issues with colleagues in the Welsh Health and Social Services, including on the access to medicines. The Department has had no specific discussions with the Welsh Minister for Health and Social Services.

**Helen Hayes:** [19915]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to give patients access to information on stock levels of ADHD medication at high street pharmacies; and whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of giving patients access to the Medicines Supply Tool.

**Helen Hayes:** [19916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the availability of information about stock levels of ADHD medication by high street pharmacies; and what steps is she taking to help ensure patients can identify pharmacies with stocks of their prescription.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

There were 10,558 community pharmacies in England on 29 February 2024, including 405 distance selling pharmacies. These contractors are independent private businesses contracted to provide services within the National Health Service. While the Department does not monitor their stock levels, it does have a role in managing supply at a national level to help ensure stocks are available from manufacturers to meet demand from patients across the country. We are often made aware of supply issues. Thankfully the vast majority can be managed with no impact to patients.

We work with the industry, the NHS, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and others working across the supply chain to manage issues and we provide guidance for health care professionals about medicines that are experiencing supply issues on how to manage patients during a disruption where necessary.

The Medicine Supply Tool is designed to provide information and guidance for healthcare professionals, rather than members of the public. However, a public-facing page on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder medicine supply is available at the following link:

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/prescribing-available-medicines-to-treat-adhd/>

Any patient who is worried about the supply of their medication should speak to their clinician, in the first instance.

## ■ Audiology: Health Services

**Yasmin Qureshi:** [19030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many integrated care boards have introduced (a) community audiology services and (b) self-referral for community audiology.

**Helen Whately:**

Information on how many integrated care boards (ICBs) have introduced community audiology services is not held centrally by the Department or NHS England. As part of an ICB self-assessment on the introduction of self-referral, conducted in September 2023, 26 ICBs reported having self-referral in place for community

audiology in one or more services, with more ICBs reporting they had plans to introduce it later in the year, or as part of recommissioning arrangements for 2024/25.

## ■ **Blood: Contamination**

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[19391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate her Department has made of how many people in St Helens North constituency have been affected by the infected blood scandal.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department has not made an estimate of the number of people who were treated with contaminated blood products and given contaminated blood transfusions by the National Health Service in St Helens North constituency.

## ■ **Cancer: Children and Young People**

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[19745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has made of the financial support for (a) travel costs, (b) energy bills, (c) accommodation and (d) dietary requirements available for carers of children and young people with cancer.

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[19746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance her Department provides to carers of children and young people with cancer on the financial support available to them from the UK government.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department has not made a specific assessment of the financial support available for travel costs, energy bills, accommodation, or dietary requirements for carers of children and young people with cancer.

The Department does not provide guidance on the financial support available to carers of children and young people with cancer. NHS England and the integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning and ensuring the healthcare needs of local communities in England are met, including ensuring that healthcare providers inform all patients and carers, and specifically the carers of children and young people with cancer, of the financial support available to them.

The National Health Service in England runs schemes to provide financial assistance for travel to a hospital or other NHS premises for specialist NHS treatment or diagnostics tests, when referred by a doctor or other primary healthcare professional.

## ■ **Cancer: Health Services**

**Mrs Paulette Hamilton:**

[\[19992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions she has had with NHS England on the impact of staffing on the (a) National Cancer Patient

Experience Survey programme and (b) collection of data on people with pancreatic cancer.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

We are not aware of an impact of staffing on the National Cancer Patient Experience Survey programme, or on the collection of data on people with pancreatic cancer.

The Department is working closely with NHS England to make sure we have the right workforce with the right skills, across the country. In 2023, the National Health Service published the first ever Long Term Workforce Plan, backed by over £2.4 billion of Government funding, to deliver the biggest training expansion in NHS history. Regarding cancer specifically, the number of staff in the cancer workforce has increased by 50% since 2010.

The 2022 National Cancer Patient Experience survey showed respondents' average rating of care was 8.8 out of 10, with zero being very poor and 10 very good. 75.5% of respondents said they definitely received the right amount of support for their overall health and wellbeing from hospital staff.

■ **Cancer: Medical Equipment**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[19142]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of (a) funding and (b) support available for research into non-invasive cancer monitoring technologies.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Research is crucial in tackling cancer, which is why the Department invests over £1 billion per year in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was £121.8 million in 2022/23 and the NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group.

In terms of adequacy of funding, 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.

Regarding technologies, the NIHR's Invention for Innovation (i4i) Programme is a translational research funding scheme aimed at supporting medical devices, such as non-invasive cancer monitoring technologies, and includes in vitro diagnostic devices and digital health technologies addressing an existing or emerging health or social care need. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/invention-for-innovation.htm>

Additionally, in September 2023, the Office for Life Sciences Cancer Mission launched the £12 million NIHR i4i Cancer Mission: Early Cancer Diagnosis Clinical Validation and Evaluation Call, aiming to support the clinical validation and evaluation

of breakthrough technologies that can increase the proportion of cancers that are detected earlier in the disease course and target health inequalities in cancer diagnosis.

The NIHR continues to welcome and encourage funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including cancer monitoring technologies, and it is worth noting that all applications that were fundable in open competition, have been funded.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[19145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of (a) the breast cancer monitoring device and (b) other innovative medical devices on (i) early cancer detection rates and (ii) patient outcomes.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[19146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of breast cancer monitoring devices on global health outcomes.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department has not yet assessed the potential impact of breast cancer monitoring devices. This technology is at an early stage and further evidence is needed before we can assess whether it could be trialled in medical settings.

Improving the early diagnosis of cancer, including breast cancers, is a priority for the National Health Service. NHS England has an ambition to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage one or two by 2028, which will help tens of thousands of people live for longer. NHS England is working to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard (FDS) which sets a target of 28 days from urgent referral by a general practitioner or screening programme, to patients being told that they have cancer, or that cancer is ruled out.

In January 2022 the Department provided £10 million of funding for 28 new breast screening units and nearly 60 life-saving upgrades to services in the areas where they are most needed, so more women can be checked for signs of cancer, speeding up diagnosis and treatment.

## ■ Childbirth

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[19251]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many premature babies were born at between 22 and 24 weeks of gestation in the last five years.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The following table shows the number of all live births and those with gestational age of 22 weeks, 23 weeks and 24 weeks in England and Wales between 2017 and 2021, the most recent five-year period for which data is available:

YEAR	ALL LIVE BIRTHS	LIVE BIRTHS WITH GESTATIONAL AGE BETWEEN 22 AND 24 WEEKS, INCLUSIVE
2017	678,728	972
2018	656,723	894
2019	639, 987	890
2020	613,231	784
2021	624,162	796

Source: Office for National Statistics Birth Characteristics

Note: Still births are not included as they are only measured from gestational age of 24 weeks onwards.

#### ■ Childbirth: Greater London

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[19333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of birth rates in North Central London in each of the last five years.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[19334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the Department has made of (a) induction rates and (b) Caesarean rates in the North Central London area in each of the last five years.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[19336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of indices of deprivation of women who access maternity services at the Royal Free Hospital.

#### **Maria Caulfield:**

Population health trends in North Central London (NCL), including historic birth rates and the future projected population size, have informed proposals to improve maternity and neonatal services included in the NCL Integrated Care System's (ICS) Start Well programme.

Modelling to inform the proposals included in the NCL Start Well programme has considered changing population demographics. This has included looking at changes to the size and birth rate of the populations living in NCL, as well as the complexity of births, which has included looking at factors such as caesarean rates.

The Department, along with NHS England, recognises that the foundations of lifelong health are built during pregnancy, at birth, and in childhood. This is why the NCL

ICS's Start Well programme has taken a population health approach, looking at data relating to ethnicity and deprivation, and impact on maternity outcomes across all units in NCL, including the Royal Free Hospital.

## ■ Clinics: Contraceptives

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[19607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the ability of sexual health clinics to administer local anaesthetic for the fitting of intrauterine devices.

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[19608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS guidance webpage entitled Getting an IUD (intrauterine device) or copper coil fitted or removed, last reviewed on 15 February 2024, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the extra pain relief that can be made available during the fitting of intrauterine devices on levels of people with endometriosis having intrauterine devices fitted.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Long-acting reversible contraceptive fitting services are commissioned at a local level to meet the needs of the local population. Local authorities and integrated care boards are responsible for ensuring services are delivered in accordance with quality and safety standards and clinical guidance.

The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH), who are responsible for the clinical issue of pain relief during intrauterine contraception procedures, have published updated clinical guidance for healthcare professionals on pain management during these procedures. FSRH guidance is clear that healthcare professionals should work in partnership with women to establish the best strategies for reducing anxiety, and the most effective interventions for minimising pain during intrauterine contraception procedures.

## ■ Congenital Abnormalities: Health Services

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to ensure specialist neurotherapy for babies with neurodevelopmental conditions is accessible through the NHS.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We are not taking such specific steps, as diagnosis of a neurodevelopmental disorder would typically be in children and adults but not babies.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment her Department has made of workforce requirements for (a) babies and (b) children with neurodevelopmental conditions.



**Maria Caulfield:**

No recent assessments have been made. We are working closely with the Department for Education to ensure that children and young people with Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

We are taking forward work to better understand the health needs of children and young people with SEND so that these needs can be better met as we plan what workforce we need. A research commission from the National Institute for Health and Care Research to understand the demand for therapists for children with SEND was issued January 2024.

In June 2023, we published the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP) which sets out the steps the National Health Service and its partners need to take to deliver an NHS workforce that meets the changing needs of the population over the next 15 years. It will put the workforce on a sustainable footing for the long term. The LTWP applies to all workforce groups, including those working with babies and children with neurodevelopmental conditions.

The modelling NHS England has used in the plan is founded on data, evidence and analysis and provides a set of broad ranges to measure the potential impact of actions over its 15-year timeframe. We have committed to refreshing the modelling that underpins the plan every two years or in line with fiscal events.

**■ Contraceptives: Anaesthetics****Bill Esterson:****[19606]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS guidance webpage entitled Getting an IUD (intrauterine device) or copper coil fitted or removed, last reviewed on 15 February 2024, what the extra pain relief is that can be made available during the fitting of intrauterine devices.

**Maria Caulfield:**

This is a clinical matter. The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) has published a statement on pain associated with intrauterine device (IUD) insertion in 2021, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.fsrh.org/standards-and-guidance/documents/fsrh-statement-pain-associated-with-insertion-of-intrauterine/>

The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare expects clinicians who insert IUDs to be able to demonstrate sufficient skills and knowledge in pain relief, and that options are discussed with patients as part of obtaining consent.



## ■ Dementia: Continuing Care

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[19298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the assessment process for NHS continuing healthcare funding in accurately capturing the needs of people living with dementia.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department has no plans at this time to assess the efficacy of the NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) assessment process. Eligibility for CHC is not determined by age, clinical condition, or financial means. It is assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the totality of an individual's needs, including ways in which these interact with one another. We continue to work with our partners to deliver CHC policy effectively, including NHS England, who are responsible for oversight of CHC delivery.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Legal Costs

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

[\[19107\]](#)

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

**Andrew Stephenson:**

*[Holding answer 25 March 2024]:* The information is not held centrally or collated in the format requested. More generally, I would refer the hon. Member to the long-standing policies on legal expenditure, as set out recently by Cabinet Office Ministers on 12 March 2024, Official Report, Question 17709 and 12 March 2024, Official Report, House of Lords, Cols. 1901-1904.

## ■ Disease Control

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[18979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to prepare for (a) an avian influenza outbreak and (b) a future pandemic.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department continues to plan and prepare for a range of pandemic and emerging infectious disease scenarios, including those caused by respiratory contact, both influenza and non-influenza, and vector-borne pathogens, building on lessons learned from exercises and incidents, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department, working with health and care partners, is strengthening pandemic preparedness by considering the flexible and scalable response capabilities that can be adapted to any threat that the health and social care system needs.

These capabilities include stockpiles of critical medicines, an advance purchase agreement for a pandemic specific influenza vaccine, and a long-term strategic

partnership with Moderna on vaccine development. These complement core scalable capabilities in the UK Health Security Agency, such as surveillance and diagnostics.

We are carefully monitoring avian influenza globally. The risk to people in the United Kingdom from avian influenza is very low. It is primarily a disease of birds and there is currently no evidence that it can spread more easily to people, or that it can spread between people. We continually review our readiness plans as new evidence emerges.

■ **Edgware Birth Centre**

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[19327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many births were delivered at the birthing suites at Edgware Birth Centre in each of the last five years.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[19328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the annual cost to the public purse is of the birthing suites at Edgware Birth Centre.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[19329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff are employed at the birthing suites at Edgware Birth Centre.

**Maria Caulfield:**  
The following table shows the numbers of births delivered at birthing suites at Edgware Birth Centre, in each of the last five years:

YEAR	BIRTHS DELIVERED
2018/19	68
2019/20	73
2020/21	18
2021/22	45
2022/23	34

Edgware Birth Centre is a standalone birth centre which is staffed by midwifery teams employed by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust who work across a number of locations. Because of this it is difficult to determine the cost for the centre separately. The centre is the base for three teams that work across the maternity services provided by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. The staff are deployed across a number of birth settings, including home births, Edgware Birth Centre, and Barnet Hospital. Staff working at the centre also deliver antenatal and postnatal clinics.

## ■ Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[19919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether trading standards officers are required to share information on seized non-compliant (a) tobacco and (b) vaping products with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) works in collaboration with a number of enforcement and regulatory agencies to share intelligence, support strategic planning, produce guidance, and review emerging issues. There is no legal requirement for Trading Standards to share seizure data with the MHRA, however this data is shared in cases where the MHRA can provide evidence to support ongoing compliance and enforcement investigations.

## ■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[19739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to reduce the average time taken for an endometriosis diagnosis.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Care for menstrual problems including endometriosis is a 2024 priority for implementing the Women's Health Strategy. We are investing £25 million in establishing women's health hubs, which will play a key role in improving access to care for menstrual problems including suspected endometriosis.

Through the NHS Delivery Plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care, we are increasing activity through dedicated and protected surgical hubs that conduct planned procedures only. Surgical hubs are focusing on providing high-volume low-complexity surgery such as laparoscopies for suspected endometriosis. As of March 2024, 48 surgical hubs conduct gynaecological procedures.

Community diagnostic centres (CDCs) are playing an important part in tackling the backlogs of people waiting for diagnostic tests, which includes checks, tests, and scans for patients on gynaecological pathways, including those with endometriosis. As of March 2024, there are 155 CDCs open already, and up to 160 set to open by March 2025.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is currently updating its guideline on diagnosing and managing endometriosis, which will provide healthcare professionals with evidence-based recommendations on diagnosing and treating endometriosis. NHS England is also updating the service specification for severe endometriosis, which sets the standards of care expected from National Health Service organisations.

## ■ Endometriosis: Health Services

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[19740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Women's Health Strategy for England, updated on 30 August 2022, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of progress on the 10-year ambition that women and girls with severe endometriosis experience better care.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No specific assessment has been made. Care for menstrual problems including endometriosis is a 2024 priority for implementing the Women's Health Strategy. We are investing £25 million in women's health hubs, so that women can get better access to care for menstrual problems, including women with suspected or diagnosed endometriosis.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is in the process of updating its recommendations on diagnosing endometriosis, and surgical management of endometriosis if fertility is a priority. The NICE will provide information on the expected publication date of its final guidance in due course.

Additionally, NHS England is updating the service specification for severe endometriosis, which defines the expected standards of care. This update will ensure that specialist endometriosis services have access to the most up-to-date evidence and advice, and will improve standards of care for women with severe endometriosis.

## ■ Health Professions: Career Development

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the modernising scientific careers framework for (a) medical physicists, (b) clinical engineers and (c) clinical scientists.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The curriculum underpinning the Modernising Scientific Careers framework has been recently reviewed. Undergraduate level training, known as the Practitioner Training Programme, now has the Practitioner Training Programme Principles. This means there is now far more flexibility when Higher Education Institutes design new, or develop existing, courses. The postgraduate level training for clinical scientists, known as the Scientist Training Programme, has been substantially reviewed. The professions had considerable input into the rewriting of the curricula. The first cohort of trainees started the new curriculum in September 2022. This includes all Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering specialisms.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the Scottish Government's publication entitled Healthcare Science in Scotland: Defining Our Strategic Approach,

published on 14 March 2024, and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a similar strategy for England.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department has not made an assessment of the publication, Healthcare Science in Scotland: Defining Our Strategic Approach. NHS England published the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan in June 2023, which sets out future National Health Service workforce requirements for England, including with respect to healthcare scientists.

The plan assesses that education and training places for healthcare scientists need to increase by 20 to 34%, reaching between 930 to 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 places, by 2028/29.

■ **Health Services: Contraceptives**

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[19609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of training given to staff on assessing when to stop IUD insertions if the patient feels pain or discomfort.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Individual employers providing contraception services are responsible for ensuring their staff are trained and competent to carry out their role.

The standard of training for health care professionals is the responsibility of respective independent statutory regulatory bodies, who set the outcome standards expected and approve courses. It is the responsibility of higher education and training institutions to write and teach a programme that enables their students to meet the regulators' outcome standards.

■ **Health Services: Finance**

**Mark Eastwood:**

[\[19218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure local authorities can finance the delivery of essential medical (a) devices and (b) services.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Under their public health responsibilities, local authorities in England commission or provide a range of health services for their local populations. Some of these services are likely to involve the use of medical devices.

Public health funding to local authorities has increased each year over the Spending Review period. In 2024/25 the total Public Health Grant to local authorities will be £3.603 billion. In addition, we have provided additional targeted investment to local authorities in England for drug and alcohol addiction treatment and recovery, and services that support the best start in life, and from April 2024 we will double current

investment in local authority stop smoking services, in support of our commitment to deliver a smoke-free generation.

This overall funding package will deliver a real-terms increase of more than 4% over the two years 2023/24 and 2024/25 in departmental funding allocated for local authority public health functions.

## ■ Health: Technology

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[19143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help encourage innovation in the development of healthcare technology for at home use.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[19144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS is taking steps with (a) technology developers and (b) academia to help accelerate the introduction of innovative medical solutions.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

In February 2023, the Department published the MedTech strategy which outlined how we will work with key stakeholders, including technology developers and academia, to ensure the health and social care system can reliably access safe, effective, and innovative medical technologies. To accelerate the introduction of innovative medical solutions, we are working with stakeholders at pace to implement solutions to streamline and join-up the innovation adoption pathway, from providing clear signals to industry on the innovation we need, to reforming regulation, comparative assessment, and with clearer procurement pathways.

In October 2023, the Government announced £30 million of investment in the Health Tech Adoption and Acceleration Fund. The fund is supporting integrated care systems to invest in the latest technology to help cut waiting lists, speed up diagnosis, and deliver new and improved ways to treat patients. Thanks to this fund, tens of thousands of patients at risk of kidney disease will be able to get tested from the comfort of their own homes. In February 2024, the Government announced eight innovative tech companies who will be supported to bring their devices to market through the Innovative Devices Access Pathway (IDAP). One of the technologies allows chemotherapy patients to self-test at home, using a finger-prick blood test, for neutropenic sepsis. Another is a smartphone app that delivers exercises, cognitive behaviour therapy, and targeted physical activity in a personally customisable format to help patients manage multiple sclerosis.

## ■ Health: Women

**Ian Byrne:** [\[19741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of funding for the ambitions in the Women's Health Strategy for England, updated on 30 August 2022.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Women's Health Strategy sets out our plans for boosting the health and wellbeing of women and girls, and for improving how the health and care system engages and listens to all women. The funding confirmed at the last Spending Review was on top of the historic long-term National Health Service settlement announced in 2018. Taken together with funding announced at subsequent fiscal events, it means the NHS resource budget in England will increase in cash terms to £164.9 billion in 2024/25, up from £121.7 billion in 2019/20.

We are also investing in a number of specific programmes within the strategy. For example, we are investing £25 million in the expansion of women's health hubs over 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, and recently announced a £35 million investment to further improve maternity safety across England over 2024/2025 to 2026/2027.

**■ Healthy Start Scheme****Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[19624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the correspondence from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health, Start for Life and Primary Care to the hon. Member for South Shields of December 2023, whether her Department has received personal identifiable data from the Department for Work and Pensions on people who are eligible for Healthy Start.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[19625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the correspondence from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health, Start for Life and Primary Care to the hon. Member for South Shields of December 2023, for what purpose her Department requested personal identifiable data from the Department for Work and Pensions on people who are eligible for Healthy Start.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

*[Holding answer 25 March 2024]:* The Department of Health and Social Care does not receive personal data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on those eligible for the Healthy Start scheme. The NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) runs the scheme on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care. The Department is continuing to work closely with the NHS BSA and the DWP, in order for the NHS BSA to receive the personal data held by the DWP for those potentially eligible citizens, as soon as possible. The NHS BSA will use this data to reach out to those eligible, who are not currently in receipt of Healthy Start, to encourage them to apply for the Healthy Start scheme.

**■ Heavy Menstrual Bleeding****Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[19727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if her Department will take steps to categorise heavy menstrual bleeding as a chronic disabling condition.



**Maria Caulfield:**

We do not currently have any plans to categorise heavy menstrual bleeding as a chronic disabling condition. Improving care for menstrual problems, including heavy menstrual bleeding, is among our 2024 priorities for the Women's Health Strategy. We recognise the severe impact that heavy menstrual bleeding can have on women throughout much of their lives, and we are taking steps to improve access to care, so that women experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding can be treated. We are investing £25 million in women's health hubs, so that women can get better access to care for essential services, including for menstrual problems such as heavy menstrual bleeding.

**■ Heavy Menstrual Bleeding: Screening****Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[19728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of including a screening process for heavy menstrual bleeding for women attending primary care surgeries for gynecological (a) procedures and (b) consultations.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No formal assessment has been made. Improving care for menstrual problems, including heavy menstrual bleeding, is among our 2024 priorities for the Women's Health Strategy. We recognise the severe impact that heavy menstrual bleeding can have on women, and we are taking steps to improve access to care so that women experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding can receive the care they need. We are investing £25 million in women's health hubs, so that women can get better access to care for essential services, including for menstrual problems such as heavy menstrual bleeding.

**■ Hospitals: Medical Equipment****Rachael Maskell:**[\[19091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) medical physicists and (b) clinical engineers have adequate access to advanced (a) radiotherapy and (b) other relevant equipment in hospitals.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Government and NHS England work closely together to ensure that staff have access to appropriate equipment, to ensure that cancer patients can receive high quality radiotherapy treatment across England. This includes supporting advances in radiotherapy, using cutting-edge imaging and technology to help target radiation doses at cancer cells more precisely.

The Government has invested in the latest technology in radiotherapy, ensuring that every radiotherapy provider had access to modern, cutting-edge radiotherapy equipment, enabling the rollout of new techniques like stereotactic ablative radiotherapy. The total central investment made between 2016 and 2021 was £162



million, and enabled the replacement or upgrade of approximately 100 radiotherapy treatment machines. Since April 2022, the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines has sat with local systems. This is supported by the 2021 Spending Review, which set aside £12 billion in operational capital for the National Health Service from 2022 to 2025.

## ■ Human Papillomavirus: Vaccination

**Jim Shannon:**

**[19354]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to encourage the uptake of HPV vaccinations in schools.

**Maria Caulfield:**

National Health Service Commissioned School Aged Immunisation Service providers have robust catch-up plans in place for the adolescent human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme based on population need, utilising opportunities from the move to one dose in September 2023.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) works closely with several charities to develop resources that can be used to raise awareness of HPV. UKHSA also publishes annual statistics to support local NHS teams in developing plans to improve HPV uptake and reduce inequalities.

NHS England has improved digital communications on vaccinations, including expanding the NHS app, and improved vaccine access outside of schools through community clinics at convenient times and locations. UKHSA produces a number HPV resources which are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hpv-vaccination-programme>

Other materials are available on the UKHSA Health Publications website in a range of language and accessible formats, which are available at the following link:

<https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/Home.html>

## ■ Infant Mortality: Certification

**Catherine West:**

**[19419]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when baby loss certificates will become available for people who lost their child before September 2018.

**Maria Caulfield:**

On 22 February 2024, we launched the Baby Loss Certificate service, fulfilling our commitment in the Women's Health Strategy. The certificate is an important acknowledgement of a life lost, and we hope it will provide some comfort and support by validating the loss.

We recognise that some people will wish to obtain a certificate for a baby loss that has happened in the past. It is currently open to pregnancy losses since 1 September 2018, and we will extend this to earlier losses as soon as we can.

## ■ Long Covid

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[19670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of collecting data on the prevalence of long covid.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[19671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has undertaken an impact assessment on the impact that long covid has had on the NHS workforce.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No assessment has been made of the potential merits of collecting data on the prevalence of long COVID. On 25 April 2024, the Office for National Statistics will be publishing additional analysis from the fortnightly Winter Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Study, including data on trends in ongoing symptoms of COVID-19. This article will expand on the existing analysis published in the Winter Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Study's data tables, to look more in depth at trends in self-reported symptoms of COVID-19, including ongoing symptoms and associated risk factors. No assessment has been made of the impact that long COVID has had on the National Health Service workforce.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[19967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact long covid has had on sufferers of the condition.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Long COVID is a complex condition, affecting multiple systems within the body. Commonly reported symptoms include fatigue, shortness of breath, cognitive impairment, and muscle pain.

NHS England has invested £314 million to expand long COVID treatment in the National Health Service and rehabilitation services, establishing 100 long COVID services for adults and 13 specialist paediatric hubs for children and young people. These assess people with long COVID and direct them into appropriate care pathways which provide appropriate support and treatment.

The Government has also invested over £50 million into long COVID research. The projects aim to improve our understanding of the diagnosis and underlying mechanisms of the disease and the effectiveness of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies and interventions, and to evaluate clinical care.

## ■ Maternal Mortality

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[19332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies on preventing maternal

deaths of MBRRACE-UK's report entitled Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care, published in October 2023.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department is committed to reducing maternal mortality and improving outcomes for mothers and is working to fully understand why a recent increase in the maternal death rate has been reported, including considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several initiatives have already been introduced across the National Health Service to improve maternity safety as part of NHS England's Three Year Delivery Plan for maternity and neonatal services, which is backed by £186 million a year from April.

Initiatives include the establishment of 14 maternal medicine networks which provide pregnant women who have medical conditions with specialist advice and support, and the publishing of local Equity and Equality Action Plans, which are tailored to meet the needs of that area. The Department also expects all 42 integrated care systems to have a Maternal Mental Health Service operational by the end of March 2024, which provide psychological therapy for women experiencing mental health difficulties related to their maternity experience.

On top of this, as announced at Spring Budget, the Government and NHS England are investing almost £35 million from 2024/25 to 2026/27 to further improve maternity safety across England, with specialist training for staff, additional numbers of midwives and support to ensure maternity services listen to and act on women's experiences to improve care.

■ **Maternity Services: Greater London**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[19596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if her Department will make an estimate of the number of women who have experienced medical complexities associated with pregnancy when accessing maternity care services in (a) north and (b) central London in each of the last five years.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department does not hold this information in the format requested. The North Central London Start Well programme has considered changing population demographics, including the birth rates of the populations living in North Central London and the complexity of births. This information is available at the following link:

[https://nclhealthandcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/NCL\\_Start-Well-Case-for-Change\\_FINAL\\_ALT-TEXT.pdf](https://nclhealthandcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/NCL_Start-Well-Case-for-Change_FINAL_ALT-TEXT.pdf)

■ **Measles: Diagnosis**

**Jim Shannon:**

[19355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many diagnoses of measles there have been in the last 12 months.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) publishes routine data on laboratory confirmed measles.

Between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2023, there have been 368 laboratory confirmed cases in the England. From 1 October 2023, there have been 730 laboratory confirmed measles cases reported in England.

The 2023 data is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-epidemiology-2023/confirmed-cases-of-measles-in-england-by-month-age-and-region-2023>

As part of the national incident response, 2024 data is currently being published weekly at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-epidemiology-2023/national-measles-standard-incident-measles-epidemiology-from-october-2023>

**■ Mental Health Services: Parents****Catherine West:****[19417]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure bereaved parents have access to NHS community-based psychological support.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, the Government is providing investment and increasing the mental health workforce to expand and transform mental health services in the National Health Service in England. Almost £16 billion was invested in mental health in 2022/23, enabling 3.6 million people to be in contact with mental health services, a 10% increase on the previous year.

It is important that grieving parents who have lost a child have access to the mental health support they need, when they need it. Anyone struggling with a bereavement is strongly encouraged to contact their general practitioner who can help provide support, signpost to specialist bereavement support charities or make a referral to a counsellor. Bereaved parents can also refer themselves directly to an NHS talking therapies service without a referral from a general practitioner.

Last year, we updated GOV.UK's Tell us Once service to better signpost people to sources of bereavement support.

**■ Mental Health Services: Veterans****Steve McCabe:****[19241]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2024 to Question 17496 on Mental Health Services: Veterans, for what reason NHS England does not hold data on the number of veterans who have used Op Courage services more than once.

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[19242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 14 March 2024 to Question 17496 on Mental Health Services: Veterans, for what reason NHS England does not hold data on the number of veterans with gambling addictions who have used Op Courage services.

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[19243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 14 March 2024 to Question 17495 on Mental Health Services: Veterans, how much funding has been allocated to the three social prescribing pilot sites.

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[19244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2024 to Question 17495 on Mental Health Services: Veterans, where the three social prescribing pilot sites are located.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Prior to April 2023, Op COURAGE was formed from the three separate services of the Transition, Intervention and Liaison service, the Complex Treatment Service, and the High Intensity Service. Performance data for these services did not collect uniquely identifiable information on individual veterans, so it would not be possible to identify instances where a veteran had attended Op COURAGE for more than one course of treatment.

No data is held on the numbers of veterans with gambling addictions that have used Op COURAGE. Data analysed includes the primary mental health reason for referral to Op COURAGE. From April 2023, there have been no referrals to Op COURAGE with a primary mental health reason of gambling addiction. Since April 2023, less than 1.5% of referrals to Op COURAGE have been with a primary mental health reason of either obsessive-compulsive disorder or drug or alcohol difficulties.

Between August 2021 and September 2024, £339,000 has been allocated across the three social prescribing pilot projects which are in Cornwall, Durham, and Dorset. The National Health Service provides wellbeing support to all full-time carers. Veterans who identify as a carer are offered a Carer's Assessment, which is undertaken by local authorities. The outcome of the Carer's Assessment will inform a care and support plan, which is bespoke to the needs of the carer.

The Better Care Fund in 2023/24 includes £327 million for carers support, including short breaks and respite services for carers. It also funds advice and support to carers and a small number of additional local authority duties. There is no data on how much of that funding may have been used for veterans.

## ■ MMR Vaccine: North West

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[18980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2024 to Question 11582 on MMR Vaccine: North West, what assessment she

has made of the potential implications for her policies of the lower uptake of MMR2 at five years; and what steps her Department is taking to increase the uptake of childhood vaccines.

**Maria Caulfield:**

It is vitally important that everyone takes up the vaccinations to which they are entitled. Vaccination rates across the country are too low, particularly in some local areas, and we need a concerted effort to reach the 95% coverage, with two doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine, required to provide population protection.

The Department works with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and NHS England to improve immunisation through diverse delivery methods, making getting vaccinated easier for all, including those in traditionally under-served groups. The UKHSA launched a new multi-media marketing campaign across England on 4 March 2024, to remind parents and carers of the risk of their children missing out on protection against serious diseases that are re-emerging in the country.

There have also been increased outreach efforts to make sure that communities with historically lower uptake are informed of the benefits of vaccines and have access to inclusive resources. For example, in the North West and the Midlands, National Health Service teams are using initiatives like roving clinics, extra vaccination sessions in schools, and community pharmacies to step up their efforts to get more children protected with the MMR vaccine.

The Government supports NHS programmes focused on improving coverage, including regional and national campaigns for polio, and a new targeted national MMR catch-up campaign for children aged six to 11 years old this year, extended to all those aged 11 to 25 years old in London, the West Midlands and the North West. Human papillomavirus infection vaccination catch-ups for adolescents are also taking place.

The NHS Vaccination strategy outlines plans to maximise convenience, with more vaccination services at locations that the public can easily access such as libraries, leisure centres, social clubs or sports grounds, family hubs, support services, and places of worship, or at local cultural and community events, with flexible opening hours and booking options.

■ **NHS: Health Professions**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the age demographic on the workforce for (a) medical physics and (b) clinical engineering.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

No assessment has been made. The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan sets out 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 930 to 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 places 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.

## ■ NIHR Moorfields Biomedical Research Centre: Research

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[19461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the priority areas of research are under the five year grant made to NIHR Moorfields Biomedical Research Centre for vision research innovation in 2022.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Research's (NIHR) Moorfields Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) is a partnership between Moorfields-Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and University College London's Institute of Ophthalmology, dedicated to pioneering discovery to transform the lives of patients facing sight loss. The BRC has five research themes:

- vascular disease and inflammation;
- genomic discovery and therapeutics;
- regenerative therapies, lasers, and medical devices;
- translational data science; and
- imaging, visual assessment, and digital innovation.

The BRC's themes bridge biological sciences, health data, and translational science. Their aim is to change lives across the United Kingdom and the world by preserving sight and driving equity through innovation, particularly for those with the greatest need.

## ■ Ophthalmology: Training

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[19460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has plans to upskill non-clinical eye health staff as part of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The department has an existing programme addressing the upskilling of this workforce. Ophthalmic Practitioner Training is a training programme for hospital-based ophthalmic nurses, optometrists, and orthoptists who wish to develop skills in



one or more of four sub-specialty areas: medical retina; glaucoma; cataract; and emergency ophthalmology. The programme is a collaboration between the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, the Royal College of Nursing, the College of Optometrists, and the British and Irish Orthoptic Society. It offers a standardised and supportive platform for these healthcare professionals to learn new clinical skills, for the benefit of their patients. The programme trains postgraduate orthoptists, optometrists, ophthalmic nurses, and other eye care practitioners in secondary care, to develop their skills in eye care.

## ■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Clinical Trials**

**Mrs Paulette Hamilton:**

**[19993]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer who are eligible for clinical trials are able to access those trials.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Government has set out a vision for the Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery, which aims to create a patient-centred, pro-innovation, and digitally enabled clinical research environment. Key to achieving this vision is increasing participation in research to ensure that the research we support is inclusive and representative of the populations we serve.

The Department-funded National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funds research and research infrastructure which supports patients and the public to participate in high-quality research. For example, in financial year 2022/23, the NIHR Clinical Research Network supported 41 pancreatic cancer studies and recruited 1,004 participants to these studies.

In addition, the NIHR provides an online service called Be Part of Research which promotes participation in health and social care research by allowing users to search for relevant studies and register their interest. This makes it easier for people to find and take part in health and care research that is relevant to them.

When designing research studies, researchers consider inclusion and exclusion criteria carefully to ensure they are not unnecessarily excluding specific groups who would benefit from the outcome of their study. However, we are aware that inclusion and exclusion criteria can disproportionately exclude individuals from specific groups, for example older adults or pregnant women.

The Health Research Authority (HRA) is developing guidance to improve practices in this area. We are not aware that people with pancreatic cancer are routinely being excluded from studies, however, we know that sometimes people are automatically excluded from taking part, and this can be for good reasons. The guidance produced by the HRA will help researchers to consider if these people and any other groups of people may be unnecessarily excluded, and consider putting measures in place to address this.



## ■ Radiology: Medical Equipment

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will undertake an audit of NHS equipment used in radiotherapy treatments.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Since April 2022, the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines has sat with local systems. Consequently, the Department has no plans to audit National Health Service equipment used in radiotherapy treatments.

## ■ Sexually Transmitted Infections: Notifiable Diseases

**Caroline Nokes:**

[\[19850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to her Department's consultation entitled Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010: proposed amendments which closed on 15 November 2023, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the inclusion of (a) gonorrhoea and (b) syphilis in the list of notifiable diseases on the (i) principle of confidentiality for sexual health service users and (ii) willingness of individuals to access sexual health services.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Patient confidentiality is of vital importance to retain patients' trust in sexual health services, and to encourage access to advice, testing, diagnosis, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

A public consultation seeking views on proposals to amend the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 was held between 12 July and 15 November 2023. This included the proposal to add specific STIs to schedule 2 of the regulations to strengthen surveillance. The consultation asked for views on the consequences of this change, including whether it could negatively impact public trust in the confidentiality of sexual health services and data and risk creating a barrier to accessing sexual services.

The Department and the UK Health Security Agency are considering the responses to the consultation and are grateful for stakeholders' continued engagement on this topic.

**Caroline Nokes:**

[\[19851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to consult key sector stakeholders before final decisions are taken on proposed sexual health reporting amendments included in her Department's consultation entitled Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010: proposed amendments which closed on 15 November 2023.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Patient confidentiality is of vital importance in sexual health to retain patients' trust in services, and to encourage access to advice, testing, diagnosis, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. A public consultation seeking views on proposals to

amend the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations (HPNR) 2010 was held between 12 July and 15 November 2023. This included a commitment that any decision on adding specific sexually transmitted infections to schedule 2 of the regulations would be shaped by consultation responses and engagement with stakeholders.

The Department and the UK Health Security Agency are considering the responses to the consultation and are grateful for stakeholders' continued engagement on this topic.

## ■ Social Prescribing: Pilot Schemes

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[19521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 14 March 2024 to Question 17495 on Mental Health Services: Veterans, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing social prescribing pilots in garrison towns.

**Maria Caulfield:**

NHS England commissioned three pilot sites, in Cornwall, Durham, and Dorset, to explore and evaluate the merits of social prescribing in the Armed Forces Community. The outcome of the evaluation is planned for Autumn 2024, and the findings will inform a toolkit which can be used by other social prescribing teams. The evaluation will also inform whether there should be plans for further pilots, including in garrison towns.

## ■ Social Work: Training

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[19240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2024 to Question 17493 on Social Work: Training, for what reason there are no immediate plans to implement veteran-aware training for social work teams in local authorities.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Principal Social Work (PSW) Network for Adults across England meet on a regular basis to review all aspects of social work practice and training, underpinned by statutory and policy guidance, which includes the needs of the veteran community. This national network comprises of representatives from all settings including local authorities, National Health Service bodies, the voluntary sector, and Ministry of Defence organisations, and shares an undertaking to develop the competence of the workforce to meet the needs of all vulnerable groups including veterans and their families and carers.

The Office of the Chief Social Worker will be using the PSW network in April to focus on veteran's social care needs with colleagues, and explore what training materials are available in different local authorities and NHS providers trusts specifically geared

towards social work for the purpose of assessment and care planning alongside veterans.

The Government has an ambition to make the United Kingdom the best place in the world to be a veteran by 2028. Veterans are entitled to the same social care and support as the civilian population in England.

## ■ UK Health Security Agency: Finance

**Philip Davies:**

**[18089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2024 to Question 16638 on UK Health Security Agency: Finance, on what basis the information requested is considered to be commercially sensitive.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Further breakdown of customers groupings would identify individual customers and the value of individual vaccine sales. These grouping are varied and include customers such as wholesalers, hospitals, medical centres, travel clinics and other providers of vaccination services. To break this information down to a level that would identify individual purchases could prejudice future commercial relations with the UK Health Security Agency customers.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum: Employment

**Deidre Brock:**

**[19083]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of replacing the Shortage Occupation List with the Immigration Salary List on employment opportunities for asylum seekers who are eligible to work.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Secretary commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to carry out a rapid review of the new Immigration Salary List (ISL) ahead of the Spring Immigration Rules. Appendix Immigration Salary List can be found in the [Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 590](#), published on 14 March 2024. We will keep the list under review and the MAC will carry out a fuller review later in the year.

Replacing the new ISL will maintain the important principles that underpin our approach to permission to work by an individual's asylum claim still being outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own. This includes the need to avoid creating perverse incentives for people to make dangerous journeys to the UK and to not undercut the resident labour market.

## ■ Asylum: Hotels

**Jim McMahon:** [\[19128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of hotel use for asylum seekers on community cohesion in Oldham; and when he plans to end the use of temporary accommodation for asylum seekers.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Asylum hotels were only ever a temporary measure, in response to an unprecedented spike in small boat arrivals and the statutory requirement to accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. The Government has always been clear that they are an inappropriate form of accommodation and that we must stop using them as soon as possible.

Wherever hotels are used, the Home Office works in partnership with local authorities and other statutory partners, including through multi-agency forum (MAF) meetings. These consider, amongst other things, community cohesion issues.

We will have closed 100 hotels by the end of March. We continue to work with our providers on closing further hotels across the estate and will write to local authorities and MPs when a decision to close a site has been made.

## ■ Asylum: Rwanda

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[19033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what form of immigration status people relocated to Rwanda under the voluntary departures scheme will receive once in Rwanda; and whether that status will be (a) permanent or (b) time-limited.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[19034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the agreement with Rwanda to host individuals relocated from the UK under the voluntary departures scheme was made; how many individuals can be relocated under that scheme; and if he will publish a Memorandum of Understanding relating to the scheme.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The option of voluntary relocation will be given to failed asylum seekers. It would be inappropriate to provide a running commentary on individual cases or numbers.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed for the voluntary relocation of individuals and will be published in due course.

People who voluntarily decide to relocate to Rwanda, if they are relocated, will be entitled to permanent residence in Rwanda.

## ■ Home Office: Standards

**Dame Siobhain McDonagh:** [\[18962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many investigations have been undertaken by his Department's professional standards unit in each year since

2015, broken down into the categories of (a) immigration, borders and citizenship, (b) policing and (c) counter-terrorism.

**Chris Philp:**

The requested information is not centrally held, and complying with this request would incur a disproportionate cost to the department.

## ■ Immigration: Appeals

**Darren Jones:**

[\[19426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many allowed appeals from (a) First and (b) Upper Tribunal are awaiting implementation; and what the average time taken to implement allowed appeal decisions was in each year between 2019 and 2023.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The requested information cannot be accurately extracted from our internal systems. To provide this information would require a manual trawl of successful appeals and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

Where an appeal has been allowed in favour of the appellant, and is not subject to onward appeal, we take all reasonable steps to implement the allowed appeal in a timely manner.

## ■ Migrants: Domestic Abuse

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[19998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing migrant victims of domestic abuse to access support from (a) police and (b) statutory services.

**Laura Farris:**

Victims are entitled to access services under the Victims Code regardless of their resident status, including support services. They are rightly able to access statutory services irrespective of their immigration status and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. As an example, the statutory guidance for the Duty to Provide Safe Accommodation under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act is clear that this provision is for all victims of domestic abuse, including migrant survivors with insecure immigration status.

The government has kept the range of support under review and have made recent changes.

We allocated up to £5.6 million from April 2021 until March 2025 for the Support for Migrant Victim Scheme, which provides a support net for migrant victims of abuse with no recourse to public funds. And we have expanded access to the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) to partners of workers or students, giving 3 months recourse to public funds whilst they potentially apply for an appropriate immigration status or return to their country of origin if it is safe for them to do so.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Crime

**Catherine West:**

[\[19124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to tackle car crime in north London.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government is committed to tackling vehicle crime. The latest estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales shows there were 726,000 incidents of vehicle-related theft in the year ending September 2023. This represents a 39% fall, when compared with the year ending March 2010, when there was an estimated 1,198,000 such incidents.

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. This includes training police officers on methods used to steal vehicles, encouraging vehicle owners to secure their vehicles and working with industry to prevent theft. 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 also 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.

## ■ UK Border Force: Corruption

**Dame Siobhain McDonagh:**

[\[18961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2024 to Question 15819 on UK Border Force: Corruption, if he will provide a breakdown of the allegations and referrals received by the Border Force Joint Anti-Corruption Intelligence Team by type in 2023.

**Tom Pursglove:**

As the public rightly expect, we demand the highest standards from our Border Force officers and have measures in place to prevent and tackle corruption. There were 204 allegations and referrals received by Border Force Joint Anti-Corruption Intelligence Team in 2023, broken down as follows:

TYPE OF ALLEGATION/REFERRAL	NUMBER OF ALLEGATIONS/REFERRALS
Conspiracy Cross Border Offences	54

TYPE OF ALLEGATION/REFERRAL	NUMBER OF ALLEGATIONS/REFERRALS
Crime	42
Vulnerable	22
Risk from associates	21
Local management issues	44
Not Border Force	6
Assist key partner	15

## JUSTICE

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Jerome Mayhew:**

**[902212]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the backlog in the courts.

**Mike Freer:**

We remain committed to tackling the outstanding caseloads across our courts and tribunals and have introduced a range of measures to achieve this aim.

Over 90% of all criminal cases are heard at the magistrates' court, where we heard 100,000 cases a month on average across 2023. While the outstanding caseload in the magistrates' courts has slightly increased in recent months due to an increase in the number of cases coming to court, the caseload remains well below its pandemic peak and stood at 353,900 at the end of September 2023, and cases continue to be progressed quickly. To aid our efforts in the magistrates' courts, we invested £1 million in a programme of work to support the recruitment of more magistrates. We aim to recruit 2,000 new magistrates this year, and similar numbers for each of the next couple of years.

At the Crown Court, we remain committed to reducing the outstanding caseload. Last financial year we sat over 100,000 days and this financial year, we plan to deliver around 107,000 sitting days and recruit more than 1,000 judges across all jurisdictions. Judges have worked tirelessly to complete more cases, with disposals up by 9% during Q3 in 2023 compared to Q4 in 2022 (25,700 compared to 23,700).

We are also investing in our criminal courts. In August 2023, we announced we are investing £220 million for essential modernisation and repair work of our court buildings across the next two years, up to March 2025. We have also continued the use of 20 Nightingale courtrooms into the 2024/25 financial year, to allow courts to work at full capacity.



In the Family Court, we are working with the Department for Education and other partners on the Family Justice Board to tackle the longest running cases and increase the proportion of public law cases that conclude within the 26-week timeline. The Department for Education are also investing an extra £10m to develop new initiatives to address the longest delays in public law proceedings.

We announced in the Spring Budget an additional £55m to improve productivity, support earlier resolution of family disputes and reduce the number of cases coming to court. This includes creating a digital advice tool for separating couples, piloting early legal advice and supporting the expansion of the private law Pathfinder model. We are also investing up to £23.6m in the family mediation voucher scheme, which we intend will allow for its continuation up to March 2025. As of March 2024, over 26,000 families have successfully used the scheme to attempt to resolve their private law disputes outside of court.

With regards to civil cases, we are taking action to ensure those that do need to go to trial are dealt with quickly. We have launched the biggest ever judicial recruitment drive for District Judges, are digitising court processes and holding more remote hearings, and are increasing the use of mediation. The requirement for small claims in the county court to attend a mediation session with the Small Claims Mediation Service will start this spring and is expected to help parties resolve their dispute swiftly and consensually without the need for a judicial hearing.

With regards to tribunals, we continue to work with the Department for Business and Trade on further measures to address caseloads in the Employment Tribunal, where the deployment of legal officers, recruitment of additional judges and a new electronic case management system have helped the Tribunal to manage its caseload which remains below its pandemic peak.

## ■ Cycling: Convictions and Prosecutions

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

**[19765]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prosecutions and (b) convictions there have been in Greater London for (i) dangerous cycling in contravention of section 28, (ii) careless and inconsiderate cycling in contravention of section 29 and (iii) cycling when under the influence of drink or drugs in contravention of section 30 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 in each of the last three years for which information is available.

**Gareth Bacon:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of prosecutions and convictions in England and Wales for the following offences:

- 13711 - Reckless and dangerous driving by pedal cyclist - Contrary to section 28(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.
- 13712 - Careless driving by pedal cyclist - Contrary to section 29 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.



- 13713 - Pedal cyclist driving under the influence of drink or drugs - Contrary to section 30 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

These can be accessed by navigating to the 'Prosecutions and convictions' tab and using the HO Offence Code filter to select the above offences in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool](#).

The police force area filter enables you to select specific areas, in this case, select 'Metropolitan'.

## ■ Magistrates' Courts: Greater Manchester

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[19132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) closures of magistrates courts and (b) trends in the recruitment of magistrates on case capacity in Greater Manchester.

**Mike Freer:**

The decision to close any court only happens following full public consultation, and only when effective access to justice can be maintained. Courts that have closed were either underused, dilapidated or too close to another existing HMCTS location in the same local area.

In recent years there has been considerable recruitment of magistrates in Greater Manchester, both for the Adult Court and the Family Court, and current magistrate numbers are sufficient to manage the volume of work in Greater Manchester.

## ■ Prison Officers

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[19894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which prisons have used prison officers on detached duty in 2023; and how many (a) officers were deployed to each prison and (b) times those officers were deployed.

**Edward Argar:**

During 2023, 21 prisons received Band 3 officers on National Detached Duty. The table attached shows the average number of detached duty staff deployed at each site in each month.

It is not possible, without incurring disproportionate cost, to provide the remaining information requested, as this would require a detailed examination of individual records.

We are doing more than ever to attract and retain the best staff, including boosting salaries and launching our first-ever nationwide advertising campaign. These efforts are working - we have over 4,800 FTE additional officers between March 2017 and December 2023, and retention rates for prison staff are improving.

We have committed to recruiting up to 5,000 additional prison officers across public and private prisons by the mid-2020s.

Attachments:

1. Number of detached duty staff deployed [2024-03-26 PQ 19894 table.xlsx]

■ Prisoner Escorts

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[19051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Crown Court hearings have been delayed due to a (a) failure to deliver a prisoner and (b) a delay in bringing a prisoner to a court by (i) Serco and (ii) other providers of escort services.

**Gareth Bacon:**

The number of contractual delays at the Crown Court attributable to the two PECS suppliers, in each month from September 2023 to February 2024, is shown in the table below.

Contractual delays include both failure to deliver a prisoner, and delay in bringing a prisoner to court. In contractual terms, a delay occurs when a prisoner who is at that time the responsibility of a PECS supplier, is not available in the courtroom at the required time so that courtroom business is delayed by 15 minutes or more.

Whenever a delay occurs, its cause is investigated by the PECS Management Team in His Majesty’s Prison & Probation Service. During the period for which data have been provided, there were no instances of failure to deliver a prisoner: all recorded instances are attributable to delay in bringing a prisoner to court.

PECS contractual delays to Crown Court hearings, September 2023 to February 2024

SERCO	TOTAL MOVES TO CROWN COURT	NUMBER OF CONTRACTUAL DELAYS	PERFORMANCE %
Sep 2023	4872	5	99.90
Oct 2023	4651	8	99.83
Nov 2023	5408	17	99.69
Dec 2023	3803	20	99.48
Jan 2024	5136	14	99.73
Feb 2024	4733	7	99.86

  

GEOAMEY	TOTAL MOVES TO CROWN COURT	NUMBER OF CONTRACTUAL DELAYS	PERFORMANCE %
Sep 2023	4904	2	99.96

GEOAMEY	TOTAL MOVES TO CROWN COURT	NUMBER OF CONTRACTUAL DELAYS	PERFORMANCE %
Oct 2023	5169	3	99.95
Nov 2023	5559	2	99.97
Dec 2023	4419	1	99.99
Jan 2024	5586	1	99.99
Feb 2024	5223	1	99.99

### ■ Probate Service: Telephone Services

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[19028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average holding time was for phone calls to the probate office contact line in each year since 2019.

**Mike Freer:**

The average holding time (Average Speed of Answer (ASA)) for phone calls to the Probate office contact line in each year since 2019 is as follows:

2021 = 17 minutes 28 seconds

2022 = 33 minutes 23 seconds

2023 = 12 minutes 17 seconds

HMCTS does not hold ASA data prior to 2021 due to a change in system in Spring 2021.

HMCTS has recruited over 100 additional staff, between June 2022 and June 2023, to improve both telephone response times and increase the overall volume and speed of grants being issued.

In addition, HMCTS have undertaken additional staff training to ensure probate call agents can resolve more queries at the first time of contact and issue the grant wherever possible.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Counter-extremism Centre of Excellence

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[19976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which Department the new counter-extremism centre of excellence will sit under.

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[19977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps the new counter-extremism centre of excellence will take to collaborate with the (a) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and (b) Home Office on existing counter terrorism (i) programmes and (ii) operations.

**Lee Rowley:**

The new counter-extremism centre of excellence will be housed within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

DLUHC is working with the Home Office, as well as several other Government departments, to tackle extremism head-on. The new centre of excellence will act as a world-leading authority on best practice, data and research and provide leadership for departments' operationalisation and implementation of the new extremism definition, cross-government standards and extremism-related due diligence process. It will also become home to new counter-extremism assessment and analytical functions and capabilities.

## ■ First Time Buyers

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[19135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help improve housing affordability for first-time buyers.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[19137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help average-income families access the housing market.

**Lee Rowley:**

We have introduced a number of interventions that aim to increase the opportunities available to those wishing and able to get on the property ladder for the first time. These include First Homes, the Mortgage Guarantee Scheme, Shared Ownership and Right to Buy. We have also reduced stamp duty and raised the thresholds for First-Time Buyers' Relief. We also run the Lifetime ISA scheme to help young first-time buyers save for their first home.

Moreover, our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme will deliver thousands of affordable homes for both rent and to buy right across the country. Since 2010, we have delivered over 696,100 new affordable homes, including over 482,000 affordable homes for rent, of which over 172,600 homes for social rent.

## ■ Green Belt: Planning Permission

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[19193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Answer of 11 March 2024 to Questions 16908, 16909, 16910, 16911, 16912, 16913 and 16914, and the Answer of 15 March to Questions 18292, 18293, 18294, 18295 and 18296, if he will make an assessment of whether those responses are

consistent with the requirements (a) in the Ministerial Code that Ministers should be as open as possible with parliament and the public, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest and (b) in the Guidance on drafting answers to parliamentary questions.

**Lee Rowley:**

As I have previously outlined, the most up to date and comprehensive information on the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) can be found in the Written Ministerial Statement and the revised published framework, which is what I referred the Hon Member to.

The purpose of the NPPF is to create a consistent and understood framework for development within an industry that emphasises the importance of certainty and clarity. It is, by definition, the stated position of the Government for that very reason. If the Government has further detail it wishes to impart, it will do so in the usual way.

■ **Green Belt: Renewable Energy**

**Mark Eastwood:**

[\[19215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to help support people to submit objections to planning proposals for (a) the proposed installation of solar farms near Overton, Wooley and Kirkburton and (b) other proposed renewable energy projects on the green belt.

**Lee Rowley:**

This Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the Green Belt. Our National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that structures that spoil the openness of Green Belt should be refused permission unless in very special circumstances.

■ **Housing Associations: Service Charges**

**Catherine West:**

[\[19123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will issue guidance to housing associations on increasing the transparency of service charge costs.

**Jacob Young:**

Registered Providers of social housing (including housing associations) are expected to set transparent and reasonable service charges. The policy statement clarifies that tenants should be supplied with clear information on how service charges are set.

Where new or extended services are introduced, and an additional charge may need to be made, registered providers are expected to consult with tenants.

■ **Housing: Cumbria**

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[19980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the availability of homes in Cumbria.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government is providing £212 million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund for Cumbria County Council's Carlisle Southern Link Road, which intends to support the delivery of up to 10,325 new homes in Carlisle.

In Barrow-in-Furness, the Government is spending to support the delivery of over 800 new homes at Barrow Waterfront, including up to £24 million from the Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund, and £1.5 million from the Brownfield Land Release Fund to support the release of land at Marina Village.

To the end of March 2023 £4.4 million has been allocated to Cumbria from the Affordable Homes Programme (2021-126) to deliver 74 new affordable homes. Overall, since 2010, 4,400 affordable homes have been delivered in Cumbria (3,100 for rent, of which 1,200 for social rent).

**Internal Drainage Boards: Finance****James Wild:**[\[19483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 24 January 2024 on Local Government Finance Update, HCWS206, when he plans to announce the allocation of funding for local authorities with the highest internal drainage board levies.

**Simon Hoare:**

On 24 January the Government announced that having listened to authorities who continue to face sustained increases in their internal drainage board (IDB) special levies, we would again provide £3 million outside of the 24/25 Local Government Finance Settlement to support those experiencing the biggest pressures. We will confirm the distribution of this funding shortly, when data on projected special levies becomes available.

Separately, at the National Farmers Union Conference in February the Prime Minister and Defra Ministers announced a new one-off grant, up to £75 million, for IDBs in 2024/25. This fund will help IDBs recover from the recent flooding and contribute towards modernising IDB infrastructure, to lower costs and increase resilience to climate change.

**Parking: Private Sector****Richard Foord:**[\[19229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure Private Parking Operators operate fairly.

**Richard Foord:**[\[19230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps their Department is taking to ensure those facing a Parking Charge Notice receive sufficient notice of the results of appeals.

**Jacob Young:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [15378](#) on 28 February 2024.

**Rented Housing: Older People****Jim Shannon:**[\[19059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help individuals aged over 65 living in rented accommodation.

**Jacob Young:**

The Renters (Reform) Bill is currently making its way through Parliament. It will deliver the Government's commitment to a fairer private rented sector in England, improving the system for responsible tenants and good faith landlords.

**Retail Trade: Empty Property****Neil O'Brien:**[\[19464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to initiate high street rental auctions; and what steps he has taken to support local authorities to use these powers.

**Jacob Young:**

The framework of the High Street Rental Auction policy is set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, which is now law, however many aspects need to be defined by secondary legislation before local authorities can begin to use the power. The Government is working to introduce the associated statutory instruments.

We recognise the resource constraints faced by local authorities and have considered how the burden on local authorities can be reduced. We are providing up to £2 million of financial support to make sure that areas which need this the most are not priced out by prohibitive refurbishment costs to bring the properties up to standard. We will also publish guidance for local authorities and relevant stakeholders to support them in implementing High Street Rental Auctions.

**Social Services: Finance****Mark Eastwood:**[\[19216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has held discussions with adult social care providers on potential future risks to the local financing of the provision of care.

**Mark Eastwood:**[\[19217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to support local authorities to deliver adult social care.

**Simon Hoare:**

Through the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25, we are providing over £1.5 billion in additional grant for social care compared to 2023-24. This is part of an above-inflation increase in Core Spending Power for local government from 2023-24 of up to £4.5 billion, or 7.5% in cash terms.

Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

**Trading Standards: Staff****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[19920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the average number of full time equivalent trading standards officers per local authority over each of the last 10 years.

**Simon Hoare:**

The department does not collect this information centrally.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****Public Telephones: Repairs and Maintenance****Ian Byrne:**[\[19503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with (a) BT and (b) Ofcom on the maintenance of public phone boxes.

**Ian Byrne:**[\[19504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with (a) BT and (b) Ofcom on the adequacy of the provision of public phone boxes.

**Ian Byrne:**[\[19505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with (a) BT and (b) Ofcom on the adequacy of the provision of public phone boxes in Liverpool.

**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), providers such as BT and KCOM are required to provide telephony services throughout the UK, including PCBs. BT is required to ensure the adequate provision, repair and maintenance of PCBs. Ofcom's rules and regulations regarding PCBs can be found on Ofcom's website.

As Ofcom is responsible for monitoring this requirement of telecoms companies, DSIT has not had recent discussions on this matter.



## ■ UK Research and Innovation: Social Media

**Peter Kyle:**

[19118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2024 to Question 18536 on UK Research and Innovation: Social Media, whether she has authorised the targeted collection of the views of academics on UKRI boards.

**Andrew Griffith:**

No. Due diligence is sometimes carried out by officials, at specific times, for example appointments made directly by DSIT, consistent with standard cross-government approaches.

**Peter Kyle:**

[19652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Q1 of the oral evidence given to the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee on 12 March 2024, whether her Department (a) monitors and (b) records political statements made on social media by UKRI board members.

**Andrew Griffith:**

No. Due diligence is sometimes carried out by officials, at specific times, for example appointments made directly by DSIT, consistent with standard cross-government approaches.

## SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY

## ■ Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority

**John Spellar:**

[19774]

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, what assessment the Committee has made of the effectiveness of the handling of MPs expenses claims by IPSA.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

The Speaker's Committee meets IPSA throughout the year to assess its performance, running costs and effectiveness in handling MPs' expenses. The Committee last met IPSA on 5 March 2024 and a transcript of that session is available on the Committee's website:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14403/pdf/>

In 2023, 65.3 per cent of MPs and their staff rated IPSA's service as either good or very good, which was up on this measure in 2019 when 25.1 per cent rated the service in that way. The time taken for IPSA to reimburse MPs' claims has reduced from an average of 8 days in 2020-21 to 2.6 days in 2023-24. Compliance with IPSA's scheme is currently at 99.9%.

Through its scrutiny of IPSA, the Committee is looking at the steps being taken by IPSA to help improve its effectiveness in enabling MPs and their staff to claim for expenses and business costs. IPSA's ongoing work includes:

- the development of an IPSA online portal to enhance the customer experience by improving the functionality of the system in areas such as claim and form submission;
- the greater provision of centralised services, reducing the financial and administrative burden on MPs and their staff through the centralised provision of goods and services such as constituency office leases, utilities, and equipment;
- the piloting of an online marketplace, allowing MPs and their staff to purchase goods such as office equipment centrally; and
- exploration of alternative models of reimbursement, enabling MPs and their staff to pay for business costs without the need to claim retrospectively.

The Committee plans to consider IPSA's Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24 later in the summer at which point it will assess IPSA's latest results against its performance indicators.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ A16: Lincolnshire

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[19529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve safety on the A16 in Lincolnshire.

**Guy Opperman:**

The A16 is the responsibility of local highway authorities – in this case, Lincolnshire County Council through South Holland and The Deepings. It is for those authorities to assess the benefits of improvements to areas of their networks, and to seek funding, if required.

Almost £20 million from the Levelling Up Fund has been allocated to improve the A16 corridor between Boston and Spalding, and Lincolnshire County Council has recently been allocated just over £262 million from the Local Transport Fund to improve the connections that people rely on every day.

### ■ Community Transport: Finance

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[19471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of allocating additional funding for volunteer led community transport schemes.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department makes available over £3 million each year to community transport operators through the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), supporting them to continue delivering inclusive and accessible transport across the country.

An uplift of 60% has been added to BSOG claims for community transport operators until 31 March 2025. This means operators will receive £1.60 for every £1 claimed, reflecting the increased costs faced by the sector.

We also encourage Local Transport Authorities to engage with community transport operators when preparing their Bus Service Improvement Plans which are vital in setting out an areas' long term plans for bus services and how they will be improved.

The bus fare cap, only available in England, has proven popular with bus passengers in communities across England, particularly in rural and non-metropolitan areas, where our statistics show the overall price of bus fares between September 2022 and September 2023 dropped by almost 11%.

Our £20 million Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) in England, also devolved, is supporting 16 innovative, demand-led minibus trials in rural and suburban areas across 16 local authorities in England. These pilots are exploring whether Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) can serve these communities more effectively than traditional public transport solutions alone.

**■ Darlington Station: Finance****Peter Gibson:**[\[19999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact on the economy of investment in Darlington railway station.

**Huw Merriman:**

The decision to provide £105m of Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) funding to deliver the Darlington Station Enhancements scheme was taken not only due to the direct journey time and reliability improvements it will provide to rail users, but also the result of the wider economic benefits it will generate for Darlington and the region, resulting from increased productivity.

These benefits will be further enhanced through complementary investment from Tees Valley Combined Authority, who are utilising a number of funding streams – including the Active Travel England Fund – to improve the public realm surrounding the station.

**■ East West Rail Line****Chi Onwurah:**[\[19872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of East West Rail on science and technology activities in locations on that route.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Government has a strong desire to maintain and enhance our position as a global science and technology superpower and we recognise the importance of the Oxford-Cambridge region as a globally renowned hub of science, research and innovation, with businesses and universities that are leading the way in life sciences, space and green technologies. At the East West Rail Route Update Announcement in May 2023, it was reconfirmed that East West Rail would approach to Cambridge from the south, serving the new Cambridge South station, and promoting greater economic growth given the proximity of the Biomedical Campus to Cambridge South station.

■ **Freight****Andrew Lewer:**[\[19166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on identifying a National Freight Network.

**Guy Opperman:**

We are making good progress. The Government's current focus is on building stronger data and analysis of freight as a multi-modal system. We will be engaging with the freight and logistics sector as the work to identify a National Freight Network develops.

■ **High Speed 2 Line: Compulsory Purchase****Sarah Green:**[\[19743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors on allegations in relation to agents working on behalf of HS2's property acquisition team.

**Huw Merriman:**

Officials in the Department engaged on HS2-related land and property matters meet periodically with their counterparts in RICS to update each other and to discuss issues of mutual interest. The conduct of RICS members generally and the oversight of professional standards by RICS is one issue that has been discussed, although those discussions have not narrowed to consider specifically the conduct of RICS members employed by or otherwise contracted to HS2 Ltd. Neither the Department nor HS2 Ltd has received any notification of an investigation by RICS into HS2 Ltd or its suppliers. The Department and HS2 Ltd would always give RICS their full support in the event of any allegations being raised.

**Sarah Green:**[\[19744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure good practice by agents working for HS2's property acquisition team.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department expects any agent contracted to HS2 Ltd to maintain high professional standards. As members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

(RICS), HS2 Ltd's suppliers must adhere to the RICS rules of conduct and any RICS professional statements relevant to the advice they provide. HS2 Ltd continuously monitors supplier performance through regular case review meetings and supplier relationship management meetings.

## ■ Local Transport Fund

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[19481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his planned timetable is for providing local authorities (a) information on (i) funding profiles and (ii) conditions and (b) guidance on spending for funding allocated through the Local Transport Fund.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department is working with His Majesty's Treasury to agree the funding profile for the Local Transport Fund as well as the split between capital and revenue funding. The Department will provide advice for local transport authorities shortly on the scope, process and accountability framework for the new funding, to ensure that local authorities can develop delivery plans to make the most of it.

## ■ London North Eastern Railway: Fares

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[19869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with London North Eastern Railway on the trial of the Simpler Fares pilot scheme.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[19870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to respond to feedback from passengers on the London North Eastern Railway Simpler Fares pilot scheme.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[19871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the London North Eastern Railway Simpler Fares pilot scheme on the average cost to passengers.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department supported LNER to introduce its Simpler Fares trial and officials regularly meet with LNER to discuss progress. During the trial, the majority of passengers will find fixed or semi flexible fares to be the same or cheaper than the old super off-peak fare, and there will be more fixed fares available than before. LNER estimate as of 6th February that 55% of semi flexible tickets sold were cheaper than the old super off peak ticket.

The trial will be evaluated to understand its impact on passengers, and gather passenger feedback. The evaluation will be published in due course.

## ■ North Road (Darlington) Station

**Peter Gibson:**

[\[19965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to help preserve the historic character of North Road Station during works to increase the stepping distance between the platform and the train.

**Huw Merriman:**

The station is still under consideration for Northern's ongoing platform improvement programme, but all issues and aspects of the station are being assessed which will include the historic character.

## ■ P&O Ferries

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on implementing its nine-point plan in relation to P&O ferries since July 2022.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government has made substantial progress in implementing the Nine Point Plan. This includes:

- Bringing in the Seafarers' Wages Act, which will ensure that those working on ships operating a regular international service from the UK are paid at least an equivalent to the National Minimum Wage while in UK waters. This will help to reduce the financial benefit of employing seafarers from far afield on worse terms and conditions. The Act is expected to come into force in the summer alongside French legislation which together will form a minimum wage corridor across the Dover strait, backed by law on both sides.
- Introducing a statutory Code of Practice to address 'fire and rehire' practices, aiming to ensure employees are properly consulted and treated fairly. Employment tribunals will be able to increase employee compensation by 25% if an employer unreasonably fails to comply.
- Launching the Seafarers' Charter, with Brittany Ferries, Condor, DFDS, Stena Line and now P&O Ferries committing to work towards meeting its requirements. These include paying seafarers at least an equivalent to the national minimum wage throughout their engagement, having 2 week on / 2 week off tours of duty as a baseline on high-intensity routes, and providing adequate training and development opportunities.

We continue to work to improve seafarer welfare in the UK and around the world.

## ■ Railways: Passengers

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[19317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the accuracy of projected future rail passenger volumes made by consultancy Steer in its report entitled Research on Long-Term Passenger Demand Growth, published on 19 February 2024.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department is aware and has reviewed the report entitled Research on Long-Term Passenger Demand Growth by Steer. Rail demand is uncertain – especially over the long term. DfT produces a range of different future rail demand and revenue scenarios in line with our published guidance which have a number of uses including supporting investment decisions. The projections produced by RIA/Steer are not aligned methodologically with the Department's Common Analytical Scenarios (CAS).

**Railways: Shrewsbury****Helen Morgan:**[\[19748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with Avanti West Coast on the withdrawal of the direct Euston to Shrewsbury service.

**Huw Merriman:**

Department officials routinely engage with Avanti and its Owing Group over many areas, including timetabling decisions.

The Department specifies the train services to be operated by train companies including Avanti West Coast through National Rail Contracts. As part of industry wide efforts to align timetables to changing demand patterns and restore the financial stability of the railway, the Government asked all operators to present cost saving options. Due to very low passenger numbers, the service between Shrewsbury and London is currently operating at a loss of £1.4 million per year. We cannot ask taxpayers to maintain the historically high level of financial support for the industry indefinitely, so the service will be withdrawn from June 2024. West Midlands Railway (WMR) and Transport for Wales provide sufficient capacity for passengers between Shrewsbury and Birmingham, and the Department has agreed that WMR will introduce a second hourly Birmingham to Shrewsbury semi-fast service in June 2024 to operate via the Stour Valley and provide quicker journey time between Shropshire towns and Birmingham.

**Roads: Repairs and Maintenance****Gen Kitchen:**[\[19514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of trends in the levels of pothole repair funding.

**Gen Kitchen:**[\[19515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 4.12 of the Spring Budget 2024, HC 560, whether recent funding allocated to pothole repairs will be used to help motorists report potholes.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government has announced, as part of the Prime Minister's Network North plan, that an additional £8.3 billion will be provided to local highway authorities across England over the period 2023/24 to 2033/34 to enable them to maintain and resurface local roads. £150 million of this additional funding has been made available



to local authorities in 2023/24 and a further £150 million will be made available in 2024/25. This uplift, in addition to the £200 million funding increase announced in the 2023 Spring Budget, means that local highway authorities across England, including North Northamptonshire, are receiving around 30% more highway maintenance capital grant funding in the 2023/24 financial year than in the previous financial year.

The funding is for the resurfacing of carriageways, cycleways and footways to prevent potholes and other road defects from occurring, as well as to help keep local bridges and other highway structures open and safe. It is up to the respective highway authority how best to spend it to fulfil their statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.

Motorists can already report potholes and other road defects through their respective local highway authority websites. The additional funding will enable local authorities to do more to tackle potholes and other problems reported by motorists. The Department has asked all local highway authorities to publish details of how the additional funding is being spent, and these reports should already be on authorities' websites. This will help raise awareness of highway maintenance issues and may encourage more road users to report potholes.

#### ■ **Shipping: Carbon Emissions**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[19810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Operation Zero steering board meetings were there in 2023; and how long each meeting lasted.

**Guy Opperman:**

In 2023, the Operation Zero Steering Board met three times, with each meeting lasting two hours.

#### ■ **Shipping: Conditions of Employment**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of shipping companies on the working conditions of seafarers.

**Guy Opperman:**

Seafarer welfare is a priority for the Government and Ministers regularly discuss this with maritime stakeholders. Most recently, on 19 March Lord Davies met the Chief Executive of Brittany Ferries, one of the five major international ferry companies operating from the UK that has committed to working towards meeting the requirements of the Seafarer's Charter.



### ■ **Speed Limits: Cameras**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[19684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to allocate additional (a) funding and (b) resources to local authorities for the (i) installation and (ii) maintenance of new speed enforcement technologies.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department for Transport provides funds direct to local authorities which could be used for a range of road safety purposes. The use of any funds is a decision for the local authority, in discussion with the relevant police force.

### ■ **Unadopted Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[19852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department are taking to enforce the repair of potholes by owners of unadopted roads where such damage poses a danger to (a) traffic and (b) the public.

**Guy Opperman:**

This is a matter for local highway authorities.

Under the 1980 Highways Act, the highway authority is responsible for the management of those streets that have been adopted by it, or its predecessor authorities. A road that is not maintained at public expense by a highway authority is known as a private street, as defined by Section 203(2) of the Act. The responsibility for management of private streets generally rests with those who own properties that either front onto or border the street concerned (known as “frontagers”).

Under section 230 of the 1980 Highways Act the local highway authority has the power, without commitment to adoption, to require the frontagers of a private street to carry out urgent repairs, within in a set time limit, to prevent danger to road users or the public. This is, however, entirely a matter for local authorities.

## TREASURY

### ■ **Child Benefit: Carers**

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[19306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason kinship carers can only claim the lower rate of Child Benefit if they already have children for whom they claim Child Benefit; and if he will take steps to review this policy.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The higher rate of Child Benefit can only be paid for the eldest child. It is intended to help all families with children, acknowledging the impact on a family's finances of the arrival of a child/children in the family. The arrival of a child for the first time may mean for instance that many parents have to give up work altogether or work reduced

hours. When Child Benefit ends for the eldest child, the higher rate becomes payable for the next eldest child. The government keeps all policies under review in the usual way.

Financial support for kinship carers is paid at the discretion of the local authority and in accordance with their model for assessing support needs. There is no limit on the level of support, including financial support, that local authorities can provide. The local authority should have in place clear eligibility criteria in relation to the provision of support services.

### ■ **Cost of Living: Disability**

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[19404\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to provide financial support for disabled people with the rise in the cost of living.

**Bim Afolami:**

The government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting the most vulnerable. Over the last two years, the government has provided support to help households with the cost of living totalling £96 billion – an average of £3400 per UK household.

Individuals who incur extra cost due to a long-term health conditions or disability may be eligible for Personal Independence Payment, which can be worth over £8,900 per year. This has been complemented in recent years with two £150 Disability Cost of Living Payments, to help the most vulnerable through the period of high inflation.

### ■ **Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Smuggling**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[19921\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many full time equivalent staff are dedicated to the work of the Illicit Tobacco Taskforce; how often will the taskforce meet; has the taskforce met to date; whether illicit vaping products will be included as part of its remit; and what recent estimate has he made of losses in tax revenue from the illicit trade in (a) tobacco and (b) vaping products in each of the last 10 years.

**Gareth Davies:**

We plan to establish the taskforce during 2024/25. We are not yet able to give details on meeting frequency or staff numbers.

### ■ **Empty Property: Business Rates**

**James Murray:**

[\[19972\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to question 1 of his Department's consultation on business rates avoidance and evasion, published in July 2023, and to page 37 of his Department's publication entitled, Spring Budget 2024: Policy Costings, published in March 2024, whether his Department made an estimate of the Exchequer impact of extending the reset period for empty property relief to six months.

**James Murray:**

[\[19973\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to question 1 of his Department's consultation on business rates avoidance and evasion, published in July 2023, and to page 37 of his Department's publication entitled, Spring Budget 2024: Policy Costings, published in March 2024, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the reset period for empty property relief to six months.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Responses to the Business Rates Avoidance and Evasion consultation made clear that avoidance of business rates through abuse of Empty Property Relief (EPR) is an area we need to take action on. Most respondents, and all those from local government, agreed that extending the EPR 'reset period' is an effective means of reducing rates avoidance. Extending the reset period to 13 weeks will help ensure a level playing field between ratepayers while maintaining support for landlords while they seek new tenants for vacant properties.

**James Murray:**

[\[19974\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 37 of his Department's publication entitled, Spring Budget 2024: Policy Costings, published in March 2024, if he will publish the figures used by his Department for the size of the tax base in calculating those costings.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The policy costing was based on data reflecting business rates receipts and reliefs as reported by local authorities in the National Non-Domestic Rates forms, which are publicly available on the gov.uk website.

## ■ Export Controls

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[19289\]](#)

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, which countries the 157 end-use cases where non-listed items were prevented from leaving the UK and brought within export controls were destined for; what those items were; and how many items were affected.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We do not put the detail you have requested in the public domain because its disclosure may prejudice operational detection and prevention capabilities.

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[19293\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy for strategic export controls annual reports to provide separate figures for voluntary disclosures and seizures in relation to (a) strategic export restrictions and (b) trade sanctions.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

HMRC will take this request away for consideration.

## ■ Financial Services: Learning Disability

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [19405]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to increase the financial inclusion of people with a learning disability.

**Bim Afolami:**

The Government aims to ensure that all people have access to useful and affordable financial products and services. To promote financial inclusion, the Government works closely with the regulators and stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors.

The FCA's vulnerability guidance requires firms to identify vulnerable customers, which can include those with a learning disability, and to consider the needs of these customers appropriately.

The Consumer Duty builds on this work by raising the standard expected from firms for all customers with a focus on delivering good outcomes and preventing harm.

## ■ Financial Services: Standards

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [19809]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to publish a report on the impact of Consumer Duty on consumer contact with financial services firms in the 12 months since it's establishment.

**Bim Afolami:**

The Government has no plans to publish a report on the impact of the Consumer Duty.

The Consumer Duty was introduced by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), which is operationally independent from Government and is directly accountable to Parliament for how it carries out its functions. The FCA has committed to monitoring the outcomes experienced by different consumer groups, including those in vulnerable circumstances, to check they are not being disadvantaged as a result of the Duty. It also publishes information about the implementation of the Consumer Duty by firms, including examples of good practice and areas for improvement, on its website: <https://www.fca.org.uk/firms/consumer-duty>

The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 introduced a new requirement on the financial services regulators to keep their rules under review, and to publish a statement of policy for how they conduct rule reviews. The FCA's rule review framework can be found at: <https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/corporate-documents/our-rule-review-framework>.

## ■ Housing: Valuation

**Paul Howell:**

[\[19499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2024 to Question 16860 on Housing: Valuation, which already available data from third parties was used for the model development.

**Paul Howell:**

[\[19500\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2024 to Question 16860, on Housing: Valuation, whether the Valuation Office Agency plans to collect additional (a) dwelling house codes and (b) value significant codes in addition to those used in England for the model.

**Paul Howell:**

[\[19501\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2024 to Question 16860 on Housing: Valuation, how many value estimates have been produced using the Valuation Office Agency's automated valuation model.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Welsh Government has commissioned the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to carry out a revaluation of all domestic property in Wales. To facilitate this, the VOA has built an Automated Valuation Model which has produced values for 1.46 million properties.

The following external datasets were used:

- Land Registry Price Paid data to supplement VOA sales data
- Land Registry Title Polygons and Ordnance Survey National Geographic Database for plot sizes for houses
- Ordnance Survey Master Map for building footprints for houses
- House Price Index to adjust sales in time
- National Statistics Postcode Lookup (NSPL) to incorporate Census Geography
- Ordnance Survey AddressBase Premium for latest property coordinate data
- Energy Performance Certificates

Additionally, as part of model development, sales verification was undertaken. VOA staff used a range of available data, such as aerial and street view photography, sales particulars, EPC certificates and Local Authority Planning websites to verify the usefulness of the sale.

The VOA has not collected additional codes over and above those already used within England and Wales.

I would observe that this is a policy proposed by the Labour Welsh Government, and does not represent the policy position of the UK Government in England.

**■ Motor Vehicles: Exports****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[19430]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department is taking steps to monitor the end destination of vehicle exports to ensure compliance with international sanctions.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

HMRC is responsible for the civil and criminal enforcement of export controls and trade sanctions which fall within its customs remit. In addition, for certain trade sanctions outside its customs, HMRC enforces under criminal law on referral from a civil enforcement body.

At UK ports and airports, HMRC in partnership with Border Force carries out targeted risk and intelligence-based checks to ensure traders are compliant with sanction measures and identify breaches.

HMRC takes breaches of sanctions seriously and undertakes a preliminary investigation into all credible allegations of Trade Sanctions offences.

Options for tackling breaches of export controls or sanctions range from the issuing of written warnings, through to compound settlements and, in the most serious cases, referral to the UK Prosecution Authorities for consideration of criminal prosecution.

**■ National Insurance Contributions: Personal Income****Stephen Morgan:****[19161]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department conducted distributional analysis of the impact of the reduction to National Insurance contributions announced in the Spring Budget 2024 on people in different income brackets.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

HM Treasury published distributional analysis at Spring Budget 2024, which can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e83ed008eef600115a5660/Impact\\_on\\_households\\_-\\_SB24\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e83ed008eef600115a5660/Impact_on_households_-_SB24_FINAL.pdf)

**■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services****Catherine West:****[19655]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an equality impact assessment of the decision to close the HMRC helpline between April and September each year.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

HMRC conducted a full Equalities Impact Assessment regarding the planned closure of the Self Assessment helpline between 8 April and 30 September 2024. However, HMRC has halted this plan while it engages with stakeholders about how to ensure

all taxpayers' needs are met as the Department shifts more people to online self-service.

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[19732\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will introduce alternative arrangements for HMRC to answer calls during the self-assessment telephone helpline closure between 8 April and 30 September 2024.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

HMRC has halted its planned changes to the Self Assessment, VAT and PAYE telephone helplines between April and September 2024 while it engages with stakeholders about how to ensure all taxpayers' needs are met as the Department shifts more people to online self-service.

HMRC encourages customers to use its online services and the HMRC App where they can. These offer quicker and easier handling of most transactions and queries.

However, for those who are vulnerable, digitally excluded, or have complex tax affairs, HMRC's helpline and webchat advisers will remain available to provide the necessary support.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ **Cancer: Children and Young People**

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[19988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of financial support available for carers of children and young people with cancer for (a) travel costs, (b) energy bills, (c) accommodation and (d) dietary requirements.

**Mims Davies:**

The Government recognises and appreciates the vital role unpaid carers play in caring for, and supporting, members of their own family.

Providing they meet the entitlement conditions, unpaid carers of children and young people with cancer may be able to receive Carer's Allowance and/or an extra amount in means tested benefits, including Universal Credit. Carer's Allowance provides a measure of financial support and recognition for people who are not able to work full time because of their caring responsibilities. The extra amounts in means tested benefits at least partly recognise the additional costs associated with providing unpaid care.

Disability benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance for children and Personal Independence Payment, are available as a contribution towards the extra costs of being disabled and recipients are free to choose how they spend them.



**Helen Morgan:** [\[19989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of applications for Carer's allowance that have been delayed for people caring for a child with cancer as a result of delayed (a) Personal Independence Payments and (b) Disability Living Allowance for the child or young person being cared for.

**Helen Morgan:** [\[19990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing carers of children and young people with cancer to apply for Carer's Allowance prior to the child or young person being cared for receiving the associated disability benefit.

**Mims Davies:**

The information requested on the number of delayed applications is not collected and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

It is a long standing principle that Carer's Allowance can only be awarded once a decision has been made to award the "trigger" disability benefit to the person being cared for, but the award of Carer's Allowance can be backdated to the date that the disability benefit is payable from.

**Helen Morgan:** [\[19991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the change to annual income that families experience as a result of (a) a child or young person receiving a cancer diagnosis and (b) their associated caring responsibilities.

**Mims Davies:**

No such estimate has been made.

## ■ Children: Maintenance

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[19185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Complex Needs Toolkit is used by the Child Maintenance Service.

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[19186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish the best practice guidance provided to Child Maintenance Service caseworkers for (a) complex cases and (b) cases involving domestic abuse.

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[19187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish the training (a) programme and (b) objectives for Child Maintenance Service caseworkers relating to (i) identifying and (ii) supporting victims of domestic abuse.

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

**[19188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what is the (a) average and (b) longest time for a Child Maintenance Service caseworker to be in post before receiving training on supporting families with experience of domestic abuse.

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

**[19189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that Child Maintenance Service caseworkers use a trauma informed approach to deal with (a) complex cases and (b) cases involving domestic abuse.

**Paul Maynard:**

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) takes the issue of domestic abuse extremely seriously and is committed to ensuring that victims of abuse get the help and support they need to use the Service safely.

CMS has a Complex Needs Toolkit for its caseworkers, which includes clear steps to follow to support customers who are experiencing abuse. To improve the quality of the information we provide our customers, from 1 April we will start using the DWP District Provision Tool (DPT) and retire the Complex Needs Toolkit. The DPT contains the most up to date information for customer help and support across England, Scotland, and Wales.

CMS refreshed its approach and understanding of domestic abuse to include financial and coercive control and better awareness of how this affects all genders. A Domestic Abuse Plan has been developed which outlines key steps for caseworkers to follow to ensure victims of domestic abuse are supported. This includes advice on contacting the police if the parent is in immediate danger. Caseworkers can also call the police on behalf of the parent if requested to do so. As well as The Domestic Abuse Plan, CMS responds to cases involving domestic abuse in several ways, including by acting as an intermediary in Direct Pay cases, and providing advice on how to set up bank accounts with a centralised sort code to limit the risk of a parent's location being traced. There are no plans to publish The Domestic Abuse Plan as it is a tool within CMS instructions for caseworkers to follow.

We reviewed domestic abuse training in 2021 to ensure caseworkers are equipped to support parents in vulnerable situations. This included reviewing the Home Office's updated statutory guidance on coercive and controlling behaviour to ensure CMS staff are equipped to recognise this form of domestic abuse and signpost parents appropriately. In November 2023, a range of external stakeholders were invited to two workshops and were provided with an overview of the current CMS domestic abuse training to ensure it is in line with best practice. This opportunity allowed stakeholders to offer insight and feedback which can help feed into the evolution of future domestic abuse training. We are currently consulting with a range of external organisations and charities to help us enhance and modernise our learning to incorporate the broadest and most up to date information about dealing with victims and survivors of abuse. There are no plans to publish the training programme.

We have a comprehensive learning journey for established and new colleagues. Domestic abuse training is covered in the second week of colleagues joining CMS to ensure colleagues have the knowledge and tools available to support customers.

Through extensive Stakeholder engagement and the evolution of domestic abuse training, CMS continues to evolve and make positive changes to the way we deliver our service in order to support our caseworkers; including developing a trauma informed approach to complex cases and cases involving domestic abuse .

We commenced trialling the use of a single, named case worker team to help ensure victims of domestic abuse are appropriately supported. Evaluation of the trial has commenced, and this will inform the future service offer for survivors of domestic abuse. Additionally, CMS has processes to ensure there is no unwanted contact between parents and provides advice on bank accounts with a centralised sort code so their location cannot be traced. We act as an intermediary in Direct Pay cases to facilitate the exchange of bank details, which helps to ensure no personal information is shared between parents. The Service also signposts to appropriate charities and support lines.

The Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act received Royal Assent on 28 June 2023 following a Private Members Bill that had full Government support. The Act will allow for a CMS to place a child maintenance case onto the Collect & Pay service where it is requested by either parent, and there is evidence of domestic abuse against the requesting parent or children in their household by the other parent involved in the case. The Act is reliant on secondary legislation required to implement the measures in the Act and set out the procedures and evidence requirements. We have announced a consultation to seek views on how the CMS collects and transfers maintenance in response to the Domestic Abuse Act receiving royal assent. We are in the process of finalising the details of the consultation and aim to publish it as soon as possible.

## ■ Children: Maintenance and Universal Credit

**Richard Foord:**

**[19228]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the number of people in receipt of both Child Maintenance payments and Universal Credit.

**Paul Maynard:**

At the end of the quarter ending September 2023, 353,000 Receiving Parents were also claiming Universal Credit.

Please note that Child Maintenance payments are not considered during the calculation of Universal Credit and Figures have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.

## ■ Debts

**Dame Siobhain McDonagh:**

[\[18963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information his Department holds on trends in the number of people with problem debt; and if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of those trends.

**Paul Maynard:**

DWP Debt Management holds information on people owing monies to DWP (benefit debt recovery) but does not hold data on general, personal/household indebtedness.

Problem debt statistics are published by the Office for National Statistics.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Mental Health

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what training (a) he has and (b) other Ministers in his Department have had in mental health literacy.

**Paul Maynard:**

Ministers are not required to undertake specific mental health literacy training.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure his Department's (a) policy and (b) other staff have comprehensive training in mental health.

**Paul Maynard:**

DWP is actively taking steps to increase staff capability and raising awareness of the mental health difficulties that may be experienced by our customers, ensuring they can be directed to further support at any stage of the claimant journey.

We continually review our learning alongside external experts and psychologists to enhance the mental health training offer. The learning is mandatory and aims to help our colleagues better support claimants who may present with mental health issues/unexpected behaviour by exploring their impact on customers, the steps needed to build relationships and learning how to respond appropriately to customers' needs.

All colleagues in customer contact roles will receive this learning by March 2025, and the learning is included in new entrant learning for colleagues in these roles. As of the end of February 2024, we have delivered the learning to 62,291 colleagues, with a further 20,399 colleagues due to receive the learning before the rollout is completed.

All DWP colleagues have access to support and resources relating to mental health.

■ **Disability**

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[19669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Disability Action Plan, published in February 2024, what steps his Department is taking to help with the extra financial costs associated with disability when standing for elected office.

**Mims Davies:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ[15196](#) on 29 February.

■ **Disability: North East**

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[19874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of the working age population are disabled in the North East; and how many and what proportion were disabled in 2010.

**Mims Davies:**

The information requested is shown in the table below.

The definition of disability changed in 2013 therefore estimates for 2010 and 2022 are not directly comparable.

**Number and percentage of disabled people aged 16 to 64 by country/region**

	COUNTRY/ REGION	2010		2022
Number of disabled people	Percentage of disabled people	Number of disabled people	Percentage of disabled people	
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>8,257,200</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>9,311,800</b>	<b>22.4</b>
<b>North East</b>	<b>399,400</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>429,500</b>	<b>26.4</b>
North West	1,012,200	22.5	1,111,300	24.7
Yorkshire and The Humber	738,500	21.9	818,200	24.2
East Midlands	629,200	21.8	712,500	24.1
West Midlands	720,900	20.5	819,300	22.6
East	729,400	19.9	790,200	20.8

	COUNTRY/ REGION	2010		2022
London	935,500	16.9	1,092,600	17.7
South East	992,100	18.3	1,144,800	20.4
South West	653,600	20.0	766,900	22.9
Wales	469,200	24.4	506,600	26.5
Scotland	746,500	21.9	861,200	25.0
Northern Ireland	230,700	19.9	258,700	22.1

Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - [Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/)

Notes:

- Numbers are rounded to the nearest 100 and percentages to one decimal place.
- Totals may not always sum due to rounding and the exclusion of missing, unknown and not applicable categories.
- Numbers shown are central estimates and subject to sampling variation. The precision of these estimates will be limited by sample size.
- Annual Population Survey data has not been reweighted to incorporate the latest estimates of the size and composition of the UK population.
- Estimates for 2010 are based on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) definition of disability. Estimates for 2022 use the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Harmonised Standard definition.

## ■ Employment Schemes: Advertising

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

**[19657]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much his Department has spent on advertising the Back to Work Plan since November 2023 by advertising method.

**Jo Churchill:**

To date, the Department has not spent anything on advertising the Back to Work Plan.

**■ Employment: Mental Health****Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[19978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Health and Safety Executive employees are dedicated to mental health related workplace matters.

**Paul Maynard:**

Information on the work and resourcing within Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is not available in the format requested.

**■ Maternity Pay: Small Businesses****Darren Jones:**[\[19428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to encourage small businesses to provide statutory maternity pay to employees; and whether he has discussions with industry on this.

**Paul Maynard:**

All employers have a statutory obligation to pay Statutory Maternity Pay to eligible employees. Employers are reimbursed at least 92 percent of the Statutory Maternity Pay they pay. Small employers (those who pay £45,000 or less gross NICs in the previous tax year) receive 100 percent of the Statutory Maternity Pay paid plus an additional 3 percent, known as the Small Employers' Compensation Rate. This is in recognition of the relatively greater impact maternity absence has on small businesses.

Employers may apply for advance funding from HMRC if they are unable to meet their SMP liability at the required time.

DWP officials regularly meet with industry representatives to discuss Statutory Maternity Pay.

**■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Health Services****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[19407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 15 March 2024 to Question 17902, how many individual Musculoskeletal Physical Activity Hubs will be created as a result of the £12 million a year allocated as part of the 2023 Spring Budget.

**Mims Davies:**

The DHSC/DWP Joint Work and Health Directorate is actively exploring opportunities to increase access to, and hence the number of, MSK Physical Activity Hubs in the Community, and enhancing the interventions on offer by embedding vocational support and rehabilitation services. This includes how to maximise access for people with greatest unmet MSK need and people with MSK conditions living in areas of deprivation. We are exploring how to improve referral pathways so where appropriate

people with MSK conditions get easier access. This will help inform new models of delivery and our thinking on scale.

We are currently undertaking extensive stakeholder engagement and anticipate publishing our approach over the next few months.

## ■ Pensions: Young People

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[19353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he is taking steps to encourage young people under the age of 18 to opt in to pensions.

**Paul Maynard:**

The 2017 Review of Automatic Enrolment (AE) sets out our ambition to reduce the qualifying age for AE below 22, so that younger workers can begin to save as soon as they join the labour market.

The government supported the Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) Act 2023 which gives us the legislative powers to implement this expansion of AE subject to consultation with employers and workers. Government is committed to make this change in the mid-2020s.

In the meantime, the current AE framework allows workers who are not automatic enrolled to opt-in to a workplace pension, including those below age 22, and many employers already choose to enrol those workers.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[19455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper, published on 16 March 2023, what progress his Department has made on testing matching a Personal Independent Payment applicant's primary health condition to a specialist assessor; and when he plans to publish the findings.

**Mims Davies:**

The Health and Disability White Paper, published in March 2023, set out ambitious and extensive reforms to further support disabled people including exploring the initiative referred to as "Specialist Assessors".

As the term "specialist" has a very specific meaning in a medical context, the decision has been made to rename the initiative to "Condition Focused Assessors" to avoid misalignment with clinical definitions. The ambition and intent of the initiative remains the same.

In September 2023, we began a small-scale test matching certain PIP claimants' primary health condition to an existing healthcare professional (HCP) with relevant clinical experience. This test ran until January 2024, at which point it was expanded to cover claimants with multiple conditions.



We continue to work closely with key stakeholders and support organisations as we progress our testing. Initial exploratory research will be published later this year. The Health Transformation Programme looks to publish evaluation when services are suitably developed, and when findings are robust and provide a representative picture of our progress.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[19457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he has taken to inform recipients of the (a) limited capability for work-related activity element of Universal Credit and (b) Employment and Support Allowance support group of their potential entitlement to Personal Independence Payment.

**Mims Davies:**

DWP Work Coaches and Disability Advisers can signpost and support claimants who may be eligible for other benefits. Signposting is also performed by Citizens Advice Bureau, Disability Groups, healthcare professionals and Welfare Rights organisations.

Information for those who want to know more about DWP benefits is also available on GOV.UK and via social media.

## ■ Protective Clothing: Safety

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[19158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many investigations into (a) all and (b) ill-fitting personal protective equipment the Health and Safety Executive has undertaken in each year since 2018.

**Paul Maynard:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) does not categorise investigations by breach and is unable to provide a breakdown of investigations by breaches of specific regulations.

## ■ Social Security Benefits

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[19200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the total revenue accrued by the Exchequer since the introduction of the benefit cap; and how many and what proportion of households are impacted in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales, (iv) Northern Ireland and (v) each parliamentary constituency in the latest period for which data is available.

**Jo Churchill:**

Since the introduction of the benefit cap in April 2013 to November 2023 (the latest data available) an estimated £2.2 billion has been accrued in Housing Benefit (HB) and Universal Credit (UC) expenditure in Great Britain due to the benefit cap.

Official statistics on the number and proportion of working-age households in receipt of UC and HB who are capped up to November 2023 are available on Stat-Xplore for

the requested geographies. Official Statistics on the total number of households in Great Britain on HB or UC for the same geographies are also available on Stat-Xplore up to November 2023. You can log in or access [Stat-Xplore](#) as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

Benefit cap statistics for Northern Ireland are published by the [Department for Communities](#).

**Notes:**

Source: Benefit Cap Official Statistics up to Nov-23 published in Mar-24

- Total savings are rounded to the nearest £100m
- UC data is only available from October 2016 and for UC Full Service cases only
- Figures do not include households capped in UC Live Service and so this figure will represent a small undercount of the total savings

■ **Social Security Benefits: Children**

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[19202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of households impacted by the two child limit where one adult is in work in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales, (d) Northern Ireland and (e) each parliamentary constituency.

**Jo Churchill:**

The requested information is provided in the attached spreadsheet.

**Attachments:**

1. Attachment [19202 Attachment.xlsx]

■ **Social Security Benefits: Disqualification**

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[20048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of how many of his Department's staff are involved in sanctions (a) referral, (b) decision making, (c) administration and (d) appeals.

**Jo Churchill:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Fraud**

**Darren Jones:**

[\[19427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he has taken to ensure benefit fraud investigations do not result in discrimination.

**Paul Maynard:**

All fraud investigations are conducted in line with current legislation including Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984.

All staff in the department undergo Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) training. The training is provided to ensure everyone has the right level of skill and understanding to ensure equality of treatment for all customers.

**Ben Lake:**[\[19927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that the use of AI in benefit fraud investigations does not discriminate against vulnerable people.

**Paul Maynard:**

The Department does not use AI in its benefit fraud investigations.

**■ Social Security Benefits: Long Covid****Ellie Reeves:**[\[19673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of the eligibility criteria for people with long covid to access (a) Universal Credit and (b) Employment and Support Allowance.

**Mims Davies:**

No assessment has been made.

People living with a condition arising from exposure to the Covid-19 virus can access the financial support that is available through Statutory Sick Pay, Universal Credit, New Style ESA or Pension Credit depending on individual circumstances.

Disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance do not include or exclude by condition, instead they look at the needs arising from a long-term health condition or disability. Therefore people living with a condition arising from exposure to the Covid-19 virus are also able to access these benefits in the same way as other people with long-term conditions or disabilities.

**■ State Retirement Pensions: Women****Chi Onwurah:**[\[19875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department plans to formally respond to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report into the communication of state pension age increases, published on 21 March 2024.

**Paul Maynard:**

We are considering the Ombudsman's report and will respond in due course.

**Claire Hanna:**[\[19979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to introduce a compensation scheme for women affected by the Pensions Act 1995.

**Paul Maynard:**

We are considering the Ombudsman's report and will respond in due course.

■ **Unemployment: Mental Health**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has he made of the potential merits of taking a nurturing and trauma-informed approach to people with mental health challenges who are not in employment.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[19901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 are taken into account when developing policies on support for people with mental health challenges.

**Mims Davies:**

The DWP is proudly committed to becoming a more Trauma Informed organisation. The potential merits of the adoption of the Trauma Informed Approach into DWP services, will benefit all customers including those with mental ill health who are unemployed. Adopting the principles of the approach into the core of our business will help us to ensure that anyone interacting with our services feels as safe, empowered and understood as possible; this will underpin our ongoing commitment to compassionate coaching and tailored services.

We have a dedicated programme which will integrate the six key pillars of the approach as defined by the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities (December, 2022) which are safety, trustworthiness, choice, empowerment, collaboration and cultural consideration. Our programme looks at these six pillars within the contexts of application to our colleagues, our customers, our culture, and the context of our interaction- whether that is a physical, telephony, digital or postal interaction. There is significant emphasis within the design of the programme regarding what more can be done to prevent trauma and re-traumatisation for both our customers and our colleagues. We are learning from best practice demonstrated by organisations such as NHS Education Scotland, Work Services Australia and the Wales ACES Hub to shape the future prioritisation of this work.

When developing policies, the Department routinely carries out assessments against the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that due regard is given to our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

■ **Universal Credit: Armed Forces**

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[18973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the answer of 13 March 2024, to Question 16599 on Universal Credit: Armed Forces, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of verifying the self-reported armed forces status of universal credit claimants.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department has no plans to change the self-reported armed forces status for universal credit claimants. Our general approach is to trust the information provided to us by individuals and it is unclear what benefits checking this information would bring, particularly as it may place additional burdens on the claimants and departments concerned.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Special Educational Needs: Standards

**Ashley Dalton:**

**[3387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure equitable standards of SEND provision in (a) urban and (b) rural communities.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 27 November 2023. The correct answer should have been:**

**David Johnston:**

In the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan, published in March 2023, the department set out plans to build a consistent national SEND and AP system which parents and carers can trust, easily navigate, and have confidence in, whether they live in an urban or rural area.

The foundation for the new nationally consistent SEND and AP system will be new evidenced-based National Standards for early and accurate identification of need, and timely access to support to meet those needs. The standards will include clarifying the types of support that should be ordinarily available in mainstream settings and who is responsible for securing the support.

This will help families, practitioners and providers understand what support every child or young person should be receiving from early years through to further education, no matter where they live or what their needs are. By the end of 2025 the department will publish a significant proportion of the National Standards.

New local SEND and AP partnerships will support this work by bringing together Education, Health and Care partners with local government to produce evidence-based Local Area Inclusion Plans setting out how to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and in AP in the local area, in line with National Standards.

The department is testing and refining reforms through the £70 million Change Programme to collect evidence about what works for children and young people with SEND and their families at a local level. The department is working with 32 local authorities and their local areas in each of the nine regions. To form a **Change Programme Partnership** ~~Child Protection Plan~~, in the majority of cases, a lead local authority will work in partnership with up to three neighbouring local authorities which will ensure impact is spread across a range of local areas, with differing levels of performance and demographics.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Department for Business and Trade Update on Export Statistics

**Minister of State (Greg Hands):**

[\[HCWS383\]](#)

On 31 March 2021, the previous Government published its policy on support for the fossil fuel sector overseas.<sup>[1]</sup> As part of this, the Government set out that it would withdraw all new financial and promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, with very limited exemptions.

Since the introduction of this policy, the Government can confirm that no such overseas fossil fuel projects have received financial funding or support from UK Export Finance (UKEF); nor have they received any government investment. However, I regret to inform the House that we have recently discovered that a limited number of projects did receive other support that contravened this policy in the period April 2021 – October 2023. Support typically focussed on market entry and trade promotion advice.

During this period, 134 projects worth £747 million were recorded as having been supported by departmental officials in some capacity. These 134 projects are a small proportion (1.00%) of the 13,457 projects, and the £0.747 billion of export wins are similarly a small proportion (1.35%) of the total value of £55.342 billion of exports in these years.

None of these projects were subject to the approval of Government Ministers and Ministers were not made aware of these projects until the discrepancies were discovered recently by officials. The projects were however included in the Government's 'Export Wins' data between 2021-2023.

My department has taken steps to rectify and remedy the issue. We have put in place additional measures, checks and reporting to ensure all staff understand and adhere to the policy and can demonstrate clearly that no support is being given that contravenes the policy.

We have also written to colleagues who were inadvertently given incorrect information.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-the-government-will-implement-its-policy-on-support-for-the-fossil-fuel-energy-sector-overseas>

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Wider Service Medal

**Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps):**

[\[HCWS386\]](#)

It gives me great pleasure to announce the introduction of the Wider Service Medal to the House today, a new medal to recognise the service of personnel outside the traditional 'risk and rigour' criteria of existing medals.

The Wider Service Medal represents a significant change in medallic recognition for the UK Armed Forces, and on occasions other public servants, acknowledging the evolving context within which our personnel operate. The medal ensures that the operational impact of many activities, previously considered out of scope for medallic recognition, is now able to be recognised.

The overarching eligibility criteria for the medal is defined as follows:

- Operational activity where there is evidence of operational impact, non-physical risk, and rigour.
- Personnel must have accrued 180 days' aggregated service on eligible operations. Subsequent service of 180 days will result in the award of a bar to the medal, up to a maximum of three bars.
- The medal will be retrospective to December 2018 for ongoing operations.

The medal is evidence of our gratitude and respect for the dedication of our Armed Forces, and other public servants, and recognises the diverse roles our personnel play in the defence of our nation. The initial tranche of medals will be awarded in the early summer.

## EDUCATION

### ■ School Capital Update

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gillian Keegan):**

[\[HCWS384\]](#)

Today, I am announcing a further £850 million investment in places for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or who require Alternative Provision (AP). I am also announcing £1.8 billion in capital funding for the 2024-25 financial year to improve the condition of buildings at schools and sixth-form colleges.

#### **Funding for SEND and AP places**

Spread over this financial year and next, our £850 million investment forms part of our record £2.6 billion funding in high needs capital between 2022 and 2025, and represents a significant, transformational investment in new high needs provision. This funding will support local authorities to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings, and will also be used to improve suitability and accessibility of existing buildings. Along with the funding already provided, it will mean this government is delivering over 60,000 new places for children with SEND or who require AP since 2010.

The methodology for calculating each local authority's allocation has been updated to target the funding to the areas where it is needed most. This will help to ensure that families have access to the localised, specialised support that their children need. 30 successful applications to run special free schools have also been announced today.

Full details of this announcement, including allocations broken down by local authority and the methodology used to distribute funding, have been published on the Department



for Education section on the GOV.UK website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-provision-capital-allocations>.

### **Funding for school condition**

Today's announcement on funding to improve school condition means we will have invested over £17 billion since 2015 to support local authorities, academy trusts and other bodies responsible for school buildings, to keep their estates safe and well-maintained.

The £1.8 billion includes £450 million made available through the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) programme for financial year 2024-25. As part of this, we have today announced projects to improve condition across 733 schools and sixth-form colleges.

It also includes almost £1.2 billion in School Condition Allocations (SCA) including for local authorities, large multi-academy trusts and large voluntary-aided school bodies, to invest in improving the condition of their schools. The proportion of funding allocated through SCA continues to grow as more schools become part of large, strong academy trusts. Over £200 million in Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) will also be allocated directly for schools to spend on their capital priorities.

The amount of SCA allocated to each eligible responsible body, and the total for CIF, have been calculated informed by evidence from the condition data collection. Previous administrations took no action to have a national assessment of the condition 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.

Condition allocations for 2024-25 are in addition to our continued investment in the School Rebuilding Programme and our commitment to remove all RAAC from the school estate in England.

Details of today's CIF announcement are being sent to all CIF applicants and a list of successful projects will be published on GOV.UK. Copies will be placed in the House Library. The full methodology, guidance and allocations amounts for SCA and DFC will also be published on GOV.UK.

## **FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**

### **■ United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

#### **Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Europe (Leo Docherty):**

**[[HCWS393](#)]**

The Hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Heather Wheeler) has been appointed as a full member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon).

The Hon. Member for Jarrow (Kate Osborne) has been appointed as a full member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port has been appointed as a full member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in place of Baroness Massey of Darwen.

The Rt. Hon. Member for Rochester and Strood (Kelly Tolhurst) has been appointed as a substitute member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken).

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Touhig has been appointed as a substitute member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ 2023-24 Revised Financial Directions to NHS England and 2024-25 Financial Directions to NHS England

**Minister of State (Minister for Health and Secondary Care) (Andrew Stephenson):**  
[\[HCWS388\]](#)

My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for the Lords) (Lord Markham) has made the following Written Statement:

I am revising the 2023-24 Financial Directions to NHS England made on 30 March 2023 and setting the 2024-25 Financial Directions to NHS England. The amendment to the total revenue resource use limit for 2023-24 has been agreed with NHS England as required under section 223D(4) of the National Health Service Act 2006.

The Directions include a number of transfers of funding between DHSC and NHS England that are in addition to the headline Spending Review / Autumn Statement settlement for the NHS. This includes the outcome of the Supplementary Estimates process and the Spring Budget 24. Funding is being transferred for the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing, access and growth (VPAG), the COVID-19 vaccination programme, 2023/24 pay awards, as well as to fulfil manifesto commitments on primary care, car parking and nursing recruitment.

The Directions will be laid in Parliament and published on gov.uk. The existing NHS Mandate remains unchanged by these publications.

### ■ Care Quality Commission Section 48 Review of Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Victoria Atkins):** [\[HCWS391\]](#)

On 30 January 2024, I requested that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conduct a special review of mental health services in Nottinghamshire under section 48 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008. The review includes three strands of activity.

Part 1 is a rapid review of the evidence related to the care of Valdo Calocane. I have asked the CQC to report on part 1 by June, with the aim of providing much needed

answers to the families of Barnaby Webber, Grace O'Malley-Kumar and Ian Coates whose lives were taken so brutally in the horrific events in June 2023.

Part 2 is an assessment of patient safety and the quality of care provided by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to improve the standard of mental health care at the Trust.

Part 3 is an assessment of progress made at Rampton Hospital since the most recent CQC inspection activity to offer an up-to-date assessment of the service provided at the hospital.

Today the CQC have reported on part 2 and 3 of this review.

I am grateful to the CQC for the rapid and extensive work that has been undertaken as part of this review. As set out in their report, the CQC has found highly concerning failings in the Trust's ability to manage demand for services and access to care, staffing, and issues of leadership at the Trust. This is not acceptable and must be improved. The Trust has already begun work to address areas of risk such as patients who are waiting to access care. The Trust Board have accepted the recommendations made by the CQC and will address each recommendation through an Improvement Plan.

Since I asked for the review, the Trust has been evaluated by NHS England and given a rating within their National Oversight Framework of 4, which means it now subject to regulatory action and the highest degree of national oversight. This includes being entered into the national Recovery Support Programme. An Improvement Director has been appointed to manage the Trust's progress through the recovery programme, and delivery of its improvement plan, which is being supported by system partners and NHS England.

I expect to see significant action and improvements. I have asked NHS England to work with my officials to provide assurance that their programme will provide targeted support for the issues identified, and to be updated on improvements at the Trust.

I also asked that the CQC, as part of their review, assess the services at Rampton Hospital to inform my decision about the reauthorisation of Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust as a provider of high security psychiatric services. The CQC have found that, while some progress has been made at Rampton since their last inspection, there are still significant improvements to be made. Following this assessment and the recommendations from NHS England's assessment across all three high security hospitals, I have decided to reauthorise Rampton for a period of 12 months only, with conditions attached to address the concerns raised by the CQC and to continue to sustain the improvements they found at the hospital. I will review the progress made against these conditions before the end of the 12-month period and make a further decision about whether to renew the authorisation and what further steps are necessary, if any.

The Government remains committed to expanding and improving mental health services. This is reflected in the investment that has gone into services, with NHS spending on mental health increasing by £4.7 billion (in cash terms) between 2018/19 and 2023/24.

I will update the House again when the CQC provides its report on part 1 of the review in June.

## ■ Healthy Start Uptake Data

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Public Health, Start for Life and Primary Care) (Andrea Leadsom):**

[\[HCWS389\]](#)

### **Background**

Healthy Start is a passported scheme with eligibility being derived from certain qualifying benefits, such as Universal Credit and Child Benefit. The uptake percentage for the Healthy Start Scheme is calculated by comparing the number of eligible people to the number of beneficiaries (individuals who were eligible and accessing the scheme).

I regret to inform the House that an issue has been identified with the statistics provided that means that the uptake figures used in PQ198857, PQ199201, PQ199480, PQ201335 and PQ9386, and referenced by Viscount Younger in a debate in December 2023, were incorrect.

It is important to state that this issue affected eligibility uptake statistics only; it did not impact any Healthy Start individual applicants, existing beneficiaries, or live claim processes.

### **Issue**

Healthy Start uptake percentage statistics is calculated using information provided by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). DWP generate potential eligibility statistics through matching DWP Benefit data with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Child Benefit data. When a new HMRC child benefit data feed was introduced in June 2023, DWP omitted to add it to the matching process. This means that the figures provided between July 2023 and February 2024 were inaccurate.

### **Impact**

Due to the missing data feed, the Healthy Start statistical data provided has led to an underestimated number of eligible beneficiaries from July 2023 to February 2024; this in turn has led to an overstated estimated uptake percentage for the same period.

It should be noted whilst these statistics are a key element for reporting uptake of the Healthy Start Scheme, there has been no impact on new claims where volumes have remained stable. The scheme continues to be promoted by NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), who administer the scheme on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), through a variety of publications, social media, exhibits and other routes.

### **Corrective Action**

DWP have now added the new data feed to the matching process and have provided the updated statistical data for March 2024. Additional checks have been added to ensure the issue does not occur in the future.

The incorrect statistical data has been removed from the NHS Healthy Start website; the revised March figures will be published shortly by the NHSBSA.

Unfortunately, we are unable to publish corrected historical figures as the two systems involved in the matching process do not have the historical data that could be matched.

This issue did not impact any Healthy Start individual applicants, existing beneficiaries, or live claim processes but did affect eligibility uptake statistics. DWP will continue to work closer with HMRC and DHSC to ensure the quality of this data going forward.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Police Covenant Annual Report

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Cleverly):** [\[HCWS385\]](#)

I am delighted to lay before Parliament the second annual report for the Police Covenant. The report will also be available on GOV.UK.

The Police Covenant aims to provide recognition by Government, policing and society as a whole of the sacrifices involved in working in policing, with the intention of ensuring that members of the police workforce suffer no detriment as a result of their role.

Since the first Police Covenant report was laid before Parliament in May 2023, significant progress has been made on all of the priorities. Several additional priorities have also been delivered successfully.

A major issue identified early on in the development of the Police Covenant was a need to better link across to the NHS and to develop a greater understanding of the impacts of policing amongst certain parts of the medical profession. To address this, we have appointed a permanent Chief Medical Officer who will work to bridge the work of the NHS with the needs of the policing community through the new Clinical Governance Group workstream. We have also seen training developed for General Practitioners on the specific needs of the police workforce, which has now been shared with the Royal College of General Practitioners.

We have also taken steps to address issues around officer and staff roadside safety with new sentencing guidelines for situations where a car is used as a weapon.

This year, the Home Office sought to expand the Police Covenant further, by incorporating new priorities and initiatives to combat the ever-changing challenges faced by police. In doing so, we have been able to identify and incorporate four new priorities into the Police Covenant;

- tackling fatigue within the workforce;
- providing, for the first time, proactive suicide prevention resources for forces and individuals;
- the creation of a new Authorised Professional Practice specifically centred around wellbeing; and

- re-purposing the Operation Hampshire priority to focus on efficient data gathering for assaults on Police.

The remaining workstreams continue to be priorities for the Covenant. This year, there has been a particular effort made to understand and find the most effective support for police families and police leavers, leading to the creation and further development of resources to help these groups.

Our police officers and staff put themselves in challenging and dangerous situations daily, for the benefit and protection of the communities they serve. It is vital that our police workforce feels supported, not just by the statements that go out from Government and Parliament, but also in the actions we take to look after them. That is why I particularly welcome the improvements in how the Covenant is being publicised by the Home Office, forces and the National Police Wellbeing Service.

It has been this Government's privilege to support the improvements being made to police wellbeing. In taking forward the work of the Covenant over the past year, I am grateful for the support, professionalism and collaboration of our valued policing partners including the College of Policing, National Police Chiefs' Council, the staff associations and unions, the Chief Medical Officer, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Welsh Government and Non-Home Office Forces for their vital contributions.

This Government will continue to push to progress and deliver the Police Covenant. We have a duty to support and protect the wellbeing of the police and that should never be forgotten.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Next Steps on Cambridge

**Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove):** [\[HCWS390\]](#)

Today, I set out the next steps in this Government's commitment to realise the true potential of Greater Cambridge.

Cambridge, as part of the 'Golden Triangle', is an exceptional place that for centuries has been one of the intellectual centres of the world. The city is internationally renowned for its strengths in research and innovation, particularly in the life sciences sector. It is one of the UK's most prized assets, with an academic, scientific, financial and technical ecosystem that is already well-established – but can go much further. [The Case for Cambridge](#), published at Spring Budget 2024, explains why its successes can neither be taken for granted nor easily replicated elsewhere, and sets out the economic and architectural opportunity in growing the city to achieve its full potential.

The Government is firmly committed to supporting Cambridge through its next chapter, both for the benefit of the local area and the UK economy as a whole. That is why at Spring Budget 2024 we announced that the next Spending Review will confirm a long-



term funding settlement for the future development corporation in Cambridge, commensurate with the Government's level of ambition. This long-term commitment is being bolstered by funding for immediate priorities: a £7.2 million investment for locally led transport schemes to provide the Cambridge Biomedical Campus with the connectivity it needs to thrive; and £3 million to support Cambridge University NHS Trust to support plans for future growth.

We are also delivering ambitious plans to make sure that Greater Cambridge has a safe and sustainable supply of water. We set out these plans in a policy paper, published at the Budget, which includes a unique offsetting intervention to save water now through improving efficiency, and support sustainable growth. In addition, DLUHC issued a joint statement with the Environment Agency, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and Defra, outlining our commitment to sustainable growth and development on the basis of our water credits scheme.

I have asked Peter Freeman, who is leading the Government's Cambridge Delivery Group, to establish a dedicated Growth Company for Cambridge as the next step towards a development corporation. As set out in the Terms of Reference, published today, the Growth Company will focus on establishing a strong Cambridge presence and brand, developing the evidence base and case for investment to support our long-term strategy, and enabling and accelerating existing developments in and around the city.

A range of local partners, including local authority leaders and representatives of the academic, innovation and infrastructure sectors, will be invited to an Advisory Council to support the Growth Company.

This Government remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting and increasing the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods. Ambitious development and growth should not come at the expense of this commitment. In Cambridge, the very best design principles will be used to enhance what is special about the city and to create a model for ambitious urban growth, based on connected city quarters, that reflects what communities want and demonstrates how new places can be equal to, and even better than, the old.

## ■ **Supporting Families Annual Report 2024 – Supporting Families, a Foundation for Family Help**

**Minister for Housing and Homelessness (Felicity Buchan):**

**[[HCWS392](#)]**

I am pleased to inform the House that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has published the 2023-24 annual report of the Supporting Families programme, as required by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, section 3(1). The report sets out how the programme is helping our most disadvantaged families who face multiple and complex problems. A copy of this report will be placed in the House of Commons library.

Supporting Families (previously the Troubled Families Programme) funds local authorities to join up local services to help families combat problems such as domestic abuse, unemployment, poor school attendance, and crime. Funding allocations are based on

deprivation and population figures. It has been at the heart of the Government's work to strengthen families and improve their futures for over ten years. This phase of the programme has been expanded with an increase of £200 million additional investment. This is approximately a 40% real-terms uplift in funding by 2024-25, taking total planned investment over the Spending Review period to £695 million.

This is the Supporting Families Programme's final year under the remit of the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The programme moves to the Department for Education on 1 April 2024, bringing together the spectrum of reforms to children's services following the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. These reforms aim to deliver a coordinated system of support for children and families, as well as ensuring services are sustainable for local government.

Since 2012, the programme has directly helped vulnerable families across the country. Importantly, the programme has shown what is possible when we act early to help families and prevent problems from escalating. The programme's evaluation showed that, of those on the programme, children going into care reduced by a third, the proportion of adults receiving custodial sentences decreased by a quarter, juveniles receiving custodial sentences decreased by almost 40%, and the proportion of adults claiming Jobseeker's Allowance decreased by 11%. Not only has the programme delivered benefits for families, but it has provided a net benefit to the taxpayer. By reducing demand on high-cost acute services, every £1 spent on the programme delivers £2.28 of fiscal and economic benefits.

*Supporting Families, A foundation for Family Help: annual report of the Supporting Families programme 2023-2024*, is the 8th annual report for the Supporting Families Programme. This document provides an update on the programme's performance figures and policy developments for the programme.

Between April 2023 and January 2024, the programme has achieved positive outcomes with 77,203 families. The programme is progressing towards its aim of helping 300,000 families between 2022-25. This year's outcome takes the total number of families helped since 2015 to 612,164. The programme continues to join up with support for children and families across government. This includes contributions to the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance and the Families First for Children Pathfinder which is testing a new Family Help system.

As well as outlining our key national policy developments the report sets out how the programme has continued to drive improvement of local services for families. For example, the programme produced a high-level 'blueprint' for local authorities to rebalance their Children's Social Care system towards earlier, whole-family help and has begun implementation of its national good practice projects.

Alongside the annual report, I have also published the evaluation report for the Data Accelerator Fund. The evaluation report looks at effective practice and service delivery. The report has found that the Data Accelerator Fund has progressed the data maturity of participating local authorities and partners. A copy of this evaluation report will be also placed in the House of Commons library.



I am immensely proud of the achievements made in the last 11 years, and I look forward to working alongside the Department for Education as we hand the programme to them for future delivery.

## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner 2022

**Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):**

[\[HCWS387\]](#)

I have today laid before both Houses a copy of the Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, Rt Hon Sir Brian Leveson. This report covers the activities of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO), the Office for Communications Data Authorisations (OCDA) and the Technology Advisory Panel (TAP) for 2022.

Sir Brian Leveson oversees the use of investigatory powers by over 600 public authorities, including the intelligence and security services and law enforcement agencies. Overall, his report demonstrates the extremely high levels of operational competence and respect for the law, of our security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant public authorities when using investigatory powers.

Where the Investigatory Powers Commissioner has identified concerns, he is clear to point out that this does not detract from the strong culture of compliance and dedication across our agencies, departments, and public authorities. I am confident that our agencies and departments are working hard to address any concerns, and I thank them for their hard work to protect the UK at home and abroad.

Now in its sixth year since creation, IPCO continues to provide independent oversight of the use of investigatory powers, providing assurance to both the public and parliament that privacy safeguards are applied. For this reason, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Sir Brian, his team of Judicial Commissioners, and all of their staff, for their work.

Maintaining public trust and confidence in the exercise of investigatory powers is vital for national security and public safety, and a top priority for this Government. This report demonstrates the high quality of oversight over our intelligence and security agencies' use of the most intrusive powers. I am satisfied that our oversight arrangements are amongst the strongest and most effective in the world.

In accordance with section 234(6)(b) of the IPA, I wish to notify both Houses that there is material considered too sensitive for the open report, on which I have been briefed separately. I am satisfied that, following consultation with relevant government departments and agencies, the contents of this open report are not prejudicial to national security or ongoing investigations.

A copy of this report has been provided to Scottish Ministers for laying in the Scottish Parliament, as required under section 234(8) of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA), and I commend this report to the House.