



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 March 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:31 P.M., 22 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

■ Amazon: VAT

Stephen Morgan:

[18784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues and Amazon to help support businesses that use that website to demonstrate that they are UK-based for VAT purposes.

Kevin Hollinrake:

I have written to Amazon's UK Country Manager on two occasions as well as met them in person to discuss this issue. I have requested that Amazon unfreeze business accounts and provide support for those impacted.

Government officials continue to signpost sellers to support, working alongside the Small Business Commissioner, who is in regular contact with Amazon to highlight specific cases.

Steps taken by the Government and the Small Business Commissioner have led to cases being resolved, with online sellers receiving their withheld funds and resuming trading. We will continue working with Amazon until this issue is fully resolved.

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Fleur Anderson:

[19485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether there are pending applications for arms export licences for arms to Israel as of 19 March 2024.

Greg Hands:

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

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

Information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 July – 30 September 2023 will be published after April 2024 and information regarding export licensing decisions made between 1 October – 31 March 2024 will be published later this year.

■ Business: Productivity

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[19296]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what comparative assessment she has made of the level of business productivity in (a) 2018 and (b) 2023.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Productivity is the main driver of long-run economic growth and a key determinant of living standards. We continue to assess ONS inflation adjusted data. Details covering 2018 and 2023 Q3 are detailed below.

CHAINED VOLUME MEASURE

INDEX 2019	OUTPUT PER HOUR WORKED	OUTPUT PER WORKER
2018	99.6	99.4
2023 Q3	103	100.9

The Government continues to improve access to finance, skills, business support and to address barriers to trade using schemes such as Help to Grow: Management, British Business Bank programmes and the Export Academy.

■ **Businesses: Grants****Rachael Maskell:**[\[18746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to ensure (a) maximum value for money and (b) equal regional distribution when awarding grant funding to businesses.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Development and delivery of grant schemes within the Department is in line with the principles of Managing Public Money and also addresses the Government Grant Functional Standards' requirements.

The Department delivers various grant schemes tailored to address specific regional and sectoral needs, emergency response and the government's wider policy agenda.

■ **Export Controls****Layla Moran:**[\[19446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to undertake a new review of (a) existing and (b) pending export licences.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

All export licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard. We are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences and refuse new licence applications as circumstances require.

The FCDO advises DBT on the situation in country and the risks this poses with respect to the UK's export control responsibilities. The MOD advises DBT on the risks of diversion of exported goods and national security risks arising from hostile state activity.

■ Exports: Sanctions

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department has (a) taken steps to help support exporters to comply and (b) issued guidance to exporters on compliance with international sanctions.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Non-compliance with sanctions is a serious offence. We expect and support UK businesses to take steps to reduce their risk and comply with sanctions.

We regularly engage with exporters, have published statutory and non-statutory guidance, and issued notices to exporters on due diligence and circumvention risk.

We recently announced that we are creating the Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation, which will strengthen the implementation and enforcement of our trade sanctions once operational, including through additional business outreach and guidance.

■ INEOS: Belgium

Martyn Day:

[\[18755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the notice by UK Export Finance entitled Category A project supported: INEOS Project One, Belgium, published on 14 April 2023, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of that decision on the development of (a) energy generation and (b) energy production sites in the UK.

Greg Hands:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has not made an assessment of the potential impact on the development of (a) energy generation and (b) energy production sites in the UK.

In its role as the United Kingdom's export credit agency, UKEF has issued a guarantee to commercial lenders who are funding the project. That support will help to secure new export opportunities for UK businesses that otherwise may not have been possible.

As with every transaction that it supports, UKEF conducted rigorous due diligence in line with the government's policies and obligations to inform its decision-making on Project One. This included consideration of environmental and climate impacts.

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[19476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March to Question 17476 on INEOS: Belgium, how many jobs will be created as a result of the funding.

Greg Hands:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) does not provide direct funding. It issued a guarantee to commercial lenders to help secure new export opportunities for the UK, which in turn

support jobs across the UK, both in those businesses with which INEOS contracts directly, and in their supply chains.

In 2022-23, UKEF provided £6.5 billion of support in total, which is estimated to have backed up to 55,000 jobs across the UK.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Exports**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had discussions with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders on the level of vehicle exports to Azerbaijan.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

DBT ministers regularly meet with sector bodies and companies to discuss a variety of issues. This includes meetings with The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and automotive companies where trade issues are discussed.

■ **Sales: Children**

Naz Shah:

[\[18889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to improve processes for reporting businesses selling age-restricted products to underage customers.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Enforcement of sales of age-restricted products is governed by distinct legislation and the respective lead department.

The Department supports enforcement efforts in England and Wales through funding for Citizens Advice Consumer Service, to relay crucial intelligence to local Trading Standards. To report suspected illegal sales to minors, the public is encouraged to contact Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133, or Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000.

Additionally, individuals can report suspected traders to the police using the non-emergency number, 101.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Blood: Contamination**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[19300\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on what dates four nations ministerial meetings have taken place on the topic of infected blood in the last 12 months.

John Glen:

I, and my predecessors in this role, have met with Ministers across the four nations a number of times in the last 12 months, and will be doing so again ahead of tabling a Government amendment for Report Stage of the Victims and Prisoners Bill.

Alison Thewliss:[\[19385\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the joint letter to him from Scottish and Welsh Ministers in relation to Infected Blood Compensation and Interim Payments, dated 22 January 2024, when he plans to make interim compensation payments to bereaved parents and children.

John Glen:

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

■ Cabinet Office: Legal Costs**Pat McFadden:**[\[19020\]](#)

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

John Glen:

Such information is not centrally recorded or collated in the form 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, PQ 17709 and 12 March 2024, Official Report, House of Lords, Cols. 1901-1904

■ Infected Blood Inquiry**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[19302\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2024 to Question 17717 on Infected Blood Inquiry: Pay, on what dates the expert group has met.

John Glen:

The Infected Blood Inquiry response expert group meets weekly and have met in full seven times as of 20th March. As the work of the expert group relates to the formulation and development of Government policy, their advice, evidence and methodologies as well as the terms of reference, minutes and agendas of their meetings have not been published at this time.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: South Wales****Stephen Doughty:****[19069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support the (a) growth and (b) development of the creative industries in South Wales.

Julia Lopez:

The UK Government has a clear plan to grow the creative industries by a further £50 billion and add another 1 million jobs by 2030. As set out in the Creative Industries Sector Vision, we are committed to working with industry and the devolved administrations to ensure our creative industries continue to be the best in the world. As part of this, we invited Creative Wales to become a member of the Creative Industries Council to ensure they are represented in discussions about the UK's creative industries.

Culture and the creative industries are devolved policy areas. The UK Government has provided opportunities to support Welsh creative businesses through the following programmes:

- The UK-wide Film & TV Restart scheme which supported 1,259 individual film and TV productions and £3.06 billion in production expenditure through the pandemic. Wales received £287.5 million – the largest share of funding of any nation after England (c.9%).
- The £56 million Creative Clusters programme was announced in the 2018 Sector Deal: and supported R&D across the Cardiff Clwstwr one of 9 first-wave of clusters across the UK. The Clusters programme has generated approximately £252 million of private co-investment, creating or safeguarding over 4000 jobs.

■ Cinemas: Government Assistance**Dr Neil Hudson:****[18821]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has taken recent steps to support independent cinemas.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises that cinemas are a hugely important part of the UK's fantastic film industry and has been supporting them throughout the uncertainties of the past several years with the pandemic and rising energy costs.

We supported more than 200 independent cinemas through the pandemic, who received £34.4 million from the Culture Recovery Fund as well as benefiting from other pan-economy measures. The Government has also delivered an £18 billion package of support through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme supporting businesses - including cinemas, arts venues, and charities - through the winter.

The Government's £500m Film and TV Production Restart Scheme also helped keep the cameras rolling at the other end of the screen supply chain. The scheme

supported over 100,000 jobs and productions worth more than £3 billion. To build on this, and support the industry to not only survive but thrive, further actions have been taken. This includes the Government's current £1.6 million annual funding of the British Film Commission, the £28 million UK Global Screen Fund, and the continued success of our screen sector tax reliefs. This has been further bolstered at Spring Budget 2024 with the new UK Independent Film Tax Credit, with films with budgets up to £15 million being eligible for an increased benefit of 53% - which is estimated to increase spending on independent films by 70% before 2032.

The British Film Institute (BFI), a DCMS Arms Length Body, is also conscious of the pressures faced by the cinema sector. The BFI's Film Audience Network (BFI FAN) is a collaboration of 8 film hubs, managed by leading film organisations and venues around the UK. Film hubs are centres of expertise and support that connect cinemas, festivals and creative practitioners. You can also read more about the National Lottery funding the BFI makes available to bring film to a wider UK audience, including through BFI FAN, at: <https://www.bfi.org.uk/get-funding-support/bring-film-wider-uk-audience>.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[17909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the ARAP eligibility standard operating procedure was first changed to give the relevant Other Government Department the power to reject a member of the Afghan (a) CF 333 and (b) ATF 444 unit applying to the scheme.

James Heappey:

There is no ARAP eligibility standard operating procedure that provides a relevant Other Government Department with the power to reject an application.

When considering Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme applications under Category 4, Ministry of Defence (MoD) caseworkers seek input into decision-making from other parts of the MoD, Other Government Departments and governmental bodies, where they are likely to hold useful information relating to an individual's application.

Every individual application is considered on a case-by-case basis in line with our published ARAP criteria, including applications considered under Category 4.

■ Aircraft Carriers

Stephen Morgan:

[18593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made a recent assessment of the UK's capacity to replace the current aircraft carrier force.

James Cartlidge:

On current plans, the out of service date for the Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) carriers is 2069.

The Royal Navy (RN) continually assesses its force structures and abilities based upon constant operational analysis and intelligence led threat assessments.

■ **Armed Forces: Housing**

Stephen Morgan: [18791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of service accommodation.

James Cartlidge:

Currently, 96% of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) meets or exceeds the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Only these properties should be allocated to families.

This Government continues to invest significant sums to improve the quality of UK SFA. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation received an investment of £400M over this Financial Year and next, as part of the Defence Command Paper Refresh 2023. This is being spent on improving the preparation of homes; treating and preventing damp and mould and improving thermal efficiency; and refurbishing empty homes in high demand areas.

■ **Armed Forces: Staff**

Stephen Morgan: [18792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to the adequacy of staffing levels in the Armed Forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

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

Attachments:

1. [Armed Forces Recruitment](#) [9841 - Armed Forces Recruitment.docx]

■ **Defence Equipment & Support: Staff**

Maria Eagle: [19268]

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

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in the Land Combat Vehicles 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	LAND COMBAT VEHICLES TEAM
2018-19	143.4
2019-20	133.0
2020-21	140.1
2021-22	150.7
2022-23	149.2

Maria Eagle:

[\[19269\]](#)

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

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in the Ajax 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	AJAX TEAM
2018-19	142
2019-20	153
2020-21	162
2021-22	165
2022-23	167

Maria Eagle:

[\[19273\]](#)

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

James Cartlidge:

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in the Helicopters Operating Centre (Hels OC) 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	HELICOPTERS OC
2018-19	797.8
2019-20	825.0
2020-21	804.7
2021-22	723.2
2022-23	773.6

Note:

- The figures reported are for the Helicopters Operating Centre because a single specific helicopter team does not exist.

■ Defence: Finance

Stephen Morgan: [\[18788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's budget for its military capability requirements.

James Cartlidge:

UK defence spending is at its highest level in history and is increasing in real terms. Over the next decade we have increased the budget for our Equipment Plan to £288.6 billion and we have set out our longer-term aspiration to invest 2.5% of GDP on defence when the fiscal and economic circumstances allow.

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

■ Ministry of Defence: Finance

Maria Eagle: [\[18666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected annual budget is for the Maritime Combat Systems Team for (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26.

Maria Eagle: [\[18667\]](#)

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

Maria Eagle: [\[18668\]](#)

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

James Cartlidge:

The requested information, where available, is provided in the tables below. This information represents the projected annual equipment expenditure and operating cost forecasts of the named teams by financial year (FY).

EQUIPMENT COSTS (£MILLION)

Team	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26
Naval Ships Support	691.14	739.70	616.61
Maritime Combat Systems	315.88	537.01	537.91
Marine Systems Support	162.42	195.90	201.82
Boats	81.07	82.47	88.86

OPERATING COSTS (£MILLION)

Team	FY 23-24
Naval Ships Support	22.36
Maritime Combat Systems	25.82
Marine Systems Support	17.91
Boats	3.61

The Future Maritime Platforms team forms part of the wider Ship Acquisition Directorate and has no separately identified budget.

Annual Operating Cost budgets by team for 2024-25 are not available and for 25-26 have not yet been forecast.

Due to the Operating Model work currently underway in DE&S, the current team structures are likely to change significantly, and we anticipate that the way that budgets are apportioned will also change.

Maria Eagle:

[18673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the projected annual budget is for the Soldier Training and Special Projects Team in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25 and (c) 2025-26.

James Cartlidge:

The figures presented below represent the projected annual operating expenditure budget and forecast costs for the Soldier Training and Special Projects Team at Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S).

The Soldier Training and Special Projects Team forecast equipment costs by financial year are as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONTRACT SPEND £MILLION
FY2023/24	£333.49
FY2024/25	£319.20
FY2025/26	£311.58

The Soldier Training and Special Projects Team forecast operating costs by financial year are as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL SPEND £MILLION
FY2023/24	£23.68

Notes:

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

Maria Eagle:

[\[18854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the budget for the UK Military Flying Training Systems team 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 UK Military Flying Training Systems team at Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S).

The UK Military Flying Training Systems team forecast equipment costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2023/24	331.03
2024/25	376.01
2025/26	359.70

The UK Military Flying Training Systems team forecast operating costs by financial year is as follows:

FY	TOTAL SPEND (£MILLION)
2023/24	12.90

■ Ministry of Defence: VAT

James Gray:

[\[18640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much VAT was paid by his Department to HM Treasury in each of the last three years; whether such payments are notional balance sheet transactions ; and whether such payment count towards the NATO target of 2 percent of GDP spent on defence.

James Cartlidge:

The table below provides details of VAT paid and not recovered by MOD's main VAT registration for the previous three financial years (FY).

VAT PAID BY HMRC AND NOT RECOVERED £MILLION

FY20/21	3,026
FY21/22	3,143
FY22/23	3,607
Total	9,776

These payments are not notional balance sheet transactions. They are actual cash payments made by MOD and are accordingly considered part of the Department's spend for NATO purposes.

■ Ministry of Defence: Workplace Pensions

James Gray:

[\[18641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which pensions his Department has responsibility for are counted towards the NATO target of spending two percent of GDP on defence; and what the value of such pension payments was in the latest period for which figures are available.

James Cartlidge:

Under NATO guidance pensions for defence personnel form part of qualifying defence spend. This includes both military pensions and Ministry of Defence civil servants. For Financial Year 2022-23, this is £1,523 million and £123 million respectively.

■ Nuclear Weapons: Expenditure

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[18719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of his Department's expenditure on a replacement nuclear deterrent on the non-nuclear equipment budget.

James Cartlidge:

Funding for programmes in the Defence Nuclear Enterprise is now ringfenced within the Defence budget. This will help to protect the wider Equipment Plan budget from any financial pressures in nuclear programmes.

■ Warships

Stephen Morgan: [\[18592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to prevent the mothballing of Royal Navy ships.

James Cartlidge:

The Royal Navy (RN) is allocated resources and tasked at a Departmental level. The RN then generates the Fleet as necessary to meet the readiness profile it has been tasked with and use its people and resources in the most efficient manner.

EDUCATION

■ Alternative Education

Rachael Maskell: [\[15939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help provide alternative learning opportunities for cases of school refusal among children.

David Johnston:

Local authorities have the responsibility for arranging and providing suitable alternative provision for children of compulsory schooling age unable to receive their education in school due to ill health, under section 19 of the Education Act.

The department expects and encourages schools to work with families or carers and with the child themselves to arrange and put in place suitable provision that will help the child re-engage in education.

If a school believes they can no longer support the child's needs, the local authority should arrange alternative provision that will provide suitable education and targeted support to help the child overcome their barriers to learning and to re-engage back into mainstream schooling.

The department's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance also makes clear that schools and local authorities should be taking a 'support first' approach to attendance challenges.

■ Alternative Education: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[16713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help support local authorities to provide adequate levels of (a) estate and (b) workforce for alternative provision for children at secondary schools.

David Johnston:

The department has published over £1.5 billion of high needs provision capital allocations for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. This funding is allocated to local authorities to support their delivery of new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or who require alternative provision (AP).

This funding forms part of the department's transformational investment of £2.6 billion in new high needs provision between 2022 and 2025 and is on top of the ongoing departmental delivery of new special and AP free schools. On 6 March 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced 20 successful applications for new AP free schools creating over 1,700 new places.

In the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, published March 2023, the department set out its intention to give AP schools funding stability by requiring local authorities to create and distribute an AP specific budget. This will mean that resources can be targeted and distributed more effectively, supporting AP schools to recruit and retain high-quality staff.

■ Child rearing

Alex Cunningham:

[\[16734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the accessibility of evidence-based parenting support for parents and families residing in local authority areas that do not offer Family Hubs.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[16736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a comparative assessment of the effectiveness of (a) evidence-based parenting programmes and (b) other interventions to support parents.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[16738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference the Social Mobility Commission's publication entitled Family and parenting programmes: rapid evidence assessment, published in October 2023, what assessment her Department has made of the role of evidence-based parenting programmes in ensuring value for money from expenditure on parenting support.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[16739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of funding a digital roll out of evidence-based

parenting programmes similar to the scheme announced by the Australian Federal Government in 2022.

David Johnston:

The Family Hubs and Start for Life programme aims to improve access to services for parents and families with children 0-19 or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities. It provides funding for parenting support as part of the Start for Life offer to be used on evidence-based programmes alongside peer support and community outreach activities.

The department has selected 75 local authorities based on levels of disadvantage. The department would like to see Family Hubs open across the country. The departments initial focus is on delivering well in the local areas that it is currently working with and building a model and evidence base. The department can then look to expand further in the future.

The published programme guide sets out requirements for local authorities to invest in evidence-based programmes with encouragement to select those that feature in published guidance, which have been rigorously evaluated and demonstrated impact.

The programme guide can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>. The published guidance is available at: <https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programme/incredible-years-preschool>.

The department is working with the local authorities selected for the programme to assess delivery of all funded services in Family Hubs, and evidence-based parenting programmes are included as part of this. A comprehensive external evaluation of the parenting support offer has been commissioned and is due to report in late 2025. This evaluation will explore how well different parenting programmes have been implemented into the Family Hubs model. It will include a quasi-experimental impact evaluation that will assess the outcomes for families and an assessment of the value for money offered by the programme as a whole.

The department is currently considering options for widening access to parenting support through Family Hubs and as such undertaking assessments of the effectiveness and value for money of evidence-based parenting programmes, as well as other forms of support for parents. As part of this work to inform future fiscal events, the department considers policies from across the world, including Australia, to inform departmental thinking. This scoping work also includes engaging with the Social Mobility Commission following their recent report into family and parenting programmes.

The department is also investing over £17 million on the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) in order to improve the language skills of reception age children who need it most following the pandemic. This evidence-based programme targets children needing extra support with their speech and language development and is proven to help them make four months of additional progress, and seven months for those on free school meals. Over 500,000 children have had their language

screened, with 160,000 reception age children having received extra support with their speech and language development from this proven programme.

Alongside investing in parenting support and the NELI programme, the department has also launched a national media campaign 'Little Moments Together' to encourage parents to chat, play and read with their pre-school children. The campaign, run jointly with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, provides evidence-based advice for parents on the NHS Better Health Start for Life website, and support from national partners on activities for parents. Little Moments Together is based on long-standing evidence on the importance of the home learning environment to providing children the best start to life. The Better Health Start for Life website can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/early-learning-development/>.

■ **Childcare: Costs**

Rachael Maskell:

[16826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the (a) affordability of childcare and (b) potential impact of conditionality requirements for benefits on people's ability to afford childcare.

David Johnston:

Officials across the Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions continue to work closely and extensively together to ensure that families in receipt of benefits are not disadvantaged in any way in accessing childcare.

Childcare is a vital enabler for parents to work. By the 2027/28 financial year, this government will expect to be spending more than £8 billion every year on free childcare hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever, and is set to save working families using the full 30 funded hours up to £6,500 per year from when their child is nine months until they are five years old by September 2025. By 2027/28, the Office for Budget Responsibility expects around 60,000 parents to enter employment, and for there to be an equivalent effect on the 1.5 million mothers of young children already in work, increasing their hours by a small amount.

In addition to the expanded entitlements, the government has also taken action to support parents on Universal Credit with childcare costs upfront when they need it, rather than in arrears. The department has increased support for these parents by increasing the childcare cost maximum amounts to £950 for one child and £1,629 for two children. This is an increase from the current rate of up to 70% in the Tax Credit and Universal Credit systems. Families will benefit from the decision to increase the rate of childcare costs support from 70% to 85% and will get more out of the money they earn.

■ Childcare: South West**Mr Tobias Ellwood:****[17068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to increase childcare provision in (a) Bournemouth East constituency and (b) the South West.

David Johnston:

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. Part B of the early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities highlights that local authorities are required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make this report available and accessible to parents.

In the government's 2023 Spring Budget, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced transformative reforms to childcare for parents, children and the economy. By the 2027/28 financial year, this government expects to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education, helping families with pre-school children with their childcare costs. This represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever and is set to save working families using the full 30 funded hours up to £6,500 per year from when their child is nine months until they are five years old by September 2025.

Funding will be key to delivering the existing and expanded childcare entitlements. The department has substantially uplifted the hourly rate paid to local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers. In the 2024/25 financial year, the department is investing over £400 million additional funding to deliver a significant uplift to hourly rates, building on the £204 million of additional funding paid in September.

To support the sector further to deliver the expansion of childcare support, the government is confirming that the hourly rate that providers are paid to deliver the free hours offers will increase in line with the metric used in the Spring Budget 2023. This reflects that workforce costs are the most significant costs for childcare providers and represents an additional £500 million of investment over financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Alongside increasing funding rates, the government is allocating £100 million in capital funding to local authorities in the 2023/24 financial year to support the expansion of childcare places for eligible working parents and to increase the supply of wraparound care in primary schools. The funding is anticipated to deliver thousands of new places across the country.

Following the department's consultation on changes to the early years foundation stage framework, the department has introduced flexibilities that aim to make things easier for providers, as well as continuing to explore how the department can support the sector to deliver the additional places that will be required.

The department is ensuring a phased implementation of the expansion to the 30 hours offer to allow the market to develop the necessary capacity. On 2 February 2024, the department launched 'Do something big, Work with small children', a new national recruitment campaign to support the recruitment and retention of talented staff to support the expansion of the 30 hours offer. This campaign will raise the profile of the sector, support the recruitment of talented staff, and recognise the lifelong impact those working in early years and childcare have on children and their families.

The department is also continuing to monitor the sufficiency of childcare places across the sector. The department's childcare and early years provider survey shows that both the number of places available and the workforce has increased since 2022.

The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing.

Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, the department discusses what action the local authority is taking to address those issues and, where needed, supports the local authority with any specific requirements through the department's childcare sufficiency support contract.

■ **Childcare: Special Educational Needs**

Justin Madders:

[\[16710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of childcare for children with special educational needs in each constituency.

David Johnston:

The department recognises the importance of ensuring that local authorities provide sufficient childcare services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The department continues to work closely with local authorities to monitor sufficiency of places for children in early years, including for those children with SEND.

The local authority statutory guidance on early education and childcare sets out a clear requirement that local authorities must report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents. The statutory guidance is clear that the report should include a specific reference to how they are ensuring sufficient childcare is available to children with SEND.

The department is introducing Local Area Inclusion Plans (LAIPs) which are 3 year plans that explain how the needs of children and young people with SEND aged 0 to 25 in an area will be met. LAIPs will be monitored and reviewed by the department and be underpinned by strengthened accountabilities and improved use of data for all those responsible for local delivery of places.

■ Children: Care Homes**Helen Hayes:**[\[17452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.25(3) of the Spring Budget 2024, HC 560, published on 6 March 2024, how much and what proportion of the £165 million funding for the children's homes estate will be spent on (a) new children's homes, (b) rebuilding children's homes and (c) repairing existing children's homes in each local authority area; and if she will make an estimate of the number of new places that will be created.

David Johnston:

In the Spring Budget, the department was awarded £165 million capital funding to invest in open and secure children's homes. This consists of £45 million match funding to local authorities to create 200 new open children's home (OCH) placements for the most vulnerable children, and £120 million to fund the maintenance of the existing secure children's home (SCH) estate and rebuild Atkinson SCH and Swanwick SCH.

It will be for local authorities in receipt of this OCH match funding to decide how best to deliver these additional 200 placements to meet the needs of the children they look after.

The department will work with Atkinson and Swanwick SCHs and other SCHs to determine the number of places and maintenance required to meet current and future needs of the individual SCHs and the SCH estate as a whole. The department will then allocate the £120 million to the SCHs on this basis.

■ Department for Education: Fraud and Maladministration**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[18452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report entitled Cross-Government Fraud Landscape: Annual Report 2022, published on 21 March 2023, what the basis is of the increase in detected error in her Department from £7.5m in 2019-20 to £29.1m in 2020-21.

Damian Hinds:

The increase in detected error was driven by the department migrating some of its financial services from an external provider to a pre-existing in-house service.

All detected errors were corrected within the financial quarter in which they occurred. No losses were incurred.

Where errors occur, the department operates a robust process to ensure lessons are learned and corrective actions embedded into processes and ways of working. This is reflected in the drop back to zero detected errors in quarter 3 and quarter 4 of the year.

■ Education: Standards

Damien Moore:

[18282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the progress on improving educational outcomes in the 55 education investment areas.

Damian Hinds:

The Education Investment Areas (EIA) programme is in its infancy, and it is too early to attribute any changes in educational outcomes in these areas to the initiatives made available to schools through the EIA programmes.

The department will, internally, monitor changes in key stage 2 and key stage 4 attainment in EIAs and consider any fluctuations. The department intends to review their impact following the publication of the 2023/24 academic year data.

■ Family Hubs: South West

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[17067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on expanding Family Hubs to (a) Bournemouth East constituency and (b) the South West.

David Johnston:

The £12 million family hubs transformation fund (TF1) is supporting 13 local authorities, including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP), with the costs of transforming to a Family Hub model of service delivery and a strong Start for Life offer at its core. Further information about BCP's Family Hubs can be found on their website at: <https://www.fid.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/family-information-directory/information/family-hubs/family-hubs-early-help-and-outreach-centres>.

As part of the Family Hubs Start for Life programme, the department is also investing £300 million in 75 local authorities. Funding has been targeted to the most deprived local authorities, ensuring families get the support they need. This will fund a network of Family Hubs and specific support within those hubs for parent–infant mental health, infant feeding services, parenting support, home learning environment, and to establish parent-carer panels. In addition, all 75 local authorities will publish their Start for Life offer and the department will be providing funding for trials of innovative workforce models to a smaller number of local authorities.

As part of the Family Hubs Start for Life programme, the department is funding 4 local authorities in the South West, which are Bristol, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay. Further information on Family Hubs in Bristol is available at: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/help-for-families/family-hubs>. Further information on Family Hubs in Torbay is available at: <https://torbayfamilyhub.org.uk/>. Further information on Family Hubs in Plymouth is available at: <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/family-hubs>. Further information on Family Hubs in Cornwall is available at: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-services/family-hubs/>.

The department is currently in year 2 of the programme, and all local authorities have opened at least one Family Hub and are focusing on delivering the minimum expectations as set out in the Family Hubs and Start for Life local authority guide by March 2025. This guide is accessible at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>.

■ Free Schools: Darlington

Peter Gibson: [16918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on appointing a provider for the new 48 place Autism Spectrum Disorder special free school in Darlington.

David Johnston:

The application process for potential providers to operate Darlington's new special free school has been completed. Ministers are considering the outcome before confirming the successful applicant.

■ Herefordshire Children's Services: Standards

Sir Bill Wiggin: [16668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to provide further assistance to Herefordshire Children's Services.

Sir Bill Wiggin: [16669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the performance of Herefordshire Children's Services relative to average national standards.

Sir Bill Wiggin: [16670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to help improve the standard of service provided by Herefordshire Children's Services.

David Johnston:

In its inspection report, published 21 September 2022, Ofsted judged the overall effectiveness of Herefordshire Council's children's services to be inadequate.

There have been regular subsequent visits by Ofsted over the past 18 months, as well as two reports on the service by the Children's Services Commissioner appointed following the inspection. All acknowledge progress, but challenge the pace at which change is being achieved.

The department is mounting a significant intervention to improve services, deploying the Commissioner and an improvement adviser to provide challenge and support, and brokering a comprehensive two-year improvement partnership with a stronger local authority, Leeds City Council.

Most recently the department has committed £300,000 this year and next to strengthen the delivery of early help arrangements so that a greater number of children and families can access help at an earlier stage and receive a more tailored response to that need.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Alistair Strathern:

[\[15511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the steps they are taking to support the new Early Years Funding programme to ensure nurseries are viable.

Alistair Strathern:

[\[15512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the impact of the new Early Years Funding programme on the viability of providers where the Government's payments do not match the nurseries current fees.

David Johnston:

There were 15,100 childcare places in 2023 than the previous year, with 12,900 paid staff added to the same period according to 2023's Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey.

To support providers to expand their provision further, the department is investing over £400 million of additional funding to uplift the hourly rate for the entitlements next year. This investment consists of £67 million new funding to reflect the latest National Living Wage increase, an additional £57 million to support providers in respect of teachers' pay and pensions, and the £288 million for the existing entitlements in 2024/25 announced in the Spring Budget in March 2023. It also builds on the £204 million of additional investment to increase funding rates this year.

The department will also be providing over £4.1 billion by the 2027/28 financial year to fund 30 hours of free childcare per week (38 weeks per year) for working parents with children aged 9 months and above in England, from the term after they reach the relevant age (£1.7 billion in 2024/25, £3.3 billion in 2025/26, £4.1 billion in 2026/27, and £4.1 billion in 2027/28). Additionally, hundreds of thousands of children aged 3 and 4 are registered for a 30-hour place, saving eligible working parents up to £6,900 per child per year, helping even more working parents and making a real difference to the lives of those families.

Providers are expanding placements across the country and the department is supporting providers to deliver each stage of the entitlement expansion rollout through increases to the rate of pay, the department's national recruitment campaign and establishing more qualification routes into the sector.

■ Schools: Buildings

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the Greater London region.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the South East.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the South West.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the West Midlands.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the North West.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the North East.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the East Midlands.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in the East.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[18151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the total cost to the public purse of (a) repairing, (b) refurbishing and (c) rebuilding school buildings in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Damian Hinds:

Well-maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the department to support a high-quality education for all children. The department has allocated over £15 billion since 2015 for keeping schools safe and operational, including £1.8 billion in the 2023/24 financial year. In addition, the School Rebuilding Programme is transforming poor condition buildings at over 500 schools.

It is the responsibility of those who run schools, such as academy trusts, local authorities and voluntary-aided school bodies, to manage the safety and maintenance of their schools based on local knowledge of their estates. They decide how to use annual funding provided, or when to apply to central programmes. Where there are serious issues with buildings that cannot be managed independently, the department provides additional support on a case-by-case basis.

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. The department's evidence-led approach, following the James Review of Capital in 2011, has enabled the department to use consistent data on the condition of the school estate to inform capital allocations and funding policy. This means that the department targets more funding to where it is needed most, with schools in relatively poorer condition attracting more funding for their responsible body.

Almost all government funded schools in England were visited as part of the Condition Data Collection 1 (CDC1) programme between 2017 and 2019. Surveyors and engineers assessed the condition of multiple components of the schools' buildings and land within twelve primary building elements using an A-D rating. Key findings, including regional breakdowns, from the CDC1 can be found in the report, 'Condition of School Buildings Survey – Key Findings', which is available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60af7cbb90e071b54214c82/Condition_of_School_Buildings_Survey_CDC1_-_key_findings_report.pdf.

Significant capital investment has been provided since the CDC1 was carried out, and Condition Data Collection 2 (CDC2) is now in progress to provide updated information and will be completed by 2026. Early indications from the CDC2 data collection to date, and feedback from responsible bodies, showed that in almost every case where a D grade component was identified in the CDC1 report, it has since been addressed.

The list of schools that have been awarded a place on the School Rebuilding Programme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme>.

Funding for capital programmes up to the 2024/25 financial year comes from the department's overall £19 billion capital budget set at the 2021 Spending Review. Capital budgets beyond 2024/25 will be determined through a Spending Review, in the normal way.

Catherine McKinnell:

[18155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 17 of the NAO report on the Condition of school buildings, HC 1516, published on 28 June 2023, what estimate she has made of the number of children studying in schools where the responsible body or her Department believes that major repair works are required in each of the next five years.

Damian Hinds:

It is the responsibility of those who run schools, such as academy trusts, local authorities and voluntary-aided school bodies, to manage the safety and maintenance of their schools based on local knowledge of their estates. They decide how to use annual funding provided, or when to apply to central programmes. The department has allocated over £15 billion since 2015 to support responsible bodies and schools, including £1.8 billion in 2023/24. Where there are serious issues with buildings that cannot be managed independently, the department provides additional support on a case-by-case basis.

Consequently, the department does not hold an estimate of pupil numbers in schools that may need major works over the next five years, nor similar data from responsible bodies.

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. A successor programme, CDC2, is underway and will be complete by 2026. Thanks to its evidence led approach, following the James Review of Capital in 2011, this government has been able to allocate capital funding based on consistent data on condition need.

The National Audit Office, in their report on school buildings in June 2023, provided an estimated number of pupils that were in 'a school that the responsible body or the Department for Education believes needs major rebuilding or refurbishment'. The figure is often misinterpreted as it is based on the total number of pupils in schools nominated to the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) in 2022 by responsible bodies, and includes schools that were already selected to be rebuilt in the SRP. Nominations to SRP give an indication of refurbishment need, but as responsible bodies are self-nominated, this is subjective. The figure is also for all pupils in these schools, whereas buildings in poor condition are often only a part of each estate.

Unlike programmes prior to 2010, the SRP and the Priority School Building Programme have been prioritised on condition need. The department robustly evaluated the nominations to the SRP and selected schools with the greatest need. This included all schools with evidence of exceptional need, such as structural issues, verified by the department against the programme criteria.

The SRP now has over 500 projects. The methodology for prioritising schools and all schools included in the programme are published on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme>.

More broadly, the CDC2 survey is already demonstrating the government's evidence led approach is working. Early indications from the CDC2 data collection to date, and feedback from responsible bodies, shows that in almost every case where a D grade component was identified in the CDC1 report, it has since been addressed.

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[18157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of the number of schools with (a) Laingspan and (b) Intergrid system builds.

Damian Hinds:

The department has prioritised Laingspan and Intergrid for replacement and included all identified school buildings of these types that are still in service in the School Rebuilding Programme.

The department is aware of 7 schools with Laingspan buildings and 18 schools with Intergrid buildings. Of these 24 schools (1 school has both a Laingspan and an Intergrid block), 23 have been included in the School Rebuilding Programme. The remaining school was not included in the School Rebuilding Programme as the academy trust was taking its Intergrid block out of use.

■ Schools: Finance

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[18152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the funding required to maintain the school estate.

Damian Hinds:

Well-maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the department in order to ensure that they support a high-quality education for all children. The department has allocated over £15 billion since 2015 for keeping schools safe and operational, including £1.8 billion in 2023/24. In addition, the school rebuilding programme is transforming poor condition buildings at over 500 schools.

It is the responsibility of those who run schools, such as academy trusts, local authorities and voluntary-aided school bodies, to manage the safety and maintenance of their schools based on local knowledge of their estates. They decide how to use annual funding provided, or when to apply to central programmes. Where there are serious issues with buildings that cannot be managed independently the department provides additional support on a case by case basis.

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. Thanks to our evidence led approach, following the James Review of Capital in 2011, this government has been able to allocate capital funding based on consistent data on condition need. Almost all government funded schools in England were visited as part of the CDC programme between 2017 and 2019. Key findings from the CDC programme can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60af7cbb90e071b54214c82/Condition_of_School_Buildings_Survey_CDC1_-_key_findings_report.pdf.

This reported a total modelled remediation cost of £11.4 billion to repair or replace building components rated less than good (Grade A), which included elements which were rated as satisfactory.

Significant capital investment has been provided since the CDC was carried out. Condition Data Collection 2 (CDC2) started in 2021 and will complete in 2026. It will provide the department with an improved and up to date evidence base on building condition to inform future capital policy and programmes. Early indications from our CDC2 data collection to date, and feedback from responsible bodies, showed that in almost every case where a D grade component was identified in the CDC1 report, it has since been addressed.

Funding for capital programmes up to 2024/25 comes from the department's overall £19 billion capital budget set at the 2021 Spending Review. Capital budgets beyond 2024/25 will be determined through a Spending Review, in the normal way.

■ Schools: Surveys

Catherine McKinnell: [18160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment she has made of the effectiveness of information collected from schools which have undergone both condition data collection (a) one and (b) two exercise surveys.

Catherine McKinnell: [18161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an estimate of the number of schools in which construction types were misidentified during condition data collection 1 surveys.

Damian Hinds:

Well-maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the department to support a high-quality education for all children. The department has allocated over £15 billion since 2015 for keeping schools safe and operational, including £1.8 billion in the 2023/24 financial year. In addition, the School Rebuilding Programme is transforming poor condition buildings at over 500 schools.

It is the responsibility of those who run schools, such as academy trusts, local authorities and voluntary-aided school bodies, to manage the safety and maintenance of their schools based on local knowledge of their estates.

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. Previous administrations took no action to understand the condition of the school estate. Running from 2017 to 2019, the survey allowed the department to understand the condition of the school estate over a sustained period, and informed capital funding and programmes by providing

information on the condition of all 22,000 government funded school buildings and 260 further education colleges in England.

CDC2 started in 2021 and will complete in 2026. Any comparative assessment between both programmes will be undertaken upon the completion of CDC2 in 2026. The department has taken steps to ensure that the condition data collected is consistent and accurate across the school and further education college estate. Early indications from the CDC2 programme suggest that, in almost every case where a category D was identified in CDC1, it has since been addressed.

CDC visits are carried out by professionally trained building surveyors and mechanical engineers, who follow a specific methodology. Data goes through a robust quality assurance process, and schools are given the opportunity to feedback and comment on their report.

The department is not aware of any systemic misidentification of construction types in CDC1.

■ Special Educational Needs

Rachael Maskell:

[\[15946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on allocating school places to children with SEND based on the level of support available.

David Johnston:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, including for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), sits with local authorities. The department allocates funding to support local authorities to meet this duty and has allocated over £1.5 billion of High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years.

This funding can be used to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings, and to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings, local authorities can spend the funding across the 0-25 age range, including in special post-16 institutions or other further education settings. The need for investment across this age range will differ between different local authorities, dependent on local circumstances, and it is therefore for local authorities to determine how to best prioritise their available funding to address their local priorities.

Through our reforms, we want to ensure that placements for children and young people with SEND are sufficient to meet need, allowing them to access the right support, in the right setting, at the right time.

In the SEND and alternative provision (AP) Improvement Plan the department set out proposals to support parents and carers, or young people from the age of 16, to express an informed preference for a suitable placement, by requiring local authorities to provide a tailored list of settings that are appropriate to meet a child or young person's needs. Tailored lists are about illustrating choice for parents and

young people by providing detailed, relevant information about suitable placements. We are testing an advisory version of the tailored list proposal in participating local authorities through the Change Programme, to gain feedback on the best way to support families as they choose a placement.

In addition, we will establish new local SEND and AP partnerships which will bring together delivery partners across local systems to strategically plan and commission support for children and young people with SEND and in AP. The partnerships will be expected to co-produce a Local Area Inclusion Plan based on robust evidence that will explain how the needs of children and young people in the area will be met.

Rachael Maskell:

[16712]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to ensure that children with SEND who have difficulties with the school environment receive a full education.

David Johnston:

Schools, further education colleges, sixth form colleges and 16-19 academies are required to identify and address the special educational needs (SEN) of the pupils they support and (in mainstream settings) to use their best endeavours to make sure that a child or young person who has SEN gets the support they need.

The right of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to an education is the same as that for any other pupil. It is important for schools to acknowledge the barriers to attendance are wide and complex, especially for pupils with SEND.

The department's expectation for a 'support approach' is set out in the working together to improve school attendance guidance which can be accessed here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf. This support may include reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities or support for pupils for whom mental health issues are affecting their attendance. The guidance states that schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This includes establishing strategies for removing in-school barriers to attendance as well as ensuring joined-up pastoral care is in place with the local authority and other partners. More information on reasonable adjustments can be found here: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/04/10/what-are-reasonable-adjustments-and-how-do-they-help-disabled-pupils-at-school/>. More information on mental health issues affecting pupils attendance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupils-attendance-guidance-for-schools>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[15418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council to reduce the time taken to complete education, health and care plans.

David Johnston:

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole in June 2021 and identified eight areas of significant weaknesses. Following this inspection, the Local Area Partnership were required to produce a Written Statement of Action.

Where local authorities are failing to deliver consistent outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the department works closely with them using a range of improvement programmes and SEND specialist advisors to address weaknesses.

The department has appointed a SEND specialist advisor to work closely with the Council and has approved a robust package of sector led improvement support from Bedford Borough Council. Amongst a wide range of support, the specialist advisor and Bedford Borough Council are supporting the Council with meeting the 20 week timescales within the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan process and improving the quality of EHC plans being produced.

Alongside this support, the department has issued the Council with a statutory direction for SEND services on 26 February 2024. This is due to the inadequate progress the Council has made following the Written Statement of Action Plan since their local area SEND inspection in June 2021. In line with the direction, the department will be working closely with the local area to ensure they are supported in addressing issues and driving improvements to services.

■ Special Educational Needs: Location

Helen Hayes:

[\[17741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Spring Budget 2024, HC 560, where the 15 new special schools will be located.

David Johnston:

The Spring Budget confirmed plans for 15 additional special free schools. An announcement on the location of these schools will be made by May 2024.

The department received a large number of high-quality applications from local authorities through the most recent special free schools application round. In March 2023, the department approved 33 new special free schools.

The Spring Budget announcement means that the department can now go further, by considering more high-quality applications that were not able to be approved at the time. Therefore, the department does not currently plan to invite new local authority applications for this wave.

■ **Students: Transgender People**

Darren Jones: [\[19429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department has taken to consult (a) transgender students, (b) the families of transgender students and (c) organisations that represent the views of transgender people on the draft guidance entitled Guidance for Schools and Colleges: Gender Questioning Children, published on 19 December 2023.

Damian Hinds:

From the 19 December 2023 to the 12 March 2024, the department carried out a full public consultation on the draft guidance for schools and colleges on gender questioning children. Any member of the public could respond and provide their views.

■ **Teachers: Qualifications**

Naz Shah: [\[19081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 10 May 2023 to Question 182611 on Teachers: Qualifications, if she will take steps to make the Education Accreditation Scheme available to online education providers for adult learners.

Robert Halfon:

The Online Education Accreditation Scheme (OEAS) was launched by the department in April 2023. The objective of the scheme is to bring regulatory oversight to an unregulated part of the education sector. The scheme is not designed to cover all forms of online education but to focus where the need for quality assurance is most pronounced, which is to pupils of compulsory school age. The OEAS is only open to applications from those providers offering full-time education online to pupils of compulsory school age. The government has no plans to expand the scheme to online education providers for adults.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ **Alternative Fuels: Heating**

Steve Double: [\[18735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to section 159 of the Energy Act 2023, whether she plans to consult on regulations for renewable liquid heating fuel.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government has begun developing a consultation on the role of renewable liquid fuels in heat and intends to issue the consultation by September this year, in line with commitments made by ministers during Parliamentary debates on the Energy Act.

■ Oil: Refineries

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[19478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2024 to Question 17958 on Oil: Refineries, what information her Department holds on the (a) value and (b) volume of oil produced at each refinery.

Andrew Bowie:

The Department collects commercially sensitive data on the volume of oil produced by each refinery in order to produce aggregate data on the UK's refinery output. The Department cannot release refinery level data on production volumes due to the commercial nature of these data. The Department does not collect data on the value of each refinery's output, but this will be reflected in the owner's annual accounts filed at Companies House.

■ Oldbury Power Station and Wylfa Power Station: Land

Alan Brown:

[\[19397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2024 to Question 18508 on Oldbury Power Station and Wylfa Power Station: Land, who undertook the independent valuation; and whether the commercial value of land adjacent to decommissioned reactors was taken into account as part of that valuation.

Andrew Bowie:

Independent valuations of the land were conducted by Knight Frank. The inherent characteristics of the land as well as the previous development work which make the land suitable for consideration for nuclear development informed the valuation of the sites.

■ Renewable energy: Community Development

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[19016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero during the debate on Consideration of Lords message on the Energy Bill [Lords] of 18 October 2023, Official Report, column 352, what her planned timetable is to consult on the barriers to community energy schemes.

Graham Stuart:

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

■ **Renewable Energy: Feed-in Tariffs**

Naz Shah: [\[19082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to investigate the installation of (a) biomass boilers and (b) solar panels by (i) A Shade Greener and (ii) other commercial rent-a-roof companies.

Andrew Bowie:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) on 18 March to question UIN [18120](#).

■ **Warm Home Discount Scheme**

Kenny MacAskil: [\[19477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2024 to Question 17957 on Warm Home Discount Scheme, what steps she is able to take to ensure that the regional electricity areas with the highest levels of fuel poverty are adequately financially supported, in the context of no data being collated centrally on the number of households receiving Warm Home Discounts by regional electricity area.

Amanda Solloway:

The Warm Home Discount scheme is targeted to low-income households at risk of fuel poverty, providing a £150 rebate to eligible households. In England and Wales, the government sets the eligibility criteria and identifies households through data matching. In Scotland, the government identifies eligible low-income pensioners through data matching, meanwhile other low-income households in Scotland must apply to their energy supplier who can set their own criteria, subject to approval by Ofgem.

The government published official statistics for winter 2022/23 last year which showed, that across England, the distribution of rebates across regions is roughly consistent with the fuel poverty statistics for rates of fuel poverty. The government does not produce equivalent statistics for Scotland as fuel poverty is devolved and measured differently.

■ **Wind Power: Manufacturing Industries**

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [\[19017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether investment to support the manufacture of wind turbine jackets will be included in the Green Industries Growth Accelerator.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has committed £1.1 billion to the Green Industries Growth Accelerator to support the expansion of domestic green manufacturing capacity and strengthen clean energy supply chains. At Spring Budget, we announced provisional allocations of up to £390 million for offshore wind and networks, up to £390 million for

carbon capture, utilisation and storage and hydrogen and up to £300m to support domestic production of high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU) for nuclear fuel.

The Government is conducting engagement with industry on the design of the Accelerator and more detail on eligibility and how to apply for funding will be shared in due course.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[19304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on producing a draft list of proscribed activities for application under the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[19305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timescale is for publishing a public consultation on potential proscribed activities in relation to the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023.

Mark Spencer:

The Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023 provides a framework for the introduction of future bans on the advertising and offering for sale, in England and Northern Ireland, of low-welfare animal activities abroad.

Future decisions on which specific animal activities will fall in scope of the advertising ban will be evidence-based and subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. Sufficient, compelling evidence will be required to demonstrate why any specific advertising ban is needed.

This Government continues to make animal welfare a priority and we are currently exploring a number of options to ensure progress as soon as is practicable .

■ **Climate Change: Investment**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[19037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Climate Change Committee's report entitled Investment for a well-adapted UK, published on 1 February 2023.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) was published in July 2023 and sets out how we are investing billions in projects to improve the UK's climate resilience. This includes £5.2bn of investment over six years in flood and coastal erosion schemes in England, and £2.4bn per annum until the end of this current Parliament on the Farming and Countryside Programme which supports and helps to drive practices that embed greater climate adaptation in England's

agriculture. Where government has concerns about the level of investment in resilience we have acted swiftly. For example, through the recent Plan for Water we have accelerated £2.2bn of investment in measures to secure a resilient, clean and plentiful supply of water now and in the future.

The Government has also committed to support the flow of private finance into adaptation through the government's 2023 Green Finance Strategy '[Mobilising Green Investment](#)'. This includes working with private sector partners to improve the approach to climate resilience assessment and disclosure, and supporting private and public collaboration to overcome barriers to investment and assist in the functioning of new markets.

■ Dogs: Animal Welfare

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: **[18249]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to support animal welfare organisations in tackling (a) ear cropping and (b) puppy smuggling.

Mark Spencer:

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it is an offence in England and Wales to carry out a non-exempted mutilation, including the cropping of a dog's ears. 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.

Defra supports the work of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) which includes in its membership some of the country's key animal welfare organisations. To ensure that advertisements for pets are legal and ethical, PAAG has developed a set of advertising standards which several of the UK's largest classified websites have agreed to meet. The standards prohibit engaged websites from hosting adverts for dogs whose ears have been cropped.

Defra regularly engages with stakeholders, including veterinary and animal welfare professionals, on a range of animal welfare issues, including the illegal smuggling of pets into the UK.

The Government supports the Private Members' Bill, Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, introduced by the hon. Member for North Devon 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 UK including prohibiting the import of dogs with cropped ears.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: **[18250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with local authorities to enhance enforcement against (a) puppy smuggling and (b) the sale of dogs with cropped ears.

Mark Spencer:

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it is an offence in England and Wales to carry out a non-exempted mutilation, including the cropping of a dog's ears. 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.

The Government supports the Private Members' Bill, Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, introduced by the hon. Member for North Devon 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.

Defra regularly engages with stakeholders, including local authorities, on a range of animal welfare issues, including the smuggling of pets into the UK and the cropping of dogs' ears.

Dogs: Import Controls**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[18081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken help tackle the import of dogs with cropped ears since 1 January 2024.

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.

The Government supports the Private Members' Bill, Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, introduced by the hon. Member for North Devon 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.

Dogs: Public Places**Steve McCabe:**[\[18977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of legislating to compel dogs to be put on leads in public places.

Mark Spencer:

There is a balance to be struck between protecting the wider public and their animals from dog attacks, the freedom people enjoy when walking their dogs, and the welfare

of those dogs including the freedom to exhibit normal behaviours. We currently have no plans to legislate to compel dogs to be on leads in public places.

The Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs already states that it is best practice to keep dogs on leads around other animals. It is also an offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to allow a dog to be on a designated road unless it is on a lead.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, enforcement authorities have powers to make Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) insisting dogs are kept on leads in certain areas. Where a dog has been involved in anti-social behaviour, enforcement authorities can also issue community protection notices which could require a dog to be kept on a lead in public.

■ Dogs: Smuggling

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[18248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to enforce (a) legislative provisions and (b) border controls relating to puppy smuggling.

Mark Spencer:

The Government supports the Private Members' Bill, Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill, introduced by the hon. Member for North Devon 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.

We operate one of the most rigorous and robust pet travel checking regimes in Europe. The Animal and Plant Health Agency works collaboratively with Border Force and other operational partners at ports, airports and inland, sharing intelligence to enforce the pet travel rules, disrupt illegal imports, safeguard the welfare of animals and seize non-compliant animals.

■ Fish: Consumption

Derek Thomas:

[17749]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage (a) schools, (b) prisons and (c) hospitals to serve British-caught fish.

Mark Spencer:

The Government has consulted on changes to the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF), including increasing the sourcing of local and sustainable food. The consultation sought views on sourcing, where possible, a diverse range of seasonally available seafood species from locally caught or produced sources. As the Government response to the consultation has not yet been published, it is too soon to pre-empt any specific findings.

We have also now appointed an independent advisor to support the Government's ongoing work to improve food procurement in the public sector and make the system more accessible to small- and medium-sized businesses and, subject to domestic and international legal obligations, explore the benefits of and steps to getting more local-caught fish into schools, prisons and hospitals.

■ Fisheries: Thailand

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[19048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the value of fisheries stocks imported from Thailand in each of the last five years.

Mark Spencer:

The nominal value of seafood goods, mainly shrimps & prawns, and skipjack tuna, imported from Thailand was £64m in 2019, £50m in 2020, £40m in 2021, £37m in 2022 and £36m last year.

■ Food: Waste

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[19458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential (a) economic and (b) environmental impact of mandatory food waste reporting in Battersea.

Robbie Moore:

The 2022 public consultation on improved food waste reporting by large food businesses in England included an Impact Assessment which assessed the economic and environmental impacts of the of the voluntary and mandatory approaches to reporting. These assessments were made at the national level. No regional or local assessments have been made.

■ Marine Environment: Biodiversity

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[19148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of high ocean temperatures on marine biodiversity in UK waters.

Rebecca Pow:

Through the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership, we are improving our understanding of the impact of climate change, including on sea temperature and marine biodiversity. Evidence suggests that increasing sea temperature is associated with a number of possible impacts on marine biodiversity, such as changes in the range, distribution and abundance of marine species, impacts on growth rates and size, and altered foodwebs due to the location of primary production and prey availability.

In the UK we are committed to ensuring that climate change adaptation, resilience and mitigation are fully considered and integrated in our marine and fisheries policies. The third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) was published on 17 July 2023 and showcases our plans to adapt to and mitigate the risks of a warming climate on the marine environment, including to protect, restore and create blue carbon habitats and manage the risks and opportunities to marine species, habitats, and fisheries.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Bill Esterson: [\[17352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 8 September 2023 from the constituent of the hon. Member for Sefton Central on animal testing.

Mark Spencer:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 8 March 2024 advising that the issues raised in his correspondence are a matter for the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. I apologise for the delay in responding.

■ **Nature for Climate Fund: Saltmarshes**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[17843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including a grant scheme for saltmarshes in the Nature for Climate Fund.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK recognises the important role that saltmarsh can play in climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. Saltmarsh habitats are also richly biodiverse, benefit fish stocks and provide a crucial buffer from coastal flooding.

Building on this recognition, the UK Government is supporting blue carbon restoration efforts through various initiatives, for example by providing £640,000 funding for domestic blue carbon habitat restoration.

This includes funds to support the development of a Saltmarsh Code to help drive investment flows from the private sector towards nature. This funding has also increased the capacity of the Restoring Meadow, Marsh and Reef initiative (ReMeMaRe), helping to create a pipeline of restoration projects in saltmarsh and other key estuarine and coastal habitats.

Defra has set up the UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership in partnership with the Devolved Administrations to address evidence gaps that currently prevent the inclusion of saltmarsh habitats in the UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory (GHGI). Inclusion of saltmarsh in the GHGI and the development of a Saltmarsh Code will allow blue carbon to be marketed and traded as a carbon offset, leveraging private investment into these vital natural carbon stores.

In addition, funding has been made available for saltmarsh restoration through the Landscape Recovery and Countryside Stewardship Environmental Land Management schemes. In the ELMS Countryside Stewardship scheme approximately 5,000 hectares of saltmarsh is being maintained or restored to a good condition.

The £750m of Nature for Climate funding is due to end in March 2025 and the Programme will be delivering against its agreed Business Case in that time. The Fund's impact is being evaluated and any future funding for Trees, Peat and Saltmarshes will be a matter for the next Spending Review. We are continuing to explore further means of supporting saltmarsh restoration.

■ **Tree Planting: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[19254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees have been planted on behalf of his Department in (a) South Holland District, (b) South Kesteven District and (c) Lincolnshire since 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

We do not collect data on tree planting by constituency. Our England Trees Action Plan has kickstarted tree planting across England with over 4 million trees planted in 2023 and 15 million trees planted since 2020.

■ **Trees: Diseases**

Steve Reed:

[\[19374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of trees that have died in each year since 2010.

Rebecca Pow:

We do not hold data on the number of trees which have died each year since 2010. We recognise trees can only help mitigate the impact of a changing climate if they are resilient to those challenges themselves, and to pests and diseases. Landowners and woodland managers should actively manage, increase diversity and maintain tree health so they are fit for the future, including new trees planted under our grant schemes. Our main grant schemes provide 15 years maintenance payments to give these trees the best chance to thrive.

Individual landowners are legally responsible for the care and management of trees on their land. Defra and the Forestry Commission provide guidance and grants, to help landowners manage the impacts of priority tree pests and pathogens such as ash dieback and oak processionary moth. Last year we published a new Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain (2023 to 2028) which sets out an ambitious plan of action for continuing to drive up biosecurity standards and increase the protection for our trees.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Arms Trade: Export Controls

Brendan O'Hara: [\[19381\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of creating a replacement to the Committee on Arms Export Controls.

Leo Docherty:

Parliamentary scrutiny is a matter for the House. In January 2024, the Business and Trade Committee (BTC) became the Parliamentary scrutiny committee with oversight of arms export controls, a role formerly carried out by the Committees on Arms Exports Controls (CAEC). The Government is committed to keeping the BTC updated on export controls.

■ Mali: Private Military and Security Companies

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[18251\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had at international conferences with his counterparts on tackling the influence of private military security companies in Mali; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of such companies on peace negotiations.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK consistently makes clear that groups such as the Russian proxy Wagner Group, with its proven track record of human rights abuses, exacerbate instability in fragile contexts. Whilst Private Military Companies can provide valuable security assurances, Russian Proxies have a destabilising influence in Mali where they focus on military action only and have never had a role, or any interest, in supporting meaningful peace negotiations. Long-term solutions to foster a sustainable and peaceful Mali require meaningful, inclusive dialogue. The UK supports this by coordinating with likeminded states and international organisations to address the drivers of instability. We draw on a range of available levers, including through its humanitarian, development and conflict resolution programmes.

■ Nigeria: Abduction

Ruth Jones: [\[18802\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the kidnappings of schoolchildren in Nigeria.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Government is monitoring the recent kidnappings of schoolchildren in Nigeria and condemns this crime. At the latest UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) dialogue in February, we strengthened our commitment to providing mentoring and capacity-building support to agencies tackling the threat of kidnap within Nigeria. As part of this partnership, the UK National Crime Agency is working with Nigeria to

create a Multi-Agency Kidnap Fusion Cell to increase interoperability between security and justice agencies responding to kidnaps. This will help reduce harm to victims and hold those responsible to account.

■ Options: Finance

Jeremy Corbyn:

[\[18639\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office what steps his Department takes to ensure that a significant percentage of the funds awarded to Options Consultancy Ltd reaches grassroots led organisations.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO has controls in place to ensure that funds awarded to Options Consultancy Ltd, and to all suppliers, are used for their intended purposes. The FCDO's 'rule book' which guides all FCDO programme spending, known as the Programme Operating Framework, contains clear rules and guidance on the lifecycle of a programme from design to delivery. The FCDO agrees upfront with suppliers such as Options Consultancy what each programme must deliver, including how local knowledge and expertise will be used to strengthen delivery. There are established mechanisms to monitor and verify that Options Consultancy Ltd are delivering on these agreements. The FCDO recognises that inclusion of grassroots led organisations in the supply chain improves overall value and increases the chance of lasting impact.

■ South Sudan: Sudan

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[18685\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of (a) recent violence in the Abyei Administrative Area and (b) the capacity of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to protect civilians affected by that violence; and what recent discussions he has had with (i) UNISFA , (ii) the authorities in South Sudan, (iii) the African Union and (iv) the Intergovernmental Authority on Development on the situation in Abyei.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK condemns the recent escalation of violence in Abyei. We released a statement alongside Troika (US, Norway) partners on January 29, to condemn the armed attacks in Abyei and urge the Government of South Sudan to urgently withdraw its troops in line with its commitments under the 2011 Status of Forces Agreement. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei's (UNISFA) mandate was renewed in November 2023 and amended to better equip the mission to respond quickly to security incidents and to place greater emphasis on community engagement. The UK is using its position as a permanent member of the Security Council to urge both the government of South Sudan and the de facto Sudanese authorities to ensure UNISFA can fully and effectively implement its mandate. We echo the UN Secretary-General's encouragement for the African Union to intensify its

mediation efforts to help reach a political solution for Abyei and we encourage The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to engage in this process.

■ UNRWA: Finance

Beth Winter: [\[18310\]](#)

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the Minister of State's oral contribution of 12 March 2024, Official Report, column 133, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the capacity of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to sustain the population of Gaza through delivery of aid at current volumes until the UK's next payment to the agency is due in April.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK provided £35 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) this financial year, including an uplift of £16 million for the Gaza humanitarian response since 7 October, all of which was disbursed before the recent allegations came to light. No more UK funding is due this financial year.

Our decision to pause future funding to UNRWA has no impact on the UK's contribution to the humanitarian response. We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it. Our commitment to trebling aid to Gaza still stands. The Foreign Secretary announced a further £10 million in aid funding for the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) on 13 March, bringing the total spend to over £100 million this financial year. Together with partners we are working to get aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Domestic Visits

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[17999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the destinations were of domestic overnight visits undertaken by Ministers within their Department in each of the last three financial years.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 18 March 2024]: The Government publishes the details of the cost of overseas ministerial travel, including costs of travel, and other costs like accommodation and meals, on the GOV.UK website. But as has been the case under successive administrations, the Government does not publish granular detail on ministers' travel at home or abroad.

■ Hospitals: Older People

Karin Smyth: [\[19386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospital admissions for patients aged 65 and over were the result of a fall in 2012-13.

Helen Whately:

NHS England published information on finished consultant episodes for admitted patients in 2012/13, which is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-admitted-patient-care-activity/hospital-episode-statistics-admitted-patient-care-england-2012-13>

This shows in 2012/13, there were 283,794 finished consultant episodes relating to a fall, where the patient was 65 years old or over.

■ Lung Cancer: Screening**Karin Smyth:****[18730]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans NHS England has to update the standard protocol for the Targeted Lung Health Check programme to reflect work carried out by the National Screening Committee's lung cancer screening task group.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 19 March 2024]: The standard protocol for the Targeted Lung Health Check (TLHC) programme was last updated in November 2022, with the protocol and quality assurance standards being regularly reviewed by the programme's Expert Advisory Group.

When the TLHC protocol is next updated, it will take into account feedback received since the last update, including work carried out by the UK National Screening Committee's lung cancer screening task group. The focus of the task group has been to support the feasibility of the rollout of a national targeted lung cancer screening programme, and developing aspects of planning and implementation.

Karin Smyth:**[18732]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish an assessment of the CT scanner capacity required to support the national roll-out of lung cancer screening by 2028.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 19 March 2024]: NHS England is responsible for the roll out of the NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme, and has no plans to publish an assessment of the computed tomography scanner capacity required.

■ Medicine: Students**Steve McCabe:****[18832]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 24 May 2022 to Question 5381 on Medicine: Students, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of uprating the bursary amount paid for fifth year medical students.

Andrew Stephenson:

The NHS Bursary funding arrangements are reviewed annually, ahead of the start of each academic year. For the 2023/24 academic year, the Government uplifted travel and dual accommodation expense rates for the NHS Bursary by 50%, with the exception of travel by public transport, which continues to be reimbursed at cost. We also uplifted disabled students' allowance, childcare rates, and the means-testing threshold, increasing the amount of funding available to support medical students.

■ **Yellow Card Scheme: Medical Records****Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[18345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date work on digitally linking Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority Yellow Card information to NHS clinical records (a) began and (b) is expected to be completed.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 18 March 2024]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has been working with the National Health Service to explore approaches to facilitate digital linkage of Yellow Card information to clinical records, and to potentially enable faster access to information, where considered necessary for an assessment. Any such approach would be subject to strict information governance controls and prior consultation with stakeholder groups.

In 2020, the MHRA began delivery of a substantially enhanced Yellow Card platform under the SafetyConnect programme, aligned to the recommendations in Baroness Cumberlege's Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review. The new infrastructure is designed with the intent of enabling connectivity to other systems, to facilitate the exchange of information. During that time the MHRA has engaged with the NHS around the evolving technical options for robust and secure connectivity and enhanced user journeys. The first step in these enhancements is use of the common NHS login capability within Yellow Card, which is expected to go live in 2024.

Deeper connectivity between systems will be subject to internal and external stakeholder engagement and substantial information governance controls, with elements completed over a phased and multi-year work plan.

HOME OFFICE■ **Ask for ANI Scheme: Expenditure****Jess Phillips:**[\[19380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse was of the Ask for ANI domestic abuse scheme in 2023.

Laura Farris:

The Home Office allocated £243,662 in the financial year 2022/23 and £168,449 in the financial year 2023/24 to Hestia Housing for the delivery of the Ask for ANI scheme.

In the financial year 2022/23, we also allocated £45,323 to develop an e-learning module and accompanying communications assets to complement the launch of the Ask for ANI in Jobcentre and Jobs and Benefits Offices pilot sites.

The Home Office has also commissioned an independent evaluation to understand how the scheme has been implemented across the Jobcentre and Jobs and Benefits Offices pilot sites. This evaluation is yet to be concluded but has so far cost £116,087.

■ Asylum**Andrew Percy:****[18695]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims have been successfully made by citizens of (a) Israel, (b) the United States, (c) Canada, (d) New Zealand, (e) Australia, (f) Germany, (g) Spain, (h) France and (i) Italy in each of the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the [‘Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release’](#). Data on asylum applications received, and the initial decisions on claims, is published in tables Asy_D01 and Asy_D02 of the [‘Asylum applications, decisions and resettlement detailed datasets’](#). This data includes nationality breakdowns.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the ‘Notes’ page of each workbook. The latest data relates to 31 December 2023. Data up to the end of March 2024 will be published on 23 May 2024.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the [‘Research and statistics calendar’](#).

■ Asylum: Hotels**Mike Amesbury:****[19170]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing exit plans from hotel accommodation to give settled residents 56 days notice.

Tom Pursglove:

Since September 2023, all individuals receive a minimum of 28 days’ support (including accommodation) after being issued with a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). There are no current plans to extend the 28 days prescribed in legislation due to the huge pressures on the asylum system.

We offer move on support to all individuals through Migrant Help or their partner organisation. This includes providing advice on accessing the labour market, on applying for Universal Credit and signposting to local authorities for assistance with housing. Individuals do not need to wait for their BRP to make a claim for benefits and are encouraged to do so as early as possible if they require them.

We work closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to ensure the right asylum decision data is being shared with local authorities to enable effective planning and to lessen the impact on existing homelessness and rough sleeping pressures. Our accommodation providers are directly working with local authorities to notify them when an individual is due to have their asylum support ended. We are working with our partners, including local authorities, to provide timely notification of key events that impact them. We are working with our Strategic Migration Partners (SMPs) to facilitate regional sessions with councils and to share data.

We are also utilising Home Office Liaison Officers (HOLOs) to replicate part of the Afghan resettlement move on process. We have been working in three local authority areas since December 2023; Glasgow, Brent and Hillingdon. This has now been expanded to Manchester and Liverpool.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[19301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an estimate of the cost of establishing an appeal body for asylum applications processed in Rwanda under the UK-Rwanda treaty.

Michael Tomlinson:

We are working at pace with the Government of Rwanda to establish an appeal body for asylum applications. More details on this will be released in due course.

■ Asylum: Weaver Vale

Mike Amesbury:

[\[19169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when his Department plans to end the use of hotels in Weaver Vale constituency for (a) adults and (b) children seeking asylum.

Tom Pursglove:

By the end of this month, we will have successfully closed 100 hotels. We continue to work with accommodation 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.

■ Heathrow Airport: Immigration Controls

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[19448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2024 to Question 15335 on Heathrow Airport: Immigration Controls, if he will publish the Equality Impact Assessments produced for the (a) Heathrow Change Programme and (b) proposed roster system.

Tom Pursglove:

An Equality Impact Assessment on the Heathrow Change Programme was published electronically to departmental trade unions on 4 August 2023.

An Equality Impact Assessment on the proposed roster was published electronically to departmental trade unions on 13 September 2023.

■ Humberside Police: Burglary

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[19295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has had discussions with Humberside police on the pledge that a police officer will attend every burgled home.

Chris Philp:

The Crime Survey for England and Wales data shows a 56% fall in domestic burglaries when comparing the year ending September 2023 with year ending March 2010. This is clearly good news; however, we recognise the impact domestic burglary can have on individuals and communities and we are committed to tackling and preventing this crime.

The public rightly expects that the police will visit them when a home burglary has been committed, which is why we welcome the announcement made by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) on 8 June 2023 that all 43 police forces in England and Wales have been implementing this attendance policy since March 2023.
<https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-now-attending-scene-of-every-home-burglary>.

The police commitment to attend home burglaries is supported by specific College of Policing good practice guidance on conducting residential burglary investigations:
<https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/residential-burglary>.

We continue to liaise with Humberside Police and the NPCC who play a key role in tackling burglary through an array of different forums, including the Residential Burglary Taskforce and the National Policing Board. We are also working with police leaders across England and Wales to ensure forces are making their attendance data available to the public.

HMICFRS will be doing an inspection on Investigations shortly.

■ **Iran: Sanctions**

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[18632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle hostile activities by the Iranian regime in the UK, in the context of recent reports of (a) threats to British journalists and human rights defenders by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and (b) the use UK-based banks to procure funds in breach of UK sanctions.

Tom Tugendhat:

We do not routinely comment on operational matters or specific threats. However, we take the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms and safety in the UK very seriously. We continually assess potential threats in the UK and use all tools at our disposal to protect the UK and our interests from any Iran-linked threats.

UK businesses – including banks – are expected to perform due diligence checks on all of their customers and clients to ensure compliance with all UK sanctions regulations.

The UK is committed to ensuring that our sanctions are robustly enforced, potential breaches are assessed, and appropriate action is taken where a breach is identified. Non-compliance with UK sanctions is a serious offence and punishable through disclosures, financial penalties, or criminal prosecution. Departments from across HMG – including FCDO, HMT, OFSI, HMRC, HO, and the NCA – are working together, and with UK companies, to ensure that sanctions are enforced.

■ **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[18633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the Government has not proscribed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps; and what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on that issue.

Tom Tugendhat:

While the UK Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under review, we do not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not being considered for proscription.

The UK Government has long been clear about our concerns over the malign activity of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The UK maintains sanctions on over 400 Iranian individuals and entities covering human rights abuses and nuclear proliferation. The Government has also imposed sanctions on the IRGC in its entirety and on several senior security and political figures in Iran, including senior commanders within the IRGC and its Basij force.

The UK Government, working with the US, has engaged closely with European partners on Iranian transnational threats and we will continue to hold Iran and the IRGC to account. On 24 January 2024, we took coordinated action with the US and

imposed sanctions on several members of the IRGC for their involvement in plots to assassinate individuals on UK soil.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Penrose:

[18686]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he will plans reply to the letters of 15 January and 12 February 2024 from the Hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of a constituent about potential examples of two-tier policing in the UK.

Chris Philp:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 14 March 2024. I apologise for the delay in responding.

■ **Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence**

Stephen Morgan:

[18942]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the introduction of the aggravating factor for attacks on public facing workers on levels of retail crime.

Chris Philp:

The Government is clear that violent and abusive behaviour towards any worker, particularly those who provide a valuable service to the public, is never acceptable.

In 2022, we took the significant step to introduce a statutory aggravating factor for assault against those who are serving the public. Section 156 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 means the public facing nature of a victim's role will be considered an aggravating factor when it comes to sentencing for assault offences, allowing the court to give a longer sentence within the statutory maximum for the offence.

Assaults against retail workers are not separately identifiable in police recorded crime data held centrally by the Home Office.

The Government shares concerns about the level of assaults against retailers. In October 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) published the [Retail Crime Action Plan](#). Through this Plan, all forces across England and Wales have committed to prioritise police attendance at the scene where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured and can only be done by police personnel. Additionally, where CCTV or other digital images are secured, police will run this through the Police National Database to aid efforts to identify prolific offenders or potentially dangerous individuals.

The longer-term impact of the Action Plan will continue to be monitored; however, retailers have reported early signs of improvement in the police response to retail crime and according to data collected by the NPCC from a dip sample of forces in December 2023, police attended 60% of crimes reported by retailers where violence

had been used, with 16% of forces sampled reporting 100% attendance to this type of incident: [Policing Retail Crime Action Plan shows early impact \(npcc.police.uk\)](https://npcc.police.uk).

■ Seasonal Workers: Pay

Stuart C McDonald: [\[18726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2024 to Question 14330 on Seasonal Workers, who is responsible for ensuring that seasonal workers receive a minimum of 32 hour's pay each week for each week of their time in the UK; and what steps his Department is taking to support enforcement of this.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[18727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, who is responsible for (a) accommodating, (b) maintaining, (c) supporting and (d) compensating workers in the UK on the Seasonal Worker visa who become ill; who is responsible for (i) monitoring and (ii) enforcing this right; and which body handles complaints on healthcare support for those workers.

Tom Pursglove:

The Scheme Operators are responsible for monitoring pay, conditions, and worker's general welfare whilst they are in the UK.

The Home Office works closely with DEFRA to monitor the scheme to ensure Scheme Operators adhere to the stringent requirements set for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the seasonal workers. This includes ongoing monitoring of the route's performance, regular communication with Scheme Operators and ongoing compliance monitoring which is underpinned by compliance visits to both Scheme Operators and growers, which are carried out by UKVI. Action is taken if concerns are identified during sponsor visits, with sponsor licences being suspended while UKVI investigate further.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Stoke-on-Trent

Jonathan Gullis: [\[18813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of illegal migrants were (a) in Stoke-on-Trent and (b) housed in hotels in Stoke-on-Trent in the last 12 months; and how many have been removed since October 2023.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Home Office publishes data on irregular arrivals to the UK in the '[Irregular migration to the UK statistics](#)' release. Data on detected irregular arrivals is published in table Irr_01 and data on returns of small boat arrivals is published in table Irr_02e of the '[Irregular migration to the UK summary tables](#)', with the latest data up to the end of December 2023. Data on all returns is published in table Ret_D01 of the '[Returns detailed datasets](#)' as part of the '[Immigration system statistics](#)' quarterly release.

These statistics should not be used to infer the size of the irregular population in the UK, nor the total number of people entering the UK irregularly. The location of irregular arrivals is not published. However, the Home Office does publish data on asylum seekers in receipt of support by local authority, some of whom will have entered the UK through irregular methods, in table Asy_D11 of the '[Asylum and resettlement data tables](#)' as part of the '[Immigration system statistics](#)' quarterly release.

■ Vetting: Standards

Mr Rob Roberts:

[19488]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his Department's standard completion timetable is for processing DBS applications; how many applications his Department are processing and how many applications have been processed outside the standard timetable in the last 12 months.

Laura Farris:

For the 2023/24 financial year, the Disclosure and Barring Service's (DBS) targets are to complete 85% of Basic checks within two days, 85% of Standard checks within three days, and 80% of Enhanced checks within 14 days.

DBS publishes its performance against these targets on a quarterly basis at [DBS dataset 1: DBS checks, the DBS Update Service, and disputes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). This includes the total monthly volumes of applications processed and the totals issued within target. The latest published information is up to December 2023.

In addition to this data, DBS's performance for January and February 2024 is as follows:

- Basic checks – 435,350 checks processed of which 382,412 completed within the two-day target, exceeding the 85% target.
- Standard checks – 70,729 checks processed, of which 62,898 completed within the three-day target, exceeding the 85% target.
- Enhanced checks – 691,244 checks processed, of which 544,082 completed within the 14-day target, achieving 78.7% against the 80% target.

■ Visas: Care Workers

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[18769]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to ensure that the application process for visa renewals for care workers is efficient.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office carries out robust security and eligibility checks and each Certificate of Sponsorship is assessed to ensure there is a licensed sponsor and that the roles are valid.

Technological advances have also improved the customer journey meaning that large numbers are no longer required to attend a physical enrolment centre, plus Health and Care visas provide a more generous service standard than the wider Skilled Worker route.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[18770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions he has had with the home care sector on the impact of changes to care worker visa policy.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government engages regularly with business sectors, including through a number of its advisory groups, when developing its policies and we will continue to strike the balance between reducing overall net migration and ensuring that businesses have the skills they need.

JUSTICE

■ Legal Representation

Alex Cunningham: [\[19348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the document entitled Qualified legal representative appointed by the Court: Statutory guidance, published in July 2022, how many qualified legal representatives have been registered in (a) family and (b) other civil cases since the publication of that guidance.

Alex Cunningham: [\[19349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in how many cases a qualified legal representative was (a) required and (b) available.

Alex Cunningham: [\[19350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in how many cases a qualified legal representative was (a) required and (b) not available.

Alex Cunningham: [\[19351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many qualified legal representatives had completed vulnerable witness training when they registered for the scheme.

Alex Cunningham: [\[19352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department is taking steps to monitor the requirement for qualified legal representatives to undergo vulnerable witness training within six months of registering.

Laura Farris:

The Qualified Legal Representative (QLR) scheme was introduced in July 2022, following the Government's Domestic Abuse Act (2021) which prohibited unrepresented perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims or alleged victims in family and civil proceedings, and vice versa. The

prohibition ensures that vulnerable victims and witnesses are not traumatised by being cross-examined directly by their alleged perpetrator.

As of 20 March 2024, there are currently 366 QLRs registered to undertake work in the family courts and 78 QLRs registered to undertake work in the civil courts. We do not hold central data on total registrations since the publication of the statutory guidance.

Circumstances under which a QLR is required vary, for example, depending on whether parties have their own representation, and decisions on which cases require QLRs are taken by the courts. We do not collect data centrally on how many cases have required a QLR, or the number of QLRs that have presented cases under the scheme.

We do not hold central data on how many QLRs have completed training, which they are able to access from a range of external providers. The Government encourages legal professionals to take up this important work to assist in both the family and civil courts, and to complete the required training as early as practicable.

■ Magistrates

Liz Saville Roberts:

[19516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of single justice procedure notices.

Mike Freer:

HMCTS assessed the Single Justice Procedure Notice (SJPN) following a pilot with two prosecutors, the Metropolitan Police Service and TV Licensing, between December 2019 and February 2020 where a redesigned SJPN was trialled.

The SJPN was redesigned to encourage engagement. The pilot assessment showed that this was successful as the online plea rates and form completion improved following the redesigned SJPN. As a result of this there was an agreement to rollout the revised notice to all prosecutors who use the Single Justice Procedure.

Details of the assessment were published on 29 July 2022 and can be found by following the link: [HMCTS single justice procedure notice pilots assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmcts-single-justice-procedure-notice-pilots-assessment).

■ Prison Officers: Pension Rights

Grahame Morris:

[19322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many pre-Fresh Start prison officers with reserved pension rights remain in service.

Grahame Morris:

[19323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the last pre-Fresh Start prison officer with reserved pension rights retired from service.

Edward Argar:

Currently there are 11 full time and 181 partially retired operational uniform staff who retained Pre-Fresh Start Reserved Rights Terms under the legacy PCSPS Classic scheme. There are also 19 partially retired Operational Managers who retained Pre-Fresh Start terms under the legacy PCSPS Classic scheme at the date of taking their benefits.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Domestic Abuse

Caroline Lucas: [\[18692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the report by Women's Aid entitled Domestic Abuse Report 2024, The Annual Audit, published in February 2024; and whether his Department is taking steps to increase funding for the specialist domestic abuse sector.

Felicity Buchan:

The Government recognises the vital role of local domestic abuse organisations in supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse, as highlighted by the Women's Aid 2024 Annual Report.

The Government is committed to the delivery of safe accommodation with support for victims of domestic abuse and their children who need to flee their homes and has placed a duty on councils to provide safe accommodation services to victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Since 2021, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has committed over £507 million, including £129.7 million in 2024/25, to councils across England to fund this duty. Funding from April 2025 will be determined at the next Spending Review.

I work closely with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, the Local Government Association, and the domestic abuse sector, including Women's Aid, through a National Expert Steering Group on safe accommodation to ensure that councils have the support they need to deliver their duty requirements. DLUHC is also working closely with Women's Aid, the specialist 'by and for' sector and local authorities to explore ways to improve the commissioning of 'by and for' services.

■ High Rise Flats: House Insurance

Mike Amesbury: [\[19172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Association of British Insurers plan to reduce insurance costs for leaseholders and residents in high rise buildings.

Lee Rowley:

The Government is very aware that leaseholders in some affected buildings have been burdened with paying extremely high premiums for too long. The industry-led Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility will be launched on 1st April. We have repeatedly called for this to be launched and it has taken too long to do so, but now it is due to launch the Government will monitor the implementation and impact of the Facility and will remain engaged with industry regarding whether any further steps may be required.

Housing: Environment Protection**Andrew Lewer:**[\[18797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what (a) policy and (b) regulatory steps his Department is taking to enable greater competition amongst utility providers to ensure the speedy delivery of green homes.

Lee Rowley:

The department is working towards delivering the greener homes of the future and in doing so the department will collaborate with key partners across government. I would be happy to meet my Hon Friend to discuss further, should that be helpful.

Housing: Insulation**Stephen Doughty:**[\[19071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to support people in Wales with incorrectly installed cavity wall insulation.

Lee Rowley:

This is a devolved matter.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products: Scotland****Ian Murray:**[\[18416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to help support research into cell and gene therapy in Scotland.

Andrew Griffith:

The UK is a world-leader in the development and manufacture of cell and gene therapies thanks to government investment in innovation and skills, including through the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult (CGTC).

DSIT also invested £10 million - alongside £10 million from Scottish Enterprise – to support a new Oligonucleotide Manufacturing Innovation Centre of Excellence in Glasgow.

The Vaccine Taskforce provided funding for a state-of-the art CGTC facility in Braintree to accelerate the development and manufacturing of advanced therapies at clinical and commercial scale.

My department also supported CGTC to establish apprenticeships and training programmes to upskill people across the UK.

■ **Broadband: Social Tariffs**

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[19479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2024 to Question 17385 on Broadband: Social Tariffs, what steps she is taking to ensure that access to social tariffs is equitable across (a) regions and (b) nations.

Julia Lopez:

Social tariffs are available in 99% of the UK and are offered by a range of telecoms providers. National providers, such as BT, Virgin Media, Sky and Vodafone, as well as regional or local 'alternative network providers' (often referred to as altnets) such as Community Fibre, Greysthott Gigabit Connect, and Lothian Broadband offer social tariffs. Mobile social tariffs are also available nationwide, using normal mobile networks across the UK. Ofcom has published a full list of social tariffs and the locations they are available on their website.

We recognise that the delivery of social tariffs by regional or local altnets means that not all eligible consumers are able to access every social tariff, however provision by internet service providers (ISPs) on Openreach's national telecoms network means that vast majority households across the UK will have social tariff options from their provider.

We continue to work with operators to encourage them to do all they can to support customers and ensure strong provision of social tariffs across all the UK.

■ **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Domestic Visits**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[19365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, on how many occasions Ministers from her Department and its predecessor Department have visited (a) Wales, (b) Scotland and (c) Northern Ireland in each of the last three financial years.

Andrew Griffith:

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

We do not hold information centrally on all Ministerial visits to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland conducted since the Department for Science, Innovation and

Technology was established in February 2023. However, we are able to provide some detail of recent Ministerial visits.

This week, the Minister for Science visited Edinburgh for Arctic Science Summit Week.

In December 2023, Minister for Technology and the Digital Economy visited the compound semiconductor cluster in South Wales.

In May 2023, Chloe Smith MP also visited the compound semiconductor cluster in May 2023 during her time as Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology.

Earlier this month, the Minister for AI and Intellectual Property visited Belfast for CyberNI Week. The Minister also visited Belfast for CyberNI week in April 2023, along with a visit to the Intellectual Property Office HQ Newport, Wales in November 2023.

■ **National Security Online Information Team: Social Media**

Peter Kyle:

[\[19414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the opening statement by the Secretary of State at the Lords Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee on 12 March 2024, whether the officials who alerted her to tweets posted by a EDI board member were part of the Counter Disinformation Unit.

Andrew Griffith:

No.

TRANSPORT

■ **Avanti West Coast: Catering**

Grahame Morris:

[\[19316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the on-board catering capacity of the Class 390 Pendolino trains operated by Avanti West Coast following the refurbishment of that train fleet.

Huw Merriman:

The on-board catering capacity on the refurbished Class 390 Pendolino fleet is a matter for the operator. However, officials regularly hold Avanti West Coast (AWC) to account on the on-board customer experience they provide to passengers including catering services.

■ Cars: Crime Prevention

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[19299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will hold discussions with insurers on encouraging car owners to fit car security systems to (a) deter theft and (b) reduce their insurance premiums.

Guy Opperman:

New cars and light commercial vehicles require systems to prevent unauthorised use, immobilisers and a vehicle alarm system to enable them to be registered. Department for Transport officials regularly liaise with representatives of the motor insurance industry on a variety of issues such as the cost of insurance. However individual insurers are responsible for setting the terms and conditions of the policies that they offer. The Government does not intervene or seek to control the market.

■ Cars: Insurance

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[19510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will hold discussions with car insurance providers on the cost of insurance for young drivers.

Guy Opperman:

Department for Transport officials regularly liaise with representatives of the motor insurance industry on a variety of issues such as the cost of insurance. However, it is the responsibility of individual motor insurers to set premiums and the terms and conditions of their policies, and the Government does not intervene or seek to control the market.

The Government is determined that insurers should treat customers fairly and firms are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority rules.

There is evidence to suggest that younger drivers and those with less experience carry a higher risk. Some insurers have introduced the use of telematics or in-car black boxes to allow better risk-based pricing of insurance, especially for new drivers. It means insurers now have a real time data feed, which allows them to see an individual's driving behaviour; this had not been possible in the past. This can help reduce insurance premiums if drivers show good driving behaviour with a black box installed in their cars.

■ Roads: Safety

Helen Morgan:

[\[18330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support National Highways in working to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the Strategic Road Network.

Helen Morgan:

[\[18331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help improve safety on the strategic road network.

Helen Morgan:

[\[18332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that programmes for improving safety on the strategic road network receive adequate funding.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is investing £24 billion on the Strategic Road Network during the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2 - 2020-2025) to fund the operation, maintenance, renewal and enhancement of the network. Safety is a key consideration National Highways takes into account across all its activity and much of this investment aims to improve safety across the network for all road users. A specific Safety and Congestion Fund, worth £140m in RIS2, is in place as part of National Highways' Designated Funds programme and aims to deliver over 150 safety improvements on specific high-risk roads, accident-cluster locations and potential suicide-cluster areas, to help reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the Strategic Road Network.

The Department for Transport and the Office of Rail and Road, in its capacity of Highways Monitor, hold National Highways to account for delivery against its performance indicators and work collectively to ensure appropriate action plans are in place to maximise safety on the network.

TREASURY

■ Banks: Closures

Rachael Maskell:

[\[18747\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of bank closures on (a) local communities and (b) elderly people's access to banking services.

Bim Afolami:

Whilst decisions to open or close a bank branch are commercial decisions for firms, and the Government does not intervene on individual closures, it is imperative that banks and building societies recognise the needs of all their customers, including those who still need to use in-person services. The impact of branch closures must be mitigated where possible so that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have appropriate access to banking services.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)'s guidance sets out that firms must carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and put in place reasonable alternatives. This seeks to ensure the implementation of closure decisions is done in a way that treats

customers fairly. Where firms fall short, the FCA may ask for closures to be paused or other options to be put in place.

Alternative options to access everyday banking services can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking and via the Post Office or Banking Hubs. The Post Office allows personal and business customers to carry out everyday banking services at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

Banking Hubs are an initiative which enable customers of participating banks to access cash and banking services in shared facilities. Over 100 Banking Hubs have been announced so far, and the Government hopes to see these Hubs open as soon as possible.

■ Credit: Regulation

Dan Carden: [\[18773\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to increase the regulation digital buy-now pay-later products.

Bim Afolami:

The Government is committed to regulating Buy-Now Pay-Later (BNPL). The Government will publish a response to the consultation, which will set out next steps, in due course.

■ Debt Collection: Regulation

Dan Carden: [\[18774\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to improve the regulation of debt collection practices.

Bim Afolami:

The Government wants to see fair treatment of individuals in problem debt, and there is a range of work underway across government and regulators to promote responsible debt collection practices.

In June 2023 the FCA, Ofgem, Ofwat and Ofcom published a joint letter via the UK Regulators' Network (UKRN) setting out how firms in their respective sectors should support customers in financial difficulty. On 18 March 2024, the same group of regulators issued further guidance, setting out their shared expectations on firms' debt collection practices. This is to ensure that firms support customers in debt and that firms' collection practices are not causing harm to customers.

■ Iran: Financial Institutions

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[18629\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to investigate (a) Bank Saderat PLC, (b) Melli Bank PLC and (c) other Iranian financial institutions based in the UK with links to the Iranian Government.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[18630\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK financial institutions comply with UK sanctions against Iran.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[18631\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take to hold to account UK-based (a) entities and (b) people continuing to deal with the (i) Iranian Government and (ii) IRGC in breach of UK sanctions.

Bim Afolami:

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) is the authority responsible for implementing and enforcing the UK's financial sanctions on behalf of HM Treasury.

On 14 December 2023, the UK announced a new sanctions regime that gives the UK extensive new powers to disrupt and deter Iran's hostile activities in the UK and around the world. This has been developed to respond to unprecedented threats from the Iranian regime, including efforts to undermine peace and security across the Middle East and plots to kill individuals on UK soil. Overall, the UK has designated over 400 Iranian individuals and entities including in relation to Iran's destabilising regional activity, human rights abuses, and nuclear proliferation.

OFSI assesses every instance of reported non-compliance and will act in all cases where we conclude a breach has occurred. OFSI does not comment on specific cases.

Non-compliance with UK sanctions is a serious offence and punishable through disclosures, large financial penalties, or criminal prosecution. Departments from across HMG including FCDO, HMT, OFSI, HMRC, HO, and the NCA, are working together, and with UK companies, to ensure that sanctions are enforced.

■ Pension Funds

Matt Western:

[\[19425\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that investors in pension funds have the right (a) for complaints to be determined by the Financial Ombudsman Service and (b) to receive redress from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

Bim Afolami:

The Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) can consider complaints about businesses regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) which includes firms that provide self-invested personal pensions (SIPPs). The jurisdiction of the FOS, including which complaints it can deal with, is determined by the FCA and set out in the FCA Handbook. Whether a complaint is eligible or not is a matter for the FOS to consider.

■ **Schools: Concrete**

Martyn Day: **[18756]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 3.5 of Treasury minutes: Government response to the Committee of Public Accounts on the Second report from Session 2023-24, HC 78, published 8 March 2024, how much and what proportion of funding to tackle RAAC concentrate in schools will come from (a) existing and (b) additional budget funding.

Laura Trott:

Government is funding the removal of RAAC present in schools and colleges either through grants, or through the School Rebuilding Programme. A list of education settings with confirmed RAAC and the funding route to remove RAAC was published on 8 February, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>.

■ **Tobacco: Smuggling**

Mr Virendra Sharma: **[19303]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2024, to Question 13272 on Tobacco: Smuggling, how many referrals have been made by Trading Standards to HMRC in the last 12 months; and how many penalties have been issued as a result.

Nigel Huddleston:

In July 2023 new powers were given to Trading Standards to make referrals to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) where they find evidence of tobacco products that don't comply with the UK Tobacco Track and Trace System. The referral process which practically implements these powers started in October 2023. HMRC periodically publishes outputs of its tobacco strategy, and will publish the outputs of its work with Trading Standards as part of future publications.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

Colum Eastwood: **[19509]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance his Department issues on the requirements for customs declarations for business-to-business shipments exceeding the value of £135 between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has recently issued guidance on the long-term arrangements for business-to-business parcels which is available on gov.uk - www.gov.uk/government/publications/moving-parcels-from-great-britain-to-northern-ireland-under-the-windsor-framework-from-30-september-2024.

WALES

■ Tata Steel: Redundancy

Stephen Doughty:

[19070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the impact of potential job losses at Tata on the (a) wider supply chains and (b) economy in South Wales.

David T C Davies:

This Government is supporting Tata Steel with £500 million towards building of the electric arc furnace, securing the future of steelmaking at Port Talbot. This will protect 5,000 steel jobs and thousands more in the supply chain. The Tata Steel/Port Talbot Transition Board has been set up to support those affected by Tata Steel's decarbonisation transition, backed by a £100 million fund. Of that funding, £80 million is provided by the UK Government and £20 million will be provided by Tata.

The Transition Board has commissioned the development of a Local Economic Action Plan to assess the economic impact in South Wales, as well as provide the Transition Board with advice on how to support and grow the local economy. The full impact of Tata Steel's transition on the wider supply chains and the South Wales economy depends on the outcome of the formal consultation, which remains underway.

This Government acknowledges the need for immediate as well as long-term support, especially in the wake of the announcement on 18 March that Tata Steel UK will cease operation of coke ovens at their Port Talbot site. This decision, while primarily an operational matter for Tata Steel UK, shows again why the UK government is right to step in with one of the largest support packages in our history to secure the future of the Welsh steel industry.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Domestic Visits

Jonathan Ashworth:

[19367]

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

Paul Maynard:

The information requested is not centrally collated and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Information on DWP ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings can be found at: [DWP ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings - GOV.UK\(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings)

■ **Social Security Benefits**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[19203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his department has made of the potential implications for household budgets of his policies on the (a) cap on benefits for out of work households and (b) two child limit for child support.

Jo Churchill:
It is not possible to produce a robust assessment.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Children**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[19204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the two child limit on the numbers of children living in (a) absolute and (b) relative poverty between 2018 and 2035.

Jo Churchill:
It is not possible to produce a robust assessment.

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

Sir John Hayes: [\[18836\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:
In South Holland and the Deepings, and across the country, our Jobcentre teams are supporting people back into work and those in work to progress. We are working with local and national employers to help fill vacancies quickly, delivering Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPS), recruitment days and job fairs.

In partnership with Boston College, Net UK and Steadfast Training, we have recently offered SWAPs for local customers to gain skills and enhance their applications for Security, Construction, Fork Lift Driving and Teaching Assistant vacancies. These offers are repeated bi-monthly. We are also working with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Boston College to support recruitment into LGV driving roles via a Skills Boot Camp that has been running since early 2023.

Our local Partnership Manager works alongside the South East Lincolnshire Council Partnership on Shared Prosperity Funding Grant Panels, focussed on people and skills, with procurement of a range of options to support the economically inactive to move closer to the labour market and into work.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

TREASURY

■ Scottish Government and Welsh Government funding

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Laura Trott):

[\[HCWS373\]](#)

In addition to changes in funding at Supplementary Estimates 2023-24, and in line with the Statement of Funding Policy, the Welsh Government has chosen to draw down £265.056 million in Resource DEL (excluding depreciation), £47.230m in Capital DEL (General) and £37.420 million in Capital DEL (Financial Transactions) from the Wales Reserve in 2023-24.

The Scottish Government has confirmed that they wish to carry forward £14.758 million in Capital DEL (General) outside of the Scotland Reserve and defer a reduction of £52.838 million in Capital DEL (Financial Transactions) from 2023-24 to 2024-25.

The flexibility to carry forward funding outside the Reserve and to defer the reduction in Capital DEL (Financial Transactions) was exceptionally agreed to help the Scottish Government and Welsh Government to manage late changes to their budgets.

Revised 2023-24 funding is as follows:

£MILLION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT	WELSH GOVERNMENT
Resource DEL excluding depreciation ¹	37,608.692	16,718.329
Capital DEL (General)	6,073.634	3,079.192
Capital DEL (Financial Transactions)	349.926	124.682
Total DEL	44,032.252	19,922.203

¹ Due to the scale of tax devolution in Scotland, Scottish Government DEL funding is shown excluding tax and welfare Block Grant Adjustments. Welsh Government DEL funding is shown including tax Block Grant Adjustments.