House of Commons

Daily Report **Tuesday, 28 April 2026**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 28 April 2026 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:05 P.M., 28 April 2026). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.
Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Law Officers: Equality

Charlie Dewhirst: [128594]

To ask the Solicitor General, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2026 to Question 111851 on Law Officers: Equality, whether her Department's document entitled Attorney General's Guidance on Legal Risk, published on 6 November 2024, will be updated to reflect the proposed socio-economic duty when enacted.

Ellie Reeves:
The public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities is not yet in force in England. Once in force, the duty will require public authorities (including the Law Officers), when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise their functions, to have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.

The Attorney General's Guidance on legal risk is intended to assist lawyers and others advising on lawfulness and legal risk in government, by setting out a common framework to assess risk. At such time that the duty comes into force, the Law Officers will have due regard to it in deciding whether any updates to this guidance are required.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

Alcoholic Drinks: Delivery Services

Peter Lamb: [128576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Licensing Reform Programme's call for evidence, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect on society of rapid alcohol delivery services.

Kate Dearden:
The Licensing Act 2003 regulates the sale and supply of alcohol for consumption within licensed venues (on-trade) and outside of licensed venues (off-trade), which is the responsibility of the Home Office.

The Licensing Reform Programme's call for evidence focused on the operation of the on-trade, and the National Licensing Policy Framework applies exclusively to premises authorised under the Licensing Act 2003 for the sale and consumption of alcohol on-site, regulated entertainment or late-night refreshment.

Under the Licensing Act 2003, it is already an offence to sell alcohol to someone who is intoxicated. The Home Office is looking at how current licensing rules apply to

home alcohol delivery services and speaking to experts and stakeholders to ensure these are effective.

Although the evidence base is still emerging, the Government is aware there are some concerns that rapid online alcohol delivery may be contributing to increased alcohol harm by significantly expanding availability and ease of access. Faster delivery times can reduce the natural friction that moderates consumption, potentially enabling higher risk and more impulsive drinking, including among vulnerable groups. The Government is committed to ensuring that the licencing regime remains fit for purpose and able to meet emerging challenges.

Arms Trade: Israel

Richard Burgon: [129189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has assessed if there is a clear risk that arms exports licensed by the UK government might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law by Israel in Lebanon.

Richard Burgon: [129191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has assessed if there is a clear risk that arms exports licensed by the UK government might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law by Israel in Iran.

Richard Burgon: [129306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has assessed if there is a clear risk that arms exports licensed by the UK government might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law by the US in Iran.

Chris Bryant:
The Prime Minister has been clear that the conflict in the Middle East is not our war. We are responding to this crisis with clear and calm leadership to protect our national interests without being drawn in to the conflict.

Export licence applications are rigorously assessed against the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, including criterion 2(c) which states that we will not grant a licence if there is a clear risk that the items under that licence might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law. We also keep all existing licences under continual review on the same basis. This means that all these issues are kept under continuous review.

Beer: Government Assistance

Navendu Mishra: [128755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his Department is doing to support independent breweries in England.

Kate Dearden:
The Government fully recognises the importance of independent breweries and pubs. We are committed to maintaining a beer and pub sector that is diverse, competitive and rooted in local communities, supporting jobs, investment and growth across towns and villages.

We have conducted a review of the beer market to determine whether there are any structural barriers preventing small breweries from accessing pubs, I am currently considering the findings of this review alongside hearing evidence directly from industry stakeholders and representative bodies with whom I am meeting over the next month. This includes meeting with small brewery owners and representatives from the Society of Independent Brewers.

Additionally, Small Producer Relief (SPR) supports smaller producers by allowing those producing up to 4,500 hectolitres a year to pay reduced duty on products below 8.5% ABV. At Budget 2025, the Government increased the cash discount for small producers, maintaining the value of SPR relative to main duty rates.

Business: Energy

Gareth Snell: [128262]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the impact of energy price volatility on business insolvency rates.

Blair McDougall:
Business insolvency rates over the last year are shown below.

PERIOD	TOTAL COMPANY INSOLVENCIES
Mar 2025	1,995
Apr 2025	2,058
May 2025	2,216
Jun 2025	2,033
Jul 2025	2,058
Aug 2025	2,015
Sep 2025	1,964
Oct 2025	2,006
Nov 2025	1,848
Dec 2025	1,686
Jan 2026	1,759

PERIOD	TOTAL COMPANY INSOLVENCIES
Feb 2026	1,895
Mar 2026	2,022

Source: Insolvency Service – Company Insolvency Statistics March 2026

In March 2026, total company insolvencies were up 7% on the previous month and up 1% on a year earlier.

The proportion of UK SMEs reporting higher costs as a potential barrier is shown below.

PERIOD	% OF SMES REPORTING HIGHER COSTS AS A POTENTIAL BARRIER
Q1 2025	37%
Q2 2025	35%
Q3 2025	35%
Q4 2025	37%
Q1 2026	40%

Source: IPSOS - SME Finance Monitor Monthly Charts, Q1 2026

Ofgem, as the independent regulator of gas and electricity markets, actively monitors the non-domestic energy market, including to track outcomes for consumers. During periods of price volatility, Ofgem's priority remains protecting consumers and ensuring the energy system continues to work for consumer across Britain. To support non-domestic customers, Ofgem has recently published guidance for businesses on how to manage business costs in an uncertain market: Managing business energy costs in an uncertain market | Ofgem.

In addition, the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero and Ofgem's interim CEO recently wrote to non-domestic suppliers and energy third party intermediaries to set out their expectations as to how non-domestic customers should be supported during this period of price volatility.

Gareth Snell: **[128263]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the regional distribution of energy cost support for businesses in the West Midlands of England.

Chris McDonald:

The Department for Business and Trade manages two energy cost support schemes, the British Industry Supercharger and the Energy-Intensive Industries Compensation

Scheme, to support eligible energy-intensive industries with the indirect costs of emissions levies and electricity policy and network costs. These schemes provide support to around 550 businesses across the whole of Great Britain, including businesses in the West Midlands of England in sectors such as brick production, aluminium casting, glass production, plastic manufacturing and paper manufacturing.

Sir John Hayes: **[128652]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the regional distribution of energy cost support for businesses in Lincolnshire.

Chris McDonald:
The Department for Business and Trade manages two energy cost support schemes, the British Industry Supercharger and the Energy-Intensive Industries Compensation Scheme, to support eligible energy-intensive industries with the indirect costs of emissions levies and electricity policy and network costs. These schemes provide support to around 550 businesses across the whole of Great Britain, including some of the most electricity and trade-intensive businesses in Lincolnshire.

From April 2027 the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme is expected to support over 10,000 additional manufacturing businesses across the whole of Great Britain with an additional payment in 2027 to cover the 2026/27 period.

Gareth Snell: **[129209]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate his Department has made of the number of businesses that have relocated production overseas due to energy costs in the last 24 months.

Chris McDonald:
The Department for Business and Trade does not hold this information. We continue to support UK businesses and have many avenues through which businesses of all sizes can explore opportunities to grow internationally. We will continue to review how we can support businesses.

Business: Government Assistance

Alex Baker: **[128459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help businesses to increase exports, improve productivity, and create more skilled jobs.

Blair McDougall:
The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is putting exports at the heart of our growth mission to boost productivity and create skilled jobs across the UK. Through our Trade Strategy, we are removing barriers that hold UK businesses back from selling to the world by negotiating trade deals, tackling regulatory obstacles, and expanding export finance support.

For the first time, DBT has integrated its support in a single, accessible place - the Business Growth Service - helping firms build the capabilities needed to compete internationally. This includes tailored market advice, free Business Academy training, access to UK Export Finance and our on-the-ground network around the world.

Business: Regulation

Chris Bloore: [129226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of sector-specific administrative cost baselines on measuring the 25% reduction in business compliance costs targeted under the Regulation Action Plan.

Chris Bloore: [129228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the 25% administration reduction target set out in the Regulation Action Plan on the baseline annual compliance costs of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Blair McDougall:
We have established a baseline of the annual administrative burden of regulation on UK businesses, including SMEs. As set out in the technical annex to the policy paper ‘A new approach to ensure regulators and regulation support growth’, we used a pragmatic, top-down approach, building on the previous Administrative Burden Reduction Programme (2005-10), which was based on detailed feedback from businesses, including SMEs, in individual sectors.

Our approach was also informed by DBT’s Business Perceptions Survey, which draws from a large, representative sample of businesses across sectors and sizes to ensure our reforms are targeted effectively.

Chris Bloore: [129227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking through the Regulation Action Plan to align regulatory frameworks with the Modern Industrial Strategy.

Blair McDougall:
The Industrial Strategy sets out how targeted regulatory reform will support key sectors to unlock investment and increase productivity. This is reinforced by the Regulation Action Plan which aims to tackle the regulatory burden and complexity; reduce uncertainty and challenge risk aversion to drive growth.

This is supported by targeted regulatory reviews in growth-driving sectors. For example, DBT is working with Defra and the Regulatory Innovation Office on a regulatory review of agri-tech as a frontier industry, to help SMEs navigate the regulatory landscape and support farmer adoption. This approach ensures regulation supports innovation and investment while maintaining essential protections.

Competition: Civil Proceedings

Sir Julian Smith: [129471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to publish his Department's (a) review of and (b) consultation on the opt-out collective actions regime.

Kate Dearden:
The Government's call for evidence on the opt-out collective actions regime closed on 14 October 2025. Careful consideration is being given to responses received and a consultation on potential changes to the regime will be published in spring of this year.

Construction: Fraud

Shivani Raja: [128758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to protect consumers from rogue builders.

Kate Dearden:
This Government is working to ensure we have a high-quality and professional construction industry, with consumer protection at the heart of this. TrustMark, sponsored by the Department and licenced by the Government, is the Government Endorsed Quality Scheme that covers work a consumer chooses to have carried out in or around their home. In addition, the Building Safety Act 2022 has introduced competence requirements for both individuals and businesses working in the built environment.

Cooperatives: Buckinghamshire

Callum Anderson: [129416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to provide development support for co-operative businesses located in (i) Milton Keynes and (ii) Buckinghamshire.

Blair McDougall:
The Government is committed to supporting diverse business models and doubling the size of the co-operative and mutual sector. We have received strong engagement from the sector through our Call for Evidence and are now analysing responses to shape future business support, including what can be achieved within existing support services such as the Business Growth Service and Growth Hubs.

Cooperatives play a vital role in Buckinghamshire's agricultural sector and Government is developing the new Farmer Collaboration Fund to unlock the broader benefits of this sort of collaboration.

Electronic Commerce: Delivery Services

Jess Brown-Fuller: [129026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will require online vendors to clearly display which courier service they are using.

Kate Dearden:
The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 prohibits unfair commercial practices, including misleading actions and omissions of material information, that are likely to impact the average consumer's transactional decision.

Beyond this, how vendors display information is a commercial decision. Consumers are encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions to businesses directly. This encourages businesses to adapt and fairly compete based on demand.

Energy: Foreign Investment in UK

Gareth Snell: [129208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of energy costs on the UK's attractiveness for Foreign Direct Investment.

Chris McDonald:
We understand the scale and depth of challenge that high industrial electricity prices present to businesses. This is why we are addressing wholesale and network costs through long-term investment in clean, homegrown power to reduce exposure to volatile fossil fuel prices.

While most businesses are currently protected against recent prices spikes through long-term energy contracts, the Government will remain agile and responsive. We are also providing longer-term support with initiatives such as the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme to drive investment in our sectors most likely to grow.

Foreign Investment: Dispute Resolution

Brendan O'Hara: [129164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how the Government aligns its climate commitments with continued support for investor–state dispute settlement provisions in bilateral investment treaties where such provisions may affect fossil fuel transition policies in partner countries.

Chris Bryant:
The UK draws on the full range of investment commitments and international best practice in our international investment agreements to promote growth, deliver our clean energy goals, and continue to uphold the UK's right to regulate.

Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provides an independent means to resolve disputes with states where investors believe they have experienced arbitrary, discriminatory or unfair treatment or expropriation without compensation. ISDS does

not remove governments' right to regulate in the public interest, including with respect to the environment.

Brendan O'Hara: [129165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of investor–state dispute settlement provisions in the Colombia–UK Bilateral Investment Treaty on Colombia's ability to implement climate policies aimed at phasing-out fossil fuels.

Chris Bryant:
The Government values the role played by the UK-Colombia Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) in the investment relationship between our countries. Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provides an independent means to resolve disputes with states where investors believe they have experienced arbitrary, discriminatory or unfair treatment or expropriation without compensation.

ISDS does not remove a government's right to regulate in the public interest, nor its obligations to comply with other commitments, including with respect to the environment.

Dr Ellie Chowns: [129653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the UK's Investor-State Dispute Settlement Scheme on foreign policy goals.

Chris Bryant:
The UK is party to 77 Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) that contain Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). The UK's international investment agreements aim to enhance opportunities for UK businesses to expand overseas, with commitments that seek to limit the barriers they face, make it easier to navigate local rules, and ensure investments are treated lawfully, and protected against unfair or arbitrary action. These are fully consistent with our foreign policy goals and our economic ambitions for the country. We keep the operation of these provisions under review.

Groceries Code Adjudicator: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann: [128587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to WPQ 126941, answered on the 20th April 2026 at 14:14; to detail any direct intervention on behalf of consumers they have had with suppliers or stakeholders from Northern Ireland.

Kate Dearden:
In enforcing compliance with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice ("the Code"), the GCA aims to ensure that large supermarkets do not impose excessive risks and unexpected costs on their direct suppliers which would adversely affect competition and, ultimately, consumers. It is not the role of the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) to intervene directly on consumer matters. The GCA publishes an Annual Report and Accounts which sets out its priorities and performance.

Hospitality Industry: Energy

Gareth Snell: [128260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on extending energy cost support for hospitality businesses.

Kate Dearden:
The Government recognises the pressures that energy costs can place on hospitality businesses. We engage regularly with colleagues across Government, including HM Treasury, on measures to support businesses, including the hospitality sector and we keep the impact of energy prices on businesses under close review.

The Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband, and the interim CEO of Ofgem, Tim Jarvis, have written to business energy suppliers setting clear expectations that customers, particularly small businesses, must be treated fairly. The letter makes clear that any unfair practices will not be tolerated, and that suppliers should take a fair and supportive approach, offering maximum flexibility and transparency for small businesses.

The Government also plans to legislate on Third Party Intermediaries, including energy brokers, through the forthcoming Energy Independence Bill to strengthen protections for SMEs.

Industry: Energy

Alex Baker: [128458]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to reduce industrial energy bills.

Chris McDonald:
Our modern Industrial Strategy will make British industrial electricity costs cheaper. From 2027, the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme will reduce electricity costs by up to £40 per megawatt hour (MWh) for over 10,000 manufacturing businesses in Industrial Strategy growth sectors and their foundational supply chains. The Government has also announced an additional payment for eligible businesses in 2027 to cover the 2026/27 period.

In addition to this, the British Industry Supercharger reduces electricity costs for eligible energy-intensive businesses by c.£65 – £87/MWh by exempting them from certain policy costs and offering 90% compensation for network charges through the Network Charging Compensation scheme.

Iron and Steel: Imports

Sarah Coombes: [129305]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of reduced quotas and increased tariffs on steel imported from overseas on downstream metals businesses in the UK.

Sarah Coombes: [129317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will set out which categories of steel are not produced by UK steel mills.

Chris McDonald:
The steel trade measure is designed to balance viability of domestic steel production with the need for reliable supply for downstream businesses. It includes types of steel that the UK can currently produce, with quota allocations set to allow for sufficient imports to ensure continued availability of goods. The UK measure covers 20 product categories, six less than the EU's proposed measure. More information is available at UK's steel trade measure from 1 July 2026 - GOV.UK

The Department has engaged extensively with producers and downstream users throughout the design of the measure and will conduct a formal review after 12 months.

Life Sciences: Energy

Gareth Snell: [129217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of energy cost pressures for the life sciences and laboratory sectors.

Chris McDonald:
The Government is aware of the pressure of high industrial energy costs in the life sciences and laboratory sectors. Officials from the Office for Life Sciences regularly engage with both companies and Trade Associations to understand the challenges facing the sector.

As one of the sectors within the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, many manufacturing life sciences businesses will benefit from the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme. The scheme will bring GB electricity costs more in line with other major economies in Europe, and level the playing field for British businesses.

Maternity Leave: Diseases

Kate Osamor: [128243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Parental Leave and Pay review is considering the ability for individuals with severe illness, such as cancer, to postpone maternity leave.

Kate Dearden:
A cancer diagnosis is distressing at any stage of life, and especially for mothers on maternity leave, at a time that should be focused on recovery, bonding and family life.

The Department of Health and Social Care's National Cancer Plan sets out how people with cancer, including pregnant and postnatal women, are supported before, during and after treatment, including supporting mothers to stay in work.

Alongside this, the Parental Leave and Pay Review is examining how maternity leave and the wider parental leave and pay system can better support working families. The Review will report in early 2027.

Parcels: Delivery Services

David Baines: [128883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with Ofcom on regulating employment standards in the parcel delivery sector; and what steps he is taking to prevent gig economy working practices from adversely impacting Royal Mail's Universal Service Obligation.

Blair McDougall:
Ministers have regular discussions with Ofcom as the independent regulator for the postal sector. The government does not, however, have a role in Ofcom's regulatory decisions and Ofcom does not regulate the employment models of parcel delivery companies.

All employers must comply with their legal obligations to ensure that their workforce receive the rights and protections to which they are entitled. The government recognises self-employed arrangements can provide valued flexibility but also recognises concerns about exploitation of the current employment status framework which can leave vulnerable workers without core employment protections. The government will consult on addressing these.

Retail Trade: Energy

Gareth Snell: [128265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the impact of energy costs on the competitiveness of the UK retail sector.

Kate Dearden:
The government keeps the impact of energy costs on the competitiveness of the UK retail sector under review.

Through our Clean Power 2030 mission we are taking action to accelerate the transition to clean, homegrown electricity helping to improve energy security and reduce exposure to the volatility of fossil fuel prices across of the UK economy. Alongside this, the government is considering a range of options to address the relative cost of electricity for non-domestic users and to support the wider take-up of low-carbon heat, including through future consultation where appropriate.

Small Businesses: Renewable Energy

Gareth Snell: [128781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help micro-businesses invest in onsite renewable energy generation.

Gareth Snell: [128785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the adequacy in the level of availability of private sector green finance for business energy efficiency projects.

Chris McDonald:
The Government recognises the importance of green finance as it is one of the fastest growing sub-sectors of a low carbon economy.

The British Business Bank's Green Growth Guarantee helps increase the supply of affordable finance for businesses investing in green technologies, by giving lenders confidence to support finance for green assets or lower the up-front cost of that finance.

Small businesses across the UK benefitted from Government funding and support to help them invest in sustainability, to cut their operating costs and boost their business. A recent £2m Made Smarter Adoption Programme initiative helped SMEs lower their bills and become more energy efficient through investment in technology in areas like heating, insulation and solar power. The Government will continue to review support for business energy efficiency projects.

Small Businesses: Skilled Workers

Steve Darling: [129539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, (a) what action the Government is taking to address skills shortages in small and medium sized enterprises; (b) what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the combined impact of skills shortages and workforce capacity constraints in SMEs; and (c) what steps he is taking to ensure the skills system supports SMEs to train and grow their workforce.

Blair McDougall:
The government is committed to addressing skills shortages in small and medium sized enterprises. To support employers to take on apprentices, the government provides a range of financial support. We are introducing a new hiring grant of £2,000 for non-levy paying employers, typically SMEs, that take on 16–24-year-old apprentices as new employees. Additionally, from August 2026 we will fully fund apprenticeship training for non-levy paying employers for eligible people aged 16-24.

The new Business Growth Service is already promoting and signposting the government's skills offer to SMEs.

Supply Chains: Environment Protection and Human Rights

Catherine West: [129498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department are taking to promote human rights and environmental due diligence in global supply chains.

Catherine West: [129499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing legislation to promote and enforce ethical business practices across global supply chains.

Chris Bryant:
The UK has a range of measures in place to promote ethical business practices across global supply chains. In the Trade Strategy, the Government launched a review of the UK's approach to responsible business conduct, focused on addressing human rights abuses, labour abuses and environmental harms in global supply chains. The review is objective and evidence-based, examining both existing policies and potential alternative approaches. We shall update the House when the review is complete.

Trade Agreements: Gulf States

Andy Slaughter: [129452]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed UK–Gulf Cooperation Council trade agreement on (a) labour standards in partner countries and (b) what steps were taken to ensure that the agreement does not undermine UK employment protections or make UK companies at risk of being complicit in labour rights abuses.

Chris Bryant:
The Government is a staunch defender of worker protections and has made clear that we will not compromise on these through our FTA programme.

As part of the UK-GCC FTA, we are seeking commitments which reaffirm our international obligations at the International Labour Organisation, including a safe and healthy working environment, freedom of association and the elimination of forced labour.

Nothing in the potential agreement will supersede or undermine UK domestic legislation or employment protections. Additionally, UK companies operating in the GCC are bound by UK legislation, including the Modern Slavery Act, which has extraterritorial reach.

Warranties

Edward Morello: [128487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to ensure consumers are provided with adequate and clear information on the value of extended warranties at the point of sale.

Edward Morello: [128488]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to tackle misleading practices in the sale of extended warranties.

Kate Dearden:
Manufacturers are not required to provide warranties on their products. Whether they choose to do so and under what terms is a commercial decision for them. Where warranties are given, they are benefits in addition to consumers' rights against the trader under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, which requires that products are fit for purpose, as described and of satisfactory quality.

Terms of warranties must be clearly communicated to consumers. The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 prohibits unfair commercial practices, including misleading actions that are likely to impact the average consumer's transactional decision.

CABINET OFFICE

Cabinet Office: Public Appointments

Charlie Dewhirst: [128580]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the merit ranking was of the Cabinet Secretary in the competition when she applied in the previous Cabinet Secretary recruitment process.

Satvir Kaur:
I refer to my answer for 113705. In accordance with data protection regulations, we do not provide information about candidates in Civil Service recruitment processes.

Cabinet Office: Reviews

Alex Burghart: [127472]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards and (b) Cabinet Office Propriety and Ethics Team made an assessment of any involvement by Lord Mandelson in the commissioning, distribution of subsequent review of the APCO/Labour Together dossier on journalists.

Chris Ward:
The work undertaken by the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards is set out in his advice to the Prime Minister of 27th February 2026 and published on gov.uk.

Information on the work undertaken by the Cabinet Office can be found in the Government's response to the Urgent Question granted on 23 February (Official Report, Column 29).

Cabinet Office: Vetting

Calum Miller: [128628]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, without revealing personal information, how many applicants for Developed Vetting in 2025 were assessed as (a) clearance approved, (b) clearance approved with risk management, and (c) clearance denied or withdrawn.

Dan Jarvis:
National Security Vetting (NSV) clearance applications, including Developed Vetting, are rigorously assessed within a robust governance framework. UKSV works closely with departmental vetting risk owners to balance operational demands with assured and effective national security safeguards.

In line with the practice followed by successive administrations, the government does not otherwise comment on security matters. To reveal such details could prejudice national security and would provide insights into the scale and nature of the UK's sensitive workforce and the thresholds of our security safeguards.

Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister: Australia

Ben Obese-Jecty: [127175]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason the Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister visited Australia in April 2026.

Mr James Frith:
The Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister visited Australia in April 2026 to build critical policy and security links with state and regional authorities in Australia. This included defence visits for the AUKUS programme, and discussions with Ministers at both Federal and State level and with private sector stakeholders on support for British businesses, bolstering regional security and learnings about harnessing technology to modernise public services based on learnings from the Australian government their successes and challenges as pioneers in providing online government services. State-level meetings included understanding the context for the roll out of the New South Wales state digital ID pilot and visiting South Australia to highlight the extent of UK-Australian cooperation, focusing particularly on secure growth, including opportunities presented by the AUKUS programme.

Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions

Matt Vickers: [110109]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many newly retired members of the civil service pension scheme did not receive payments a) one week, b) two weeks, 3) one month, 4) two months, 5) three months and 6) six months after their first payment was due.

Matt Vickers: [110110]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many members of the civil service pension scheme had not received quotes as to their expected pension income a) 12 months before retirement, b) six months before retirement, c) 3 months before retirement , d) one month before retirement and e) date of retirement.

Satvir Kaur:
The Cabinet Office awarded the contract to administer the Civil Service Pension Scheme to Capita in November 2023 under the previous government.

The issues and delays facing a number of civil servants and pension scheme members in receiving their pension quotes are unacceptable. I want to reassure you that this Government has taken firm action to help put things right as soon as possible. We have agreed a clear recovery plan with Capita, which includes specific milestones and accountability targets for delivery. For priority cases, we have deployed additional resources and improved communication with affected colleagues, so that staff, both former and serving, receive the quality of service and support they deserve.

Existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been enhanced and strengthened to deliver improved performance and higher penalties for failure, including financial penalties. These have already applied in respect to Capita's performance with recent issues and delays in administering the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

Capita prioritised the most urgent cases and by the end of February, all death in service cases were either settled or progressed to the final stage or awaiting a member response. The same position was reached for ill health retirement applications by mid-March.

Capita has made lump sum payments to 8,747 members, the majority of whom have retired but are not yet receiving their pension, and are on track to bring these members into regular pension payments by the end of April.

To provide immediate financial support to those who may need it, arrangements are in place for interest-free bridging loans typically up to £5,000 or £10,000 in exceptional cases to most recent retirees facing payment delays. This is alongside interim lump sum payments being made to provide immediate funds to retiring members. The pension scheme continues to make monthly pension payments to approximately 730,000 existing pensioner members on time.

The latest position of the Civil Service Pension Recovery Plan Update is available at this weblink: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-pension-recovery-plan-updates

However, the level of detail requested in respect of specific payment delays (PQ 110109) and quote delays (PQ 110110) is not available from either Capita or the former administrator, MyCSP.

Mohammad Yasin: **[113685]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Civil Service Pension scheme claims and member inquiries are outstanding for which the latest data is available; what steps he is taking to ensure that Civil Service Pension scheme payments are paid accurately and on time; and what progress has been made on the review of the award and management of Civil Service Pension scheme contracts.

Satvir Kaur:
The Cabinet Office awarded the contract to administer the Civil Service Pension Scheme to Capita in November 2023 under the previous government.

The issues and delays facing a number of civil servants and pension scheme members in receiving their pension quotes are unacceptable. We have agreed a clear recovery plan with Capita, which includes specific milestones and accountability targets for delivery. For priority cases, we have deployed additional resources and improved communication with affected colleagues, so that staff, both former and serving, receive the quality of service and support they deserve.

Existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been enhanced and strengthened to deliver improved performance and higher penalties for failure, including financial penalties. These have already applied in respect to Capita's performance with recent issues and delays in administering the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

Capita is prioritising the most urgent cases and as of 28 February 2026, all death in service cases are now either settled, progressed to the final stage or awaiting a member response. All ill-health retirement cases were also addressed by 6 March 2026 and service levels in these areas are being maintained.

Capita has made lump sum payments to 8,747 members, the majority of whom have retired but are not yet receiving their pension, and are on track to bring these members into regular pension payments by the end of April.

To provide immediate financial support to those who may need it, arrangements are in place for interest-free bridging loans typically up to £5,000 or £10,000 in exceptional cases to most recent retirees facing payment delays. This is alongside interim lump sum payments being made to provide immediate funds to retiring members. The pension scheme continues to make monthly pension payments to approximately 730,000 existing pensioner members on time.

Interest will be paid on delayed benefits to avoid financial loss by members. In addition, the existing statutory complaints process evaluates claims for financial losses, as well as distress and inconvenience caused, on a case-by-case basis to determine whether compensation is due. This ensures that any retiree who provides evidence of extra costs, such as bank penalties or interest charges caused by the delay, is fairly assessed. This process is run in accordance with the standards set by the Pensions Ombudsman.

The latest position of the Civil Service Pension Recovery Plan Update is available at this weblink: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-pension-recovery-plan-updates

Gregory Stafford: **[118464]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential tax implications for recipients for civil of service pensions due to Capita delays with payments.

Satvir Kaur:

The Cabinet Office acknowledges the potential tax implications regarding pension arrears. For the vast majority of members, receiving arrears will not result in a higher tax liability as they will remain within the same tax band across the relevant years.

However, where an arrears payment causes a member to move into a higher tax bracket in the year of receipt, individuals may request a schedule from the scheme administrator (Capita) to submit to HMRC.

This schedule allows HMRC to assess the tax on an accruals basis, spreading the income back to the years in which it was due to ensure the member pays the correct amount of tax.

Mike Wood: **[122721]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department made of the potential impact of the work-in-progress data backlog for the Civil Service Pension Scheme of the outgoing supplier on Capita.

Satvir Kaur:
The Cabinet Office awarded the contract to administer the Civil Service Pension Scheme to Capita in November 2023 under the previous government.

The issues and delays facing a number of civil servants and pension scheme members in receiving their pension quotes are unacceptable. I want to reassure you that this Government has taken firm action to help put things right as soon as possible. We have agreed a clear recovery plan with Capita, which includes specific milestones and accountability targets for delivery. For priority cases, we have deployed additional resources and improved communication with affected colleagues, so that staff, both former and serving, receive the quality of service and support they deserve.

Existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been enhanced and strengthened to deliver improved performance and higher penalties for failure, including financial penalties. These have already applied in respect to Capita's performance with recent issues and delays in administering the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

Capita has made lump sum payments to 10,147 members, the majority of whom have retired but are not yet receiving their pension, and are on track to bring these members into regular pension payments by the end of April.

To provide immediate financial support to those who may need it, arrangements are in place for interest-free bridging loans typically up to £5,000 or £10,000 in exceptional cases to most recent retirees facing payment delays. This is alongside interim lump sum payments being made to provide immediate funds to retiring members. The pension scheme continues to make monthly pension payments to approximately 730,000 existing pensioner members on time.

The Cabinet Office has mandated Capita that they must restore service levels by the end of June 2026. We are using every commercial lever at our disposal, including withholding payments for deliverables that have not been met. We also reserve the right to take further formal action to ensure the service returns to the required standards.

The latest position of the Civil Service Pension Recovery Plan Update is available at this weblink: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-pension-recovery-plan-updates

Anna Sabine: **[127333]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of Civil Service Pension Scheme members experiencing hardship due to delayed payments since Capita took over administration; what steps his Department is taking to help ensure hardship cases are prioritised; and whether bridging payments are available where full payment cannot be made immediately.

Satvir Kaur:
The administration of the Civil Service Pension Scheme is the responsibility of the Cabinet Office.

The Cabinet Office awarded the contract to administer the Civil Service Pension Scheme to Capita in November 2023 under the previous government.

The issues and delays facing a number of civil servants and pension scheme members in receiving their pension quotes are unacceptable. I want to reassure you that this Government has taken firm action to help put things right as soon as possible. We have agreed a clear recovery plan with Capita, which includes specific milestones and accountability targets for delivery. For priority cases, we have deployed additional resources and improved communication with affected colleagues, so that staff, both former and serving, receive the quality of service and support they deserve.

Existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been enhanced and strengthened to deliver improved performance and higher penalties for failure, including financial penalties. These have already applied in respect to Capita's performance with recent issues and delays in administering the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

Capita prioritised the most urgent cases and by the end of February, all death in service cases were either settled or progressed to the final stage or awaiting a member response. The same position was reached for ill health retirement applications by mid-March.

While hardship estimates are not held, Capita has made lump sum payments to 10,147members, the majority of whom have retired but are not yet receiving their pension, and are on track to bring these members into regular pension payments by the end of April.

To provide immediate financial support to those who may need it, including those who have been dismissed with compensation, arrangements are in place for interest-free bridging loans typically up to £5,000 or £10,000 in exceptional cases to most recent retirees facing payment delays. This is alongside interim lump sum payments being made to provide immediate funds to retiring members. The pension scheme continues to make monthly pension payments to approximately 730,000 existing pensioner members on time.

The Cabinet Office has mandated Capita that they must restore service levels by the end of June 2026. We are using every commercial lever at our disposal, including withholding payments for deliverables that have not been met. We also reserve the right to take further formal action to ensure the service returns to the required standards.

The latest position of the Civil Service Pension Recovery Plan Update is available at this weblink: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-pension-recovery-plan-updates

Cybersecurity: Public Sector

Ian Roome: [127988]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he expects to publish the National Cyber Action Plan.

Dan Jarvis:
We will publish the business-first National Cyber Action Plan this summer. Our new National Cyber Action Plan will set out concrete actions for how we can strengthen our resilience and harness cyber's enormous growth opportunities.

After recent high profile cyber attacks, there can be no doubt that more action must be taken to raise resilience levels across the economy, tackle the threat and maximise the opportunities for growth in the cyber sector. Our priorities for the new Cyber Action Plan are to improve resilience by incentivising businesses to invest in their own cyber security, sharpen government's tools to tackle the most capable cyber actors and maximise opportunities to grow the UK cyber sector.

Defence: Vetting

Steve Barclay: [128669]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what is the longest time that (a) an SME and (b) a person has waited for security vetting in the last two years; and whether either application is still ongoing.

Dan Jarvis:
UKSV continues to meet its agreed KPIs across each product type. The time taken to complete a vetting assessment varies according to the level of clearance required and the complexity of an individual's background.

In line with the practice followed by successive administrations, the Government does not disclose granular performance data or specific case details, as to do so could prejudice national security and provide insights into the operational thresholds of our security safeguards. UKSV remains focused on ensuring the vetting process is both rigorous and timely.

Lord Mandelson

Alicia Kearns: [128100]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on what date the Cabinet was informed that (a) Peter Mandelson had failed his security vetting and (b) the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office had overruled the vetting failure.

Dan Jarvis:
I refer the Hon Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister on 20 April, and his answers to the questions raised in response, including his commitment that the Government would continue to comply with the instructions of Parliament in the Humble Address of 4 February.

Mike Wood: [128300]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Cabinet Office document Publication regarding events surrounding the granting of Developed Vetting to Peter Mandelson, dated 17 April 2026, which boxes were ticked by UKSV in relation to Lord Mandelson's vetting for the (a) level of concern and (b) overall decision or recommendation boxes.

Dan Jarvis:
I refer the Hon Member to Prime Minister's Questions on 22 April 2026, Official Report, Column 317

Mike Wood: [128303]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Cabinet Office was aware that Lord Mandelson failed his Developed Vetting when the Volume 1 of the Government response to the humble Address was laid on 11 March 2026.

Dan Jarvis:
I refer the hon Member to the Statement made by the Prime Minister on Security Vetting on the 20 April 2026, Official Report, Column 23-26.

Mike Wood: [128726]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the terms of reference are for the review into security concerns from Lord Mandelson having access to STRAP material; who will be undertaking that review; and whether it is the same review to the one being undertaken by Sir Adrian Fulford.

Dan Jarvis:
The Government Security Group (GSG) will conduct a review into Peter Mandelson's conduct while in the role of HMA Washington. The review will seek to establish whether Mandelson's actions constituted a national security risk during his tenure.

GSG's review will be conducted separately to that of the review being conducted by Sir Adrian Fulford; which will focus on learning from the Peter Mandelson National Security Vetting case and vetting decision making.

National Security

Edward Morello: [128480]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of engagement with civil society organisations in the formulation of the National Security Strategy.

Edward Morello: [128481]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve engagement with the private sector, including the technology industry, in national security policymaking.

Edward Morello: [128482]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to undertake broader consultation with industry to support the delivery of national security objectives.

Dan Jarvis:
During the development of the National Security Strategy, the Cabinet Office engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, considered assessments and analytical products from think tanks, academics, industry experts and reports from the Intelligence and Security Committee and the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy.

It also brought together several strategies, reviews, and audits developed and being developed by the government. These reviews had their own method of engagement, including with civil society organisations and industry. This includes the Resilience Action Plan which a large number of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, were engaged with to support development and delivery.

To support the delivery of national security objectives, the government regularly engages with industry including the technology industry. For example, this week the Security Minister was in Glasgow at the 10th annual Cyber UK conference, attended by 2,500 cyber security leaders and technical professionals.

Our Modern Industrial Strategy is a 10-year plan backing our strengths and realising Britain’s potential. This strategy is an ongoing partnership between business, government, and workers, meeting the needs of business head on. This government has also published its Defence Industrial Strategy, which lays out our new approach, not just to defence procurement, but also how we engage with industry throughout the supply chain. The upcoming Defence Readiness Bill will improve how we work collectively with industry to improve the readiness of our defence sector.

National Security Council: Disclosure of Information

Mike Wood: [124840]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 24 March 2026 to Question 120840 on National Security Council: Disclosure of Information, if he will make it his policy to make a statement to Parliament on the conclusion of the leak inquiry.

Dan Jarvis:
In line with the policy of successive administrations, we do not comment on live leak inquiries.

Permanent Secretaries: Contracts

Mike Wood: [126598]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the provisions of the model Permanent Secretary contract applies to Permanent Secretaries who were in post before the introduction of the fixed term contract.

Satvir Kaur:
I refer to my answer for PQ 88716. The provisions of the model Permanent Secretary contract apply to all Permanent Secretaries.

Prime Minister: Special Advisers

Mike Wood: [128732]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) Jonathan Powell, (b) Tim Allan, (c) Matthew Doyle and (d) Morgan McSweeney passed their security clearances without any qualification.

Richard Burgon: [128754]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, (a) on what date Morgan McSweeney was granted Developed Vetting clearance; (b) whether Morgan McSweeney handled documents for which he would require Developed Vetting clearance prior to that date.

Dan Jarvis:
We do not comment on the details of individual clearances or national security as a matter of course.

Propriety and Constitution Group: Recruitment

Mike Wood: [116493]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the recruitment of the permanent Director General for the Proprietary and Constitution Group has been discussed at the Civil Service Senior Leadership Committee.

Satvir Kaur:
The Civil Service Senior Leadership Committee (SLC) is consulted on the selection route for all appointments to Director General.

Plans for the permanent recruitment to the role of Director General for Propriety, Ethics and Constitution are being developed in accordance with governance procedures.

Public Appointments: Vetting

Sir Bernard Jenkin: [128180]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many times the assessments made by UKSV arising from the developed vetting of individuals proposed for public appointments since the enactment of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 come into force.

Dan Jarvis:
UKSV does not centrally categorise individuals by their specific terms of appointment, such as whether they are a public appointee.

In line with the practice followed by successive administrations, the Government does not otherwise comment on security matters, including providing granular data on the volumes of specific clearance types.

Public Sector: Procurement

Grahame Morris: [129093]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Government's objective of delivering "the biggest wave of insourcing for a generation", which specific previous wave of insourcing the Government is using as a comparator, and what assessment it has made of the timing and scale of that wave.

Chris Ward:
The Government's policy of delivering the highest wave of insourcing in a generation reflects a clear commitment in Labour's 'Make Work Pay' agenda and will see an end to the previous administration's policy of outsourcing by default.

Central to this is the introduction of a Public Insourcing Test, as announced on 26 March, which will see all Government departments assess if services can be better delivered in-house. Alongside this, departments will produce and publish robust insourcing strategies.

Detailed guidance will be published in the updated Sourcing Playbook this summer, and my officials have been engaging across Government to ensure the implementation of both the Public Interest Test and insourcing strategies can commence rapidly.

Senior Civil Servants: Vetting

Mike Wood: [128056]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the UK Security Vetting document entitled DV - Guidance Pack for Applicants, updated on 23 September 2024, if he will set out the circumstances in which senior civil servants can be appointed to Civil Service roles requiring Developed Vetting (DV) clearance where they have failed their DV security vetting.

Dan Jarvis:
United Kingdom Security Vetting (UKSV) provides a range of independent vetting services designed to identify potential personnel security risks. However, the employing department ultimately owns the risk of any appointment decision. Senior officials with responsibility for personnel security within their department evaluate vetting outcomes alongside the specific requirements of a post and the organisation's risk appetite.

Special Advisers: Vetting

Mike Wood: [128727]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any special adviser since July 2024 has had Developed Vetting approved with mitigations following a (a) borderline conclusion and (b) recommended refusal from UKSV.

Dan Jarvis:
National Security Vetting (NSV) clearance applications, including Developed Vetting, are rigorously assessed within a robust governance framework. UKSV works closely with departmental vetting risk owners to balance risk mitigation and operational demands with assured and effective national security safeguards.

In line with the practice followed by successive administrations, the Government does not otherwise comment on security matters. To reveal such details could prejudice national security and would provide insights into the scale and nature of the UK's sensitive workforce and the thresholds of our security safeguards.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Arts: North East

Joe Morris: [128308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how her Department plans to support the BBC in growing the North East's creative economy.

Mr Jonathan Brash: [128334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on economic growth in the North East generated by the creative industries following the BBC's recent announcement of a cut of £500m in its budget and 2,000 job losses.

Ian Murray:
The BBC is a vital national institution and an engine of the nations and regions, including the North East of England. In that context, this news is concerning for the BBC workforce who are facing significant uncertainty, and for the sector as a whole. The BBC is delivering significant savings, which requires difficult decisions to be made independent of the Government. The BBC have stated that there will be more information on their plans later this year. Looking ahead, the Charter Review aims to

deliver a BBC that is sustainably funded in a way that sets the BBC on a path to thrive until well into the latter half of this century. The Charter Review will consider how the BBC can support the creative economy and drive growth across the UK.

BBC: Local Broadcasting

Charlotte Nichols: [129237]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how her Department plans to help ensure that the BBC can continue to a) invest in regional storytelling; and b) support growth in regional creative economies under a new Charter.

Ian Murray:
As a public service broadcaster that matters hugely to public life, the BBC must be responsive to its viewers and listeners, in order to tell inclusive stories about the lives of all people, in all parts of the UK. This Government wants broadcasters, including the BBC, to be more ambitious in growing our world-leading TV sector outside of London and the South East, and to commission content in every part of the country. We want British storytelling to reflect the full diversity of people, communities and experiences across the UK so that more people can see themselves reflected on screen and as part of our national story. This is an area of focus in the BBC Charter Review as we look to make sure the BBC truly represents and delivers for every person in this country, particularly by ensuring that the BBC's commissioning, decision-making and budgets are spread across all the nations and regions of the UK.

Cinemas: Finance

Joe Morris: [128307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will (a) include cinemas as eligible recipients of capital funding for UK cultural venues and (b) introduce a (i) complementary and (ii) parallel funding scheme for cinemas.

Ian Murray:
Cinemas help to sustain our high streets whilst offering one of the most accessible and affordable cultural experiences for communities around the country.

In a challenging fiscal environment, we have to make difficult choices about where to direct available funding. Whilst we have no current plans to expand the eligibility criteria of existing schemes or introduce new capital funding schemes, we continue to engage with cinema stakeholders to identify options to support the sector.

Cinemas based in eligible venues can benefit from capital investment through the Creative Foundations Fund (CFF). Not-for-profit mixed arts venues in England are eligible for the CFF, including those with cinemas on site. The first round of CFF recipients included many mixed arts venues with cinemas, including Firstsite in Colchester, the Rich Mix Cultural Foundation in London, and the Queen's Hall Arts Centre in Hexham. We are also supporting the cinema sector through permanently lower business rates multipliers; public funding schemes through the British Film

Institute including the National Lottery Audience Projects Fund and the Film Audience Network; and our significant investment in stimulating production - including through generous tax credits and the £75 million Screen Growth Package we announced in the Creative Industries Sector Plan - which creates the strong slate of films cinemas need to thrive.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Artificial Intelligence

Sir John Hayes: [127041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has used artificial intelligence to assist with drafting (a) legislation and (b) policy in the last 12 months.

Ian Murray:
The drafting of primary and secondary legislation is the responsibility of a large number of officials across government departments. A range of tools are used to assist with this drafting, including AI which is most commonly used to check, critique, and otherwise interrogate drafts. Work is continuously underway to identify ways of improving the efficiency of this work, including collaboration between departments to share ideas and emerging practices.

While AI can be used to assist with the drafting of legislation, the production of any draft remains the responsibility of a lead human drafter to meet the high standards expected of Government legislation.

Policy teams in DCMS can use approved AI tools to assist with the drafting and synthesis of documents, as well as the analysis of data; however, like other government departments, we have a strong human-led AI approach, meaning that any policy document, analysis or decision made remains the responsibility of a human, and no decision is made based on AI outputs alone, without manual intervention or overarching human accountability. This approach aligns with the UK Government's AI Playbook, published in 2025, and with DCMS's wider work to support the secure, appropriate, responsible and well-governed use of AI across the department.

Golf: Women and Young People

Adam Jogee: [128473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to encourage a) women and b) young people to play golf.

Stephanie Peacock:
The Government is committed to ensuring that as many women and young people as possible have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities, including golf.

We provide the majority of support for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England, which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. They provide long term investment of £10.2 million to England Golf

between 2022-2029 to support grassroots participation, including for both women and young people.

England Golf run a campaign called Girls Golf Rock, which has enabled 5000 girls aged 7-14 to play golf over the last five years.

I was delighted to attend The Open Championships at Royal Portrush last year where the R&A hosted a number of programmes aimed at getting young people to play golf including free tickets for children under 16, the R&A swingzone with free lessons and their “Road to the Opens” programme.

Horse Racing: Gambling

Mr Lee Dillon: [128520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential economic impact on the horseracing industry of the full implementation of financial risk assessments for gambling.

Ian Murray:
The Government recognises the significant contribution that racing makes to British sporting culture and its importance to the British economy. Horseracing is the only sport in receipt of a direct government-mandated levy which helps to drive improvements in the sport.

The Government remains committed to supporting the implementation of key measures in the 2023 white paper, including the introduction of Financial Risk Assessments (FRAs).

Following the conclusion of its pilot on FRAs, the Gambling Commission has continued to engage with gambling operators and other stakeholders. As the independent regulator, the Gambling Commission will decide how to implement FRAs based on the best available evidence.

The Gambling Commission has recently published an updated blog on its pilot findings and plans to publish the pilot data, including updated impact assessment results following implementation decision, as is standard practice.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Saqib Bhatti: [129555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate her Department has made of the number of projects supported by the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme that would have proceeded as planned without the Scheme; and what comparative assessment she has made between this estimate and the findings of section 2.3.2 of Harlow Consulting's Evaluation of the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, published on 22 January 2026.

Ian Murray:
The Department commissioned Harlow Consulting to conduct an independent evaluation of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. The Department has not

made a separate internal estimate, and uses Harlow's comprehensive independent assessment to understand the Scheme's impact and additionality.

The evaluation used survey data from Scheme beneficiaries to determine how much of the activity was truly "additional" versus how much would have occurred anyway. It established that 80% of respondents indicated they would have done the work without the rebate. Section 2.3.2 of the evaluation provides a further breakdown of this figure, indicating that the Scheme had an impact on the timing and quality of the work. 51% of all Scheme users reported that the grant increased the timeliness of repairs. Likewise, 31% of users were enabled to carry out more extensive works or works of a higher standard.

Primary Education: Libraries

Jacob Collier: [128400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to facilitate library provision in every state-funded primary school.

Stephanie Peacock:
Every Child Can will invest £132.5 million of dormant assets funding to increase disadvantaged young people's access to enrichment opportunities in the culture, sport, and wider youth sectors. This includes a £12.5 million investment to meet our commitment to provide a library in every primary school in England by the end of this Parliament.

DCMS and the National Lottery Community Fund continue to work together to develop more of the programme's detailed design and delivery, including which schools may be eligible for funding.

Rugby: LGBT+ People

Kate Osborne: [129192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that UK Sport and Sport England's funding conditions require the Rugby Football Union and other rugby governing bodies to (a) demonstrate measurable progress in tackling homophobia and (b) creating inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ players, fans and staff.

Kate Osborne: [129197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what engagement the Government Equalities Office has had with rugby governing bodies regarding their inclusion policies for transgender and non-binary players.

Kate Osborne: [129198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how does the Government plan to support the development of inclusive frameworks that respect both participation rights and competitive fairness for the LGBTQ+ community in rugby union.

Stephanie Peacock:
Sport must be open to everyone. There is absolutely no place for homophobia, or discrimination of any kind, in sport or society.

The Government expects sports bodies, including rugby governing bodies, to take robust action to tackle discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs. The Government will continue to work with National Governing Bodies and sector organisations to fight all forms of discrimination at all levels of sport.

Through the Sports Council's Equality Group, UK Sport and Sport England provide guidance on transgender inclusion in domestic sport to our National Governing Bodies. It makes clear that inclusion, fairness, and safety cannot always be balanced in gender-affected sport.

Under the UK Sport and Sport England Code for Sports Governance, National Governing Bodies at Tier 3 are required to publish and maintain a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to receive public funding. This framework serves as the accountability mechanism to demonstrate commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Sports Competitors

Marsha De Cordova: [128865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the role of year-round, all-weather sports facilities in the development of future elite athletes.

Stephanie Peacock:
The Government recognises that year-round, all-weather training environments play a vital role in the development of future elite athletes, ensuring consistent access to high-quality facilities regardless of external conditions.

Through Government and National Lottery funding, UK Sport invests in a network of Elite Training Centres across the UK. These centres provide daily training environments where athletes can access world-class facilities, coaching and integrated performance support, forming a key part of the UK's approach to developing future Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

Sports: Facilities

Christine Jardine: [128409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that public investment in sports facilities supports a balanced range of sports, including court-based activities such as tennis and padel, to maximise participation among women, disabled people, and inactive communities.

Stephanie Peacock:
The Government is investing at least £400 million in new and upgraded grassroots sport facilities over the next four years, promoting health, wellbeing and community

cohesion, while removing the barriers to physical activity for under-represented groups, such as women and girls and people with disabilities.

£15 million is being invested into new delivery models across England in 2026/27, to allow more people to participate in sports they wish to. At least £2.5 million will be invested through the LTA for covered courts in England for tennis, padel and other activities, and additional funding will also enable a wider range of sporting bodies to trial innovative funding pathways.

Kim Leadbeater: [129548]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that public investment in sports facilities supports a balanced range of sports, including court-based activities such as tennis and padel, to maximise participation among women, disabled people, and inactive communities.

Stephanie Peacock:
The Government is investing at least £400 million in new and upgraded grassroots sport facilities over the next four years, promoting health, wellbeing and community cohesion, including by removing the barriers to physical activity for under-represented groups, such as women and girls and people with disabilities.

£15 million is being invested into new delivery models across England in 2026/27, to allow more people to participate in their chosen sports. At least £2.5 million of that will be invested through the Lawn Tennis Association into covered courts in England for tennis, padel and other activities, and additional funding will also enable a wider range of sporting bodies to trial innovative funding pathways.

Sports: Finance

Alex Baker: [128457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what funding her Department is providing to help improve participation in grassroots sport.

Stephanie Peacock:
The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

We provide the majority of support for grassroots sport through our arm's length body, Sport England, which annually invests over £250 million of National Lottery and Exchequer funding to help people get active.

In addition, on 27 January, the Government announced that £85 million of the £400 million package for grassroots sport facilities will be invested in during 2026/27, funding the continuation of the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme. This funding is designed to increase participation opportunities and benefit the areas most in need, with 50% investment going to the 30% most deprived areas in the UK.

Television: Internet

John Lamont: [128295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 April 2026 to Question 123660 on Television: Internet, whether her Department's definition of universal access to free-to-air television requires that households be able to receive television services without taking up a fixed broadband subscription.

Ian Murray:
There is no single agreed definition of what it means for audiences to have universal access to free-to-air television, but – supported by the work of the Future of TV Distribution Stakeholder Forum in particular – the Government has been considering a number of important elements, including the availability, affordability and accessibility of the different methods by which audiences can receive television services at present and how these are likely to evolve in the future.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces: Freedom of Expression

Rupert Lowe: [128994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what formal routes of appeal or review are available to recruits, officer cadets, and serving personnel who are subject to administrative action under JSP 767 following views expressed during training or education.

Rupert Lowe: [128995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether guidance on the application of JSP 767 relating to the expression of views is issued uniformly across the Armed Forces or separately by each Service.

Rupert Lowe: [128996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps are taken to ensure that personnel subject to administrative action under JSP 767 are informed of their right to seek review or submit a Service Complaint.

Rupert Lowe: [128997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether decisions to take administrative action under JSP 767 in relation to views expressed during training are required to be reviewed by a senior officer not directly involved in the original decision, and if so, at what stage such review takes place.

Rupert Lowe: [128999]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what written guidance exists under JSP 767 to assist commanding officers and training establishments in distinguishing between lawful expression of opinion and unacceptable behaviour during training and education, and on

how many occasions since 1 January 2015 disciplinary or administrative action relating to expressed views has been reviewed centrally for policy compliance.

Louise Sandher-Jones:
I can advise the hon. Member that JSP 767 does not exist.

Each Service has their own set of core values and standards that should be adhered to at all times. These can be viewed online:

- Royal Navy: https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/organisation/our-people/our-values
- Army: https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/about-the-army/values-and-standards/
- Royal Air Force: https://recruitment.raf.mod.uk/media/ig5dhw0z/20200703-raf_ap1_2019_rev_3_page_spreads.pdf

Minor Administrative Action guidance is contained in Joint Service Publication 833 (Minor Administrative Action) which sets out an individual's rights during the process. This includes the right to review at a higher level than that at which it is initiated. In addition, a Service person who considers themselves to have been wronged in a matter relating to their service has the right to submit a Service complaint, seeking redress of individual grievance.

Service Complaints guidance is published within Joint Service Publication 831 (Redress of Individual Grievances (Service Complaints)). This includes a Complainant's right to appeal if they disagree with the decision of their Service Complaint, and also how they can ask the Armed Forces Commissioner to investigate issues relating to the outcome of their complaint if they are dissatisfied. Furthermore, all Complainants and Respondents are entitled to the services of an Assisting Officer whose role is to support and help them throughout the process.

Defence remains committed to decisive, evidence-based action to protect our people and uphold the highest standards for everyone.

Rupert Lowe: **[128998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what welfare or legal support is available to personnel while investigations or reviews are ongoing following administrative action taken in connection with the expression of views or opinions.

Louise Sandher-Jones:
Welfare support is always available to Service personnel, who are free to access unrestricted welfare support whatever the circumstances.

Following an administrative action, Service personnel are able to access legal support at their own cost should they wish to do so.

Armed Forces: Training

Rupert Lowe: [128993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what written guidance or briefing material is provided to recruits and officer cadets on acceptable expression of views during training and assessment activities.

Louise Sandher-Jones:
All of our Service personnel are expected to uphold the highest standards of behaviour and to adhere to the core values and ethos of the Armed Forces. There is no single piece of written guidance or briefing material to cover these expectations across all the single Services, however they are consistently embedded during Phase 1 training and are made explicitly clear through multiple policy documents.

Defence Nuclear Enterprise: Finance

Ben Obese-Jecty: [127858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost is of the Defence Nuclear Enterprise in each year until 2029/30 as a proportion of GDP.

Luke Pollard:
Spend in relation to the Defence Nuclear Enterprise will be considered as part of the Defence Investment Plan.

Global Combat Air Programme: Costs

James Cartlidge: [128751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has held discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the cost of delivering the Global Combat Air Programme.

James Cartlidge: [128753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has discussed the Global Combat Air Programme with his (a) Swedish, (b) Polish, (c) Canadian, (d) Australian, (e) Saudi Arabian and (f) Singaporean counterpart.

Luke Pollard:
As part of the Ministry of Defence's close working relationship with HMT, the Chancellor and the Defence Secretary, as well as other Ministers and officials, regularly discuss many of the Department's largest programmes. These discussions can include the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP).

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with his international counterparts on a range of issues.

We have always maintained that we remain open to others joining GCAP, however, the UK and GCAP partners, Italy and Japan, are focused on delivering this vital military capability at pace.

Global Counsel: Palantir

Charlie Dewhirst: [129003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2026, to Question 112826, on Global Counsel: Palantir, whether Global Counsel staff were in attendance at the meeting on 27 February 2025; and whether the office of the UK Defence Attache received communications from Global Counsel after that event.

Luke Pollard:
Global Counsel staff were not present at the Prime Minister's visit to Palantir on 27 February 2025. The UK Defence Attache has not corresponded or met representatives of Global Counsel since July 2024.

The visit was part of the Prime Minister's trip to Washington. During this visit the Prime Minister listened to a short presentation about Palantir's work, followed by a tour of the premises and an introduction to members of staff.

Any contracts for any firm go through the usual rigorous departmental processes and their decision makers.

Ministry of Defence: Disclosure of Information

Douglas McAllister: [128341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Department's policy is on reviewing whistleblowing reports where the individual concerned does not wish to disclose their identity.

Louise Sandher-Jones:
The Ministry of Defence is committed to encouraging individuals to speak up and raise concerns where they believe wrongdoing has occurred or behaviour falls below expected standards.

Individuals are encouraged to disclose their identity and/or contact details to support appropriate safeguarding, assessment and investigation. However, a decision not to disclose identity or contact details does not prevent a concern from being assessed. Information relating to such cases is handled in accordance with confidentiality requirements and the Department will investigate the concern as far as is possible based on the information available.

Ministry of Defence: Finance

James Cartlidge: [128750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what efficiency savings targets does his Department have for financial year (a) 2026-27 and (b) 2027-28.

James Cartlidge: [128871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to implement efficiency savings in his Department in the (a) current financial year and (b) next financial year.

Luke Pollard:
The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has agreed efficiency targets with His Majesty's Treasury for 2026-27 and 2027-28, as set out in the Spending Review 2025 and the Departmental Efficiency Plans policy paper, published 11 June 2025.

Further efficiencies, were included in the Strategic Defence Review.

As part of routine financial management, the MOD continues to allocate resources effectively to meet departmental and operational priorities. The Department's final position for 2025-26 will be set out in the Annual Report and Accounts.

James Cartlidge: [128874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much will be spent on (a) core defence and (b) NATO qualifying defence spend in financial year (i) 2027-28 and (ii) 2028-29.

Luke Pollard:
As the hon. Member will recall from his time as a Defence Minister, the Ministry of Defence does not routinely publish forecast figures. The UK's defence spending figures for 2027-28 and 2028-29 will be published by NATO in due course.

Ministry of Defence: Training

Sir John Hayes: [129072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the training programmes used by civil servants in his Department since 2020.

Louise Sandher-Jones:
Civil servants have access to a wide range of training through the Government Campus and Civil Service Learning (CSL), covering areas including leadership, policy, digital and project management skills. Key provision includes Civil Service Essentials, Line Management Induction, and specialised courses on security, policy-making and communications. A recommended learning curriculum is published on GOV.UK at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-civil-service-recommended-curriculum.

Defence also provides training for its Civil Service workforce through a range of internal programmes, including classified courses and profession and domain specific training, which are organised and delivered at a local level.

A comprehensive list of all training programmes within the scope of the question is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Opposition: Domestic Visits

Charlie Dewhirst: [128586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2026, to Question 117764, on Opposition: Domestic Visits, whether the (a) MOD or (b) Armed Forces have guidance on this issue in relation to visits to military sites.

Louise Sandher-Jones:
The Ministry of Defence is eager to facilitate more engagement with Parliamentarians, and we are proactively doing so given the importance of Defence within the national conversation. Defence Ministers are committed to ensuring the Department is being more transparent and engaged with MPs from all parties, supporting visits to sites across the UK to meet our brave Service men and women.

Parliamentarians can seek approval to visit an establishment, including requests for media or photography in advance, and these are approved on a case-by-case basis noting security protocols and sensitivities. The most effective route remains to contact the Parliamentary Engagement Lead for the relevant Service in the first instance. Constituency MPs or MPs for immediately neighbouring constituencies may arrange visits directly with local establishments.

Strategic Defence Review

James Cartlidge: **[119952]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of the 62 recommendations of the Strategic Defence Review have been implemented.

Luke Pollard:
The Government has made significant progress on Strategic Defence Reviw (SDR) implementation since it was published last June. Examples include:

CyberEM Command: The Defence Cyber and Electromagnetic Force (DCEM Force) was established on time and is now up and running, within the Cyber and Specialist Operations Command (Nov 25). ***SDR Rec 51***

MIS and DCIU: The Military Intelligence Services and Defence Counter-Intelligence Unit were launched on time, as part of major overhaul of Defence's intelligence organisations amid increasing threats to the UK and to keep Britain ahead of hostile states and terrorists (Dec 25). ***SDR Rec 54 & 56***

Nuclear deterrence: The Prime Minister announced at the NATO Hague Summit (Jun 25) that the UK will purchase 12 new F-35A fighter jets and join NATO's dual capable aircraft nuclear mission. ***SDR Rec 30***

Atlantic Bastion: The UK's groundbreaking Atlantic Bastion programme was unveiled (Dec 25), which will make Britain more secure from Russian undersea threats in the North Atlantic through a transformation of the Royal Navy and its submarine-hunting capabilities into an advanced hybrid force. ***SDR vision: Hybrid Navy***

UKDI: UK Defence Innovation was launched (Jul 25) to streamline the delivery of innovation technology to Armed Forces personnel through rapid investment, with an annual budget of £400m. ***SDR Rec 07a***

Defence Exports: The UK Defence and Security Exports function was transferred from Department for Business and Trade to MOD (Jul 25); all staff have completed their migration to MOD systems. 2025 was the highest year for UK Defence exports

in 40 years including landmark deals with Norway, worth £10bn (T26 frigates; Aug 25), and Türkiye, worth £8bn (Typhoons; Oct 25). ***SDR Rec 12***

DIS: The Defence Industrial Strategy was published (Sep 25) to take forward the SDR's vision for radical reforms, growth, innovation, industrial resilience and warfighting readiness – backed by nearly £800m this parliament. ***SDR Rec 3 & 8***

Always on munitions: Defence announced a new programme to build factories of the future (Nov 25) with at least 13 potential sites identified to manufacture munitions and explosives in the UK to create an always on capability. This is backed by £1.5bn of new investment in this parliament and creating over 1,000 British jobs. ***SDR Rec 29***

Housing: The Defence Housing Strategy 2025 (Nov 25) set out £9bn of investment over the next decade to upgrade 40,000 Forces' family homes. An ambitious programme of work to urgently fix 1,000 military homes was completed ahead of schedule (Dec 25). The programme of housing improvements, known as Raising the Minimum Standards, has seen significant work take place at service family homes across the UK. Legislation to establish a specialist arm's length defence housing service is in the Armed Forces Bill, now in the Commons. ***SDR Rec 60***

Gap Year: Plans to launch the new Armed Forces 'Gap Year' Foundation Scheme were announced (Dec 25) to give young people in the UK new opportunities to experience military service. ***SDR Rec 16***

Veterans: Radiation Exposure

Sir John Hayes: [128192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress he has made on his review of the records of nuclear test veterans.

Louise Sandher-Jones:
The records exercise is nearing completion, and I shall update the House in due course. In parallel, as part of wider work, over 19,300 historic nuclear testing records are now publicly accessible having been transferred to the National Archives from the Merlin database.

EDUCATION

Academies: Disciplinary Proceedings

Suella Braverman: [128279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what remedies are available to parents who wish to challenge disciplinary decisions made by academy schools.

Suella Braverman: [128280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to introduce additional oversight mechanisms for academy trusts in relation to complaints about suspensions and behaviour management.

Olivia Bailey:
Parents can raise concerns about behaviour management in academies through the academy's complaints process.

Where parents believe that an academy has not followed proper procedures or has acted unlawfully, and they have fully exhausted the academy's complaints process, they can raise a complaint with the department. Parents may also pursue legal remedies where appropriate, including judicial review, and may bring claims to the First-tier Tribunal where a decision is alleged to involve disability discrimination.

The Schools White Paper sets out the government's proposals for ensuring the school complaints process works better for all involved.

Business and Financial Services: Education

Shivani Raja: [128757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to provide (a) financial and (b) business education to (i) secondary school students and (ii) further education students.

Georgia Gould:
The government is committed to strengthening pupils' foundational understanding of financial education in mathematics and citizenship following the publication of the Curriculum and Assessment Review's final report in November 2025. The department is engaging with sector experts and young people in how best to reflect this, and life skills content, in the updated curriculum. There will be public consultation on updated curriculum Programmes of Study in 2026, seeking views on the content before they are finalised.

Teaching at GCSE business studies can build on the financial education being taught in earlier key stages in citizenship and maths.

Charities: Children

Navendu Mishra: [128835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking (a) to ensure that charities operating as member organisations are not precluded from recognition as a body of persons and (b) to safeguard children and young persons participating in brass banding.

Josh MacAlister:
The department recognises the valuable role that charities and voluntary organisations play in supporting children and young people to participate in cultural and educational activities, including brass banding.

The department is clear that a Body of Persons Approvalmay be applied for by any organisation responsible for putting on a performance involving children.

Safeguarding children and young people is a fundamental priority for this government. All organisations involved in brass banding are expected to comply with relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance. This includes effective safeguarding policies, appropriate vetting and training of adults, and clear processes for reporting and responding to concerns, to ensure safe and positive participation for all young people.

Moreover, many brass bands operate as Out-of-School Settings (providing activities for children, without their parents' or carers' supervision). The department has published guidance outlining the safeguarding standards we expect these settings to meet, and free accompanying e-learning.

Childcare

Jacob Collier: **[128399]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to review the system of applications for government-funded childcare in order to allow parents to submit applications outside of term time.

Olivia Bailey:
It is the department's ambition that all families have access to high quality, affordable and flexible early education and care, giving every child the best start in life and delivering on our Plan for Change.

Children become eligible for the working parent entitlement from 1 Sept, 1 Jan or 1 April, the term after they reach the relevant age and meet relevant eligibility criteria.

Termly deadlines enable local authorities and childcare providers to better plan and ensure sufficient early years places are available for parents each term, as there are clear periods for when children are likely to enter into a place.

Through the Childcare and Early Education Review, the department will look at how to improve access to early education and care, making the system simpler for families.

Lizzi Collinge: **[128562]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government will consider amending the Childcare Act 2006 to allow registered childminders to claim funded childcare hours for children to whom they are related, where all regulatory requirements are met.

Olivia Bailey:
Parents are free to choose the childcare that is right for them and their children, and childminders are not prevented from caring for related children. However, the restriction on funding relatives is set out in the Childcare Act (2006). Section 18(4) of this Act specifically excludes care provided for a child by a parent or other relative.

This approach avoids creating an incentive for adults to register to become childminders and being paid to look after related children that they are already looking after on an informal basis. Allowing childminders to receive funding for looking after related children would not be an effective use of public money.

A local authority can choose to fund a childminder providing childcare for a related child, but this would have to be from local authority funds independent of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Although childminders cannot receive entitlements funding for related children, flexibilities within staff-to-child ratios can be used to enable childminders who are caring for related children to avoid limiting the income they can earn.

We have no plans to change this long-standing position at this time.

Department for Education: Finance

Saqib Bhatti: [128849]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether funding has been directed from other departments' budgets to the budget of the Department for Education, as she outlined on the 1st December 2025.

Olivia Bailey:
The usual practice to transfer budgets between government departments is via budget cover transfers (BCTs), which occur twice a financial year through the Estimates process. The most recent Estimates Memo for the department is available here:
https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/52047/documents/288898/default/.

Department for Education: Written Questions

Mr Richard Holden: [126724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to respond to Question 121539 from the hon. Member for Poole.

Mr Richard Holden: [126725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to respond to Question 121538 from the hon. Member for Poole.

Georgia Gould:
The responses to these Written Parliamentary Questions have been issued.

English Language and Mathematics: GCSE

James McMurdock: [127947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the difference in attainment rates in GCSE a) English and b) Maths by age 19 between South Basildon and East Thurrock and the national average.

James McMurdock: [127948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce the proportion of young people who do not achieve a grade 4 in GCSE a) Maths and b) English by age 19.

Josh MacAlister:
The latest available data for the 2023/24 academic year shows that by age 19, 76.3% of young people in South Basildon and East Thurrock had achieved a grade 4 or above in GCSE English and 69.8% in GCSE maths, compared with national averages of 82.9% and 79.0%. The department has committed £27.7 million this financial year to raise reading standards and are introducing a new statutory year 8 reading test to strengthen reading at key stage 3. Curriculum and GCSE reforms will deliver clearer, better-sequenced, content. Schools will be supported by the universal regional improvement for standards and excellence programme providing sector-led school improvement support. As part of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, the department is introducing reforms to support progression to Level 2 English and maths. This includes new 16 to 19 Level 1 qualifications for lower-attaining students, revising the accountability framework and sharing effective practice through a Further Education Commissioner guide.

Erasmus+ Programme

Ben Coleman: [125962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many higher education institutions applied for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education by 24 March 2026; and how many were accepted.

Josh MacAlister:
Erasmus Charter for Higher Education applications are currently subject to admissibility and eligibility checks before being evaluated against published award criteria.

We anticipate that the results will be published in September 2026.

Callum Anderson: [126325]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled The Erasmus+ programme, published on 17 December 2025, what steps her Department is taking to support (a) schools and (b) other participating organisations listed in that guidance to engage with the Erasmus+ programme in advance of the UK rejoining the scheme.

Josh MacAlister:
The government will work closely with organisations and young people to maximise take-up, particularly among disadvantaged groups. The British Council is set take on the role of the UK National Agency.

The National Agency will be in charge of managing the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in the UK. The National Agency will have a dedicated website, and will issue guidance to applicants in advance of the 2027 funding call.

Alongside this, there will also be a broad range of sector outreach activities to increase awareness and engagement, such as webinars and targeted communications to schools, colleges and other eligible organisations. There will also be support for schools who wish to apply and make the most opportunities across Europe.

Schools can find guidance about the Erasmus+ programme on the Erasmus+ GOV.UK pages.

Free School Meals: Secondary Education

Adam Dance: [128451]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of expanding secondary school breakfast provision in (a) Yeovil constituency, (b) Somerset and (c) England.

Olivia Bailey:
Through our Opportunity Mission, this government will ensure that all children get the best start in life. We are committed to rolling out free breakfast clubs in all schools with primary-aged pupils, helping to build strong foundations in the first years of school. It is right that we start from supporting the youngest children.

The National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) is an inherited scheme from the previous government, providing subsidised breakfast food only to schools in disadvantaged areas via a national supplier, Family Action. This contract will end in July 2026.

In November 2025, we announced that all NSBP-participating schools with primary-aged pupils had been offered a place on the free breakfast club programme from September 2026. We also confirmed that all NSBP schools with secondary-aged pupils will continue to be supported to an equivalent value for the 2026/27 academic year so that these schools can continue to offer breakfast to their pupils.

Further details will be provided to these secondary schools in due course.

Further Education: Pay

Afzal Khan: [128833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing parity of pay between teachers in further education colleges and sixth forms.

Afzal Khan: [128834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the Association of Colleges on pay increases for further education staff.

Josh MacAlister:
Further education (FE) teachers are central to delivering high quality technical education. Last year, we announced an additional £190 million to help colleges and other 16-19 providers address the recruitment and retention of specialist FE teachers. In addition, our targeted retention incentive offer is designed to retain eligible FE teachers in technical subjects with payments of up to £6,000 after tax. In its first year, nearly 6,000 teachers received a payment.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and my noble Friend, the Minister for Skills have regular engagement with FE stakeholders including the Association of Colleges (AoC) on a range of issues, including matters pertaining to funding. FE pay remains a matter for individual colleges supported by the National Joint Forum, the AoC's national bargaining arrangements.

Higher Education: Oppression

Anneliese Dodds: [128061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is she taking to help support academics in the UK from transnational repression.

Anneliese Dodds: [128062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to engage with universities on the issue of the transnational repression of their staff and students.

Anneliese Dodds: [128063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support she is providing to universities on the issue of transnational repression of their staff and students.

Josh MacAlister:
Any attempt to intimidate, harass or harm academics in the UK will not be tolerated. Since February 2026, we have held a series of events, engaging over 200 higher education staff on foreign interference concerns such as transnational repression, including a meeting of Vice-Chancellors with Ministers and MI5. The Education Secretary also met with academics to discuss how to strengthen support.

The National Security Act 2023 provides effective tools which increase our ability to target hostile activity from foreign states. For higher education, there are a range of relevant regulatory expectations including around academic freedom, free speech and protection from harassment. We have also issued guidance available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-uk-higher-education-from-foreign-interference to help students and staff identify and escalate concerns.

The government is investing £3 million in a package of measures to tackle foreign interference, including a new Academic Interference Reporting Route, enabling senior university leaders to raise concerns directly with government.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Emma Lewell: [128720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether local authorities in England have received from the Department for Education information on how they can implement the HAF Plus model of the Holiday Activities and Food programme.

Emma Lewell: [128721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of local authorities piloting community eligibility, or open access, for the Holiday Activities and Food programme in more deprived areas.

Olivia Bailey:
The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme provides free nutritious meals, enriching activities, and safe environments to children and young people from low-income families during the school holidays, benefiting their health, wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Local authorities and their providers have flexibility in how they deliver provision to best serve the needs of young people in their area. The department's published HAF guidance encourages all local authorities to have a varied mix of provision that caters for different ages and interests, including through collaboration with relevant local organisations. We are aware that several local authorities are utilising different delivery models for HAF to better suit the needs and interests of teenagers, including the HAF Plus model, which features an App

There have been several successful pilots within the HAF programme in collaboration with participating local authorities to further test what works in practice and develop innovative approaches to supporting children and young people We will continue to consider potential future pilots.

Overseas Students: Fees and Charges

Carla Denyer: [127577]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will exclude incoming exchange students whose tuition is fully funded via (a) scholarships and (b) fee waivers from the International Student Levy.

Josh MacAlister:
The International Student Levy will require higher education providers to pay a flat fee of £925 per international student per year. Further details of the levy, including students in scope, will be published in due course. The income raised by the levy will be reinvested into skills and maintenance grants.

Providers will be given an allowance for the first 220 international students per year. This is to mitigate the levy having a disproportionate impact on smaller providers, particularly those operating specialist and resource intensive models with limited other means of cross-subsidisation. The levy will not be introduced until 2028/29 to

give providers time to plan for its introduction. Providers will pay the levy one year in arrears, to help with their financial planning.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education: Equality

Mr Joshua Reynolds: [125825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that Personal, Social, Health and Economic education in schools includes specific teaching on racism, sexism and gender equality across all state schools.

Georgia Gould:

We are making sure that all children in England learn about respectful relationships, in person and online, as part of mandatory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). The curriculum has a strong focus on equality, respect, the harmful impact of stereotyping, as well as the importance of valuing difference. Further guidance here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education.

Pupils should learn about the law relating to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sex by the end of their secondary education.

Relationships education should ensure that pupils understand the importance of treating others with respect, including those who differ in their choices, preferences or beliefs. Pupils should be taught to recognise and understand bullying, including the use of derogatory language and how stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes, including misogyny, can cause harm, and equip them to recognise and challenge such behaviours.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education: Training

Helen Maguire: [126059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when schools can expect to access training to implement the new RSHE curriculum, which all schools must follow from 1 September 2026; and how many schools will have access to Government funded support with the implementation of the new RSHE curriculum.

Helen Maguire: [126060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has been made of the training and support needs of teachers and school staff to effectively implement the new RSHE curriculum that all schools must follow from 1 September 2026.

Helen Maguire: [126061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the RSHE training pilots promised from early 2026 will be available for schools to access.

Helen Maguire: [126062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding the Government is committing specifically to support teachers with the implementation of the new RSHE curriculum.

Josh MacAlister:
Education is a significant part of the cross-government strategy to keep women and girls safe, focusing on prevention by instilling early the values and skills needed to protect young people, disrupt dangerous attitudes, and stop harmful behaviours escalating.

As with all curriculum subjects, schools are responsible for ensuring the quality of the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) they provide. This includes ensuring that staff are properly trained and equipped to teach these subjects accurately and confidently.

The department is currently working at pace through a commercial process to establish the best route to support schools with implementation of the new elements of the RSHE curriculum. Through the Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy, the department has committed to invest £3 million over the next two years to ensure that the new curriculum has the greatest impact, and £5 million to pilot healthy relationships training delivered by external providers.

Pupil Exclusions

Suella Braverman: [128273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the increase in pupil suspensions in England since 2016.

Suella Braverman: [128274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the increase in pupil suspensions in England since 2024.

Suella Braverman: [128275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of suspensions issued to pupils each year.

Olivia Bailey:
The department publishes termly and annual statistics on suspension and permanent exclusions, including the reasons why pupils are suspended. The latest full academic year release, covering 2023/24, is available at: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england/2023-24. This data sets out national patterns and drivers of suspension and informs the department's ongoing approach to behaviour and exclusion policy.

Suella Braverman: [128276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many suspensions were issued in each of the last five academic years, broken down by type of school.

Olivia Bailey:
Statistics on suspensions, by academic year and school type, is available here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england/2023-24. This has been available since 10 July 2025.

Pupil Exclusions: Complaints

Suella Braverman: [128281]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many complaints about pupil suspensions were upheld by her Department in each of the last five years.

Olivia Bailey:
The department's School Complaints Compliance Unit considers complaints about exclusions including pupil suspensions in relation to both academies and local authority maintained schools. Complaints are categorised as exclusions complaints on our case management system. Data on complaints logged as exclusion complaints for the last five academic years is in the table below:

NUMBER OF EXCLUSION COMPLAINTS UPHELD OR PARTIALLY UPHELD BY THE DEPARTMENT

Academic Year	Number of academy exclusion complaints	Number of maintained school exclusion complaints
2020/21	13	7
2021/22	13	8
2022/23	11	5
2023/24	27	5
2024/25	13	9
2025/26*	13	9
Total	**90**	**43**

*Complaints received and closed up to and including 31 March 2026.

Pupils: Attendance

Suella Braverman: [128286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to review the current level of fines for school non-attendance.

Suella Braverman: [128287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support is available to parents facing financial hardship who are issued with penalty notices for their child's non-attendance at school.

Olivia Bailey:
The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education and it is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. Our guidance emphasises a support first approach and makes clear that fines and legal intervention should only be used where support has been exhausted, not engaged with, or is not appropriate. Fines remain one part of our system for reducing school absence, therefore the amount must reflect the potential short and longer-term impact of absence on the pupil, their teachers, and other pupils at the school. If parents cannot afford to pay a school attendance penalty notice, they should contact their local council immediately to explain their financial situation, as they may be able to offer guidance or support.

Suella Braverman: [128288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's policy is on arresting and detaining parents overnight in connection with Education Act 1996 non-attendance offences, particularly in cases where the parent ensured the child attended school and the absence occurred after the school had assumed duty of care.

Olivia Bailey:
The department does not hold responsibility for policy on arrests or detentions as this is a matter for the Home Office, as the department responsible for policing. We do not hold data on parents in custody.

Religion: Teachers

Daisy Cooper: [125239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure an adequate number of specialist training places for religious education teachers in Hertfordshire.

Georgia Gould:
There have been noticeable increases in religious education (RE) ITT recruitment recently. Between 2023/24 and 2025/26, postgraduate ITT recruitment for RE increased by 71%. 492 RE trainees started courses in 2025/26, compared to 287 two years ago.

We will publish postgraduate initial teacher training (PGITT) recruitment needs for the 2026/27 academic year in due course. PGITT recruitment need is estimated by the teacher workforce model each year, and is used to monitor and measure recruitment for specific subjects. PGITT trainee need is calculated to account for a broad range of factors including historic recruitment, economic forecasts, teacher retention and wider forms of teacher recruitment. The Find teacher training courses website lists training

opportunities in England, including 28 RE courses with placement schools in a 10-mile radius of Hertfordshire.

Schools: Birmingham

Ayoub Khan: [128541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has been approached by (a) Birmingham City Council, (b) the West Midlands Combined Authority, or (c) any other public body to approve the re-designation of school land for development in Birmingham Perry Barr in the last three years.

Josh MacAlister:
The department has not received any applications or notifications from Birmingham City Council or any other public body concerning the redesignation of school land for development within the Perry Barr area during the past three years.

Schools: Finance

Jim Shannon: [129098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in England required emergency financial support from her Department in the most recent financial year.

Georgia Gould:
Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only

The department publishes details of academy trusts receiving funding support as an annex to the ‘Academies sector annual report and accounts’.

The department sets robust expectations for how trusts should manage their finances effectively. Trusts must have the financial, leadership and management capacity to plan appropriately and act in the best interests of their pupils.

Where a trust experiences financial difficulty, the department will take a robust approach. In a small number of cases, as a last resort, a trust may require additional funding to secure long-term educational sustainability. This support carries strict conditions and is typically accompanied with a notice to improve, setting out conditions the trust must meet to avoid further intervention. The department has the power to terminate a trust’s funding agreement if there is a serious breakdown in management or governance.

Local authorities are responsible for overseeing the financial management and additional financial support for maintained schools.

Schools: Repairs and Maintenance

Jim Shannon: [129102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many school rebuilding projects are underway under the school rebuilding programme.

Josh MacAlister:
Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

We are investing almost £20 billion into the School Rebuilding Programme through to 2034/35, to rebuild over 750 schools and sixth-form colleges across England.

There are over 500 schools already in the programme, with well over half in delivery, and the department is currently identifying a further 250 schools to add to the programme. As of February 2026, we have worked with schools and Responsible Bodies to rebuild 51 schools through the School Rebuilding Programme, with 39 of these completed since July 2024.

Schools: Skilled Workers

Mr Lee Dillon: [128517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to place greater emphasis on the development of work-related skills in schools and colleges.

Josh MacAlister:
The department's reforms will prepare children for the modern world, ensuring every pupil develops essential knowledge and skills for life, work and innovation. We will strengthen the curriculum by embedding critical media literacy and sustainability and improving financial education. A refreshed computing curriculum will build early digital confidence, including core learning on artificial intelligence, and integrate digital skills across subjects.

Colleges already deliver a wide range of technical or vocational provision aimed at equipping students with the skills they need for work or higher study, such as T Levels, based on employer-designed standards with a 45-day industry placement.

Reforms set out in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper to develop the skilled workforce our economy needs include new V Levels, expansion of T Levels; and clearer Level 2 routes through Occupational and Further Study Pathways.

We are also strengthening careers advice and guidance in schools, driven by updated Gatsby Benchmarks and our commitment to deliver at least two weeks' worth of work experience for all pupils.

Special Educational Needs

Tony Vaughan: [124902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether additional funding for the Targeted Plus group will be ring fenced.

Georgia Gould:
The department is taking steps to ensure that this additional funding will be spent for its intended purpose to support mainstream inclusion, this includes providing funding such as the Inclusive Mainstream Fund as a separate grant with reporting conditions and guidance to be published to achieve this.

Our special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reform consultation document proposes a continuum of support for children's needs. Support will range from the Universal offer (including high-quality adaptive teaching) to the Targeted layer (such as small group provision) and Targeted Plus support (such as speech and language therapy).

We are providing additional funding to boost the capacity of mainstream settings to meet this continuum of need, before any legislative changes. The department will publish guidance and conditions of grant to ensure that settings and local authorities spend the funding on this purpose.

The Inclusive Mainstream fund provides over £500 million per year for schools, colleges and early years settings so they can improve their inclusive practice. We have published information on £1.8 billion for local authorities over the three years to provide a new Experts at Hand offer, strengthening the capability of mainstream settings to meet SEND needs by providing access to expert support from education and health professionals.

Sir Desmond Swayne: **[126517]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to ensure that children and young people will have a right to be educated in a specialist placement if their complex needs cannot be met in a mainstream educational setting.

Georgia Gould:
In line with our proposed reforms, children with complex needs, who need a Specialist Provision Package(s) and a placement within a specialist setting, will have their provision guaranteed in their education health and care plan. Specialist Provision Packages will provide comprehensive, evidence-based and nationally consistent support.

Jo Platt: **[127817]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing a joint workforce plan with the Department for Health and Social Care to support sustainability of Experts at Hand service.

Georgia Gould:
The department is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reforms, including delivery of the Experts at Hand offer, strengthening joint workforce planning and commissioning at a local level between education and health partners.

We are investing around £1.8 billion over the next three years for local area partnerships, including local authorities and integrated care boards to develop a new 'Experts at Hand' offer, strengthening mainstream education through access to health and specialist education support.

To support delivery, we are investing over £40 million in the specialist workforce, including £26 million to increase educational psychologists and £15 million to grow the speech and language therapy workforce.

Local area partnerships will develop and deliver their own Experts at Hand, tailored to local population needs and supported by strong national oversight. The government will set the overall framework, provide guidance and tools, and work closely with local areas to ensure consistent quality.

Special Educational Needs: Appeals

Iqbal Mohamed: [126481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of proposed changes to SEND tribunal arrangements on the ability of families to challenge local authority decisions.

Georgia Gould:
The 'Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reform: putting children and young people first' consultation document explains our proposals for reforming the SEND Tribunal as part of broader SEND reform.

The department expects more disputes to be resolved much earlier through mediation without the need for a Tribunal appeal, meaning that children and young people get the support they need more quickly. However, we are also clear that the SEND Tribunal will remain an important legal backstop for families who disagree with decisions made by a local authority regarding not undertaking a needs assessment, the outcome of an assessment, the specialist provision package identified, and/or the placement named in an education, health and care plan.

We also propose measures to improve local authority accountability to act on Tribunal judgments and improve their decision-making processes where the Tribunal finds against them. These measures should give parents confidence that local authorities will get more decisions right first time in future.

The department will set out further detail following the consultation.

Special Educational Needs: Finance

Laura Trott: [116096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the £3.5 billion funding announced in the White Paper entitled Every child achieving and thriving, published 23 February 2026, is additional funding beyond that announced at the Spending Review.

Laura Trott: [116098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the £4bn announced in her Department's policy paper entitled Every child achieving and thriving, published on 23 February 2026, is from her Department's existing spending envelope.

Georgia Gould:
I refer the right hon. Member for Sevenoaks to the answer of 7 April 2026 to Question HL14880 and HL14881.

Special Educational Needs: Public Consultation

Iqbal Mohamed: [126474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of consultation undertaken in the development of proposed reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities system, particularly in relation to proposals on the role of tribunals.

Georgia Gould:

The department is consulting extensively on the full set of proposals set out in the 'SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First' consultation document, during the 12-week consultation period. We welcome and will carefully consider comments and representations on all aspects of the consultation paper and subjects related to the proposed reforms, including on the role of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) tribunal.

In addition to the online consultation, we are undertaking a national public engagement programme to ensure that families, practitioners and settings can engage meaningfully on the proposals. Ministers have established the SEND Development Group and the Complex Needs Group to provide expert challenge from local authorities, parent groups and campaigners.

This engagement activity ensures broad, balanced and representative engagement while following consultation principles around transparency, accessibility and fairness.

Special Educational Needs: Reform

Munira Wilson: [120022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed SEND reforms on care-experienced children whose needs arise from early trauma and attachment disruption, particularly where those needs span education, health and social care and may not meet the highest threshold within any single category.

Georgia Gould:

Care-experienced children will benefit from our special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reforms and vision to create a more inclusive education system. A strengthened universal offer, grounded in high-quality adaptive teaching and earlier support, will enable additional needs to be identified and met more quickly. For children with SEND, our £1.8 billion 'Experts at Hand' service will give settings access to specialist input earlier, even where needs may be masked by trauma, and individual support plans will help ensure those working with children understand their needs and how best to support them. For those with the most complex needs, education, health and care plans will remain in place, underpinned by strengthened specialist provision packages that make expectations clear and consistent across the system.

Every local authority must appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH), who has a statutory duty to promote the educational attainment of the children in their care. Looked-after children also have highest priority for school admissions and attract Pupil Premium Plus of £2,690 per child, up to age 16.

And for the first time under their new framework, Ofsted now assesses all settings for inclusion. Collectively, these reforms seek to ensure all children who can achieve and thrive in mainstream education will be supported to do so, and children and young people who need specialist support will receive it promptly and with dignity, clarity and care. The consultation for these reforms is underway and we encourage anyone with views, including on how reforms will affect care-experienced children, to participate.

Students: Debts

Mr Gregory Campbell: **[128051]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help reduce levels of student debt.

Josh MacAlister:
The government is capping the maximum interest rates on Plan 2 and 3 student loans at 6%, rather than RPI+3%, from 1 September, for the 2026/27 academic year, delivering stability and protection for graduates from escalating student loan interest.

This short-term measure removes the risk of a temporary increase in inflation due to the situation in the Middle East causing loan balances to compound at an unsustainable rate and is in line with actions taken in the past to secure stability in the student finance system.

Secondly, the government is reintroducing targeted, means-tested maintenance grants from academic year 2028/29, which will provide disadvantaged students with up to £1,000 extra support per year, without increasing their debt.

Student finance and higher education funding is a complex, interconnected, system. We are considering a range of options to make the system fairer, but to be fiscally responsible we must consider how any change would be funded.

Students: Disability

Anna Dixon: **[128610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's consultation document entitled Assistive software funded through Disabled Students' Allowance, published on 26 March 2026, what steps she is taking to ensure that any restrictions to access to specialist software will not be detrimental to student learning.

Josh MacAlister:
The department's consultation on assistive software funded through Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) seeks to gather evidence on how best to modernise the support provided to take into account the huge advances in technology over recent

years. As part of this, the consultation explores how the widespread availability of built-in and free-to-access accessibility tools can meet some students' needs without the use of specific specialist software products funded through DSA. The proposals in the consultation envisage that assistive software will continue to be funded through DSA where there is an additional disability-related need for it that cannot be met by any other software available to the student free of charge.

No policy decisions have yet been made. The consultation remains live until 18 June, and responses will inform final policy decisions following the consultation.

Teachers: Conditions of Employment

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [121538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has she made as to the suitability of the teachers' contractual obligation to work for a maximum of 1265 hours over 195 days in a year.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [121539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to review teachers' contractual obligation to work for a maximum of 1265 hours over 195 days in a year.

Georgia Gould:
Directed and undirected time is a contractual provision unique to teaching, and we know that many teachers work significantly more than 1265 hours; so, this year's remit asked for the School Teachers Review Body's (STRB) views on the benefits and drawbacks of the current working hours arrangements within the 'School teachers pay and conditions' document, to gather information as part of work to reduce working hours and make teaching a more attractive profession.

To be clear, the department has not proposed the removal, or a specific change, to the current 1265 directed hours limit, which is a key teacher protection. We will take into account the Review Body's views and evidence from statutory consultees, including unions, before considering whether to pursue any change to the provision for teachers or leaders. No policy change is being recommended or decided upon at this stage.

Teachers: Training

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [116687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Every child achieving and thriving, published on 23 February 2026, how much and what proportion of the proposed teacher training will be delivered in person.

Georgia Gould:
We are currently in the design phase of the £200 million professional development package referenced in the Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper. We are working with a wide range of experts, including the department's Inclusion Expert

Advisory Group and the Education Endowment Foundation, to identify what will be most impactful in supporting settings to be more inclusive.

We have confirmed that the courses for teachers and leaders in schools and colleges will include a mixture of flexible online self-study sessions and live facilitated sessions. We have also announced a package of materials for schools and colleges to support the development and delivery of in-house, in person training.

Iqbal Mohamed: [126005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's White Paper entitled Every Child Achieving and Thriving, published on 23 February 2026, how much of the teacher training will be delivered in person; who will deliver the training; and how will the training be funded.

Georgia Gould:
The 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' White Paper set out proposals for a package of professional development on special educational needs and disabilities, backed by over £200 million of funding. The department is currently in the design phase, listening to feedback coming through the special educational needs and disabilities consultation and working with a wide range of experts to identify what will be most impactful in supporting settings to be more inclusive. More information on the structure of the training will be released in due course.

The department has confirmed that the courses for teachers and leaders in schools and colleges will include a mixture of flexible online self-study sessions and live facilitated sessions, which may be in-person or online to support access. We have also announced a package of materials for schools and colleges to support the development and delivery of in-house, in-person training.

We will adhere to public sector procurement regulations to select suitable providers to deliver the different elements of the package.

Universities: Admissions

Charlie Dewhirst: [128593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November 2025 to Question 84664 on Universities: Admissions, what assessment has been made by (i) her Department and (ii) Office for Students on whether university admissions are materially determined by (a) the postcode of the applicant or (b) the parental occupation of the applicant.

Josh MacAlister:
Higher education (HE) should be a gateway open to all who have the ability and desire to pursue it. Our Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper sets out our vision for a reformed system that helps everyone with the desire and aptitude to access high quality HE, breaks down the barriers to opportunity, and supports growth.

While universities are independent from government and are responsible for their own admissions decisions, it is essential that the students they admit are likely to

succeed. Contextual admissions allow universities to consider an applicant's individual circumstances and background alongside their attainment, to better understand their potential. The Office for Students (OfS) provides guidance on the use of contextual admissions and expects providers to ensure policies are evidence-based and evaluated.

OfS monitors equality of opportunity, including access to HE, through its Equality of Opportunity Risk Register. HE providers are required, under Condition F1 of the OfS regulatory framework, to publish annual transparency information on applications, offers, acceptances and registrations broken down by sex, ethnicity and socioeconomic background.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

Biofuels: Regulation

Sir Mark Hendrick: [128193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen regulations on biomass energy production and waste incineration companies, including to ensure the sector takes responsibility for reducing its carbon emissions.

Michael Shanks:
Biomass electricity generators receiving support must comply with strict sustainability criteria covering supply chain greenhouse gas emissions. The government is developing a cross-sector biomass sustainability framework to further strengthen these requirements and enable consistency between government supported sectors.

Waste incineration facilities are regulated through the relevant environmental permitting regime, which sets emissions limits and monitoring requirements. The government is committed to expanding the scope of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to waste incineration. This will price emissions from the sector and incentivise decarbonisation. The UK ETS Authority will set out final policy design in due course.

Business: Energy

Gareth Snell: [128266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure that energy suppliers pass on price reductions to business customers in a timely manner.

Chris McDonald:
The government recognises that high electricity prices are a significant pressure on businesses and a barrier to investment and growth. The only way to bring electricity bills down sustainably is by reducing the UK’s exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets,

which is why business energy affordability is closely linked to the government's Clean Power mission.

My Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State wrote to business energy suppliers last month, setting the very clear expectation that small business energy customers must be treated fairly, including by third party intermediaries, who many small businesses rely on to negotiate their energy contracts. This set out the expectation that pricing needs to be fair, transparent and fully justifiable, reflecting genuine market conditions.

To ensure we do not see unfair practices continuing, in the upcoming Energy Independence Bill we will be bringing in new regulation of third-party intermediaries, such as energy brokers and price comparison websites, as a further measure to protect small businesses from harmful practices like mis-selling and untransparent pricing.

Clean Energy: Finance

Alex Baker: **[128461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Government funding of clean energy sources on businesses and local communities.

Chris McDonald:
The Clean Energy Industries Sector Plan is our plan to secure growth, to back Clean Energy Industries and unlock billions more in private investment.

The Chancellor announced £61.9bn in capital funding for DESNZ during the Spending Review, underlining both her and the Prime Minister's commitment to the Clean Energy Mission and net zero.

UK energy transition investment reached a record £65bn in 2025, a 32% increase in final investment decisions versus 2024. This investment is vital for achieving greater energy security and delivering economic growth across the UK, benefitting businesses and local communities.

Electricity Generation: Prices

Chris Bloore: **[129229]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the marginal pricing mechanism on the revenues of renewable and nuclear electricity generators.

Michael Shanks:
We will bring forward plans later this year to offer legacy low carbon generators the option of fixed price arrangements, with an intention to run an allocation process in 2027. Government will only offer contracts to electricity generators where it represents clear value for money for consumers. Further details will be set out in due course, with plans to consult later this year.

Electricity: Prices

Mr Lee Dillon: [128519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help reduce electricity prices.

Martin McCluskey:
At the Autumn Budget, we committed to taking money off energy bills to tackle the cost of living. The measures taken reduce the cost of electricity and therefore benefit all households with a domestic electricity meter. The two actions we took are (a) Removal of ECO home insulation scheme; and (b) Moving 75% of the domestic costs of the Renewables Obligation to the Exchequer from April 2026/27-28/29. These actions are designed to provide immediate savings for households, support the transition to clean energy, and ensure that future investments in the energy system are funded in a way that is fair and sustainable.

In addition, we will bring forward plans later this year to offer legacy low carbon generators, which provide about a third of our power today, the option of fixed price arrangements, with an intention to run an allocation process in 2027. This will be a voluntary decision for those generators. This will help protect families and businesses from higher bills when gas prices spike, with contracts offered only where they deliver clear value for money for consumers.

Gill German: [129561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for what reason wholesale electricity prices are set by gas-fired generation under the marginal pricing system; and what assessment he has made of the impact of this pricing structure on household energy bills.

Michael Shanks:
Our recent announcement on 21 April set out several measures that will help break the link between the price of gas and the price of electricity. These measures include voluntary long term fixed contracts and an updated Electricity Generators Levy.

Marginal pricing is a description of how competitive commodity markets function. It is the foundation of all commodity markets across the OECD. Marginal pricing incentivises the cheapest sources of energy production to provide as much power as possible, more expensive producers are only used when it is necessary to meet demand. The issue is that we are too often relying on gas to provide our power.

Accelerating the deployment of renewable generation, as we are through our Clean Power 2030 Mission, will reduce the amount of time when gas is setting the price and will help to rapidly decouple electricity from gas prices without the need for more complex arrangements. This will in turn reduce the exposure of consumer bills to volatile international prices.

Energy Bills Discount Scheme

Gareth Snell: [128254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to reopen the Energy Bills Discount Scheme for energy and trade intensive industries.

Gareth Snell: [128258]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Energy Bills Discount Scheme for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Gareth Snell: [128259]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many businesses have received support under the Energy Bills Discount Scheme since its inception.

Gareth Snell: [128264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans he has to introduce a successor scheme to the Energy Bills Discount Scheme.

Chris McDonald:
Just as we are looking across Government at the situation that households face, the Government is absolutely focused on the impact of the crisis on business and industry, and we will not hesitate to act. We will continue to monitor the situation and consider what contingency plans need to be put in place.

We are reviewing the support provided to business through the Energy Bill Discount scheme that ran until 31 March 2024, including the higher level of support provided to Energy Intensive Industries compared to the universal offer for all businesses.

Energy: Artificial Intelligence

Steve Darling: [129553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of artificial intelligence on supporting lower energy consumption and access to lower tariffs for low-income households.

Michael Shanks:
Recent analysis at global level, including by the International Energy Agency, has highlighted the extensive potential for AI applications in energy to cut costs and lower consumer bills.

Government will publish an AI Strategy for Energy in Autumn this year, which will set out the actions it is taking to apply AI to the Clean Energy Superpower mission. The AI for Clean Energy Champion is also preparing a review of AI deployment in electricity networks, for publication in the summer.

Energy: Companies

Dr Ellie Chowns: [129429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofgem regarding the adequacy of the support offered by energy companies to people living with brain injuries, including conditions such as aphasia, and registered on the Priority Services Register.

Martin McCluskey:
My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with the industry regulator Ofgem on a range of issues.

DESNZ is working closely with other Government Departments, including the Department of Health and Social Care, on the National Data Library household income 'Kickstarter' project to test how public sector data can be better joined up to improve access to government programmes. This will pave the way for better targeted help, ensuring those who are struggling to pay their bills get the support they need.

Energy: Prices

Martin Wrigley: [128414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Department considered introducing measures for businesses comparable to those available to households to mitigate rising energy costs.

Martin McCluskey:
Just as we are looking across Government at the situation that households face, the Government is absolutely focused on the impact of the crisis on business and industry, and we will not hesitate to act. We will continue to monitor the situation and consider what contingency plans need to be put in place.

We are reviewing the support provided to business through the Energy Bill Discount scheme that ran until 31 March 2024, including the higher level of support provided to Energy Intensive Industries compared to the universal offer for all businesses.

Heat Pumps

Sir Mark Hendrick: [128199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of rollout of heat pumps by boiler manufacturers.

Martin McCluskey:
UK heat pump sales hit a record high in 2025, and the government expects to see continued growth over the coming years.

Manufacturers of a range of heating technologies, including fossil fuel boilers, are among the leading players in this growing market.

The government will continue to keep developments in the market under close review as heat pump uptake in existing and new homes continues to gather pace.

Industry: Energy

Gareth Snell: [128257]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the cumulative impact of network charges on industrial energy users.

Michael Shanks:
Network charges are set by the independent energy regulator, Ofgem. As part of setting price controls under its RIIO-3 Final Determinations, Ofgem carried out an impact assessment considering the overall effect of its decisions on consumers, including industrial users. Details of Ofgem's impact assessment can be found through the following link: RIIO-3 Final Determinations – Impact Assessment

Natural Gas and Oil: Wales

Gill German: [129554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what contingency plans are in place to protect fuel supply, heating oil availability, fertiliser supplies and food distribution in Wales in the event of prolonged disruption to global oil and gas supply routes, including through the Strait of Hormuz.

Martin McCluskey:
The UK benefits from a diverse and resilient fuel supply chain and remains well supplied across all fuel types. The Government works closely with industry to monitor supply, demand, and market conditions.

Government’s long-standing contingency plans include the National Emergency Plan for Fuel. A summary of the plan is published on gov.uk and sets out measures to respond to supply and distribution disruption, ensuring that, in the unlikely event of a sustained disruption, fuel can be prioritised for essential services and critical supply chains.

The Government does not assess that the current situation warrants, or is approaching, the threshold for the use of emergency powers.

Refineries

Justin Madders: [129479]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support the refineries sector while oil supplies are disrupted due to military conflict in the Middle East.

Michael Shanks:
The Government recognises the critical role UK refineries are playing in ensuring our fuel security. The Government continues to monitor the evolving situation in the

Middle East closely, but there is no indication that current global developments are affecting UK refineries' ability to secure crude oil supplies.

The Government is committed to a long-term future for the UK's refining sector. Government is engaging with them to explore what steps can be taken to further support the sector, including considering the feasibility and impacts of including refined products in the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism in the future, and has recently concluded a call for evidence to shape the UK's long-term strategy for the downstream oil sector.

Small Businesses: Energy

Gareth Snell: [128267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of standing charges on the total energy costs of small businesses.

Chris McDonald:
The Government recognises that standing charges can be a significant concern for some businesses.

Ofgem is conducting a holistic review of how energy system costs, including network costs, should be paid for in the future, as part of its Cost Allocation and Recovery Review (CARR). The most recent update as to progress with this review can be found here: Energy system cost allocation and recovery review - Ofgem - Citizen Space.

Alongside this, Ofgem's work on the non-domestic market has highlighted the need to improve pricing transparency, and the Government has acted to strengthen protections for business consumers—such as measures to improve how businesses are supported in the market, including through action on third-party intermediaries—so businesses can better understand what they are being charged and access better value contracts.

Warm Homes Plan

Wendy Chamberlain: [129257]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2026 to Question 122806 on the Warm Homes Plan, what value of funding has been reallocated between projects under the Warm Homes: Local Grant and the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund schemes due to identified or anticipated underspend in the 2025–26 financial year.

Martin McCluskey:
The Warm Homes: Local Grant and Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund will support hundreds of thousands of homes to become warmer and cheaper to run throughout the course of this Parliament, as part of our £15 billion Warm Homes Plan.

We maximise delivery throughout the course of the scheme to ensure that the budget for each year is fully utilised so households across England reap the full benefits of

the schemes. This includes through reallocating funding where local authorities and housing associations indicate they won't be able to spend their full budget for the year.

We reallocated £2.5m within Warm Homes: Local Grant, and £7.59m within Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund projects respectively in the first year of delivery.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture: Devon

Martin Wrigley: [128410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help support rewilding in Devon.

Mary Creagh:
Rewilding projects tend to be run by environmental NGOs and private organisations. Defra's focus is to support nature recovery through a range of mechanisms, funding and policies. While Defra does not lead on nature recovery projects directly, it supports Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry England in their regulatory and partnership roles at a local level – including in Devon. Examples range from local projects such as species reintroductions to catchment scale habitat and river restoration, providing benefits to people and nature.

Agriculture: Fuels

Edward Morello: [128491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support farmers with recent changes in the level of price of fuel.

Edward Morello: [128493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will set out the support currently available to farmers in West Dorset constituency given changes in the level of fuel costs.

Dr Roz Savage: [128551]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support farmers in England with fuel costs in 2026.

Dr Roz Savage: [128552]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing temporary financial support for farmers in England to offset increased fuel costs.

Dr Roz Savage: [128556]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to introduce any short-term financial support for farmers to mitigate rising fuel costs in 2026.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Government is conscious of the increases to prices of red diesel and other fuel influenced by the continued instability in the Middle East. The Competition and Markets Authority has been asked to look into industry concerns about red diesel prices, including price transparency. The Government are determined to help keep costs down for our farmers. Red diesel continues to benefit from an 80% tax discount - saving farmers almost £300 million a year.

The Government's commitment to farming and food security is steadfast, which is why it has allocated a record £11.8 billion to sustainable farming and food production over this parliament.

Edward Morello: [128492]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of recent changes in the level of fuel prices on farm profitability.

Dr Roz Savage: [128550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of fuel costs on the financial viability of farms during the spring planting and silage-making season.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Government is conscious of the increases to prices of red diesel/gasoil, influenced by the continued instability in the Middle East. The Competition and Markets Authority has been asked to look into industry concerns about red diesel prices, including price transparency. The Government are determined to help keep costs down for our farmers. Red diesel continues to benefit from an 80% tax discount - saving farmers almost £300 million a year.

Defra works with industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise. This includes extensive, regular and ongoing engagement in preparedness for, and response to, issues with the potential to cause disruption to food supply chains. The UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group monitors UK agricultural markets throughout the year, including price, supply, inputs, trade, and recent developments.

Dr Roz Savage: [128554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with HM Treasury on targeted relief or subsidies for agricultural fuel use.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Government is determined to help keep costs down for farmers. Red diesel continues to benefit from an 80% tax discount - saving farmers almost £300 million a

year – and continue to provide £11.8 billion to support sustainable farming and food production.

There is a commitment across Government to ensure that this market functions fairly and the Government will continue discussions with industry leaders, including the NFU and farming stakeholders.

The Government stands ready to act swiftly and appropriately to support our farming industry and protect food security.

Agriculture: Innovation

James McMurdock: [127715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Powering the farms of the future with £50 million tech investment, published on 14 April 2026, what assessment she has made of the affordability of new agri-tech tools for small and medium-sized farms.

James McMurdock: [127716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Powering the farms of the future with £50 million tech investment, published on 14 April 2026, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that smaller farms are not excluded from accessing new technologies funded through the programme.

James McMurdock: [127717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Powering the farms of the future with £50 million tech investment, published on 14 April 2026, what her planned timeline is for the roll-out of new agri-tech tools to farms.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Defra is derisking decisions on new technologies through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund, which can aid the affordability of agri-tech tools. Grants are available to a range of farms, including small and medium farms. The final round opened on 17 March with grants of up to £25,000 available for each of three themes: equipment to boost farm productivity, slurry management, and animal health and welfare. Going forward, the Government wishes to build on what has worked well across all its grant schemes with the aim of bringing the strongest elements together from 2027. As part of this work, the Government will look at the specific types of equipment and technology that could be included.

The Accelerating Development of Practices and Technologies (ADOPT) fund is part of the Farming Innovation Programme with £50 million of funding announced to date. This fund is focussed on farmer-led, smaller-scale innovation grants and supports trialling new technology and methods for adoption on farms.

Through the Farming Innovation Programme our investment in the research and development pipeline of innovative technology from concept to deployment aims to

derisk adoption and enable wider take up, lowering costs for farmers and growers. As such, technologies developed within the Farming Innovation Programme will be available for use by small farmers.

Agriculture: UK Trade with EU

John Cooper: [128915]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she has taken to ensure that the UK's approach to crop protection authorisation is safeguarded under the proposed UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement.

Emma Hardy:
The UK-EU SPS agreement is under negotiation and pesticides regulations are in scope. The Common Understanding sets out that the United Kingdom, acting in respect of Great Britain, will dynamically align with all the relevant European Union rules. The Common Understanding further sets out that the UK will be involved at an early stage to contribute to the decision-shaping process on areas within scope of the Agreement.

Air Pollution

Bambos Charalambous: [128296]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what consideration she has given to (a) revising Daily Air Quality Index thresholds to align with health evidence and (b) expanding the air pollution alert system to include fine particulate matter 2.5.

Emma Hardy:
The Government is taking forward work to improve how air quality information is communicated to the public. Health advice accompanying the Daily Air Quality Index was updated in 2025, ensuring the advice is clinically accurate and aligns with the latest health evidence. Alongside the updated health advice, the Government is considering how the Daily Air Quality Index can be updated and is continuing work to improve digital systems and air quality alerts to ensure that information is timely, accessible, and presented in a clear and user-friendly way. An expanded alerts service will be incrementally released over the course of the next 5 months which will incorporate all DAQI pollutants, including PM2.5.

Bambos Charalambous: [128297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on introducing a Clean Air Act to enshrine the World Health Organisation's 2021 Air Quality Guidelines into law.

Emma Hardy:
The Government is committed to cleaning up our air and protecting the public from the harm of pollution. The World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines inform our approach to improving public health. However, as the Guidelines do not take into account national circumstances or achievability, they cannot be readily

adopted everywhere. We remain committed to continuous improvement and the WHO Guidelines will continue to inform our evidence when considering next steps.

Air pollution comes from many different sources and has wide-ranging impacts. Issues such as air quality, climate action, public health and nature recovery are closely linked, creating opportunities for policies that deliver benefits across all these areas. Because of this, every part of government has a role in shaping policies that help reduce air pollution and its effects. I will continue to work collaboratively with colleagues across government to tackle key sources of air pollution, such as through transport, health and energy policy.

Air Pollution: Yeovil

Adam Dance: [127655]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 March 2026 to Question 119646 on Air Pollution: Yeovil, what progress the Government has made on the actions for commitment 22 of the 2025 Environmental Improvement Plan, to update health advice accompanying the Daily Air Quality Index and launch a new air quality alert system.

Emma Hardy:
The Government is taking forward work to improve how air quality information is communicated to the public. Health advice accompanying the Daily Air Quality Index was updated in November 2025, ensuring the advice is clinically accurate, clearer, and easier for the public to understand. Alongside this, the Government is continuing work to improve digital systems and air quality alerts, to ensure that information is timely, accessible, and presented in a clear and user-friendly way. A new alerts service will be incrementally released over the course of the next five months.

Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Caroline Voaden: [14427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all cases of suspected wildlife crimes against birds are fully investigated, in the context of the prevalence of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Mary Creagh:
Defra wants to see as many cases as possible of suspected wildlife crimes against birds fully investigated. The department supports the National Wildlife Crime Unit which helps prevent and detect wildlife crime and directly assists law enforcers in their investigations

Highly pathogenic avian influenza findings in wild birds can bring challenges where the carcase tests positive but where the bird has died in suspicious circumstances. In some cases, further post-mortem examination may not be possible due to the need to handle carcases at high containment facilities to protect public health and prevent spread of the virus.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) Diseases of Wildlife Scheme (DoWS) works closely with the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS) which makes enquiries, where possible, into death or illness of wildlife that may have resulted from pesticide and rodenticide poisoning (including cases with suspected wildlife crime). When dead wild birds are submitted to APHA through the wild bird surveillance scheme and poisoning is suspected, where avian influenza has been negated, the case is subsequently investigated by DoWS in collaboration with WIIS, the police and other agencies as appropriate. In all other instances, further investigation is pursued where it is possible to handle carcases or samples at appropriate biocontainment levels.

Biodiversity: Planning Permission

Jerome Mayhew: **[128309]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether funding for the Alpha phase of the BNG metric digitisation programme was based on the Equal Experts Discovery Report on error rates in BNG metric submissions.

Mary Creagh:
Funding for the Alpha phase of the BNG metric digitisation project followed completion of the Discovery phase, which is an early, exploratory stage in the Government Digital Service lifecycle. Decisions to progress from Discovery to Alpha, and to commit funding, are based on the overall findings of Discovery, including the nature of the problem to be addressed, user needs, strategic alignment and the potential value of a digital solution. While Discovery work considered a range of evidence, including issues affecting BNG metric submissions, the decision to fund Alpha was not based on any single factor.

Caravans and Motorhomes: Sewage

Mr Will Forster: **[128516]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his department has made of the potential impact on repeated disposal of antimicrobial toilet additives from motorhomes and caravans into campsite septic tanks.

Emma Hardy:
Sewage discharges are regulated by the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. These Regulations allow lower risk discharges to operate under statutory General Binding Rules, but any discharge which cannot comply with those rules can only be made in accordance with an Environmental Permit issued by the Environment Agency. When a permit application is processed, the potential risks to the receiving environment are considered and conditions to protect the environment are applied to any permit that is issued.

If the disposal of toilet waste containing additives compromises the treatment provided by a campsite septic tank then the discharge may cause pollution, and the

operator of the septic tank could be subject to enforcement action by the Environment Agency.

Coastal Erosion

Rupert Lowe: [127923]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support is available to residents whose homes are lost to coastal erosion where long-term defence is not viable.

Emma Hardy:
We are committed to supporting coastal communities and ensuring coastal risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future. That is why, in January, we announced the £30 million Coastal Adaptation Pilots. Up to £18 million of this will be shared across projects in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk supporting advanced adaptation work, including selective property purchases and long-term financing solutions. The Environment Agency will continue to work closely with Great Yarmouth Borough Council to prepare for delivery from Winter 2026.

A Coastal Erosion Assistance Grant of £6,000 per property is also available for local authorities to support the prompt and safe demolition of homes at greatest risk of loss from erosion. In exceptional circumstances, supported by strong evidence, a local authority may make a case for a higher level of grant support.

In addition, local authorities are responsible for providing homelessness assistance and temporary accommodation in some circumstances.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Training

Sir John Hayes: [128647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will publish a list of training programmes used by civil servants in her Department since 2020.

Dame Angela Eagle:
A list of training undertaken via the Civil-Service Learning Frameworks from January 2023 to March 2026, and course descriptors, are available via the Prospectus Online. Training data relating to the period prior to January 2023 is not accessible to the department.

Training delivered internally or procured by the department outside of the Central Government Learning Frameworks over the last five years is not centrally available, and to obtain this information would result in disproportionate cost to the department; therefore this will not be published.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Written Questions

Barry Gardiner: [127785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to answer Written Parliamentary Question UIN 124051.

Emma Hardy:
Written Parliamentary Question UIN 124051 was answered on 28 April 2026.

Dogs: Insurance

Chris Coghlan: [129342]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that owners of dogs on the Index of Exempted Dogs can maintain the continuous third-party public liability insurance following the withdrawal of the Dogs Trust Companion Club cover on 30 June 2026; what discussions she is having with insurers on alternative provision; and if she will publish guidance on ensuring that responsible owners do not face unintentional non-compliance due to a lack of accessible insurance options.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Defra is working to ensure owners of banned breed dogs can remain compliant with the legal requirement to hold third-party public liability insurance beyond 1 July 2026.

Defra has published guidance on the GOV.UK page and contacted all registered owners to inform them that no action is required at this stage. Defra will share further guidance which will be published on GOV.UK in early June.

Electronic Cigarettes: Trading Standards

Juliet Campbell: [128132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to enforce the ban on single-use vapes in (i) the constituency of Broxtowe, (ii) the East Midlands and (iii) England.

Mary Creagh:
The ban on the supply of single-use vapes is enforced by Local Authority Trading Standards in England. To support their vital work, the Government has provided £10 million of funding to support Trading Standards officers across England. Where an individual is caught supplying single-use vapes, they are liable to receive a £200 fixed monetary penalty and may also receive other civil sanctions. If these sanctions are not complied with, the individual will be guilty of an offence and could be liable for an unlimited fine or imprisonment.

Trading Standards have powers which allow them to enter premises to inspect for single-use vapes. They will be able to make enquiries as needed; this includes searching premises and breaking open containers to inspect stock. Regulators will be able to remove vapes from the premises, either for the purpose of investigation or for disposal.

Environment Protection: Lough Neagh

Adam Jogee: [128477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the cleanliness of Lough Neagh.

Emma Hardy:
We are closely engaged with our counterparts across the UK, including the Northern Ireland Executive, on the shared challenge of improving water quality. Baroness Hayman visited Lough Neagh with Minister Muir in March 2025 to see and discuss the particular challenges faced locally. Ministers from across the UK subsequently met in November 2025 at the Interministerial Group for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to discuss the challenge of improving our waters, agreeing to establish enhanced sharing of research data and behavioural change evidence to support policy making and delivery across the UK.

Fertilisers: Costs

Wendy Chamberlain: [119468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the war in the Middle East on the cost of fertiliser for farmers.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The fertiliser market is a global market, and while there is no immediate risk to UK supply, the market price in the UK is strongly influenced by international prices for fertiliser and by the value of the pound.

The Government is aware of the current price increase for fertiliser due to the conflict in the Gulf. Defra is in close contact with domestic fertiliser suppliers and is monitoring overall supply to the UK. The Government remains ready to support businesses as effectively as possible in these challenging times.

Steve Barclay: [119859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of rising fertiliser costs on (a) farm profitability and (b) food security.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Government is conscious of the increases to prices of fertiliser, influenced by the continued instability in the Middle East.

Defra works with industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise, including to farmers. The UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group monitors UK agricultural markets throughout the year, including price, supply, inputs, trade, and recent developments.

The UK has a resilient food system, producing around 65% of all the food we eat. We have access through international trade to food products that cannot be produced

here, which supplements domestic production and ensures that any disruption from risks do not affect the UK's overall security of supply.

Defra is monitoring risks posed by the Middle East conflict to our critical supply chains. At present, there are no significant impacts to the supply of consumer goods and food, and we do not expect any short-term disruption.

Fertilisers: Prices

Ann Davies: [120169]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the conflict between the US and Iran on (a) the cost and (b) supply of fertilizer to farmers in Wales.

Seamus Logan: [120441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her department is taking to support Scottish farmers with increases in fertiliser costs.

Dame Angela Eagle:
This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The fertiliser market is a global market, and while there is no immediate risk to UK supply, the market price in the UK is strongly influenced by international prices for fertiliser and by the value of the pound.

The Government is aware of the current price increase for fertiliser due to the conflict in the Gulf. Defra is in close contact with domestic fertiliser suppliers and is monitoring overall supply to the UK. The Government remains ready to support businesses as effectively as possible in these challenging times.

Adam Jogee: [125963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of recent changes in the cost of fertiliser on farmers in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Staffordshire.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The fertiliser market is a global market, and while there is no immediate risk to UK supply, the market price in the UK is strongly influenced by international prices for fertiliser and by the value of the pound.

The current situation and impacts on farmers in particular, and industry more widely, of current rising fertiliser prices are being monitored closely. Defra has asked the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board to increase the frequency of its fertiliser price reporting and this data is now being published on a weekly basis. This will give farmers more timely and transparent information to support their decision-making. Defra has also issued a fertiliser survey aimed at farmers and land managers to help build better understanding of direct impacts. Defra will continue to engage

with industry and farmers to understand any potential pressures and options to mitigate any risks.

Flood and Water Management Act 2010

Julia Buckley: [128577]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department intends to bring section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 into force.

Emma Hardy:
The Government is committed to addressing the longstanding issues with private sewerage. Government recognises that current arrangements of sewer adoption need review.

We have recently consulted on the adoption of shared amenities, including SuDS and sewers, and are now considering next steps. As part of this, we will consider whether section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 should be brought into force.

Flood Control: South Holland and the Deepings

Sir John Hayes: [128024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to boost flood defences in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Emma Hardy:
The Government is investing in flood risk management across South Holland and the Deepings through a combination of Flood Defence Grant in Aid and maintenance funding delivered by the Environment Agency and local partners. This funding supports the maintenance, repair and improvement of flood defence assets across the constituency.

In 2026/27, £1.6 million of Flood Defence Grant in Aid was provided to the South Holland Internal Drainage Board for capital maintenance works to the Exeter Drain pipeline and channel in Spalding, and for improvements at the South Holland Main Drain outfall at Sutton Bridge Sluice.

The Environment Agency continues to maintain flood defence infrastructure, including Surfleet Sluice, and is reviewing flood storage areas such as the Crowland and Cowbit Washes.

In addition, Lincolnshire County Council received £7.18 million through Defra's Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme to lead Project Groundwater, improving understanding of groundwater flood risk and community resilience.

Fly-tipping: Forests

Chris Hinchliff: [128942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many instances of fly tipping have been recorded on the public forest estate in each of the last 10 years.

Mary Creagh:
I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Glastonbury and Somerton on 10 April 2026, PQ UIN 125371.

Food

Apsana Begum: [129701]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she expects to publish the Food Strategy.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Good Food Cycle, published in July 2025, identifies for the first time the outcomes we want from the food system. It is the first part of an on-going programme to create a healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient food system. Defra is working across Government and in partnership key stakeholders on the delivery of the priority outcomes identified in the Good Food Cycle, and other Government priorities, over this Parliament. The near-term priorities are focused on: improving public health; increasing the affordability of good, nutritious food for those that need it most; unlocking 'Good' growth that delivers for the UK economy and supports wider Good Food Cycle outcomes; and to supporting our farmers and growers to secure resilient domestic production and protect UK food security. Defra has not yet made any decisions on the format of any future publication.

Food Supply: Climate Change

Helen Morgan: [128396]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the potential impact of climate change-driven food inflation on food security.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Defra is taking action to reduce this impact and support the continued production and supply of food for UK citizens. For example, we are actively implementing the third National Adaptation Programme which sets out a range of measures to improve resilience and adaptation to climate change across the food supply and farming sector.

Defra works across Government to improve understanding of the drivers of food prices and their impact on households. This includes analysis of food inflation trends, engagement with industry to improve transparency where possible, and close collaboration with HM Treasury, the Department for Business and Trade, the

Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care to mitigate cost pressures on consumers, particularly those most affected by the cost of living. Defra also works to reduce unnecessary regulatory costs that can feed through to consumer prices.

Food: Climate Change

Adrian Ramsay: [129401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of climate change on food prices.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Defra works across Government to improve understanding of the drivers of food prices and their impact on households. This includes analysis of food inflation trends, engagement with industry to improve transparency where possible, and close collaboration with HM Treasury, DBT, DWP and DHSC to mitigate cost pressures on consumers, particularly those most affected by the cost of living.

Defra is implementing the third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3), which sets out a range of measures to improve resilience and adaptation to climate change across the food supply and farming sector.

Adrian Ramsay: [129402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to set targets for improving the climate resilience of the UK food system.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Food production faces pressing and increasing risks from climate change and nature loss. Defra is taking action to reduce this impact and support the continued production and supply of food for UK citizens.

The National Adaptation Programme sets out the actions that government and others will take to adapt to the impacts of climate change across all sectors in England, including the food supply and farming sector. The Government has committed to explore how stronger adaptation objectives can be set to improve preparedness for the impacts of climate change. This will support an ambitious and impactful fourth National Adaptation Programme due in 2028.

Adrian Ramsay: [129403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the UK's reliance on food imports in the context of increasing climate-driven supply shocks.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The UK Food Security Report, published by Defra every three years and last published in 2024, sets out an analysis of statistics relating to food security, serving as an evidence base to inform government policy and public understanding. It tracks trends in domestic production, import reliance, inflation, and supply chain shocks.

The UK has a resilient food system, producing around 65% of all food consumed here. UK consumers have access through international trade to food products that cannot be produced here, or at least not on a year-round basis. This supplements domestic production and ensures that any disruption from risks such as adverse weather or disease does not affect the UK's overall security of supply.

In most scenarios, the UK's ability to access supply from diverse sources is vital to its resilience.

Adrian Ramsay: [129404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has considered the role of legislation such as a Good Food Bill in improving the resilience of the UK food system to climate change.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Defra is working across Government and the food system to drive the Good Food Cycle outcomes, and other Government priorities, over this Parliament. This includes taking action to support the resilience of the UK food system to climate change, by implementing the third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) which sets out a range of measures to improve resilience and adaptation to climate change across the food supply and farming sector.

Transforming the food system is a long-term programme of work. The Government needs to use all available tools in a balanced, evidence-led way that avoids unintended consequences for industry and the consumer. Legislation will play a role in some areas, but the Government has not yet made a decision on the need for a dedicated Food Bill.

Adrian Ramsay: [129406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the resilience of food supply chains to extreme weather events overseas.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The UK food supply chain is underpinned by diverse sources, robust domestic production and reliable import routes. Diversity remains a core strength, supporting response to disruptions, such as extreme weather events overseas, without significant impact on national food security.

Whilst the UK currently has a high degree of food security, it cannot be taken for granted.

Ongoing research through the Defra-funded Food, Farming and Natural Environment programme with the Met Office Hadley Centre will strengthen the evidence on adaptation options. It will also identify and evaluate key adaptation measures to improve the resilience of the agri-food sector, including cost and ease of implementation.

Food: Low Incomes

Apsana Begum: [129699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the Food Strategy will support access to fresh produce in low-income inner-city communities.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Defra is developing plans to work closely with local authorities to support initiatives that help improve access to healthy and affordable food in those areas in greatest need, recognizing that the most effective solutions are often those designed and delivered locally. This will include supporting community-led approaches such as food clubs, community kitchens, and cooking and nutrition programmes, which empower people and strengthen local food resilience.

Defra is also working across Government to develop a more strategic, long-term approach to support food access and affordability in priority locations this Parliament. This will take a partnership approach with industry to support local initiatives, work across Government to promote funding opportunities (for example, through Pride and Place, Crisis and Resilience and the Better Futures Fund), and leverage additional private funding, working with the Office for Impact Economy.

Genetically Modified Organisms: Crops

John Cooper: [128916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to secure assurances from the European Union on a permanent carve-out for products authorised under the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023 in any new Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement.

John Cooper: [128917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether a carve-out for precision bred organisms from dynamic alignment under the proposed UK-EU SPS agreement has been agreed with the EU.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Government remains committed to implementing the Precision Breeding Act and enabling the safe development of innovative genetic technologies.

Under the UK-EU Common Understanding, it is recognised that there will be areas where the UK will retain its own rules. The detail of those is subject to ongoing negotiations, and it would not be appropriate to comment further.

Hornets: Kent

Rosie Duffield: [129233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is her department taking to tackle the potential impact of the Yellow Legged Hornet on pollinators in Canterbury in wider Kent.

Mary Creagh:
Defra remains committed to taking action against Yellow-Legged Hornets (YLHs) in England in 2026 and the Animal and Plant Health Agency's National Bee Unit (NBU) stand ready to respond to reported sightings. The NBU will follow up credible reports of YLHs to find and destroy nests.

Hornets: Pollinators

Rosie Duffield: [129506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to raise public awareness of potential impact Yellow Legged Hornets on pollinators.

Mary Creagh:
Defra continues to share the message about the threat of Yellow Legged Hornets (YLHs) to pollinators including honey bees and encourages the public to report suspected sightings. The Department uses a range of communication channels to inform beekeepers and the wider public.

The Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) works with over 50 local actions groups and a wide range of other organisations to raise awareness of YLH and has distributed over 48,000 Yellow-Legged Hornet awareness raising materials since January 2026.

Invasive Species Week is an annual event to raise awareness of invasive non-native species and how everyone can help to reduce their impacts. This year it will take place from 22 to 28 June 2026. Tuesday 23 June will focus on recording and volunteering and will include events highlighting work on YLH.

Additional media opportunities for awareness raising will be used as they arise.

As part of the wider work to support pollinators, Defra has committed to delivering a refreshed Pollinator Action Plan, as part of the broader Environmental Improvement Plan. This will set out key actions for pollinators in England.

Horticulture

Adrian Ramsay: [129407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress has been made on the Horticulture Sector Growth Plan.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Following the first meeting of the Farming and Food Partnership Board in March, work to prepare a Sector Growth Plan for the horticulture sector is now underway. This reflects its vital role in boosting domestic production, driving growth and strengthening national food security.

Meetings with horticulture sector experts have commenced to shape an industry-led, sector-owned plan that brings together government and industry expertise.

This plan will identify key industry challenges and where the biggest opportunities lie to boost productivity and profitability, while cutting environmental impact and improving animal welfare, all grounded in market realities and government priorities.

Livestock Worrying: Crime Prevention

Tony Vaughan: [125497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to reduce livestock crime.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Government recognises that there can be challenges in responding to rural crime. That is why the Government collaborated with the National Police Chiefs' Councils to deliver their renewal of the Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy, which was published in November. The strategy, lasting until 2028, will ensure efforts to reduce crime benefit every community no matter where they live, including rural communities.

Last financial year (2025/26), the Government provided £800,000 of funding to the National Rural Crime Unit and the National Wildlife Crime Unit, and it is providing the same level of funding across 2026/27. These capabilities play key roles in helping police across the UK tackle organised theft and disrupt serious and organised crime groups, which can pose unique challenges for policing in large and isolated rural areas.

The Government was pleased to support the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025, which came into force on 18 March 2026. It modernised the definitions and scope of the offence, strengthened police powers to collect evidence and prosecute offenders, and increased the maximum penalty from a £1,000 fine to an "unlimited" fine, to act as a deterrent for livestock worrying.

Motor Vehicles: Recycling

Michael Wheeler: [129598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of excluding UK recyclate from the End of Life Vehicles regulations on (a) the environment and (b) the plastics industry.

Michael Wheeler: [129600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will meet with the UK plastics recycling industry to discuss the exclusion of UK recyclate from the End of Life Vehicles regulations.

Mary Creagh:
We are monitoring ‘European preference’ and ‘Made in Europe’ clauses included in legislation and strategies. We are working across government departments and with key industry stakeholders to understand potential impacts. The government is also reviewing the new EU circularity requirements for vehicle design and on management of end-of-life vehicles to determine the potential impacts for UK businesses. We recognise the interconnected nature of the automotive industry between UK and EU markets, and we will work with industry and other key stakeholders to assess the implications of the EU’s new regulations, particularly on end-of-life vehicles.

Ofwat: Equality

Charlie Dewhirst: [129028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 2 February 2026 to Question 107385 on Ofwat: Equality, whether Ofwat intends to amend its policy approach; and if she will ask Ofwat to use the Equality Act terminology of sex when referring to protected characteristics.

Emma Hardy:
As previously stated, Ofwat's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy makes reference to "gender" largely in relation to the outcomes of, and insight from, statutory Gender Pay Gap reporting.

Ofwat has confirmed that it will amend its EDI strategy to provide further clarity on where commitments and actions relate to the protected characteristic of sex and/or gender or gender reassignment.

Pesticides

Jess Brown-Fuller: [129016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has identified any crop protection products currently approved in Great Britain but not in the European Union that may be affected by regulatory alignment.

Emma Hardy:
The UK-EU SPS agreement is under negotiation and pesticides regulations are in scope. The Common Understanding sets out that the United Kingdom, acting in respect of Great Britain, will dynamically align with all the relevant European Union rules. My Department’s analysis of divergence between the UK and EU regulatory decisions is ongoing. This has greatly benefited from evidence and insight from business, which is informing the approach to negotiations and implementation.

Pets

Ruth Jones: [129254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of a) companion animal ownership trends and b) recent legislative changes on local authority costs, including i) kennelling and ii) enforcement services.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Department engages regularly with local authority representative groups to understand pressures on their animal welfare functions, including kennelling and enforcement.

Pigs: Animal Welfare

Irene Campbell: [129357]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help reduce the prevalence of tail docking on pigs.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Department has recently engaged with the Pig Veterinary Society and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to reduce the prevalence of pig tail docking by working with the industry and the veterinary profession. Defra is now carefully considering the appropriate next steps, including the possibility of developing further guidance.

Pigs: Slaughterhouses

Sarah Champion: [128710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the planned consultation on banning the use of high-concentration carbon dioxide gas stunning for pigs will include a proposed timetable for phasing out that method.

Dame Angela Eagle:
As set out in the Government’s animal welfare strategy, Defra will consult on banning carbon dioxide gas stunning of pigs and on possible timescales for phasing out this method. Further details will be set out later this year.

Plants: UK Internal Trade

Mr Gregory Campbell: [129454]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on how many occasions in the past six months have discussions taken place with the EU Commission on increasing the number of plant species that can be traded between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Dame Angela Eagle:
There have been three exchanges of emails with European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in the last six months, regarding UK submissions of additional information for

three prohibited high-risk plants: *Castanea sativa*, *Hamamelis mollis* and *Robinia pseudoacacia*. This allowed EFSA to publish scientific opinions for these species on 22 December 2025, 6 January 2026 and 22 April 2026 respectively.

There is usually a delay of a few weeks/months whilst the EU Commission drafts new legislation based on published EFSA opinions, but progress continues at pace. In the last six months the EU has lifted prohibitions, subject to conditions, on a further five species of Prunus (3 October 2025)

Only seven of the 45 High Risk Plant species that the UK has requested market access for, remain prohibited for export to the EU/Northern Ireland.

Plastics

Sir Oliver Dowden: [129467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the use of plastic.

Mary Creagh:
This Government has already taken a number of steps to help reduce the use of plastic. We have banned the supply of single-use vapes, effective from 1 June 2025. From this date onwards all vapes sold in the UK must be rechargeable and refillable. We have also legislated to ban the supply and sale of wet wipes containing plastic in England, marking a major step forward in tackling the plastic and microplastic pollution which harms our waterways.

This Government is also committed to moving to a circular economy for plastics, reducing our reliance on virgin materials and prioritising principles of reduction, reuse, and recycling, to keep resources within the economy, rather than increasing production of virgin materials and injecting additional resources.

We are finalising the Circular Economy Growth Plan and intend to publish it soon. The Plan will set out how Government will deliver a more circular and more prosperous economy.

Plastics: Recycling

Michael Wheeler: [129599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of excluding UK recyclate from the Single Use Plastics Directive on (a) the environment and (b) the plastics industry.

Mary Creagh:
We are monitoring ‘European preference’ and ‘Made in Europe’ clauses included in legislation and strategies. We are working across Government departments and with key industry stakeholders to understand potential impacts.

Plastics: Waste Disposal

Sir Oliver Dowden: [129468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress her Department has made in helping to reduce the amount of plastic waste.

Mary Creagh:
This Government is committed to moving to a circular economy for plastics – a future where resources are kept in use for longer and waste is designed out. This systemic change, with investment in green jobs and vital infrastructure, builds a path to economic growth, progress towards Net Zero, restoration of nature, and a more resilient economy.

We are finalising the Circular Economy Growth Plan and intend to publish it soon.

The Government has also introduced the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging scheme. The scheme works by charging fees to the businesses that produce and/or supply household packaging. From 2026 fees will be higher for materials that are hard to recycle, and lower for packaging that can be easily recycled. Illustrative fees, published in December 2025, estimate that 45% of plastic packaging will attract a 'red' rating and therefore incur higher fees.

The Government is launching a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in October 2027 that will cover PET plastic and metal drinks containers (like bottles and cans). The aim of DRS is to reduce littering, boost recycling rates and improve material quality for recycling.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [129469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to help reduce waste caused by single use plastics.

Mary Creagh:
This Government has already taken a number of steps to help reduce waste caused by single use plastics. We have banned the supply of single-use vapes, effective from 1 June 2025. From this date onwards all vapes sold in the UK must be rechargeable and refillable. We have also legislated to ban the supply and sale of wet wipes containing plastic in England, marking a major step forward in tackling the plastic and microplastic pollution which harms our waterways.

We will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/or materials to take a systematic approach, in line with circular economy principles, to reduce the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products and encourage reuse solutions.

Poultry: China

John Lamont: [124982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of trends in the levels of imported chicken products from China since July 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:
All agri-food products must comply with our sanitary and phytosanitary standards and wider import requirements in order to be placed on the UK market. While poultry imports from China to the UK are permitted they are subject to stricter, updated certification requirements as of December 2024, requiring approved premises.

Sewers and Water Supply: Housing

Richard Fuller: [128666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the water industry regulatory framework in providing flexibility to enable water and wastewater companies to respond to major new housing growth, including the proposed Tempsford new town.

Richard Fuller: [128667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with Ofwat on ensuring that future price review processes consider strategic developments including new towns such as Tempsford.

Emma Hardy:
Defra's Water Delivery Taskforce is working to bring together Government, regulators and water companies to ensure sufficient water and wastewater capacity is delivered to accommodate the government's growth ambitions, including for new homes.

Water companies have a statutory duty to provide a secure supply of water for customers and set out how they plan to continue to do so through statutory Water Resources Management Plans (WRMPs). Water companies consult on revised WRMPs every five years, which inform Ofwat's price review decisions.

The water companies must also maintain their WRMPs and are required to review the plans annually to take account of changes. This includes changes to demand forecasts as a result of housing growth that cannot be accommodated in existing WRMPs. This year, we strengthened and clarified this change process with water companies, issuing guidance to companies on how we will engage and assess any change needed to accommodate growth.

The WRMP process works closely alongside Ofwat's price review cost change process, which allows companies to access additional funding for investment to support the growth, including investment such as sewage treatment works: PR24-Cost-change-process-–-Demand-growth-investment-additional-guidance.pdf.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Vikki Slade: [129023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data her Department holds on the number of areas in the UK that have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest in each of the last five years.

Mary Creagh:
Notification of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) is a devolved matter and data for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are held by the respective administrations. Designation of SSSIs in England is a matter for Natural England.

SSSI designation is a two-stage process. Sites are first notified, at which point they become legally protected. Notifications are then confirmed, usually within nine months,

once any objections or representations have been considered.

For the purposes of this answer, “designated” is taken to mean confirmed SSSI notifications. On that basis, the number of SSSIs designated in England, by calendar year, is as follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF SSSIS DESIGNATED
2021	6
2022	1
2023	1
2024	0
2025	0

Confirmation often takes place in a year following notification, so notified and confirmed figures do not necessarily relate to the same sites.

Calum Miller: [129438]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Sites of Special Scientific Interest have been designated in England in each of the last five years.

Mary Creagh:
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation is a two-stage process. Sites are first notified, at which point they become legally protected. Notifications are then confirmed, usually within nine months, once any objections or representations have been considered.

For the purposes of this answer, “designated” is taken to mean confirmed SSSI notifications. On that basis, the number of SSSIs designated in England, by calendar year, is as follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF SSSIS DESIGNATED
2021	6
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2023	1
2024	0
2025	0

Confirmation often takes place in a year following notification, so notified and confirmed figures do not necessarily relate to the same sites.

Calum Miller: [129439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the capacity of Natural England to identify and designate new Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Mary Creagh:
Natural England (NE) receives an appropriate budget to carry out its duties and responsibilities in line with what is affordable and the priorities set out by the Secretary of State.

Restoring nature is one of our top priorities. Protected sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), are the best existing areas for nature, where species can thrive and spread into the wider countryside, and they form the foundation of the Government's commitment to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030.

NE is adapting its protected sites work programme. It will focus on prioritising actions to deliver the Environment Act interim target for SSSIs and aligning its work with the objectives of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2025.

Calum Miller: [129440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether Natural England has (a) paused and (b) delayed the designation of any Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Mary Creagh:
Natural England has a rolling programme to keep under review places that may merit and benefit from designation as SSSIs.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Access

Chris Hinchliff: [128943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 23 January 2026 to question 106695, what discussions she has had Natural

England on restricting access to Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including at Hoads Wood in 2023.

Mary Creagh:
The Environment Agency is continuing to temporarily restrict vehicular access to Hoads Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and, alongside Kent Police, is leading the criminal investigation into the illegal dumping of waste.

The primary legal framework for protecting SSSIs is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which places a duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance SSSI features and controls operations likely to cause damage. Landowners and occupiers must obtain consent from Natural England (NE) before carrying out listed activities, including vehicle use. NE has enforcement powers to prevent or stop harm, including issuing stop notices, making byelaws and taking action against those who intentionally or recklessly damage SSSI features.

Additional powers are available under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which allows authorities to make Traffic Regulation Orders to protect SSSIs, with offences for non-compliance. The Police can also prosecute off-road vehicle use (including over SSSI land) under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and may seize vehicles under the Police Reform Act 2002 where use causes, or is likely to cause, alarm, distress or annoyance.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Ashford

Chris Hinchliff: [128944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on which date was Natural England first notified of organised criminal activity in Hoads Wood Special Site of Scientific Interest.

Mary Creagh:
Natural England (NE) does not hold a record of a specific date on which it was first notified of organised criminal activity at Hoads Wood SSSI Site of Special Scientific Interest. NE visited the site in February 2020 with Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council. Kent Police were also present to advise on the risks following reports of illegal activity.

Slaughterhouses: Demonstrations

Samantha Niblett: [129321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will hold discussions with the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers on protests outside their members' premises.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Defra engages regularly with stakeholders across the food and farming sector, including representative bodies, on matters within the Department’s remit.

Issues relating to protests and public order, including protests taking place outside commercial premises, are matters for the police and fall within the responsibility of the Home Office. The policing of protests is an operational matter for local police forces, who are responsible for balancing the right to peaceful protest with the rights and safety of others.

Slurry Infrastructure Grant

Ben Maguire: [129619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she intends to launch the third round of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant Scheme.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Slurry Infrastructure Grant first opened in 2022 and has run for two rounds. The grant supports farmers to build 6-month slurry storage and to cover stores with impermeable covers to reduce ammonia emissions. The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund 2026 grant supports farmers, growers, foresters and contractors to buy equipment and technology that improves productivity, animal health and welfare, and slurry management.

Through the Environmental Improvement Plan, published last year, the Government has committed to work with stakeholders to reduce water pollution and ammonia emissions from farming through streamlined regulation and develop detailed proposals on the extension of environmental permitting for dairy and intensive beef farms for consultation. Improved slurry infrastructure, with appropriate capacity and emission reducing features like covers, is one of the mitigation measures that will be considered as we develop these regulatory proposals, as well as the potential for further financial support.

Ben Maguire: [129623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many applications (a) her department has received to the Slurry Infrastructure Grant Scheme Rounds 1 and 2; (b) have been approved to progress; (c) have been submitted, and; (d) have had grant funding agreements offered.

Dame Angela Eagle:
As of 24 April, the Rural Payments Agency has received:

2,087 applications received (a) to the Slurry Infrastructure Grant Scheme Rounds 1 and 2 – Stage 1

1,175 have been approved (b) to progress to Stage 2

441 applications submitted (c) to the 2 nd stage

Once these checks are passed the applicant is then invited to submit a Full Application – ‘Stage Three’.

259 Full Applications received to date of which 186 have had (d) grant funding agreements offered.

Ben Maguire: [129624]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what measures she is taking to support farmers with their applications to the Slurry Infrastructure Grant Scheme.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The Slurry Infrastructure Grant Scheme is supported through a range of measures provided by Defra and the Rural Payments Agency. These include cross-department working with Environment Agency (EA) colleagues to address any issues and proactively working with customers to enable the grant funding agreement to be offered.

Further contact is due to commence with all customers who have outstanding applications, to provide an update on progress and discuss any concerns they may have.

Squirrels: Pest Control

Mr Gregory Campbell: [129081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle the predominance of the grey squirrel population during this Parliament.

Mary Creagh:
The Grey Squirrel Policy Statement was published in January 2026. This policy statement sets out the actions we will take over the next five years to manage the impact of grey squirrels.

Actions include encouraging landowners to take greater action through financial incentives and advice through Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier. The Government is paying £60 per hectare to manage and reduce the impact of grey squirrels. We are backing our nation’s conservation volunteers and landowners, by leading communication on the impacts of grey squirrels and providing support for training in grey squirrel management. We are also working with UK Squirrel Accord to support research into immunocontraception.

Sustainable Farming Incentive

Mr Lee Dillon: [129611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact on small farms of the Sustainable Farming Incentive application window opening after the previous scheme has closed.

Dame Angela Eagle:
To date small farms have been less likely to be in SFI.

SFI26 will have two application windows, to ensure as many farmers as possible can benefit from a SFI agreement. Window 1 will open from June 2026 for small farms

with between 3 and 50 hectares and also farms without an existing Environmental Land Management agreement.

The Government is specifically targeting these two groups (before opening to applications from all farmers) because it wants to bring more of them into SFI. This will make a major contribution to Defra's EIP target to double the number of farms providing for farm wildlife by December 2030 (compared with 2025).

Window 2 will open from September 2026 for all farms.

Mr Lee Dillon: [129612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will undertake a review of the Sustainable Farming Incentive application system; and whether she will make it her policy to enable smaller farmers to apply for the next funding round before their current agreement ends.

Dame Angela Eagle:
As announced at the recent NFU Conference, a range of improvements will be introduced to make SFI26 a simpler, more streamlined offer and easier to navigate.

One change is the introduction of two application windows, to ensure as many farmers as possible can benefit from a SFI agreement.

Small farms with existing agreements will be able to apply in either Window 1 or Window 2.

Farms over 50 hectares with existing agreements will be able to apply in Window 2.

Sustainable Farming Incentive: Land Use

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter: [129408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans she has to put in place a mechanism that would allow common land to be entered into Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) agreements for 2026.

Dame Angela Eagle:
Defra recognises the important role that common land and its commoners play in delivering environmental outcomes across these important and iconic landscapes. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) is currently assessing how applications on common land can access Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier and is actively exploring both on and off system options, testing feasibility. Once this assessment is complete, the RPA will engage external stakeholders to discuss their planned approach, including any implications for the Sustainable Farming Incentive.

Trees: Conservation

Chris Hinchliff: [128945]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if a Special Representative for important trees will be appointed to champion them at a political level, as recommended in the Government-sponsored Tree Council report, published in 2025.

Mary Creagh:
The Defra-funded report led by the Tree Council and Forest Research provides a range of recommendations for improving the protection and stewardship of 'important' trees. The Government is carefully considering its recommendations, including their feasibility and potential impacts, balancing our approach with our existing priorities and statutory obligations. We will set out actions to protect important trees in the new Trees Action Plan which will be published this year.

Chris Hinchliff: [128946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the England Tree Action Plan will include a new legal protection and designation system for (a) important and (b) heritage trees.

Chris Hinchliff: [128947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the England Tree Action Plan will review and improve the scope and effectiveness of Tree Preservation Orders.

Mary Creagh:
The Government committed in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 to publish a new Trees Action Plan for England in 2026. The Trees Action Plan will set out how the Government will invest in tree planting and the forestry sector to achieve our 2030 interim tree canopy and woodland cover target, improve the resilience and condition of our trees and woodlands, and deliver multiple benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy.

Vegetables

Sarah Dyke: [129313]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the supply of British grown cauliflower and other brassicas in spring 2026.

Dame Angela Eagle:
The UK's food security is built on supply from diverse sources including strong domestic production and imports through stable trade routes.

The UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group monitors and assess UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade, and recent developments. This includes consideration of the adequacy of the supply of both domestically grown cauliflower and brassicas, and where necessary, imports.

Water Companies: Repairs and Maintenance

Barry Gardiner: [124051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of to Question 122633, on Water Companies: Repairs and Maintenance, whether

her Department will publish the initial cost information on ending operator self-monitoring that has been provided by the Environment Agency.

Emma Hardy:
The Government has committed to ending Operator Self Monitoring. The Environment Agency has provided early, high-level indicative cost estimates to support the Department's initial exploration of options for future monitoring arrangements. These figures were produced to give a broad sense of potential scale only. Further work is now underway to develop and refine the policy options and to produce more detailed and robust costings.

Water Delivery Taskforce: South East Water

Tom Tugendhat: [128078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many meetings of the Water Delivery Taskforce have been held to discuss South East Water's performance since 13 November 2025.

Emma Hardy:
Defra and the regulators have met regularly with South East Water since 13 November 2025 to discuss company performance. The Water Delivery Taskforce met with South East Water on 21 April 2026.

Water Treatment

Suella Braverman: [129143]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to review the regulatory framework governing effluent recycling to ensure independent scrutiny and auditing of any future plant, in line with international practice.

Emma Hardy:
The Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) brings together the three water regulators Ofwat, Environment Agency and Drinking Water Inspectorate. RAPID is enabling the right regulatory frameworks and provides a robust process to scrutinise strategic water resource options to ensure they are appropriate and deliverable.

For any water recycling proposal to proceed, water companies will need to show how they will meet planning and permitting requirements. This includes protection for the environment and public health.

Water Treatment: Hampshire

Suella Braverman: [129140]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the level of customer engagement undertaken by Southern Water and Portsmouth Water on the acceptability of effluent recycling, and whether she plans to require earlier and more robust consultation.

Emma Hardy:
Southern Water is due to submit its Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate for its scrutiny in May 2026. There will be further opportunity for representations to be made through any subsequent Examination in Public.

Water: Standards

Suella Braverman: [129141]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of low consumer confidence in the quality of tap water on public behaviour, including increased bottled water use.

Emma Hardy:
The quality of public drinking water in England is exceptionally high and among the best in the world with compliance rates of 99.97% over the last few years. According to the 2025 British Soft Drinks Association annual report, market data shows only a 3% year-on-year growth in volume of bottled waters sold for 2023-2024, as the most recent available data. This Government has also acted decisively on behalf of consumers, introducing a power in The Water (Special Measures) Act to enable the Consumer Council for Water, as the independent statutory consumer advocate for the water sector in England and Wales, to stand up Consumer Panels in every water company. These panels will help to rebuild trust in the water sector and support increased consumer confidence by creating a forum for further embedding customer views in the decision-making process.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

1 Carlton Gardens

Sir James Cleverly: [124734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 17 March 2026, to Question 99537, on Ministers: Official Residences, who holds the registered legal title of the Ministerial residence of 1 Carlton Gardens, according to information held by the Land Registry.

Seema Malhotra:
As at 23rd April 2026 the publicly available Land Registry records (https://www.gov.uk/search-property-information-land-registry) for the Ministerial Residence at 1 Carlton Gardens shows both a Freehold Title (NGL849040) and Leasehold Title (NGL943358). The Registered Owner of the Freehold Title is The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Right of His Crown, 1 St. James's Market, London SW1Y 4AH and the Registered Owner of the Leasehold is The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Estates Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH.

The Crown Estate administer 1 Carlton Gardens on behalf of His Majesty and have granted a lease to The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for which the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office are responsible.

British Nationals Abroad: Detainees

Greg Smith: [128804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what her Department's policy is on the acceptable duration of pre-trial detention for citizens of the United Kingdom who are detained overseas.

Mr Hamish Falconer:
Where a British national raises fair trial concerns, including undue delay, we formulate our response on a case-by-case basis. Where a British detainee gives their consent for us to do so, we will raise fair trial or other concerns with the local authorities where appropriate.

British Overseas Territories: Companies

Luke Taylor: [128936]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Overseas Territories introduce Public Registers of Beneficial Ownership.

Stephen Doughty:
I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on this issue during the most recent session of departmental oral questions on 21 April, and to my Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS1237) following the Joint Ministerial Council on 13 January.

British Overseas Territories: Money Laundering

Mr Toby Perkins: [129091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress she has made with relevant Overseas Territories on developing clear, time-bound action plans to come into line with UK requirements and international standards on money laundering and transparency.

Stephen Doughty:
I refer the Hon Member to the answers I gave on these issues at departmental oral questions on 21 April, and to my written ministerial statement updating the House on the outcome of discussions at the Joint Ministerial Council on 13 January (HCWS1237).

Christianity: Women

Helen Maguire: [129785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department is taking diplomatic or humanitarian steps support female Christian converts globally.

Helen Maguire: [129786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussion she has had with her Afghan counterparts regarding the displacement of Afghan Christian women.

Helen Maguire: [129787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of attacks on female Christian converts in Central Asia.

Chris Elmore:
The UK continues to champion Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, and we continue to recognise the issue of persecution of Christians globally on account of their faith, alongside the persecution of other groups. We also recognise that women and girls may face heightened and overlapping risks of persecution or violence where religious discrimination intersects with gender-based inequality, including in contexts where women's rights and freedoms are systematically restricted, such as Afghanistan.

Last July, the UK Special Envoy for FoRB, David Smith MP, publicly set out the Government's approach to FoRB, providing a framework for UK engagement. Within this framework, we identified Afghanistan as one of ten focus countries for work on the issue. As part of this strategy, the UK continues to highlight FoRB violations on the international stage, through our position at the UN, G7, and as an active member of the Article 18 Alliance.

Crimes against Humanity

Anneliese Dodds: [129562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what number of staff in the Conflict and Atrocity Prevention Department work on atrocity, prevention (a) as their primary role and (b) as part of their portfolio.

Anneliese Dodds: [129563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what budget is allocated to (a) the Conflict and Atrocity Prevention Department overall and (b) to work on atrocity anticipation, prevention and response not including conflict prevention work.

Seema Malhotra:
The Department's conflict and atrocity prevention funding is embedded across our diplomacy, development, humanitarian, human rights and multilateral activity. We will continue to prioritise funding where it has the greatest preventative impact, including in fragile and conflict-affected states, with UK spend in these countries increasing to over 70 per cent of all country and regional spending by 2028/29.

Anneliese Dodds: [129564]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure diplomatic posts are trained in atrocity prevention.

Seema Malhotra:
The Government ensures that diplomatic posts are equipped to identify and respond to risks of mass atrocities through a combination of policy guidance, training and expert support. This year, we have established a community of expertise on conflict and violence, which integrates policy guidance, peer-to-peer engagement and evidence-based practice into a platform accessible to all staff.

Through our partnership with the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, we have delivered foundational and bespoke atrocity prevention training to over 150 staff working in 35 countries.

Darfur: Humanitarian Aid

David Taylor: [128988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to maintain the flow of aid from Chad to Darfur.

Chris Elmore:
The UK has played a direct role in delivering aid supplies to Sudan via Chad. In March, in partnership with UNICEF, the UK airlifted 84,000kg of water and sanitation supplies to Sudan to support 300,000 people in Darfur. This critical aid is addressing severe shortages ahead of the rainy season. More broadly, I refer the Hon Member to the GOV.UK story published on 15 April setting out the UK's latest efforts to help tackle the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, available at the link below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-boosts-funding-to-local-responders-to-help-more-than-18-million-people-in-sudans-humanitarian-crisis.

Developing Countries: Debts

Callum Anderson: [129413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps the Government is taking to support developing countries facing sovereign debt crises.

Chris Elmore:
I refer the Hon Member to the answer provided on 1 April in response to Question 122705.

Diplomatic Service: Vetting

Seamus Logan: [128912]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many ambassadors are in post who were recommended to be denied vetting clearance by United Kingdom Security Vetting.

Seema Malhotra:
I refer the Hon Member to the answer provided on 22 April in response to Question 128094.

Equality: Women

Anneliese Dodds: [128788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking through the G7 and G20 processes to deliver improvements for women and girls.

Chris Elmore:
I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answer provided on 23 April to Question 128522.

Anneliese Dodds: [128789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when her Department intends to publish its Women and Girls' Framework.

Chris Elmore:
I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answer provided on 10 March 2026 to Question 117530.

EU Countries: Immigration Controls

Euan Stainbank: [129419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his EU counterparts on waiting times experienced by UK travellers under the EU Entry-Exit System.

Euan Stainbank: [129420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what action the Government is taking to minimise prospective disruption for British citizens travelling to Europe this summer.

Stephen Doughty:
The EU Entry/Exit System (EES) is an EU scheme introduced to register travellers from third countries each time they enter or leave the Schengen area. While the UK is supportive of the aims of EES to improve border security, we want to see EES

implemented in a way that minimises negative impacts on border fluidity. The Government is actively engaging EU and Member State counterparts on EES and has worked with industry partners to encourage clear communications to travellers. We continue to monitor implementation closely and keep Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Travel Advice updated.

I have raised issues around EES implementation with multiple ministerial counterparts over recent months, and we continue to keep the situation in all Schengen member states under close review, raising issues as appropriate.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Training

Sir John Hayes: [129074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will list the training programmes used by civil servants in her Department since 2020.

Seema Malhotra:
A complete list of training programmes used by civil servants in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office since 2020 is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Vetting

Mike Wood: [128214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many people have been appointed to posts in her Department requiring developed vetting (DV) clearance despite DV clearance not being awarded since 5 July 2024.

Seema Malhotra:
Staff are required to have the security clearance that is necessary for the post in question.

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128899]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans her Department has to help ensure the safety of UK citizens on board the Global Sumud Flotilla.

Mr Hamish Falconer:
The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office advises against all travel to Gaza. Palestine travel advice - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Delivering aid on the scale needed can only be done properly and safely through the well-established land routes. We continue to urge Israel to allow sufficient aid into Gaza in line with minimum targets set out in the 20 point plan.

Humanitarian Aid

Anneliese Dodds: [128787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that her Department's humanitarian programmes are gender- and age- sensitive and are delivering effectively for women and girls of all ages.

Chris Elmore:
We are strengthening our prioritisation of women and girls across the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) work and have committed that at least 90 per cent of FCDO bilateral Official Development Assistance programmes will contribute to gender equality by 2030, benefiting women and girls of all ages. In humanitarian settings, the UK backs women-led organisations to help reach those most at risk, and we continue to demand that all UK funded programmes meet robust safeguarding standards.

Iain Guille

Greg Smith: [128803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to question UIN 122285, on which dates the two conversations between Minister Doughty and his Turkish counterpart took place; and on which date their next conversation about the protection of Iain Guille's rights under the law is due to take place.

Stephen Doughty:
I discussed Iain Guille's detention and welfare with my Turkish counterpart on 17 December 2025 and 3 February 2026, and I am continuing to follow the case closely. Consular officials are also monitoring Mr Guille's situation and providing support to his family as appropriate.

Immigration: Health

Chris Philp: [129286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, (a) what steps the Government is taking to reform the interpretation of Article 3 of the ECHR in immigration medical cases with the Council of Europe and (b) what timeline she expects for reform.

Stephen Doughty:
I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer provided on 22 April to Question 127688.

Israel: Lebanon

Richard Burgon: [129190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of whether F-35s were used in the Israeli strikes on Lebanon conducted on 8 April.

Richard Burgon: [129481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts on the compliance of Israeli strikes on Lebanon on 8 April 2026 with the laws of war.

Mr Hamish Falconer:
The UK has, along with 18 other countries, condemned Israel's strikes on Lebanon, as well as the attacks of Hizballah against Israel. I have discussed the situation in Lebanon directly with my Israeli and other international counterparts, including to call for civilians and civilian infrastructure to be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law. As part of longstanding convention, we do not comment on military operational details.

Jonathan Powell

Ben Obese-Jecty: [129315]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when Jonathan Powell was appointed as the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for negotiations between the UK and Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the BIOT; and what security clearance he had upon that appointment.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [129316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Jonathan Powell was interviewed for the role of the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for negotiations between the UK and Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [129318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2404 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Public Appointments, on what date did her predecessor a) appoint Jonathan Powell, b) did he commence the role and c) was his appointment publicly announced.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [129319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2404 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Public Appointments, on what dates her predecessor met with Jonathan Powell prior to appointing him as the Prime Minister's Envoy for the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)/Chagos Archipelago Sovereignty Negotiation with Mauritius.

Stephen Doughty:
I refer the Hon Member to the answers provided on 11, 18 and 19 March in response to Questions 117954, 118781 and 119899.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [129513]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the news story entitled Jonathan Powell appointed as Special Envoy for BIOT negotiations, published on 6 September 2024, whether the phrase He will begin his role immediately means that Jonathan Powell's role as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for negotiations between the UK and Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the BIOT officially started on 6 September 2024.

Stephen Doughty:
I refer the Hon Member to the answer provided on 18 March in response to Question 118787.

Lord Mandelson

Mike Wood: [128725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Lord Mandelson's STRAP clearance was a separate process to his Developed Vetting clearance; and whether it was subject to a separate (a) FCDO and (b) UKSV (i) review and (ii) recommendation.

Seema Malhotra:
I refer the Hon Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister on 21 April, and his answers to the questions raised in response, including his commitment that the Government would continue to comply with the instructions of Parliament in the Humble Address of 4 February.

Mike Wood: [128728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Lord Mandelson received training on his STRAP clearance; and on what date Lord Mandelson received that clearance.

Seema Malhotra:
I refer the Hon Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister on 21 April, and his answers to the questions raised in response, including his commitment that the Government would continue to comply with the instructions of Parliament in the Humble Address of 4 February.

Calum Miller: [129031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Peter Mandelson had access to Top Secret and STRAP classified material between 20 December 2024 and 29 January 2025.

Seema Malhotra:
I refer the Hon Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister on 21 April, and his answers to the questions raised in response, including his commitment that the Government would continue to comply with the instructions of Parliament in the Humble Address of 4 February.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [129037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date did Lord Mandelson receive STRAP level access.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [129039]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date did Lord Mandelson (a) submit his application for STRAP clearance and (b) receive that clearance.

Seema Malhotra:
I refer the Hon Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister on 21 April, and his answers to the questions raised in response, including his commitment that the Government would continue to comply with the instructions of Parliament in the Humble Address of 4 February.

Martin Wrigley: [129322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the ministerial statement made during the House of Lords debate on Security Vetting on 20 April 2026, whether any conditions or restrictions were placed on Lord Mandelson's activities as a result of security vetting arrangements, including whether any official accompanied him during meetings in an official capacity.

Martin Wrigley: [129348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Peter Mandelson required a (a) chaperone and (b) accomplice as condition for his security vetting clearance.

Martin Wrigley: [129376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) her Department and (b) any intelligence body holds written guidance, instructions, emails and briefings relating to supervision, accompaniment and activity restrictions concerning Lord Mandelson following his vetting outcome.

Seema Malhotra:
I refer the Hon Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister on 21 April, and his answers to the questions raised in response, including his commitment that the Government would continue to comply with the instructions of Parliament in the Humble Address of 4 February.

Marwan Barghouti

Mr Clive Betts: [128654]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made representations to representatives of the Government of Israel on the treatment of Marwan Barghouti.

Mr Hamish Falconer:
The UK is deeply concerned by reports of mistreatment of detainees by Israeli forces and raises this issue with the Israeli government. The UK has been consistently clear that all detainees must be treated with dignity and in full accordance with international law, and that such allegations must be thoroughly investigated. The UK continues to call on the Government of Israel to grant the International Committee of the Red Cross immediate and unrestricted access to all detention facilities.

Minerals: Supply Chains

Adam Jogee: [128469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps her Department has taken, alongside her SADC counterparts, to help secure supply chains of critical minerals.

Stephen Doughty:
The UK works closely with allies to strengthen critical minerals cooperation bilaterally and through fora such as the G7, G20 and related taskforces. This includes strong, mutually beneficial critical minerals partnerships across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) focused on improving resilience, supporting diversified supply chains and promoting the global transition to clean energy. The UK also supports the World Bank's global Resident and Inclusive Supply-Chain Enhancement partnership, providing knowledge, technical assistance and finance facilitation across the SADC region. We are also the largest contributor to the African Development Bank.

NATO

Adam Jogee: [128468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking, alongside her European counterparts, to help strengthen the NATO alliance.

Stephen Doughty:
I refer the Hon Member to the answer given on 21 April in response to Question 908775.

Religious Freedom

Jess Brown-Fuller: [128983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she plans to include reference to freedom of religion or belief, including the experiences of women who convert to minority religions, in future Human Rights and Democracy reports.

Chris Elmore:
I refer the Hon Member to the answers provided on 23 April to Questions 128246-47.

Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment

Andy Slaughter: [129453]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to answer given to Question UIN 97116 on 5 December 2025, what discussions her officials have had with their Saudi counterparts regarding (a) the execution of another individual, Ali al-Subaiti, for offences allegedly committed while he was a minor and (b) other juvenile defendants currently on death row at imminent risk of execution.

Mr Hamish Falconer:
I refer the Hon Member to the answer provided on 11 December 2025 in response to Question 97116. The UK continues to oppose the use of capital punishment in all circumstances.

Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

Anneliese Dodds: [128790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what humanitarian support is being provided by her Department to Sudanese refugees currently based outside of Sudan.

Chris Elmore:
I refer the Rt Hon Member to the statement provided to the House by the Foreign Secretary on 5 February after her visit to the Sudan-Chad border. Last May, the UK announced £36 million of dedicated funding to support Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad, helping to ease pressure on host communities and deliver food, health, water and protection assistance through trusted partners.

UK Relations with EU

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [129311]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress has been made on negotiations for a Framework Participation Agreement with the EU.

Stephen Doughty:
We do not give a running commentary on the scope of discussions with the EU, or their progress, but we have made clear that the UK will continue to engage the EU where cooperation aligns with our shared interests, including in relation to security.

USA: State Visits

Calum Miller: [129051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what is the estimated number of staff hours her Department has expended planning for the state visit to the US in April 2026.

Calum Miller: [129052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what is the estimated cost of her Department's planning for the state visit to the US in April 2026.

Calum Miller: [129053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what is the estimated number of staff hours his Department has expended planning for the state visit to the US in April 2026.

Stephen Doughty:
This historic State Visit will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States and will reaffirm the vital and enduring UK-US relationship that is central to our shared prosperity, security and history.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office does not hold a central record of the requested data. Planning for State Visits is undertaken as part of staff's normal duties and is delivered largely through existing departmental resources. The information could therefore only be collated and verified for the purposes of answering this question at disproportionate cost.

Xinjiang: Human Rights

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [128635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking in response to the House of Commons motion of 22 April 2021 entitled Human Rights: Xinjiang.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [128636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) adequacy of UK sanctions in response to ongoing human rights violations in the Uyghur Region since 22 April 2021.

Seema Malhotra:
This Government stands firm on human rights, including in Xinjiang, where China continues to persecute and arbitrarily detain Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities. We continue to raise our concerns at the highest levels: the Prime Minister raised human rights in his meeting with President Xi Jinping in January.

We also continue to coordinate efforts with our international partners to hold China to account for human rights violations, for example by joining a statement led by Australia on Xinjiang and Tibet at the UN General Assembly last October.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards

James McMurdock: [128571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of implementing the Model Emergency Department guidance on patient outcomes.

James McMurdock: [128572]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure consistency in urgent care provision.

James McMurdock: [128573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential challenges for NHS trusts in implementing the Model Emergency Department guidance.

Karin Smyth:
The Model Emergency Department guidance, published in February 2026, sets out a consistent national framework describing the core principles and pathways of high-performing emergency departments. This is supported by guidance on extended emergency medicine ambulatory care services and the Model Acute Pathway, which sets out standards for the first 72 hours in hospital.

The Department expects the guidance to support improved patient outcomes by enabling better patient flow, reducing waiting times and overcrowding, and supporting earlier senior decision-making, which are all associated with safer and more timely care.

The guidance provides a shared national model to support greater consistency in urgent and emergency care provision, including clearer clinical pathways and more consistent approaches to ambulatory and acute care, while allowing flexibility for local health systems to tailor delivery to local need.

NHS England is supporting implementation through national guidance, including companion operating principles, and by asking providers to develop improvement plans aligned to the Model Emergency Department, including demand and capacity modelling. Support is also targeted towards the most challenged organisations through oversight arrangements, improvement teams, and established improvement programmes.

Addison's Disease: Health Services

Vikki Slade: [129018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people with Addison's disease, in the context of the discontinuation of the manufacture of hydrocortisone sodium phosphate.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
[Holding answer 28 April 2026]: I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Birmingham Northfield on 21 April 2026 to Question 127384.

ADHD

Adam Dance: [128608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve data on the (a) severity of, (b) functional impact of and (c) outcomes among those diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
NHS England does not currently collect data on the severity and functional impact of and outcomes for people diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

NHS England first published management information on ADHD waits nationally in May 2025 as part of the ADHD data improvement plan. Additionally, technical guidance has been released to integrated care boards (ICBs) to enhance the recording of ADHD data, aiming to improve the quality of ADHD waits data and enable more localised reporting. We are currently refreshing the ADHD data improvement plan and remain committed to publishing data at ICB level, which is currently planned for the May 2026 publication.

NHS England has also captured examples from ICBs who are trialling innovative ways of delivering ADHD services and is using this information to support systems to tackle ADHD waiting lists and provide support to address people's needs.

Through the Medium-term planning framework, published 24 October, NHS England has set clear expectations for local ICBs and trusts to improve access, experience, and outcomes for ADHD services over the next three years, focusing on improving quality and productivity.

ADHD: Bromsgrove

Bradley Thomas: [128125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) improve ADHD diagnosis timeframes, (b) reduce the waiting list for ADHD medication and (c) improve support for patients and their families whilst undergoing the diagnostic process in Bromsgrove and the Villages.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including provision of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) services, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB is committed to wait times for ADHD assessment of less than 18 weeks, however, there are known waits for children and

young people to access ADHD diagnostic assessment services due to an increase in demand. There are currently 1,600 children and young people waiting for an assessment via an NHS provider, with an average wait time of 60 weeks. For adults, ADHD assessments are conducted by Right to Choose providers only and these services typically have a waiting time below the 18-week standard.

All patients, including children and young people, can access the Right to Choose pathway for ADHD assessments through their general practice, allowing them to select an alternative provider if the waiting time for NHS services exceeds 18 weeks at the point of referral. The ICB has put in place a number of contracts under Right to Choose to improve choice for patients and is working with its NHS commissioned services to reduce long waits. It has also commissioned additional capacity for those children waiting over 104 weeks in the NHS service in 2025/26 and will continue this in 2026/27.

For children, medication is provided by the NHS commissioned service, and the waiting time is six to eight weeks for first medication reviews, and four to six months to initiate medication following diagnosis. It should be noted that NICE guidelines expect non-pharmaceutical interventions to be considered before medication for all children. The ICB is investing in the local NHS commissioned service to increase medication treatment capacity. For adults, the only pathway available for ADHD assessments is Right to Choose. The ICB advises that there is no waiting list for these patients as they will automatically be initiated and titrated for medication, where that is identified as an appropriate treatment.

Furthermore, the ICB is at the end of a tendering process for a Neurodivergence Support Service for zero to 25 year olds and their families, and this should go live from September 2026. The ICB is considering commissioning a service for adults age 25 years old and over from April 2027.

More broadly, NHS England issued advice to systems on ADHD service delivery and prioritisation on 7 October 2025. This advice includes guidance on managing service provisions, reviewing waiting lists, and providing patient support. The advice can be found at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/adhd-service-delivery-and-prioritisation-advice-to-systems/

Through the NHS Medium-Term Planning Framework, published 24 October 2025, NHS England has set clear expectations for local ICBs and trusts to improve access, experience, and outcomes for ADHD services over the next three years, focusing on improving quality and productivity. The framework was explicit that ICBs and providers are expected to optimise existing resources to reduce long waits for ADHD assessments and improve the quality of assessments by implementing existing and new guidance, as published.

ADHD: Drugs

Mr Will Forster: [129058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has reviewed the adequacy of support that General Practitioners receive when helping people access ADHD Medication.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) guideline does not set out a timeframe within which medication should be provided, but it does explain the key considerations for clinicians when deciding whether to offer medication.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards in England to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including providing access to ADHD support services including medication, in line with relevant NICE guidelines.

The General Medical Council (GMC) has issued guidance on prescribing and managing medicines, which helps general practices (GPs) decide whether to accept shared care responsibilities. In deciding whether to enter into a shared care agreement, a GP will need to consider a number of factors such as whether the proposed activity is within their sphere of competence, and therefore safe and suitable for their patient's needs. This includes the GP being satisfied that any prescriptions or referrals for treatment are clinically appropriate.

All United Kingdom registered doctors are expected to meet the professional standards set out in the GMC's Good Medical Practice. In 2012, the GMC introduced revalidation which supports doctors in regularly reflecting on how they can develop or improve their practice, gives patients confidence doctors are up to date with their practice, and promotes improved quality of care by driving improvements in clinical governance.

If a shared care arrangement cannot be put in place after the treatment has been initiated, the responsibility for continued prescribing falls upon the specialist clinician, and this applies to both NHS and private medical care.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, announced on 4 December 2025 the launch of an Independent Review into Prevalence and Support for Mental Health Conditions, ADHD and Autism. This independent review will inform our approach to enabling people with ADHD and autistic people to have the right support in place to enable them to live well in their communities.

The final report, due in the summer, will make recommendations on how the Government, the health system, and wider public services can respond to increasing demand for support more fairly and effectively so that people receive the right support, at the right time, in the right place.

ADHD: Mental Health Services

Mr Will Forster: [129059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has reviewed the success of shared care agreements with private providers when it comes to ADHD patient cases.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Shared care within the National Health Service refers to a voluntary arrangement whereby a specialist may transfer responsibility for aspects of a patient's care, such as prescription of medication, to the patient's general practitioner (GP). Decisions regarding shared care agreements are made locally, and the General Medical Council has made it clear that GPs are not contractually obliged to enter shared care agreements and may decline requests on clinical or capacity grounds.

No specific review has been made of the success of shared care agreements with private providers for patients with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products

Kerry McCarthy: [127427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of regenerative medicine techniques on surgical recovery.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
[Holding answer 23 April 2026]: Regenerative techniques, such as cell therapies, growth factors, and bioengineered scaffolds, can accelerate wound healing, which is particularly valuable in complex or high-risk surgeries. NHS England maintains an overview of the advanced therapy medicinal products in development and assesses the potential National Health Service impact and the requirements for individual treatments as part of its due diligence, ensuring the NHS is ready to deliver innovative new treatments that secure a positive Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency licensing decision and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommendation.

Animal Experiments

Ben Obese-Jecty: [128382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress he has made in replacing adventitious agent testing in animals.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 April 2026 to Question 128366.

Aphasia: Diagnosis

Jim Shannon: [128707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to issue guidance to specialised neurology centres on the diagnosis of Primary Progressive Aphasia.

Stephen Kinnock:
There are no current specific plans to issue guidance to specialised neurology centres on the diagnosis of Primary Progressive Aphasia.

The provision of dementia health care services is the responsibility of local integrated care boards (ICBs). NHS England would expect ICBs to commission services based on local population needs, taking account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

A timely diagnosis is vital to ensuring that a person with dementia can access the advice, information, care, and support they need. We remain committed to recovering the dementia diagnosis rate to the national ambition of 66.7%. This ambition includes ensuring provision of a validated diagnosis of dementia subtype.

We will deliver the first ever Modern Service Framework for Frailty and Dementia to deliver rapid and significant improvements in quality of care and productivity. This will be informed by phase one of the independent commission into adult social care, expected this year.

As we develop this, we will consider what interventions should be supported to improve dementia care and diagnosis.

We are committed to publishing an interim product in September this year to feed into National Health Service and local government planning cycles, and will aim to publish the full modern service framework by the end of this calendar year as recommended by Baroness Casey.

Autism: Children

Lee Anderson: [125293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure children with autism receive adequate support in Ashfield constituency.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government is committed to supporting people with neurodevelopmental conditions, including autistic people of all ages. Autistic children and people should have the right support in place, tailored to their individual needs, to live well in their communities. The Government's 10-Year Health Plan will make the National Health Service fit for the future, and reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system focus on improving early intervention and support.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population,

including providing access to appropriate mental health support and services, as well as access to autism assessments and support, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

Through the Medium-Term Planning Framework, published 24 October, NHS England has set clear expectations for local ICBs and trusts to improve access, experience, and outcomes for autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder services over the next three years, focusing on improving quality and productivity. There are also clear expectations that ICBs and providers fulfil their statutory SEND duties and support the Government's SEND reform plans.

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB is working with system partners to review children and young people's autism services and pathways to improve access to a system-wide, stepped support offer that aligns with current and emerging guidance.

The service aims to launch a new support and assessment model from April 2027. However, the autism support pathway redesign is part of a broader spectrum of work and transformation, owned by the health, care, and education system across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and is a key priority in delivery plans for both city and county SEND programmes.

Autism: Diagnosis

Lee Anderson: [125291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce assessment times for autism diagnoses.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

The Government has recognised that, nationally, demand for assessments for autism has grown significantly in recent years and that people are experiencing severe delays accessing such assessments. The Government's 10-Year Health Plan will make the National Health Service fit for the future, and reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities system focus on improving early intervention and support.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including providing access to appropriate mental health support and services, as well as access to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism assessments, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

Through the Medium-term planning framework, published 24 October, NHS England has set clear expectations for local ICBs and trusts to improve access, experience, and outcomes for autism and ADHD services over the next three years, focusing on improving quality and productivity.

In April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance for autism assessment services, which can be found at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/publication/autism-diagnosis-and-operational-guidance

This guidance intends to help the NHS improve autism assessment services and the experience for those referred to a service. The guidance also sets out what support should be available before an assessment and what support should follow a recent diagnosis of autism, based on the available evidence.

Since publication, NHS England has been supporting systems and services to identify where there are challenges for implementation and how they might overcome these.

In December, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, launched an independent review into the prevalence and support for mental health conditions, ADHD, and autism. This review will inform a new approach to mental health that reduces waiting times, improves the quality of care, and promotes prevention and early intervention.

The review's interim report, published at the end of March, sets out the evidence reviewed so far on prevalence, describes the impact of rising demand for diagnosis and support, identifies where the evidence is uncertain, and outlines the key questions for the next phase. The final report, due in the summer, will make recommendations on how the Government, the health system, and wider public services can respond to increasing demand for support more fairly and effectively so that people receive the right support, at the right time, in the right place.

Jim Shannon: **[128662]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients are currently on waiting lists for specialist assessment for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

NHS England publishes quarterly Autism Waiting Time Statistics, which is available at the following link:

https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/autism-statistics

In December 2025, there were an estimated 254,108 people with an open referral for suspected autism in England. These are statistics in development and do not yet represent a complete picture of waiting times for autism assessments in England. Work to determine which provider organisations should be submitting data for autistic people is ongoing.

The Government has recognised that, nationally, demand for assessments for autism has grown significantly in recent years and that people are experiencing severe delays for accessing such assessments. The Government's 10-Year Health Plan will make the National Health Service fit for the future, and reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities focus will improve early intervention and support.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including providing access to autism assessments, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

The Medium-Term Planning Framework, published 24 October, was explicit that ICBs and providers are expected to optimise existing resources to reduce long waits for autism assessments and improve the quality of assessments by implementing existing and new guidance, as published. In April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance for autism assessment services, which is available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/autism-diagnosis-and-operational-guidance/

This guidance intends to help the NHS improve their autism assessment services and improve the experience for those referred to a service. More broadly, in December 2025, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, launched the independent review into the prevalence and support for mental health conditions, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and autism.

The review's interim report, published at the end of March, sets out the evidence reviewed so far on prevalence, describes the impact of rising demand for diagnosis and support, identifies where the evidence is uncertain, and outlines the key questions for the next phase. It does not offer final conclusions or recommendations.

The final report, due in the summer, will make recommendations on how the Government, the health system, and wider public services can respond to increasing demand for support more fairly and effectively so that people receive the right support, at the right time, in the right place.

Autism: Health Education

Lee Anderson: **[125292]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of the signs of autism in adults.

Lee Anderson: **[125294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department have taken to help support research into the causes of autism.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government is committed to supporting people with neurodevelopmental conditions, including autistic people, and we are taking action to increase awareness and understanding of autism across the health and social care sector, education, and employment.

The Health and Care Act 2022 requires that, from 1 July 2022, health and care providers registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) must ensure their staff receive specific training on autism appropriate to their role. This will ensure that health and care staff have the right knowledge and skills to provide safe and appropriate care for autistic people. As part of this, significant progress has been made to roll out the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism which has been designed and is delivered alongside people with lived

experience. Over three million people have now completed the e-learning component of the training and the statutory Code of Practice for this training has been published.

NHS England has also taken action to increase understanding of autism within mental health services specifically by supporting the transition of the National Autism Trainer Programme in mental health services to become embedded 'business as usual' training. 5,000 trainers have been trained who will be cascading the training to teams across mental health services, residential special schools and colleges, and youth justice settings. NHS England also commissioned the Royal College of Psychiatrists to deliver the National Autism Training Programme for Psychiatrists, with over 300 psychiatrists trained in the past three years.

Work is also underway to raise awareness of autism in education settings. The Schools White Paper, Every child achieving and thriving, and consultation on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reforms published on 23 February outline plans to increase education staff understanding of SEND, including autism, through improved training and better access to experts, building on the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools programme. The Every child achieving and thriving White Paper is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-achieving-and-thriving

The Government is also committed to raising awareness of all forms of neurodiversity, including autism, in the workplace and the Department for Work and Pensions launched an independent panel of academics with expertise and experiences of neurodiversity in January 2025 to advise on boosting neurodiversity awareness and inclusion at work.

Government responsibility for delivering research into autism is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation, which includes the Medical Research Council (MRC).

The MRC generally focusses on early biomedical research, including cellular and animal models, while the NIHR funds translational and applied research, where treatments and interventions are tested in real world populations and health and care settings. An example of NIHR investment in autism research is the £2.8 million SAFE trial, which aims to develop interventions to better support and improve the wellbeing of families of autistic children. As well as funding research itself, the Department of Health and Social Care invests significantly in research expertise and capacity, specialist facilities, support services, and collaborations to support and deliver research in England, known as NIHR infrastructure. This includes the NIHR Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre, which has supported research into the brain signalling of individuals with autism to help develop a range of targeted medicine choices.

The NIHR continues to welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and care, including autism.

Autism: Health Services

Hannah Spencer: [129057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what metrics will be used to assess whether the next national Autism Strategy improves outcomes for autistic people across a) education b) health and c) employment.

Hannah Spencer: [129060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how responsibility for delivering the next national Autism Strategy will be coordinated across the Department for a) Education, b) Health and Social Care) Work and Pensions d) other Government Departments.

Hannah Spencer: [129061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the development of the next national Autism Strategy is co-produced with autistic people and their families.

Hannah Spencer: [129064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeline is for publishing a new national Autism Strategy.

Hannah Spencer: [129065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the development of the next national Autism Strategy is aligned with (a) the Department for Education's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms, (b) the Department for Work and Pensions' Young People and Work Review, and (c) the Department of Health and Social Care's independent review into the prevalence and diagnosis of mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

The Autism Act 2009 places a duty on my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to consult on, publish, and keep under review a national strategy for meeting the needs of autistic adults in England. My Rt Hon. Friend may choose to revise the strategy, and if so, must publish it as revised.

We are committed to publishing a new cross-Government autism strategy. The current strategy will remain in effect until a revised strategy is published. We are carefully considering our approach to developing a new autism strategy, including our plans to work with other Government departments and engage with stakeholders, including autistic people and their families, and will set out a position in due course.

We recognise that a large amount of evidence was gathered by the House of Lords Autism Act 2009 Inquiry Committee and we will consider this evidence, along with evidence from other government and independent reviews, papers, and reports. We recognise that meaningful engagement takes time, so a balance will need to be struck on the extent of the further engagement required.

Blood Agar

Kit Malthouse: **[R]** [127531]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on where licenced donor animal blood is sourced from to develop animal blood-enriched agar for use across the NHS; and if he will make a statement about the importance of sustainable national supply of this material

Kit Malthouse: **[R]** [127532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the level of resilience of UK donor animal blood supply for diagnostic use across the NHS and the need for continuous supply.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

The Department recognises that animal blood-enriched agar is a critical component in microbiological diagnostics, and we recognise the importance of a sustainable and secure supply of such materials.

There are a number of suppliers on NHS Supply Chain's current framework which offer donor animal blood supply for diagnostic use which support a level of resilience across England. To date there has been no issues with supply.

Where challenges in the supply of key products arise, these would be escalated to the Department's National Supply Disruption Response, which works collaboratively with suppliers, manufacturers, and system partners to understand the nature of the disruption and to support appropriate mitigations.

The Department does not routinely centrally collect detailed information on the source of the licensed donor animal blood used in the manufacture of blood-enriched agar.

Botulinum Toxin: Animal Experiments

Ben Obese-Jecty: [128366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress has he made in replacing the use of animals in botulinum toxin batch potency testing.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [128368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress he has made on applying only validated alternative methods in the pharmacopoeial potency testing of botulinum toxin.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [128378]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress he has made on defining and applying guidance that permits first in human clinical trial submission for biological therapies where no pharmacologically relevant preclinical animal model exists based only on non-animal data.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [128383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress his Department has made in applying only validated alternative methods for pharmacopoeial adventitious agent testing for human medicinal products licensed in the UK.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

In line with the Government's strategy to replace animals in science, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) supports the use of non-animal approaches where they are fit for purpose and accepts that, where a biological product is not pharmacologically active in animals and no relevant animal model exists, studies in animals, including with surrogate molecules, should not be undertaken and first-in-human applications can be supported using non-animal data, such as in vitro methods and computer modelling, to inform expected human exposure and safety. Further information is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/replacing-animals-in-science-strategy/replacing-animals-in-science-a-strategy-to-support-the-development-validation-and-uptake-of-alternative-methods

More broadly, alternative methods used to characterise safety must be demonstrated as fit for their intended purpose, and MHRA guidance, published in March 2026, sets out its current approach to medicines using non-animal methods, including how such approaches can support regulatory submissions and the adoption of validated alternatives as they become available. For potency testing and for adventitious agent testing, separate information for manufacturers on controls for batch release is on the MHRA website explaining how adoption of non-animal methods for these purposes is supported. Further information is available at the following two links:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mhra-approach-to-medicines-using-non-animal-methods

https://nibsc.org/about_us/our_use_of_animals.aspx

Bowel Cancer: Medical Treatments

Mohammad Yasin: [129223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the clinical and cost effectiveness of first-line use of encorafenib in combination with cetuximab and chemotherapy for patients with BRAF V600E-mutant metastatic colorectal cancer; and whether he has set a timetable for consideration by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence of this treatment approach for routine NHS use.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The BREAKWATER study is investigating encorafenib, a BRAF inhibitor, in combination with cetuximab and fluorouracil-based chemotherapy for the potential treatment of colorectal cancer. This regimen does not currently have a United Kingdom marketing authorisation for use in the treatment of previously untreated BRAF V600E mutation positive metastatic colorectal cancer.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has prioritised an appraisal of encorafenib for this indication in anticipation of it being granted a UK marketing authorisation and will schedule the appraisal so that guidance can be published as close as possible to the expected licensing date.

Bowel Cancer: Research

Lee Anderson: [125459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to support research into (a) causes and (b) treatment of bowel cancer.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Government responsibility for delivering cancer research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation, which includes the Medical Research Council (MRC).

The MRC generally focusses on early biomedical research, including cellular and animal models, while the NIHR funds translational and applied research, where treatments and interventions are tested in real world populations and health and care settings.

The Department of Health and Social Care recognises the crucial need for research into all forms of cancer, including bowel cancer. We are supporting research into bowel cancer across a range of areas.

This includes, for example, over £2.2 million of NIHR investment in the CONSCOP2 study, a randomised controlled trial designed to investigate a new approach to screening for right sided bowel cancer.

As well as funding research itself, the Department of Health and Social Care invests significantly in centres of excellence and collaborations, services, and facilities to support health and care research. Collectively these form the NIHR infrastructure.

The NIHR infrastructure works with patients, clinicians, academics, and health services to support research into the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of bowel cancer. This includes the development of novel diagnostics, biomarkers, and therapeutic approaches as well as ensuring that effective bowel cancer innovations, once proven, are implemented nationally.

The NIHR continues to welcome high quality applications for research into any aspect of human health and care, including bowel cancer. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to the public and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

In addition, the National Cancer Plan has patients at its heart and covers the entirety of the cancer pathway, from referral and diagnosis to treatment and ongoing care, as well as prevention, and research and innovation. It seeks to improve every aspect of cancer care to better the experience and outcomes for people with cancer. This plan prepares the National Health Service to seize scientific breakthroughs, so patients benefit from the full power of modern innovation, by trialing new technologies such as the COLOFIT algorithm for bowel cancer.

Breast Cancer: Drugs

Jess Brown-Fuller: **[128978]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of NICE's severity modifier on access to drugs for secondary breast cancer patients.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given on 3 March 2026 to Question 114336.

Cancer: Health Services

Jeff Smith: **[129158]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on the Cancer Plan commitment to define and count recurrent cancers, starting with metastatic breast cancer in 2026.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The National Disease Registration Service (NDRS) in NHS England collects, curates, quality assures, and analyses data about people with cancer across the whole of England.

The NDRS data improvement team is working with National Health Service trusts to provide support and guidance to improve their reporting of non-primary cancers, focused on the specific recurrence and progression data fields included in the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset. This includes updates on trust submitted recurrence data in our routine ‘diagnoses by provider’ dashboard, available on our NHS facing, secure CancerStats2 site.

The Government has set out in the National Cancer Plan for England an ambition to define and count recurrent cancers, starting with metastatic breast cancer from 2026. Existing data improvement activity within NDRS provides a foundation to support progress towards this ambition.

Helen Maguire: [129770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on implementing the National Cancer Plan.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The National Cancer Plan was published in February 2026. The Department has taken steps to implement the plan's commitments and ambitions to be delivered within the next ten years. While immediate focus is on those to be delivered in 2026, all commitments are being considered by the various delivery partners involved.

A reformed National Cancer Board, jointly chaired by the Department and an independent representative, will track progress and provide regular updates to ministers.

Across the life of the plan, ministers will publish an annual summary of progress, along with a more in-depth report after three years to assess where the plan may need updating and refreshing.

Helen Maguire: [129771]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timeline is for (a) implementing and (b) making available the cancer manuals.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Department and NHS England will establish clear quality standards for cancer delivery through cancer manuals, published by tumour type. Quality standards will incorporate clinical-effectiveness, safety, and experience of care, in line with the definition of quality set out in the 10-Year Health Plan. The manuals will provide a consistent framework against which clinicians, trust boards, and commissioners can assess the quality of their service.

Over time, cancer manuals will be transformed into a continuous learning platform, informed by real-time feedback from patients and artificial intelligence supported learning. Publication will begin in 2027.

Helen Maguire: [129773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to confirm governance arrangements and progress reports for the National Cancer Plan to Parliament.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The National Cancer Plan, published on the 4 February 2026, sets out several commitments and ambitions, to be delivered within the next 10 years. The role of the reformed National Cancer Board will be to support and monitor the delivery of the commitments and ambitions and to provide regular updates to ministers. The board

will be co-chaired by the Director General for Planned Care in the Department and an independent representative. It will meet once a co-chair is appointed.

Across the life of the plan, ministers will publish an annual summary of progress, along with a more in-depth report after three years to assess where the plan may need updating and refreshing. The annual summary will be available publicly and ministers would welcome the opportunity to update the House when it is published.

Helen Maguire: **[129774]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure that the National Cancer Plan receives adequate long-term funding.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The National Cancer Plan, published in February 2026, aims to get more from the resources already in the system, improving productivity and modernising services to deliver better outcomes for patients.

Through the plan, the Department has announced some targeted new commitments. This includes a £10 million fund to support children and young people with cancer and their families with travel costs, which is reprioritised funding, as well as £200 million of ring-fenced funding for Cancer Alliances in 2026/27, as part of system development funding.

Cancer: Medical Treatments

Ian Lavery: **[129106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of regional disparities in access to proton beam therapy and other highly specialised cancer treatments.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The National Cancer Plan sets out how every patient will have access to top-quality care through a new approach to quality and by providing more patients with access to specialist treatment centres. We will ensure that every patient, regardless of their postcode, has access to more personalised and more effective treatments.

Cardiovascular Diseases: Health Services

Lizzi Collinge: **[129379]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his department's timeline is for deciding on the second wave of Modern Service Frameworks; and whether respiratory conditions will be considered.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for City of Durham on 16 April 2026 to Question 125554.

Care Homes

James McMurdock: [127684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase residential and nursing care capacity to reduce the need for out-of-area placements.

James McMurdock: [127685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with local authorities in Essex on commissioning adequate local adult social care provision.

Stephen Kinnock:
Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the needs of their population. Under the Care Act 2014, they are tasked with the duty to shape their care market and to commission a range of high-quality, sustainable, and person-centred care and support services to meet the diverse needs of all local people. In performing that duty, a local authority must have regard to current and likely future demand for services, including residential and nursing care, and must consider how providers might meet that demand.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing how local authorities in England are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014, including those related to the commissioning described above. As part of their assessment process, the CQC collects a range of evidence and engages directly with local authorities to inform assessment outcomes. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing to discharge its duties under the Care Act to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has powers to intervene.

All reports are made available on the CQC's website. Essex County Council was rated 'Good' by the CQC. Their assessment was published on 27 June 2025 and can be found at the following link:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports/essex-0625

Suella Braverman: [127809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the trends in the level of older people being required to move from established care home placements to alternative homes solely on cost grounds once they become local-authority funded.

Stephen Kinnock:
The Department does not hold this information.

Where an individual is assessed as requiring support in a residential care home, and they are eligible for means tested support from their local authority, the local authority must ensure that the individual drawing on care is offered a genuine choice of

accommodation. This must include at least one option which is affordable within the person's personal budget.

Where an individual wishes to remain in their current accommodation, and this accommodation is more expensive than their personal budget, the local authority is under a duty to arrange for the person to be placed in the preferred accommodation where it is satisfied that another person on their behalf, or in some limited circumstances the person receiving care, is willing and able to cover the difference in cost for the expected duration of the care arrangement, and other conditions set out in regulations are met.

Suella Braverman: **[127810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities comply with their statutory duties under section 1 of the Care Act 2014 to promote individual wellbeing when making decisions about residential care placements.

Suella Braverman: **[127811]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department provides to local authorities on balancing financial considerations against residents' emotional, psychological and relational wellbeing when reviewing existing care home placements.

Suella Braverman: **[127820]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department monitors whether local authorities are meeting their duty to respect a person's preferred accommodation where it meets assessed needs, as set out in the statutory guidance under the Care Act 2014.

Stephen Kinnock:

The relevant guidance issued by the Department is the Care and Support Statutory Guidance, issued under the Care Act 2014. This makes clear that local authorities must take into account a person's circumstances and preferences when arranging care, including when reviewing existing care home placements. They must promote the wellbeing of those drawing on care, beginning with an assumption that the individual drawing on care is best placed to judge what they require for their own wellbeing. This applies equally to those entering care for the first time and to those who have been self-funders but, because of diminishing resources, are on the verge of needing local authority support.

Where an individual is assessed as requiring support in a residential care home and they are eligible for means tested support from their local authority, the local authority must ensure that the individual drawing on care is offered a genuine choice of accommodation. This must include at least one option which is affordable within the person's personal budget, and should include more than one option. If suitable accommodation is not available at the amount identified in a personal budget, the

local authority must arrange care in a more expensive setting and adjust the budget accordingly to ensure that needs are met.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing how local authorities in England are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. The assessments identify local authorities' strengths and areas for improvement, facilitating the sharing of good practice and helping us to target support where it is most needed. The CQC is under a duty to inform my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if they consider an authority is failing to discharge its functions. My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has powers to intervene where he is satisfied that authorities have failed or are failing to discharge Care Act functions to an acceptable standard. Reports are made available on the CQC's website at the following link:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/

Suella Braverman: **[127821]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has assessed the extent to which residents and families are presented with a genuine choice when a care home placement becomes local-authority funded, as opposed to being offered relocation as the only viable option.

Suella Braverman: **[127822]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of removing long-term residents from care homes once they become local-authority funded on provider financial sustainability and the stability of the residential care market.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the needs of their population, which is why, under the Care Act 2014, they are tasked with the duty to shape their care markets to meet the diverse needs of all local people. In doing so, they should use local population and market data to inform commissioning decisions, involve people and providers in the commissioning process, and encourage a wide range of service provision to ensure that people have a choice of appropriate and high-quality care services in their local area.

Local authorities also have a duty to provide continuity of care to minimise disruption and to ensure that people continue to receive the care and support they need and do not suffer a gap in their care service when care arrangements change.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing how local authorities in England are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014, including those related to commissioning. The CQC is under a duty to inform my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if they consider an authority is failing to discharge its functions. My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has powers to intervene where he is satisfied that authorities have failed or are failing to discharge Care Act functions to an acceptable standard.

All reports are made available on CQC's website and can be found at the following link:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports

Care Homes: Dementia

Suella Braverman: [127812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of involuntary care home moves on older people living with dementia; and what safeguards are in place to prevent inappropriate relocation of such residents.

Suella Braverman: [127823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is considering reform of the residential care funding framework to prevent older people being displaced from long-standing care home placements for purely financial reasons.

Stephen Kinnock:
The Department has no current plans to reform the residential care funding framework. The responsibility for meeting eligible needs rests with local authorities under the Care Act 2014. The Government is making over £4.6 billion of additional funding available for adult social care in 2028/29 compared to 2025/26.

In terms of an assessment of the impact of involuntary care home moves on older people with dementia, the Care Act places a duty on local authorities to promote wellbeing when arranging social care for an individual, and this provides individuals and their carers with more control over the way in which care and support is provided.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing how local authorities in England are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing to discharge its duties under the Care Act to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has powers to intervene.

The Independent Commission into adult social care, chaired by Baroness Louise Casey, is looking at the medium and long-term reforms needed in adult social care to deliver a fair and affordable system that is fit for the future, including looking at what long-term and sustainable funding solutions should look like.

Care Workers

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what level of skilled professional workforce the Department estimates is needed to meet the current demand of the social care sector and what steps is it taking to meet this target.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what level of skilled professional workforce the Department estimates is needed to meet the current demand of the social care sector and what steps is it taking to meet this target.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the level of skilled professional workforce required to meet the long-term demand of the social care sector; and what steps he is taking to meet that target.

Stephen Kinnock:

Demand for long-term care is projected to rise markedly over the next decade, driven by growth in the older population. Current projections from Skills for Care, and the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre at the London School of Economics suggest that this would require workforce growth of approximately 2% to 3% per year to broadly keep pace with demand.

Recent data from Skills for Care shows a 3.2% increase in filled posts in domiciliary care and a 1.4% increase in residential care between March 2025 and February 2026.

The Department's immediate priority is to support the adult social care sector to meet current demand by improving recruitment, retention, and workforce stability. While responsibility for workforce planning and delivery sits primarily with local authorities and providers, the Department is taking action to support the sector and improve its sustainability.

This includes introducing the first ever Fair Pay Agreement to improve pay, and terms and conditions, delivering a national recruitment campaign to promote care as a career, working with the Department for Work and Pensions to support domestic recruitment, and continuing to monitor workforce capacity through Skills for Care data, the Capacity Tracker, and intelligence from sector partners.

The Department of Health and Social Care is also taking action to professionalise and upskill the workforce, which is essential for both short-term capacity and long-term sustainability. This includes implementing the Care Workforce Pathway as the first universal career structure for adult social care, investing a further £10 million this financial year through the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme to fund training and qualifications including the Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate, providing £2.3 million to support newly qualified social workers through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, and piloting a fund to enable adult social care nurses to prescribe medications and support care workers to take on healthcare activities.

Together, these measures aim to improve retention through clearer progression, better recognition of skills, and increased opportunities for development, while supporting the sector to meet rising and increasingly complex demand.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research

Mr Lee Dillon: [128524]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department is providing for research into the genetic differences between people with myalgic encephalomyelitis and those without the condition.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The National Institute for Health and Care Research and the Medical Research Council have dedicated £3.2 million to the DecodeME study. This study aims to understand the genetic differences between those who have myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), and those who do not, and in doing so increase our understanding of ME/CFS to support the development of diagnostic tests and targeted treatments. Preliminary findings from DecodeME indicate genetic differences in eight areas linked to the immune and nervous systems in people with ME/CFS. This discovery of specific genetic signals may help us understand the biological pathways involved in ME/CFS in the future.

Clinical Trials

Dame Chi Onwurah: [128689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the potential merits of proposals in the ABPI report published in March 2026.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Department has considered the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's (ABPI) March 2026 report, Globally competitive United Kingdom wide data-enabled clinical trials: the time is now, and its proposals on improving clinical trial set-up and recruitment through use of healthcare data. The report raises issues that align with the Government's ongoing work to improve the UK's clinical research environment, including delivery of faster trial set-up and development of the Health Data Research Service (HDRS).

The HDRS will be a UK-wide service to bring new treatments and cures to patients by safely enabling the use of patient data to super-charge research, and is currently being set up. It will be for the HDRS leadership team to decide whether to take forward the recommendations of the ABPI report.

The Department continues to work with industry and research system partners through the UK Clinical Research Delivery Programme to consider how such proposals could support these objectives, while ensuring high standards of data protection and public trust.

As set out in our 10-Year Health Plan, we will integrate the Be Part of Research registry tool with the NHS App to allow people to find and sign up to research relevant to them.

Community Health Services

Helen Maguire: [129768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of developing a specific criteria to determine which providers are included in the Neighbourhood Health Framework.

Helen Maguire: [129769]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the absence of a specific criteria to determine which providers were included in the Neighbourhood Health Framework on the equality of local care provisions.

Stephen Kinnock:
The Neighbourhood Health Framework is designed to empower local leaders to develop and scale neighbourhood health, and to provide clarity and consistency to support joined-up working between integrated care boards (ICBs) and local authorities.

The framework outlines the national minimum aims and objectives of Neighbourhood Health Services and maps the process systems should go through to establish local metrics and plans. The framework references how general practice, primary care, pharmacy, mental health provider, civil society partner, and social and community health services can work together to shift care from hospitals to communities. This is not an exhaustive list of all possible providers of neighbourhood health services but illustrates the types of providers with whom we are actively working. It is not prescriptive.

No specific criteria were used to determine the providers that were included in the framework. The framework does not prevent other providers from being part of neighbourhood health services.

It is important that reforms are locally led, as ICBs and local authorities are best placed to design services that make sense for their local populations. However, there are actions that work everywhere, so the framework sets out a minimum set of interventions for all ICBs to deliver over the next three years. This will provide the building blocks of an effective, joined-up Neighbourhood Health Service.

We recognise that delivering a Neighbourhood Health Service will be an incremental process, as both local understanding develops and national reforms progress. We will regularly update the Neighbourhood Health Framework to reflect learning from communities.

Cystic Fibrosis: Prescriptions

Sir John Hayes: [128036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of prescription charges on people with Cystic Fibrosis in Lincolnshire.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government has not made an assessment of the potential impact of prescription charges on people with cystic fibrosis in Lincolnshire and has no current plans to review the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate.

There are a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place for which those with cystic fibrosis may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, whether they have a qualifying medical condition, and whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with 3-month and 12-month certificates available.

Dental Services

Rupert Lowe: [128613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of NHS dental practices are accepting new adult NHS patients in (a) Great Yarmouth constituency, (b) Norfolk and (c) England.

Rupert Lowe: [128615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of children in Great Yarmouth constituency were able to access an NHS dentist in the last 12 months.

Stephen Kinnock:
As of January 2026, the latest data available, 9% of National Health Service dental practices in the Great Yarmouth constituency were showing as 'accepting new adult patients when availability allows'. For the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB), there were 10% of NHS dental practices showing as 'accepting new adult patients when availability allows', and 26% across England.

These data are sourced from the Find a Dentist website and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

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

The responsibility for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to ICBs across England.

The data for the Norfolk and Waveney ICB, which includes the Great Yarmouth constituency, shows that 51% of children were seen by an NHS dentist in the previous 12 months up to June 2025, compared to 57% in England as a whole.

Dental Services: Rural Areas

Anna Gelderd: [129442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of provision of NHS dental services in rural areas.

Anna Gelderd: [129443]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS dental posts advertised by Integrated Care Boards are unfilled in rural areas; and whether he has undertaken analysis of the reasons for issues with recruiting to those posts.

Anna Gelderd: [129444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the recruitment and retention of NHS dentists in rural areas.

Stephen Kinnock:
1.8 million additional courses of National Health Service dental treatment have been delivered in the seven months between April 2025 to October 2025 compared to the corresponding months prior to July 2024. However, we are aware of the challenges faced in accessing a dentist, particularly in more rural areas. The recruitment of dentists in underserved areas remains a priority, with integrated care boards (ICBs) continuing to be able to make use of the Golden Hello scheme to encourage dentists to work in those areas that need them most.

The Government is committed to ensuring people across the country can access urgent dental care when they need it. During 2025/26, ICBs commissioned additional urgent dental appointments and there is now an urgent care safety net available in all areas of the country. From April 2026, dentists are now required to deliver a set number of urgent dental appointments each year.

The 10 Year Workforce Plan will ensure the NHS has the right people in the right places, with the right skills to care for patients, when they need it. As announced in the 10-Year Health Plan, we will now make it a requirement for newly qualified dentists to practice in the NHS for a minimum period, intended to be at least three years.

Dentistry: Migrant Workers

Neil O'Brien: [125278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the equity of the process for accessing the General Dental Council's Overseas Registration Examination; and whether he has assessed the potential merits of introducing a queuing system.

Stephen Kinnock:
The General Dental Council (GDC) is aware that the booking process for its Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) can be challenging for candidates due to the very high demand for exam places. The GDC’s recently concluded procurement

exercise has resulted in new contracts for ORE provision that will substantially increase capacity of the exam, with places for Part Two increasing from 720 to 944 in the first year of the contract, and to 1,500 by year three.

The GDC currently offers priority booking to candidates approaching their five-year time limit to pass the ORE exam, as well as to candidates with refugee status, as they are particularly disadvantaged by their inability to return to their country of origin to practise as a dentist.

The Department has asked the GDC to develop an improved booking system as part of the new ORE contract arrangements and to consider what measures could be taken to support candidates on the waiting list who are resident in the United Kingdom.

Depressive Illnesses: Children and Young People

Jim Shannon: [128209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is children and young people diagnosed with depression to access child and adolescent mental health services in the last 12 months for which data is available.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The data for this question is unavailable. NHS England does not report waiting times data for specific conditions unless there is an existing waiting times standard, for example Children and Young People eating disorders or Early Intervention in Psychosis.

Diethylstilbestrol

Brian Mathew: [129334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what training healthcare professionals are given on the impacts of diethylstilbestrol.

Brian Mathew: [129335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a public inquiry into the effects of diethylstilbestrol.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
On 12 December 2025, Professor Peter Johnson, the National Clinical Director for Cancer, sent a letter to all cancer alliances highlighting the effects of diethylstilbestrol (DES). The message was meant for healthcare professionals, including general practitioners, and referenced existing National Health Service guidance on screening. The Government encourages all women, including those exposed to DES in utero, to attend regular cervical screening which tests for human papilloma virus, the cause of most cervical cancers. The guidance also states that local arrangements, such as regular colposcopy, should be made for women who believe or know they were exposed to DES in utero.

Employers in the health system are responsible for ensuring that their staff are trained to the required standards to deliver safe and effective treatment for patients .

The Department does not have any plans to establish a public inquiry into the effects of DES. The Department is currently collaborating with the National Institute for Health and Care Research to explore opportunities for research into the long-term and intergenerational effects of DES, including DES grandchildren.

Eating Disorders: Surrey Heath

Dr Al Pinkerton: [128136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve support for people with eating disorders in Surrey Heath constituency.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Department is working closely with NHS England to strengthen community-based eating disorder services and to improve outcomes and recovery for patients, including in Surrey Heath.

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning mental health services for local populations. In doing so, ICBs are expected to be evidence-based by assessing and responding to the needs of their local communities and to ensure services are provided equitably.

More widely, through the 10-Year Health Plan, we are transforming mental health services. Since July 2024, over 8,000 additional mental health workers have been recruited towards our target of 8,500 by the end of this Parliament. We are also reaching nearly one million more children and young people by expanding Mental Health Support Teams in schools. In addition, we are investing £13 million to pilot enhanced training for Mental Health Support Team staff, enabling them to provide more tailored support to young people with complex needs, including trauma, neurodivergence, and disordered eating.

NHS England has also published new guidance on children and young people's eating disorders, which places greater emphasis on early identification and intervention across the care pathway, including in schools and primary care settings.

Gender Dysphoria: Health Services

Jonathan Hinder: [127752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether all NHS trusts that host Specialist Gender Dysphoria Services for Adults and Specialist Gender Services for Children and Young People are members of NHS Resolution's indemnity schemes.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Whilst all National Health Service trusts in England are members of NHS Resolution's indemnity schemes, not all specialist gender dysphoria services for children and young people clinics are services covered through their schemes.

General Medical Council: Appeals

Sir Jeremy Hunt: **[R]** **[128682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department continues to support Recommendation 6.1 of the Williams Review on removing the General Medical Council's right of appeal under section 40A of the Medical Act 1983.

Sir Jeremy Hunt: **[R]** **[128683]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the Mann Review (March 2026) as potential justification for retaining the General Medical Council's section 40A appeal power in the Draft Order.

Karin Smyth:
All of the proposals relating to the findings of the Williams Review and the Mann Review contained within the Reforming the General Medical Council legislative framework consultation, published 24 March 2026, are currently open for public consultation. We welcome stakeholder views on the consultation and responses will be carefully considered to help inform future policy decisions.

General Practitioners

Dr Luke Evans: **[125710]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in relation to the Neighbourhood Health Framework's aim to have 25% of GP referrals diverted back to GPs via amendments to advice and guidance by 2027 for 10 high volume specialties, what estimate his Department has made of (a) the total number of referrals that is likely to be and (b) the increase in time and resources required in general practice to support diverted patients.

Dr Luke Evans: **[125711]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in relation to the Medium Term Planning Framework published by NHS England in October 2025, which 10 specialities each ICB has identified as the most effective for the use of Advice and Guidance.

Stephen Kinnock:
As set out in the Medium-Term Planning Framework, National Health Service providers of Referral to Treatment consultant-led care are expected to prioritise Advice and Guidance (A&G) across at least ten specialties where it will have the greatest overall benefit. The ten specialties are selected locally at provider-level. General practice should be involved in discussions to decide on which are the most appropriate and we expect integrated care boards (ICBs) to support the use of A&G through their strategic commissioning for 2026/27. We do not centrally hold information regarding which specialties providers have selected.

Regarding the 25% aim, the National Director for Primary Care and Community Services made clear there is no national target. Further information is available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/letter-specialist-advice-elective-single-point-of-access/

The 2026/27 GP Contract embeds the £82 million of funding from the previous A&G enhanced service, into core practice funding. Embedding A&G in the core contract recognises it as routine clinical practice, removes annual signups, and provides more predictable funding while supporting consistent patient pathways. A general practitioner's (GP's) clinical decision to refer remains unchanged and GPs should continue to make a clinical decision to refer for specialist care where that is in the patient's best interest.

General Practitioners: Contracts

Dr Luke Evans: [127210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2026 to Question 121056 on General Practitioners: Contracts, when the review of the Carr-Hill formula will conclude; and when he plans to publish its findings.

Dr Luke Evans: [127211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps will be taken to consider rural GP practices in the review of the Carr-Hill formula.

Stephen Kinnock:
[Holding answer 21 April 2026]: Phase one of the Carr-Hill review concluded on 31 March, with work currently under way to review options presented by the review team for reforming the formula. Given the complexity of the currently funding model, any changes to the formula will be given careful consideration. Subject to ministerial agreement to the recommendations of the review, the technical development of the new formula will begin. There is currently no confirmed timetable for the conclusion of the next stage of the review.

Findings from the review will be published in due course by the National Institute for Health and Care Research and Members of Parliament will be updated once the review findings are available.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that funding for general practice is distributed equitably and is targeted towards areas that need it most. As part of this, the review has given consideration to the unavoidable costs based on geographical areas, including delivering services in rural areas.

General Practitioners: Research

Dame Chi Onwurah: [128687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of General Practices are signed up to the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD); and what steps his Department is taking to help address (a) technical and (b) contractual barriers preventing further practices from joining.

Dame Chi Onwurah: **[128688]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients in England have exercised their right to opt out of sharing their data for research purposes via the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD).

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

[Holding answer 28 April 2026]: The Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD) receives data from Optum, Vision, and TPP SystmOne practices, which represent the three largest clinical system providers to general practices (GPs). 32% of practices across all four nations currently participate in CPRD. As of 22 April, there are 7,660 practices in total, 2,428 of which currently have requested to contribute data to CPRD. The following table shows the number of practices in each nation:

Nation	Number of contributing practices	Total number of practices
England	2,148	6,112
Wales	38	368
Scotland	216	874
Northern Ireland	26	306

CPRD is mandated to operate on a cost-recovery basis and holds contracts with all three of the main data providers. CPRD's current data licence and service fees are only able to support a maximum of 35% population coverage across the United Kingdom. The focus is therefore on a representative practice and patient sample rather than 100% coverage.

For Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, previous IT system limitations restricting participation are currently being lifted which will allow for further participation across the three devolved nations.

CPRD currently has 402 TPP practices signed up in England. However, due to technical issues, CPRD is unable to use TPP patient data and continues to work with the supplier to find a solution.

If a patient registers for a type 1 opt-out with their GP, or registers for the National Data Opt-out, then CPRD will not receive any new data for that patient.

The number of type 1 opt-outs are not recorded centrally, as it is not possible to specify how many people who registered for a National Data Opt-out did so to opt-out of the sharing of their data via the CPRD, as the opt-out covers a range of research. Information on the numbers of National Data Opt-outs is published at the following link:

https://digital.nhs.uk/dashboards/national-data-opt-out-open-data

General Practitioners: Termination of Employment

Dr Simon Opher: [128145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of GPs have left each ICB in the last 12 months.

Stephen Kinnock:

Thanks to actions taken by this Government, we have the highest number of fully qualified general practitioners (GPs) since 2015, and steps are being taken to grow the GP workforce further. The national leaver rate was 7.8% in the period covering March 2025 to March 2026.

The table below shows the proportion of fully qualified GPs who have left each integrated care board, and the total change in full-time equivalent (FTE) fully qualified GPs employed by practices from March 2025 to March 2026.

ICB Name	Headcount leaver rate	Change in FTE fully qualified GPs employed by practices
NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB	7.6%	12
NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB	6.8%	20
NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB	9.5%	1
NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB	10.3%	47
NHS North West London ICB	7.3%	1
NHS South West London ICB	7.5%	22
NHS Devon ICB	6.6%	25
NHS Gloucestershire ICB	7.4%	2
NHS Dorset ICB	7.5%	-2
NHS Sussex ICB	6.3%	25
NHS Hampshire and Isle Of Wight ICB	7.5%	47
NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB	7.7%	71
NHS Lincolnshire ICB	14.1%	-7

ICB Name	Headcount leaver rate	Change in FTE fully qualified GPs employed by practices
NHS Black Country ICB	7.1%	12
NHS Coventry and Warwickshire ICB	7.7%	12
NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB	8.8%	12
NHS Greater Manchester ICB	6.8%	62
NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB	8.2%	12
NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB	10.2%	-5
NHS West Yorkshire ICB	5.0%	26
NHS South East London ICB	9.2%	14
NHS North Central London ICB	7.1%	25
NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB	7.0%	10
NHS Somerset ICB	11.0%	1
NHS Kent and Medway ICB	8.2%	53
NHS Frimley ICB	9.5%	22
NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB	7.7%	69
NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB	9.1%	-5
NHS Northamptonshire ICB	8.2%	6
NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB	7.2%	0
NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB	7.1%	-6

ICB Name	Headcount leaver rate	Change in FTE fully qualified GPs employed by practices
NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB	8.1%	26
NHS North East London ICB	7.7%	1
NHS Cornwall and The Isles Of Scilly ICB	8.4%	-5
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB	4.6%	8
NHS Derby and Derbyshire ICB	9.7%	-3
NHS Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland ICB	6.7%	0
NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB	9.6%	1
NHS Mid and South Essex ICB	7.9%	-13
NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB	8.8%	-7
NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB	6.7%	26
NHS South Yorkshire ICB	8.4%	6

Notes:

1. data does not include estimates for practices that did not provide fully valid staff records;
2. data does not include GPs employed in primary care networks;
3. data does not include GPs who moved from one ICB to another during the reporting period;
4. the headcount percentage of GPs leaving is calculated based on the period in which the GP last appeared. It indicates the percentage of the cohort workforce that left the cohort prior to the next data extract; and
5. leavers are GPs whose identifying information was present in the relevant dataset at the beginning but not at the end of the specified time period.

Gluten-free Foods: Prescriptions

Ian Roome: [128110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to update national guidance for ICBs on gluten free prescription, including for people on low incomes.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
There are no plans to change the current national guidance for integrated care boards (ICBs) on gluten-free prescribing. In England, gluten-free bread and mixes may be prescribed for people with coeliac disease, with eligible products listed in Part XV of the Drug Tariff. Prescriptions may be issued following a shared decision between prescriber and patient, taking account of local and national guidance.

Under current legislation, ICBs may restrict product choice or end gluten-free prescribing where this is appropriate for their population, while meeting their legal duties on equality and reducing health inequalities. As autonomous bodies, ICBs determine local prescribing policies within their allocated resources.

NHS prescription charge exemptions support those with the greatest need. People on low incomes who do not qualify for an exemption can access help through the NHS Low Income Scheme or use prescription prepayment certificates, which allow unlimited prescriptions for a fixed cost.

Healthy Start Scheme

Emma Lewell: [128718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS Business Services Authority will begin writing proactively to eligible families about their NHS Healthy Start entitlement, encouraging them to apply and offering them support with the application process.

Emma Lewell: [128719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of revising the eligibility criteria for NHS Healthy Start cards.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Department continues to work with the NHS Business Services Authority on ways to encourage those eligible to apply for the Healthy Start Scheme to apply.

The Department keeps the eligibility criteria for the Healthy Start Scheme under continuous review. There are no current plans to change the eligibility for the scheme.

Hospices: Children

Alison Bennett: [129332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 April 2026 to Question 123423 on Hospices: Children, how much has NHS England

advised integrated care boards to give to each children's hospice in 2026/27 from the £80 million of NHS funding allocated for children's hospices over the next three years.

Stephen Kinnock:
[Holding answer 28 April 2026]: NHS England has informed all integrated care boards of their allocation for children and young people's hospices for 2026/27, with a total allocation of approximately £27 million. The Department is not yet in a position to share those individual allocations publicly.

A similar value, adjusted for pay inflation, will be made available in each of the subsequent two years, 2027/28 and 2028/29. Communications regarding future allocations will be sent once the 2026/27 process is complete.

Hospital Beds: Surrey

Dr Al Pinkerton: [98027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of medically fit patients unable to be discharged from hospitals in (a) Surrey and (b) Surrey Heath constituency.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stockton West on 26 November 2025 to Question 93528.

Hydrocortisone

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [128616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to licence ACT-O-VIAL containing 100mg hydrocortisone sodium succinate (powder) and 2ml of water (diluent), in the context of the discontinuation of the liquid form of hydrocortisone sodium phosphate.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
[Holding answer 28 April 2026]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) recognises the concerns raised about the withdrawal of the previously marketed liquid hydrocortisone injection.

Following a review of our current regulatory position, we can confirm that any marketing authorisation application for a liquid hydrocortisone injection product submitted to the MHRA will be rapidly progressed. A licensed hydrocortisone sodium succinate powder for solution for injection remains authorised.

ACT-O-VIAL containing 100 milligrams hydrocortisone sodium succinate, as a powder, and two millilitres of water, as a diluent, does not have a United Kingdom licence. Should a company choose to submit an application for such a product, the MHRA would prioritise its assessment, recognising the clear clinical importance. However, decisions regarding the development, manufacture, and marketing of medicines rest solely with the companies that hold, or seek to hold, the relevant product licences. The MHRA cannot compel companies to supply a medicine.

Infected Blood Inquiry

Yasmin Qureshi: [124525]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to (a) increase funding and (b) tackle inequities between haemophilia centres.

Yasmin Qureshi: [124526]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Recommendation 9 (d) of the Infected Blood Inquiry report, what progress his Department has made on establishing functioning multi-disciplinary networks.

Yasmin Qureshi: [124527]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Recommendation 9(f) of the Infected Blood Inquiry report, what consideration has been given to providing additional funding for the national haemophilia database.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

It is crucial we protect the safety of haemophilia care, and the Government is committed to implementing recommendation 9 of the 2024 Infected Blood Inquiry report.

The Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as haemophilia. The UK Rare Diseases Framework sets out four priorities collaboratively developed with the rare disease community: these include getting a final diagnosis faster; increasing awareness of rare diseases among healthcare professionals; better coordination of care; and improving access to specialist care, treatments, and drugs. We published the fifth annual England action plan in February 2026, where we report on the steps we have taken to advance these priorities.

Regarding 9d, the Clinical Community and the NHS England Clinical Reference Group for Blood Disorders support the need to develop and strengthen multi-disciplinary networks. NHS England has drafted a proposed National Clinical Network Specification specifically for these networks, which is dependent on additional funding and would embed key new requirements for providers to participate in a networked model of care.

For 9f, NHS England currently provides ‘central’ funding of approximately 40% of the total annual cost for running the National Haemophilia Database. A task and finish group relating to the database has been established, reporting into the overarching recommendation 9 expert group.

As of February 2026, stakeholders involved in the recommendation 9f working group are in agreement that the registry has been and remains immensely valuable in supporting the provision of clinical care. NHS England continues to work with the United Kingdom Haemophilia Centres Doctors' Organisation to understand the requirement for increased funding.

Further progress on implementing recommendation 9 is subject to additional funding, and this has not yet been identified. NHS England and the Department will continue to work together to provide progress updates on the Government Reporting Integration Platform.

Integrated Care Boards

Layla Moran: [128084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what functions set out in the May 2025 Model ICB document are being transferred out of ICBs in 2026-27; and if he will publish the updated NHS England document entitled Model ICB functions.

Karin Smyth:
Under the Health and Care Act 2022, integrated care boards (ICBs) have flexibility to delegate their statutory functions, their duties and powers, to other statutory bodies, subject to secondary legislation and NHS England's guidance. While ICBs can delegate responsibility for discharge of the statutory function, accountability remains with them. Currently, the focus of ICBs is realising the administrative efficiencies required of them, rather than delegating their statutory functions. No changes have been made to the existing statutory responsibilities which ICBs must continue to meet.

There is a consultation underway on restructuring the NHS England regional teams which will confirm those additional activities previously undertaken by some ICBs. This includes, for example, oversight of National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts against the national oversight framework. We have no current plans to publish additional guidance on this currently.

Joint Replacements: Obesity

Helen Morgan: [128393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that ICBs adhere to NICE guidance on the use of BMI thresholds for referral for joint replacement surgery.

Helen Morgan: [128394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of BMI-based restriction on access to joint replacement surgery on health inequalities.

Helen Morgan: [128395]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the adequacy of weight management support on patients required to lose weight to become eligible for joint replacement surgery.

Karin Smyth:
The Department has made no specific assessment of the potential impact of body mass index (BMI) based restrictions on health inequalities.

It is the responsibility of individual integrated care boards to determine policies for their local area, including that of the BMI threshold criteria for joint replacement surgery. As with all surgery, BMI should be considered as part of a holistic, personalised perioperative evaluation of the risks versus clinical need for joint replacement surgery of an individual patient. However, BMI should not be considered in isolation and in and of itself should not act as a barrier to surgery.

While National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines are not mandatory, they do represent best practice and National Health Service organisations are expected to take them fully into account in ensuring that local services meet the needs of their populations.

The NHS and local government provide a range of services to help people living with overweight and obesity to manage their weight, which may include individuals waiting for joint replacement surgery, where they meet other eligibility criteria. These range from multi-component behavioural programmes, such as the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme, to specialist services for those living with severe obesity and associated co-morbidities.

Medical Records: Data Protection

Leigh Ingham: [128098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the US CLOUD Act on the security of NHS patient data held or processed by US-based companies; and whether his Department has sought independent legal advice on whether contractual protections can override valid requests from US federal authorities.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
NHS England takes seriously its responsibility to handle health and care data lawfully, proportionately, ethically, and in confidence.

There is no overseas processing of any type of data under contracts, and access to data and systems outside of the United Kingdom is not permitted. Data is held in UK data centres and doesn't leave the UK, with data access subject to UK law, regulations, and best practice.

These measures collectively ensure that National Health Service data remains under UK jurisdiction and all processing of patient information will be within the UK only.

Medical Treatments: Standards

James McMurdock: [126287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release entitled NHS patients and British businesses to benefit from

historic changes to medicines access following pharmaceutical partnership with USA, published on 2 April 2026, what measures are in place to monitor whether the accelerated access to new treatments is translating into measurable improvements in patient outcomes.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Department will continue to work with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and NHS England to monitor and assess access to medicines in the United Kingdom and to monitor patient outcomes through the NHS Outcomes Framework Indicators.

There are no plans to routinely monitor the direct impact of accelerated access to new medicines on patient outcomes.

Meningitis: Vaccination

James McMurdock: [123924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the average cost for individuals to obtain the MenB vaccine privately; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of cost on vaccine uptake.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The UK Health Security Agency is not able to advise on the cost of meningococcal B vaccines on the private market. Private market supply and pricing is a matter for suppliers and those offering private vaccination services directly.

James McMurdock: [123929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to inform individuals born before 2015 that they are not routinely vaccinated against meningitis B.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) vaccine schedule links are covered in the UKHSA blog at the following link:

https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2026/03/20/who-is-eligible-for-the-menb-vaccine-and-do-i-need-it-myself/

This includes links to the teenage vaccine leaflet on the GOV.UK website on Immunisation for teenagers and young people, which states:

“MenACWY vaccine does not protect against MenB. MenB is caused by different group of the bug which commonly affects young infants. A different vaccine, which protects against MenB, is given to very young babies. Some adults and older children considered at risk may be eligible on the NHS. You can find out more about how to get the MenB vaccine through the charity websites.”

This is alongside the MenACWY vaccine leaflet, which states:

"The MenACWY vaccine will increase your protection against MenC and help to protect you against three other meningococcal groups (A, W and Y). This vaccine will not protect you against all forms of meningococcal disease, like MenB, and so it is still important to be aware of signs and symptoms."

These leaflets can be accessed directly on the GOV.UK website, at the following two links:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunisations-for-young-people

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/menacwy-vaccine-information-for-young-people

Meningitis: West Dorset

Edward Morello: [128489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of meningitis in West Dorset constituency.

Edward Morello: [128490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve (a) awareness, (b) diagnosis and (c) treatment of meningitis in West Dorset constituency.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has confirmed three cases of meningococcal disease among young people in Weymouth, Dorset. These three cases have been confirmed as meningitis B and are the same sub-strain serotype P1.19, P1.15. The UKHSA has confirmed that these cases are not linked to the recent outbreak of meningococcal disease in Kent.

As a precautionary measure, antibiotics and the Bexsero vaccine are being offered to young people currently in school years 7 to 13, or the equivalent in terms of age, or anyone not in full time education who would be in one of these year groups, who study or live in the Weymouth, Portland, and Chickerell areas of Dorset. The UKHSA and Dorset Council have issued advice to staff, parents, and carers at all educational settings in the area.

The UKHSA is providing support to education settings, in close partnership with the Department for Education. All affected education settings in Weymouth remain open and events involving children and young people should continue as normal. The UKHSA has published up to date information to ensure parents and concerned members of the public can find the latest information on how the incident is being managed and who can access antibiotics and vaccines, which is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/antibiotics-and-menb-vaccination-to-be-offered-to-young-people-in-dorset

Children and young people should attend their education setting normally, unless specifically told otherwise by a health professional. Attendance supports the education, health, and wellbeing of children and young people.

As my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, told the House on 17 March in the context of the recent meningococcal disease outbreak in Kent, the Joint Committee on Vaccinations (JCVI) has been asked to re-examine eligibility for meningitis vaccines to assess, for example, an expanded offer to older children and/or young adults. The JCVI will provide updated advice to the Department this summer around whether, and to what extent, a vaccine programme for older children and/or young adults would be clinically effective as well as an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of such a vaccination programme.

Meningitis: Young People

James McMurdock: **[123930]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of awareness levels among teenagers and young adults regarding their risk of meningitis B.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

In a 2023 survey of 1,003 teenagers aged 13 to 16 years old, when asked ‘How serious would it be if you got each of the following diseases?’ awareness of the seriousness of meningitis and septicaemia was very high. 98% of respondents answered that septicaemia would be very or fairly serious and 96% for meningitis. Further information is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/parental-attitudes-to-vaccination-in-young-children#what-young-people-and-their-parents-think-about-teenage-vaccination-in-england

A similar survey was completed in December 2025, and the summary findings from this survey will be published in the coming months. Information about the early signs of invasive meningococcal disease and septicaemia are available at the following link:

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/

Further information about the outbreak in Kent is available at the following link:

https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2026/03/18/meningitis-b-outbreak-what-you-need-to-know/

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has published information via social media, news stories, and a blog to provide accurate information about invasive meningococcal disease.

Charitable organisations, including Meningitis Now, have launched targeted campaigns to improve understanding of symptoms and promote vaccine uptake where available.

The UKHSA and the National Health Service will continue to work with partners to promote awareness of invasive meningococcal disease symptoms, encourage vaccination where appropriate, and support young people in understanding how best to protect themselves.

In addition to this work, the UKHSA produces a university vaccine communications toolkit in collaboration with charities and university organisations, which is available at the following link:

https://find-public-health-resources.service.gov.uk/University%20vaccine%20communications%20toolkit/UNI24

This document collates key messaging around vaccines and vaccine preventable diseases, including invasive meningococcal disease, and the resources freely available to universities and other higher education institutions to support key messaging. This is updated each year and shared with the distribution lists of Universities UK and the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education.

Menopause: Health Services

Gregory Stafford: [126416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to introduce mandatory, up-to-date menopause training for all general practitioners; and whether there will be measures to ensure consistency in diagnosis and treatment across NHS services.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that more needs to be done to support women experiencing the menopause. The Government is committed to prioritising women's health as we reform the National Health Service.

General practitioners are responsible for ensuring their own clinical knowledge, including on menopause, remains up-to-date and for identifying learning needs as part of their continuing professional development. This activity should include taking account of new research and developments in guidance, such as that produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality care to all patients.

All United Kingdom registered doctors are expected to meet the professional standards set out in the General Medical Council's (GMC's) Good Medical Practice. The training curriculum for postgraduate trainee doctors is set by the Royal College of General Practitioners, and has to meet the standards set by the GMC.

NICE published their updated guideline in November 2024 and recommended more treatment choices for menopause symptoms. The updated guideline aims to support healthcare professionals by providing them with the information they need to support evidence-based decisions about treatment choices, as well as information and

support about menopause. The guideline recommends hormone replacement therapy (HRT) as the most effective treatment for vasomotor symptoms, and also recommends that for people over 40 years old healthcare professionals should consider menopause-specific cognitive behavioural therapy as an option for vasomotor symptoms associated with menopause in addition to HRT. HRT is the main treatment for menopause symptoms, and NICE recommends that for most women it is safe and effective.

The new women's health data dashboard released last week reports on HRT use in different areas of the country and provides one measure of how consistently services are being provided.

NHS England will shortly publish an equity framework which will help systems identify and tackle inequalities in access to menopause care and regularly report on differences in HRT use for women of different ethnicities and of different socio-economic status.

Mental Health Act 2025

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [127509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department intends to publish the draft statutory guidance for the Mental Health Act 2025 for consultation; and if he will commit to consulting by and for specialist VAWG organisations in the development of that guidance.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Following Royal Assent of the Mental Health Act 2025, our priority for 2026 is to update the revised Code of Practice. We will engage extensively, including with people with lived experience and their families and carers, staff, and professional groups, commissioners, providers, voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations, and others to do this. There will also be a formal public consultation in early 2027, where we will encourage responses from anyone who wishes to input, including specialist violence against women and girls organisations.

We will be updating the Code of Practice, not just to reflect the new primary legislation, but to provide further guidance and clarity on non-legislative aspects relevant to the reforms, as well as more broadly to make general improvements and updates.

Mental Health Services

Charlie Dewhirst: [129435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that patients receiving community mental health care are appropriately involved in decisions relating to their treatment plans and discharge from services.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

[Holding answer 28 April 2026]: The Department is committed to ensuring that people receiving community mental health care are meaningfully involved in decisions about their treatment, ongoing support, and discharge.

NHS England is introducing a new Personalised Care Framework for secondary mental health services, which sets clear expectations that care and support planning should be collaborative and centred on what matters to the individual. Under the framework, people should have a single, live care plan that reflects their needs, goals, and preferences, is developed jointly with professionals, and is reviewed regularly. This is reinforced through NHS England's Community Mental Health Framework.

Recent reforms through the Mental Health Act 2025, as well as statutory discharge guidance applying to mental health inpatient settings, further strengthen this approach by promoting coproduced and personalised care and discharge planning.

Mental Health Services: Gender Based Violence

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [127510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the Mental Health Act 2025 and accompanying statutory guidance adequately address disparities in access, quality of care, and outcomes in commissioned mental health services for Black and minoritised women who are survivors of VAWG.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

We recognise that there are significant and concerning racial disparities in the rates of detention under the previous Mental Health Act and driving reductions in inequalities is a guiding principle for the Mental Health Act 2025. The Government will be working very carefully with the wider mental health system to support the effective implementation of the provisions in the 2025 act, to reduce racial disparities in decision making under the act. The updating of the Code of Practice will be a key way in which we achieve this, and we will be formally consulting on the updated code.

We also recognise that some of the disparities arise from social, economic, and environmental factors outside the scope of the act, and these are being addressed separately. For example, earlier access to mental health support prior to mental health crisis is being driven through improved community-based mental health services and NHS England's Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework is looking at transforming culture in wider mental health services, not just under the Mental Health Act.

Domestic abuse, sexual violence, and other forms of trauma are known risk factors for mental ill health, and we are committed to improving our national response to trauma through cross-Government action. The Department is taking specific steps to improve trauma-informed support for victims and survivors of abuse. This includes implementing the "Steps to Safety" referral service for domestic abuse and sexual violence across all integrated care boards, and investing £5 million each year for the

next three years to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Mental Health Services: Surrey Heath

Dr Al Pinkerton: [128135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to the Mental Health Investment Standard on access to mental health services in Surrey Heath constituency.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
There has been no specific assessment of the impact of the Mental Health Investment Standard for the Surrey Heath constituency. The Mental Health Investment Standard is a national initiative which requires integrated care boards (ICBs) to increase investment in mental health services each year.

During 2024/25, the NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB continued to meet its commitment in this area, spending over £180 million on mental health services for the local population. This represented an increased investment in this area, compared to spending of £169,092,000 in 2023/24, in line with the requirements. Performance against the standard during 2025/26 will be published in the ICB's 2025/26 Annual Report.

Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Jim Shannon: [128211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for psychological therapy.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government recognises that waiting times for psychological therapies are too long and is committed to improving timely access to care. We are expanding NHS Talking Therapies, which continue to meet their waiting time standards, and increasing capacity in mental health services generally by recruiting 8,500 additional mental health workers, with over 8,000 already in post. Alongside this, we are rolling out new community-based and digital models of care, improving data on waits, and supporting self-referral routes to help people access support earlier and reduce waiting times overall.

Mental Health Services: Yeovil

Adam Dance: [123107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the planned reductions in share of NHS spending going to mental health services for three consecutive years on rural communities in Yeovil constituency.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
As set out in a Written Ministerial Statement published on 12 March, National Health Service mental health expenditure is forecast to reach £16.1 billion in 2026/27, representing a real-terms increase of £140 million compared with 2025/26. The proportion of overall NHS spending allocated to mental health in 2026/27 is forecast to be 8.4%, just 0.28% lower than in 2025/26. This reflects significant additional investment across the wider NHS, including in technology and digital transformation, strengthening general practice, and establishing neighbourhood health centres.

The headline share-of-spend metric also does not capture the full range of mental health investment. This includes £473 million of capital funding over the next four years to support the roll-out of capital projects such as Community-Based Mental Health Centres and Mental Health Emergency Departments. Further detail on integrated care board (ICB) allocations is available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/allocation-of-resources-2026-27-to-2027-28/

In addition, the Government continues to require all ICBs to meet the Mental Health Investment Standard over the next three years, which sets a minimum rate of growth in local mental health spending. As a result, NHS Somerset will continue to increase investment in mental health services across Somerset.

The 10-Year Health Plan set out an ambitious reform agenda to transform the NHS and make it fit for the future. In line with this, we will go further to ensure that NHS mental health services deliver the care that people deserve. We know that there is much more to do to improve outcomes, tackle unacceptable waiting times for care and fully meet the needs of the population in a tailored, personalised and timely way.

NHS Somerset recognises the additional challenges associated with delivering services in rural areas. Through its transformed community mental health offer, Open Mental Health, a partnership between the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise partners, access to high-quality mental health support has been expanded for people in rural communities, including through face-to-face provision, digital services, and telephone-based support.

Motor Neurone Disease: Research

Jim Shannon: [128661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding is allocated for research into treatments for Motor Neurone Disease.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Government responsibility for delivering motor neurone disease (MND) research is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation, primarily by the Medical Research Council.

It is not the usual process of the NIHR to allocate funds for research into specific conditions. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and care, including MND. Our approach to funding research is through open and fair competition and peer review to ensure that the highest-quality proposals, most likely to deliver real impact for patients, are funded without imposing financial targets or limits.

The Government is investing in MND research across a range of areas, including possible treatments. For example, the MND Translational Accelerator, supported by £6 million of Government funding, has twelve projects all aimed at speeding up the development of treatments for MND.

The NIHR has also invested £8 million into EXPERTS-ALS, a pre-clinical study which is designed to accelerate the identification and testing of the most promising treatment candidates for treating amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the most common form of MND. This will connect to the later phase platform trial, MND SMART.

Welcoming applications on MND to all NIHR programmes enables maximum flexibility both in terms of amount of research funding a particular area can be awarded, and the type of research which can be funded.

Neurodiversity: Diagnosis

Suella Braverman: [127828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has issued guidance to Integrated Care Boards on maximum acceptable waiting times for ADHD and autism assessments for children.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

The waiting time standard recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is for a maximum waiting time of 13 weeks between a referral for an autism assessment and a first appointment. NICE guidelines on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) do not recommend a maximum waiting time standard from referral for an assessment of ADHD to assessment.

The Government has recognised that, nationally, demand for assessments for autism and ADHD has grown significantly in recent years and that people, including children, are experiencing severe delays for accessing such assessments. The Government's 10-Year Health Plan will make the National Health Service fit for the future, and reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) focus will improve early intervention and support.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including provision of autism and ADHD services, in line with relevant NICE guidelines.

Through the NHS Medium-Term Planning Framework, published 24 October 2025, NHS England has set clear expectations for local ICBs and trusts to improve access, experience, and outcomes for autism and ADHD services over the next three years,

focusing on improving quality and productivity. The framework was explicit that ICBs and providers are expected to optimise existing resources to reduce long waits for ADHD and autism assessments and improve the quality of assessments by implementing existing and new guidance, as published.

In December 2025, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, launched the independent review into the Prevalence and Support for mental health conditions, ADHD, and autism. The review is chaired by Professor Peter Fonagy, with Vice Chairs Professor Sir Simon Wessely and Professor Gillian Baird.

The review's interim report, published at the end of March, sets out the evidence reviewed so far on prevalence, describes the impact of rising demand for diagnosis and support, identifies where the evidence is uncertain, and outlines the key questions for the next phase. It does not offer final conclusions or recommendations.

The final report, due in the summer, will make recommendations on how the Government, the health system and wider public services can respond to increasing demand for support more fairly and effectively so that people receive the right support, at the right time, in the right place.

Neurodiversity: Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Suella Braverman: [127824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board's decision to pause routine ADHD and autism assessments until April 2027.

Suella Braverman: [127825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that children awaiting ADHD or autism assessments in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight receive timely support before assessments resume in 2027.

Suella Braverman: [127826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are currently on waiting lists for ADHD or autism assessments, and what the average waiting time is.

Suella Braverman: [127829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential long-term educational and developmental impact on children whose ADHD assessments have been delayed until 2027.

Suella Braverman: [127830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide additional funding or resources to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board to enable the resumption of ADHD and autism assessments before April 2027.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government has recognised that, nationally, demand for assessments for autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has grown significantly in recent years and that people are experiencing severe delays for accessing such assessments. The Government's 10-Year Health Plan will make the National Health Service fit for the future, and reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities focus will improve early intervention and support.

The Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB) understands that waiting for an assessment can be difficult for individuals and families, and is committed to improving access to meaningful support while people wait.

NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight launched a redesigned clinically optimal diagnostic model on 31 March 2026. As part of their wider transformation programme, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight ICB is introducing new services designed to offer earlier help, even when a formal diagnosis has not yet been made.

From 1 April 2026, every area in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will have a place-based Children's Neurodiversity Team. These teams will:

- bring together professionals across education and healthcare;
- offer practical advice, support, and guidance for families; and
- support children based on their needs, without requiring a diagnosis.

While patients are waiting for a Right to Choose ADHD or Autism assessment there are a range of services to access for support, which are available at the following link:

https://www.hantsiow.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/4917/7495/4596/HSIOW_ICB_-_Right_to_choose_Supporting_you_while_you_wait_for_your_assessment_.pdf

Suella Braverman: **[128692]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the decision by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board to pause Right to Choose pathways for ADHD and autism assessments until 2027 on children and young people.

Suella Braverman: **[128694]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children and adults in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have been impacted by the pause of Right to Choose pathways for ADHD and autism assessments.

Suella Braverman: **[128699]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of pausing the Right to Choose pathways on trends in the level of demand for private assessments among families unable to access NHS support.

Suella Braverman: [128702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the pause on school attendance, mental health and family stability among children awaiting ADHD and autism assessments.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

The Government has recognised that, nationally, demand for assessments for autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has grown significantly in recent years and that people are experiencing severe delays for accessing such assessments. The Government's 10-Year Health Plan will make the National Health Service fit for the future, and reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities focus will improve early intervention and support.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) in England to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including providing access to autism assessments and ADHD services, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

The Medium-Term Planning Framework, published 24 October, sets out expectations for local areas to improve access to autism and ADHD services, and was explicit that ICBs and providers are expected to optimise existing resources to reduce long waits for autism and ADHD assessments and improve the quality of assessments by implementing existing and new guidance, as published.

NHS England introduced Activity Management Plans to help manage variably funded activity when providers risk exceeding their Indicative Activity Plans.

There is a statutory requirement for ICBs to remain within annual funding allocations and to deliver on agreed financial plans. Providers are not asked to close referrals or prevent access to the pathway but, where required, once planned activity levels have been met, they are asked to manage new referrals on a waiting list until they have capacity within their contracted activity envelope.

There is guidance for the use and implementation of Indicative Activity Plans and Activity Management Plans, detailed in the NHS Standard Contract Technical Guidance. We are absolutely clear that use of these must not restrict patients' choice of provider.

The Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB) understands that waiting for an autism or ADHD assessment can be difficult for individuals and families, and is committed to improving access to meaningful support while people wait.

NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight redesigned a clinically-optimum diagnostic model on 31 March 2026. As part of their wider transformation programme, the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight ICB is introducing new services designed to offer earlier help, even when a formal diagnosis has not yet been made.

From 1 April 2026, every area in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will have a place based Children's Neurodiversity Team. These teams will:

- bring together professionals across education and healthcare;

- offer practical advice, support, and guidance for families; and

- support children based on their needs, without requiring a diagnosis;

While patients are waiting for a Right to Choose ADHD or Autism assessment there are a range of services to access for support, which are available at the following link:

https://www.hantsiow.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/4917/7495/4596/HSIOW_ICB_-_Right_to_choose_Supporting_you_while_you_wait_for_your_assessment_.pdf

More broadly, in December 2025, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, launched the independent review into the Prevalence and Support for mental health conditions, ADHD and autism. The review is chaired by Professor Peter Fonagy, with vice chairs Professor Sir Simon Wessely and Professor Gillian Baird.

The final report, due in the summer, will make recommendations on how the Government, the health system, and the wider public services can respond to increasing demand for support more fairly and effectively so that people receive the right support, at the right time, in the right place.

NHS: Databases

Tony Vaughan: [125255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the merits of ending the NHS' Federated Data Platform contract with Palantir.

Clive Lewis: [125539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has sought advice on triggering the break clause in Palantir's contract with the NHS.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
[Holding answer 17 April 2026]: The current contract for the NHS Federated Data Platform is for seven years, ending in 2031, with the initial term ending March 2027.

Advice is given regularly on the contract and performance, and ministers have been given advice on the need for a decision this year on the extension of the contract in line with standard contract management processes.

We continuously assess performance against the contract, and performance of the programme as a whole, and publish data on uptake and benefits each quarter.

Alberto Costa: [126622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what safeguards are in place to ensure that data accessed or processed through the NHS Federated Data Platform cannot be repurposed, now or in the future, for immigration enforcement or other non-health-related functions, including by third-party contractors or their overseas affiliates.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Data held within the NHS Federated Data Platform (FDP) remains under the full control of the National Health Service at all times. The supplier does not control NHS data and is not permitted to access, use, or share data for its own purposes.

The supplier cannot view NHS data unless explicitly authorised by an NHS Data Controller. The supplier acts solely on the instruction of the NHS when processing data on the platform. The FDP and Associated Services contract includes strict confidentiality requirements, supported by governance arrangements to oversee delivery and the use of the platform.

It is a contractual requirement that data held within the NHS FDP cannot be accessed by supplier staff or contractors located outside the United Kingdom. These arrangements ensure that NHS data remains under UK jurisdiction and that all data processing takes place within the UK.

In line with the General Data Protection Regulation principles of transparency and accountability, NHS England has published information within the FDP Information Governance Framework. Data held within the FDP cannot be accessed or processed by non-UK Government entities.

There are no products within the NHS FDP that hold immigration status or residency status. Immigration or residency data does not form part of NHS England data collections, nor does it form part of an individual's health record.

Iqbal Mohamed: **[128022]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish the legal direction under Section 254 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 that disapplies patient opt-outs for the NHS Federated Data Platform.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
All directions made by my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, under section 254 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 are published at the following link:

https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/directions-and-data-provision-notices/secretary-of-state-directions/secretary-of-state-directions-a-z

The National Data Opt-Out does not currently apply to the NHS Federated Data Platform (NHS FDP). This is not because of a direction but because there are currently no products within the NHS FDP which are required to apply the National Data Opt-Out. If the purpose of processing means that the National Data Opt-Out should apply, then the data controller must apply the opt-out. This is covered in the NHS FDP Information Governance Framework, which can be found at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/federated-data-platform-information-governance-framework/

Further information on where the National Data Opt-Out does not apply is available at the following link:

https://www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters/where-your-choice-does-not-apply/

Leigh Ingham: **[128099]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of critical health data infrastructure being operated by companies subject to foreign law on national resilience; and whether the Government plans to develop a policy on digital sovereignty as it applies to NHS data.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government takes seriously its responsibility to ensure critical health data is handled lawfully, proportionately, ethically, and in confidence, whether by United Kingdom based companies or those that are subject to foreign law.

Digital sovereignty is ensured through prohibiting overseas processing of critical health data under existing contracts. Access to critical data systems from outside of the UK is not permitted. Critical health data is held in UK data centres and does not leave the UK, with data access subject to UK law, regulations, and best practice.

These measures collectively ensure that National Health Service data remains under UK jurisdiction and that national resilience is not compromised.

Martin Wrigley: **[128919]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for the NHS Federated Data Platform after 15 February 2027.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Medium-Term Planning Framework 2026/27 to 2028/29 sets out the expectation that all providers and integrated care boards onboard to the NHS Federated Data Platform and start making use of core products, data capabilities, and population health management tools by 2028/29. The framework available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/medium-term-planning-framework-delivering-change-together-2026-27-to-2028-29/

The supplier contract will be reviewed this year in line with standard contract management processes, and a decision will be made on its extension.

NHS: Drugs

James McMurdock: **[126286]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release entitled NHS patients and British businesses to benefit from historic changes to medicines access following pharmaceutical partnership with USA, published on 2 April 2026, what modelling his Department has undertaken of the long-term cost implications for the NHS of the changes to medicines access and pricing.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Department has already been clear that the estimated costs of the United Kingdom's medicines pricing commitments are approximately £1 billion in England over the remaining three-years of the Spending Review. The final and longer-term costs of these changes will depend on future growth in spending on medicines.

This is not something that we can pre-empt at this time as it depends on which drugs come to market and which are assessed as approved for use on the National Health Service accordingly.

Terry Jermy: **[128177]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether non-animal alternatives must be validated if they are being used to provide data on the safety and efficacy of potential new pharmaceuticals within submissions to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The term 'validation' is broad and subject to a variety of definitions. Regarding the use of animal models for submission to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), non-animal alternatives must be demonstrated to be fit for the purpose intended when used to characterise the safety and potential efficacy of new pharmaceuticals. A new guideline issued in March of this year describes the current MHRA approach to medicines using non-animal methods, and is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mhra-approach-to-medicines-using-non-animal-methods#:~:text=In%20making%20an%20application%20to,not%20support%20testing%20in%20animals

NHS: Finance

James McMurdock: **[126288]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release entitled NHS patients and British businesses to benefit from historic changes to medicines access following pharmaceutical partnership with USA, published on 2 April 2026, what plans his Department has to report to Parliament on the outcomes of the partnership and its effects on NHS spending and patient access.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government has already enabled parliamentary scrutiny on this subject and will continue to follow standard processes to update Parliament on developments as appropriate.

Members of Parliament continue to have the opportunity to table parliamentary questions on this subject.

NHS: Negligence

Rupert Lowe: [129421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS Resolution records whether claimants had a pre-existing disability at the time of the incident giving rise to a clinical negligence claim, and whether any data is held on long-term disability arising as a result of negligent care.

Rupert Lowe: [129422]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS Resolution records the nationality or citizenship status of claimants in clinical negligence claims.

Rupert Lowe: [129423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many clinical negligence claims notified to NHS Resolution in each of the last ten years involved claimants who were not UK citizens at the time of treatment.

Rupert Lowe: [129424]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value of damages and legal costs paid by NHS Resolution in relation to clinical negligence claims involving non-UK citizen claimants was in each year since 2015–16.

Rupert Lowe: [129425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS Resolution records the nationality or immigration status of clinicians against whom clinical negligence claims are brought.

Rupert Lowe: [129426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS Resolution records whether the clinician primarily responsible for the care giving rise to a clinical negligence claim was UK-trained or internationally trained.

Rupert Lowe: [129428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS Resolution holds data on the nationality or training background of clinicians involved in high-value clinical negligence claims.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

NHS Resolution (NHSR) is an arm's length body of the Department of Health and Social Care. Its role is to manage clinical negligence and other claims against the National Health Service in England.

This data is not held by NHSR. NHSR has not routinely collected demographic information about claimants or clinicians beyond what is strictly necessary to progress individual claims. This is typically limited to basic identifiers such as age and sex where relevant. This reflects both the legal framework under which the NHSR

operates and the fact that demographic information is not required to manage claims effectively.

Rupert Lowe: [129427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any analysis has been undertaken comparing the volume, severity, or cost of clinical negligence claims involving UK-trained and internationally trained clinicians.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
No analysis has been undertaken comparing the volume, severity, or cost of clinical negligence claims involving United Kingdom trained and internationally trained clinicians.

Rupert Lowe: [129430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve transparency on the characteristics of claimants and clinicians involved in clinical negligence claims, in light of the National Audit Office's report published in October 2025.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
We welcome the National Audit Office's (NAO's) report, Costs of Clinical Negligence, and David Lock KC is providing expert policy advice on the rising costs of clinical negligence and how we can improve patients' experience of claims and will take into account the recommendations of the NAO's report.

NHS: Palantir

Nadia Whittome: [126740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to make a decision on whether the Federated Data Platform and Associated Services contract with Palantir Technologies will be extended; and what contingency plans his Department has in place to ensure ongoing provision of the programme if that contract is ended.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
[Holding answer 17 April 2026]: We continually assess performance against the contract, and performance of the programme as a whole, and publish data on uptake and benefits each quarter. The National Health Service Federated Data Platform (FDP) programme is significantly exceeding its benefits forecast and has exceeded every target since it's 'go live' in March 2024. It is also assessed regularly by the Government's National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority, on behalf of HM Treasury. The NHS FDP is one of only 14% of Government major programmes to receive a 'Green' rating in July 2025, indicating that the FDP is on track.

In line with Government commercial function standards and contract management best practice, we shall be reviewing the FDP and Associated Services (FDP-AS) contract with a decision anticipated to be made this year on extension.

As part of ongoing and regular contract reviews of the FDP-AS, due consideration is given as to how benefits and outcomes are protected, and whether there is an

extension or not. In the event of the contract ending, there are clear Exit Management provisions which would take effect. As with any change programme, there are many aspects that require planning and resource, including delivery of associated procurement activity, mobilising the replacement solutions, managing business change, in particularly supporting users, and managing the exit from existing contracts, the latter inclusive of service continuity during change activity.

The contract has a number of measures built in to facilitate exit and transition, including clear intellectual property rights in NHS build products or components.

NHS: Staff

James McMurdock: [127946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of staff perceptions of staffing levels and their ability to deliver safe patient care in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:
The Department assesses the state and sentiment of the National Health Service workforce through the annual NHS Staff Survey.

The full findings of the NHS Staff Survey is available at the following link:

https://www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/results/national-results/

Employers are best placed to determine their workforce needs based on local needs. In addition, the 10 Year Workforce Plan will set out how national supply will be achieved and will be making sure that staff are better treated, have more fulfilling roles, and hope for the future.

NHS: Vacancies

Steve Barclay: [124576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS jobs in which Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is the primary function have been advertised in the most recent 12-month period for which data are available.

Karin Smyth:
This data is not centrally held.

Nutrition

Esther McVey: [128239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what scientific evidence is the Government using to underpin the implementation of the 2018 Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) and what evidence is the Government using that the 2018 NPM will lead to healthier choices, as defined by the Government, being made by consumers.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Government has committed to updating the standards behind the restrictions on advertising 'less healthy' food or drink.

The advertising and promotions restrictions currently rely on the outdated Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) 2004/05. The new NPM has been updated in line with the latest dietary advice from the United Kingdom's Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, particularly in relation to free sugar and fibre. The Government published the new NPM on 27 January. Applying it to the restrictions will strengthen these policies by bringing more products of concern for children's health into scope.

On 25 March, we launched a 12-week consultation on the proposed application of the new NPM to the advertising and promotions restrictions. A consultation-stage impact assessment of the direct costs to businesses and intended health outcomes was published alongside. Evidence shows that children's food preferences and consumption can be influenced by advertising and that the shopping environment can encourage impulse purchasing of 'less healthy' food and drinks products. The impact assessment indicates that if the calorie reductions from applying the new NPM to the advertising and promotions restrictions are achieved, it could reduce cases of childhood obesity by over 110,000 and adult obesity by almost 520,000.

We will use evidence from the consultation to inform final policy decisions and the final impact assessment which, subject to the outcome of the consultation, would be published prior to amending the advertising and promotions restrictions legislation.

Organs: Donors

Mr Gregory Campbell: **[128194]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many organ donations under deemed consent legislation have there been from deceased donors between 1st January (a) 2022, and (b) 2026.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
[Holding answer 24 April 2026]: NHS Blood and Transplant is responsible for organ donation in the United Kingdom and manages the NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR).

Deemed consent donors are people who became deceased donors, donating one or more organs, where no decision to donate had been recorded on the NHS ODR, and consent was therefore deemed under the relevant deemed consent legislation, with organ donation proceeding only where the donor's family were available for consultation. The following table shows the number of deemed consent donors and the number of organs donated by deemed consent donors, both United Kingdom wide, from 2022 to 2025:

Year	Number of deemed consent donors	Number of organs donated by deemed consent donors
2022	439	1342

Year	Number of deemed consent donors	Number of organs donated by deemed consent donors
2023	455	1479
2024	381	1213
2025	404	1333

Source: NHS Blood and Transplant, using data from the UK Transplant Registry.

Out-patients

Dr Caroline Johnson: [127151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential risks of rejecting secondary care referrals that are currently accepted.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 21 April 2026]: It is not Government policy for referrals to secondary care to be rejected. General practitioners (GPs) are encouraged to seek specialist advice ahead of making a referral where it is clinically appropriate to do so. Patients benefit from earlier specialist input and are more likely to receive the right care in the right place, first time.

A GP's right to refer is unchanged. If a patient needs a hospital referral, they will get one.

Ovarian Cancer: Research

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [129512]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of the adequacy of funding available for research into ovarian cancer in order to improve (a) detection and (b) treatment.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

The Department invests in research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Cancer is a major area of NIHR spending at £141.6 million in 2024/25, reflecting its high priority. This includes research into ovarian cancer specifically, for example the £1.9 million PICCOS trial, which is testing whether Pressurised IntraPeritoneal Aerosol Chemotherapy is better at managing cancer spread to the lining of the abdominal cavity than standard chemotherapy in several forms of cancer, including ovarian. In addition, NIHR funded research has demonstrated that the IOTA ADNEX ultrasound model can identify nine out of every 10 ovarian cancers and could offer a much more reliable method for finding ovarian cancer early in women who have not yet reached menopause.

As well as funding research itself, the Department invests significantly in research expertise and capacity, specialist facilities, support services, and collaborations to

support and deliver research in England, known as NIHR infrastructure. NIHR infrastructure underpins research.

It is not the usual process of the NIHR to allocate funds for research into specific conditions. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and care, including ovarian cancer. Our approach to funding research is through open and fair competition and peer review to ensure that the highest-quality proposals, most likely to deliver real impact for patients, are funded without imposing financial targets or limits.

Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome and Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders

Alison Bennett: **[127960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all paediatric departments have access to specialists trained in the diagnosis and treatment of Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) and Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS).

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

[Holding answer 22 April 2026]: The Government recognises that paediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome (PANS) and paediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders associated with streptococcal infections (PANDAS) can be distressing conditions for children, young people, and their families, and that assessment and management can be clinically complex.

NHS England welcomes the formation of the PANS PANDAS Steering Group (PPSG), which includes representatives from key royal colleges, specialist clinical bodies, and the national charity PANS PANDAS UK. Since its establishment, the PPSG has launched several strategic initiatives to improve awareness, understanding, and care for affected children and young people. This includes the development of United Kingdom clinical guidelines and the formation of the PANS PANDAS Research Group and the Education, Social Care and Health Group.

Responsibility for commissioning and planning local health services sits with integrated care boards, which are expected to ensure local services have access to the appropriate clinical expertise to meet the needs of their populations and to consider emerging evidence and guidance as it develops.

The Department continues to support research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research, which welcomes funding applications into all aspects of human health, including PANS and PANDAS. As the evidence base strengthens, bodies such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence will consider whether updates to national guidance are appropriate.

Patient Choice Schemes

Suella Braverman: [128695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with NHS England on the communication of the pause of Right to Choose pathways to families, including the timing and level of notice.

Suella Braverman: [128701]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to publish the criteria used by Integrated Care Boards to prioritise cases during the pause of Right to Choose pathways.

Suella Braverman: [128703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to require Integrated Care Boards to provide regular public updates on the status of paused Right to Choose pathways.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for planning and commissioning services to meet the needs of their local populations, including making decisions about how best to manage demand and capacity within available resources. Where an ICB has taken a decision to pause or manage activity within a Right to Choose pathway, it is for that ICB to determine and apply any local prioritisation criteria, taking account of clinical need and patient safety. It is the responsibility of the local system to decide whether to publish criteria, and to ensure that patients, families, and the public are communicated with clearly and provided with appropriate information.

NHS England provides guidance and oversight to ICBs to support them in meeting their statutory duties, including in relation to patient choice. The Government is committed to patients having the right to choose their provider when referred to consultant-led treatment, or to a mental health professional, for their first appointment as an outpatient. Patients' right to choose is set out in legislation and no changes are being made to this legal right. Further information on the choices available for patients can be found on the NHS Choice framework, which is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-choice-framework

Pharmacy: Crimes of Violence

Dr Luke Evans: [127853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he has made an assessment of the impact on his Department's policies of Community Pharmacy England's recently commissioned survey on abuse in pharmacies.

Dr Luke Evans: [127854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish a response to Community Pharmacy England's recently commissioned survey on abuse in pharmacies.

Stephen Kinnock:
The Department and NHS England condemn any form of abuse directed at healthcare workers. Pharmacy teams should be able to go to work without fear and have a fundamental right to be safe at work.

NHS England has met with Community Pharmacy England to discuss the findings of the survey and how we can further support community pharmacies and their staff.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: Mental Health Services

Jim Shannon: [128210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding he has provided for services supporting people with post traumatic stress disorder in the last three years.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
It is not possible to identify the amount of funding specifically for services supporting post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Many people treated for PTSD will receive treatment in NHS Talking Therapies, which support other common mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety, as well as PTSD.

Depending on the circumstances of their case, individuals with diagnosed and undiagnosed PTSD may also be referred or could present themselves to most other forms of mental health provision, including community, crisis, and inpatient services, as well as to specific pathways for other conditions which may be co-occurring for some patients.

For 2026/27, overall National Health Service mental health spending is forecast to increase to a record £16.1 billion. The following table shows the amount of mental health spend for the past three years:

Year	NHS Mental Health Spend
2025/26	£15.7 billion
2024/25	£15.1 billion
2023/24	£13.9 billion

Note: the figure for 2025/26 is forecast.

Pregnancy Tests

Kerry McCarthy: [128240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 9 October 2025 to Question 76643 on Primodos, whether his Department plans to consider scientific evidence from Aaron. P. Adam et al (2026) titled Recurrent Constellations of Embryonic Malformations: Teratogenicity Linked to Transient Hypoxia and Hormone Pregnancy Tests Agrees With RCEM and Suggest a Reactive Oxygen Species Pathogenesis, as part of its review of the evidence on hormone pregnancy tests.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

[Holding answer 28 April 2026]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), together with the wider Government, have committed to review any new scientific evidence which comes to light regarding the use of hormone pregnancy tests during early pregnancy and adverse pregnancy outcomes. In line with this commitment, the MHRA will consider whether the recent publication, Recurrent Constellations of Embryonic Malformations (RCEM): Teratogenicity Linked to Transient Hypoxia and Hormone Pregnancy Tests Agrees With RCEM and Suggest a Reactive Oxygen Species Pathogenesis, by Aaron. P. Adam et al, presents any new scientific evidence and will act as appropriate.

Prescription Drugs

Jess Brown-Fuller: [129035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to address the potential impact of brand-specific prescribing on the availability of medication at pharmacies.

Jess Brown-Fuller: [129036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that brand-specific prescribing is matched by adequate supply and distribution arrangements.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:

Decisions about what medicines to prescribe, including whether to prescribe by brand name or generically, are clinical decisions made following discussion with a patient.

Where a prescriber specifies a particular brand or supplier because it is clinically necessary, for example due to side effects or allergies, pharmacies are required to dispense that specific product.

Medicine supply chains are complex, global, and highly regulated and there are a number of reasons why supply can be disrupted, many of which are not specific to the United Kingdom and outside of Government control, including manufacturing difficulties, access to raw materials, sudden demand spikes, or distribution issues and regulatory issues. There are approximately 14,000 licensed medicines and the overwhelming majority are in good supply.

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

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand.

Primary Care: Huntingdon

Ben Obese-Jecty: [125322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to establish new primary healthcare facilities in Huntingdon constituency through the neighbourhood health service programme.

Stephen Kinnock:

At the Autumn Budget, we announced our commitment to delivering up to 250 Neighbourhood Health Centres (NHCs) by 2035, with around 120 centres in place by 2030.

As part of this commitment, we recently announced Wave 1 of our NHC schemes, with 27 sites across England selected to bring care closer to home 12 hours a day, six days a week, backed by £50 million. To support delivery nationally, we have now published the *Neighbourhood health centre guidance for regions and integrated care boards* and the *Neighbourhood health centres: design and performance specification*. These documents have been developed in close collaboration with colleagues across government, and together, they support regions and integrated care boards (ICBs) to further develop their neighbourhood health estate strategies and pipelines.

Nationwide coverage will take time, but we will start in the areas of greatest need where healthy life expectancy is lowest including rural towns and communities with higher deprivation levels and delivering healthcare closer to home for those that need it the most.

Wave 1 is just the beginning. We will build on this momentum to enable us to remain on track for our ambitious timetable to deliver new build NHCs by 2030.

We are supporting regions and ICBs to develop neighbourhood health estates strategies and future pipelines ahead of the 28 May NHC proposal deadline and encourage MPs to engage with their ICBs ahead of this deadline.

Puberty Suppressing Hormones

Vicky Foxcroft: [123205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will conduct a longitudinal study of people treated with puberty blocking medication prior to its ban in 2024 to identify any issues before beginning another trial.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
The Government is committed to supporting research that delivers a more robust, evidence-based understanding of gender incongruence support and treatment, especially for children and young people. The Cass Review received cross-party support and highlighted remaining significant gaps in clinical evidence. The PATHWAYS study positively responds to the Cass Review's recommendation that a trial of puberty suppressing hormones should be taken forward urgently as part of a wider programme of research.

We are supporting the National Health Service in delivering this programme of research, to ensure research is embedded at the heart of new children and young people's gender services as they are shaped. One element of the programme of research is a data linkage study.

The data linkage study is observational in nature, linking and analysing existing, routinely collected healthcare data for adults who, as children, were referred into the former Gender Identity Development Service, previously operated by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

This study requires no active patient participation and may provide useful insights on the experience and outcomes of former child gender service patients.

It is important to highlight that as the study is not designed as a comparative clinical trial, it will not provide direct evidence on the cause or effect of any individual treatment approach, nor provide evidence relating to any treatment's safety or efficacy.

The data linkage study and the PATHWAYS clinical trial are separate, with different designs and purposes within a wider research programme.

Radiotherapy

Ian Lavery: [129104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of patients who were eligible for proton beam therapy but did not receive it due to availability in each of the last five years.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Department does not routinely collect data on the number of patients eligible for this treatment.

Treatment for cancer is highly individualised and decisions about cancer treatment are typically made by clinicians and multidisciplinary teams of healthcare

professionals. They consider all aspects of a patient's health and circumstances when recommending treatment options. While certain treatments may not be advised for some patients, these decisions are based on medical assessments and what's best for the individual's overall health and well-being.

Rare Diseases: Research

Jim Shannon: [127060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how rare and neglected diseases are prioritised in research funding allocations.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
Government responsibility for delivering research into rare diseases is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care, with research delivered via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, with research delivered via UK Research and Innovation, which includes the Medical Research Council (MRC).

The Department of Health and Social Care invests over £1.7 billion each year on research through the NIHR, including research on rare diseases, such as the RareCare study which aims to better understand what causes delays to diagnosis so we can take steps to address this.

The Government is committed to improving the lives of those living with rare diseases through the UK Rare Diseases Framework. Pioneering research is an underpinning theme of the framework. In the 2025 England Rare Disease Action Plan we introduced a new action to support rare disease research through changes to clinical trial regulations. For rare disease research, where patient populations are small and trial designs often complex, the flexibility and proportionality of this framework will enable more efficient set-up and conduct of clinical trials. We have also made significant investments to support rare disease research. This includes the Rare Disease Research UK Platform, a £14 million investment over five years from the MRC and the NIHR, announced in 2023, which is now established and positioned well within the rare disease research landscape. Further information the Rare Disease Research UK Platform is available at the following link:

https://rd-research.org.uk/nodes/

Social Services

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help to support the development of individual good life plans for people in social care.

Stephen Kinnock:
The Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to promote wellbeing when arranging social care for an individual, and this provides individuals and their carers with more control over the way in which care and support is provided.

As part of the Department's national improvement and support offer to the adult social care sector, it funds Think Local Act Personal (TLAP), to deliver a programme that supports the personalisation of services. This includes facilitating local use of TLAP's Making it Real framework and principles, which ensure that people who draw on care and support are involved in shaping services. TLAP also helps with practical models of self-directed support and advice on the personalisation of services.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing how local authorities in England are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014, including assessing needs. The assessments identify local authorities' strengths and areas for improvement, facilitating the sharing of good practice and helping us to target support where it is most needed. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing to discharge its duties under the Care Act to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has powers to intervene. All reports are published on CQC's website at the following link:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports.

As part of the progress we are making on building a National Care Service, we are supporting the CQC to be a trusted partner, regulator, and driver of standards across England for adult social care, underpinned by provider inspections and local authority (LA) assessments that shine a light on LA performance.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: **[128958]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Department is taking to create a system of democratic accountability and consultative governance system to advise elected representatives in their responsibilities to social care.

Stephen Kinnock:
The Department ensures that adult social care operates within clear lines of democratic accountability, with ministers accountable to Parliament, and local authorities responsible under the Care Act 2014 to meet social care needs.

Alongside this, we maintain regular and structured engagement with a wide range of stakeholders across the sector, including local government, provider organisations, charities, and people with lived experience, to ensure decision-making is informed by consultations with those working in and affected by the system.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: **[128960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help develop short-term and long-term strategic plans for the social care sector.

Stephen Kinnock:
The independent commission into adult social care is underway, developing plans for how we move to a National Care Service based on greater choice and control, joined-up health and care services, and higher quality of care.

Phase 1 of the commission will report this year, making recommendations to address immediate priorities for adult social care, laying the groundwork for long-term reform and setting us on the path to deliver a National Care Service.

In the meantime the Government is already putting the foundations in place, enabling choice and control through record investment in the Disabled Facilities Grant, including £723 million this year, improving care quality through the first ever adult social care Fair Pay Agreement backed by £500 million, and joining up services by improving national data and digital infrastructure and developing neighbourhood health services.

Social Services: Local Government

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of the provision of social care services by Local Authority Social Service Departments.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of social care resources being transferred to local government departments to deliver social care services.

Stephen Kinnock:
Funding for adult social care is provided by the Government to local authorities as part of the local government finance settlement and various grants. Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are tasked with the duty to shape their care markets to meet the diverse needs of all local people.

In exercising these duties, local authorities should balance a range of relevant factors when considering the type of care provider they commission. They should encourage or deliver a range of different services to ensure people have a genuine choice of high-quality care services. Market decisions should be informed by considerations of population needs and market sustainability, with the aim of improving outcomes through high-quality, personalised care.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing how local authorities in England are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. The assessments identify local authorities' strengths and areas for improvement, facilitating the sharing of good practice and helping us to target support where it is most needed. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing to discharge its duties under the Care Act to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has powers to intervene. All reports are published on the CQC's website at the following link:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports

Social Services: Pay

Paula Barker: [128869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he intends to take steps through the fair pay agreement process for the adult social care sector to reduce the take-home pay gap between social care support workers and equivalent NHS Band 3 roles.

Stephen Kinnock:
We plan to introduce the first ever Fair Pay Agreement in 2028, backed by £500 million of funding to improve pay and conditions for the adult social care workforce.

The Fair Pay Agreement process will see a new body formed to negotiate changes to pay and terms and conditions for care workers, improving recruitment and retention, and giving staff better recognition for their vital work. Both employers and trade unions will sit on the body, and this initial investment will mean that by 2028, care workers will expect to see a boost in their yearly wages.

The details of individual Fair Pay Agreements for the care sector, including who it applies to, and the resultant impacts on an individual's pay in a given social care role, will be subject to this negotiation process, and is for the negotiating body to decide.

Social Workers

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a new community social work professional that combines essential clinical skills with relationship- and strengths-based practical knowledge.

Stephen Kinnock:
Adult social care is part of our vision for a Neighbourhood Health Service that shifts care from hospitals to communities, with more personalised, proactive, and joined-up health and care services that help people stay independent for as long as possible. Social work professionals already work in and with the National Health Service and will be an important part of neighbourhood teams to help people stay independent for longer and play an enhanced role in rehabilitation and recovery. We recognise that in order to achieve this, cultural changes will be needed within the NHS and wider health and care system, and we are keen to strengthen partnership between the NHS and local government.

We support the supply of social workers with the right skills, knowledge, and values to support adults, children, and families. Strength-based and relationship-based approaches are fundamental to social work practice and are a key part of training and re-registration requirements.

In the NHS, social workers are classed as 'clinicians', having the same protected title, professional qualification, registration, and continuing professional development

requirements as other professionals, meaning they develop similar clinical skills as other clinicians.

We engage and work closely with the social work sector including through the Chief Social Worker (CSW) for Adults. The CSW provides independent expert advice to ministers on social work reform and works with key leaders in the sector to drive forward the improvement and reform programme for social care, contributing to social work and social care policy implementation.

Sodium Valproate and Surgical Mesh Implants: Compensation

Dr Caroline Johnson: [127842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to respond to the Hughes report before prorogation.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
[Holding answer 22 April 2026]: The Government is carefully considering the work done by the Patient Safety Commissioner and her report, which set out recommendations for redress for those harmed by valproate and pelvic mesh.

The Government has deep sympathy for all those affected and recognises the profound impact that these harms have had on individuals and their families.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has been clear that he wants to make meaningful progress during this Parliament, although a decision to provide compensation has not yet been made. We recognise how difficult and disappointing this uncertainty is for those affected, and we will ensure that the public is kept informed as soon as any decision on redress is made.

I met with the Patient Safety Commissioner, Dr Henrietta Hughes since I have been in post, and had a very productive discussion about the ongoing health initiatives led by the Department regarding sodium valproate and pelvic mesh. Details of the Government's work to date are set out in recent letters to the Dr Hughes, which are published on her website.

Speech and Language Therapy: Children

Lee Anderson: [125715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the waiting time for NHS children's speech and language therapy support in (a) Ashfield, (b) Nottinghamshire and (c) nationally.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
Community health services, including children's speech and language therapy, are locally commissioned to enable systems to best meet the needs of their communities.

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) recognises that waiting times for children's speech and language therapy (SLT) remain too long in parts of Nottinghamshire, including Ashfield, and is taking action with system partners to improve access.

Since the 2023 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection of local services for children and young people with SEND, the ICB and partners have undertaken targeted transformation activity, including:

- introduction of a SLT advice line to support earlier intervention;

- refocusing clinical capacity to address long waits in autism pathways; and

- piloting open-access early years drop-in sessions for children under four year olds.

A revised service delivery model is being implemented across SLT pathways, including:

- group assessment of all two to three year olds;

- increased use of group-based therapy and parent-supported interventions; and

- enhanced parent/carer training to support children at home.

These changes will be implemented alongside additional improvements to the model, including building workforce capacity and capability and improving support to schools and early years settings.

Nationally, ICBs are being supported to reduce waiting times through an evidence informed Children and Young People Community Speech and Language Therapy Toolkit developed with speech and language therapists, children, families, and carers.

We have set a clear target through the Medium-Term Planning Framework for systems to work to reduce long waits for community health services, including speech and language therapy.

By 2028/29, at least 80% of community health services activity should take place within 18 weeks. This will be a key part of the shift from hospital to community. In 2026/27, ICBs and community health services providers must also develop plans to eliminate 52 week waits. Whilst targets are not service-line specific, capacity growth and waiting time targets should impact positively on children and young people's speech and language therapy services.

NHS England is also working with the Department for Education to identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs to deliver the Early Language Support for Every Child programme in Early Years and Primary School settings. This programme is funding innovative workforce models to support early intervention for children with unidentified speech, language, and communication needs which may reduce exacerbation of need that might lead to a specialist speech and language therapist and/or Education Health Care Plan referral in the medium-term.

Lee Anderson: **[125718]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential link between increases in digital communication methods and speech, language and communication needs in children.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
We recognise that digital devices are now a part of most children's lives, and that their impact on development, health, and behaviour is complex and not yet fully understood. Last month, the Government published advice on screen use for children aged zero to five years old, which is available at the following link:

https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/screen-time-under-5s/

The Government has also launched the Children's Digital Wellbeing consultation on measures to ensure children have healthy relationships with technology, mobile phones, and social media. The consultation is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/growing-up-in-the-online-world-a-national-consultation

In addition, the Government will produce evidence-based screen time guidance for parents of children aged five to 16 years old.

We continue to learn from ongoing studies including the Children of the 2020s longitudinal study, which is available at the following link:

https://children2020s.ipsos.com/

Tobacco and Vapes Bill

Andrew Rosindell: **[123585]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to publish an implementation timetable for the regulations under the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Tobacco and Vapes Bill is in its final stages, awaiting Royal Assent.

We published a call for evidence to inform future regulations on licensing, registration, vape flavours, and appearance, which closed on 3 December 2025.

On 13 February, we launched the consultation on smoke-free, heated tobacco-free, and vape-free places in England, which closes on 8 May, and which is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/smoke-free-heated-tobacco-free-and-vape-free-places-in-england/smoke-free-heated-tobacco-free-and-vape-free-places-in-england

The devolved administrations will run separate consultations. Following Royal Assent of the bill, we will further develop proposals for secondary legislation, including public consultation. This will help to inform our implementation schedule, and we will update on it in due course.

Trastuzumab Deruxtecan

Jeff Smith: [129159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make the drug Enhertu is available for people with secondary breast cancer in England.

Dr Zubir Ahmed:
I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for East Grinstead and Uckfield on 13 January 2026 to Question 103810.

Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

Sarah Pochin: [127008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Chief Executive of the NHS Business Services Authority on the operation of the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Department has been working with the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), the administrators of the scheme, to continue to take steps to improve the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS), including through improving claimants' experiences and supporting engagement with healthcare providers to allow claims to be progressed to medical assessment at a faster rate. Officials have regular discussions with the NHSBSA on the operation of the VDPS.

Sarah Pochin: [127009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what performance targets his Department has set for the processing of claims under the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Department works closely with the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), the administrators of the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS), to improve claimants' experiences. While no specific performance targets have been set for the processing of claims, the Department and NHSBSA are committed to continuing to make improvements to the scheme, including by supporting engagement with healthcare providers to allow claims to be progressed to medical assessment at a faster rate.

Data from the NHSBSA shows as of 31 March 2026, there were 2,203 live VDPS claims, claims that are yet to receive an outcome. This is compared to 4,985 live claims as of 31 September 2025.

Emma Lewell: [128691]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme replacement.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
Our deepest sympathies are with those who have experienced harm following vaccination, as well as their families.

The Government recognises that concerns have been raised in relation to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS), including during Module 4 of the COVID-19 inquiry. Following the publication of the COVID-19 Inquiry's Module 4 report on vaccines and therapeutics on 16 April 2026, the Government will carefully consider its recommendations, including on the reform of the VDPS, and will respond formally in due course.

Vitamin D: Ethnic Groups

Clive Jones: **[R]** **[128972]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 March 2026 to Question 116006 on Vitamin D: Dietary Supplements, what interim measures he is taking to tackle Vitamin D deficiency rates in black and Asian populations prior to the analysis of the National Diet and Nutrition Survey.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:
The Government is not currently planning to introduce any targeted vitamin D measures. Any further risk management approaches will be considered once the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition has completed reviewing the evidence on vitamin D requirements for people with higher melanin concentrations and made recommendations.

Government recommendations on vitamin D are publicised via the NHS.UK website and the Department's social marketing campaigns Better Health, Healthier Families, and Best Start in Life. These channels help ensure that at-risk groups, for example people who have an African, African-Caribbean, or South Asian background, as well as the general population, are aware of the importance of vitamin D supplementation.

HOME OFFICE

Asylum: Afghanistan

Sir Mark Hendrick: **[128186]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to expedite the processing of asylum claims of Afghan nationals who (a) served with and (b) assisted British troops in the Afghanistan war.

Alex Norris:
Every asylum claim admitted to the UK asylum system is carefully considered on its individual merits, in line with published policies. There are clear processes in place for prioritising asylum claims on the basis of vulnerability in line with our published guidance available at: Asylum decision making prioritisation: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK.

Asylum: Artificial Intelligence

Hannah Spencer: [128589]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to WPQ UIN 121674, tabled on 17 March 2026 on Asylum: Artificial Intelligence what a)steps were taken at the design stage to assess b)mechanisms are in place to monitor the i) accuracy ii) political neutrality of the information used by ACS and APS tools.

Hannah Spencer: [128591]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to WPQ UIN 121674, tabled on 17 March 2026 on Asylum: Artificial Intelligence if people will be informed if their asylum case is being assessed with the input of AI under the ACS and APS schemes.

Alex Norris:
Both ACS and APS underwent user acceptance testing and evaluation was conducted following pilots of both tools. All caseworkers were given comprehensive training on the use of APS before it was operationalised (to note ACS is not yet fully operational). A specific inbox was set up for Decision Makers to feed back any issues found with the tool.

All questions asked of the tool, have and will be logged, and are auditable. Subject Matter Expert (SME) testing continues after operationalisation, in conjunction with the CPIT (Country Policy & Information Team), for APS. ACS has not yet been operationalised, but our Analysis and Insight team plan to conduct further follow up evaluations in due course.

Existing quality control processes are followed alongside data capture, development and two-way feedback mechanisms.

No process and/or tooling details are currently released to asylum claimants - this has not changed with the incorporation of AI elements into case working.

Anneliese Dodds: [129696]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will set out the mechanisms her Department are using to monitor the early stages of use of the Asylum Case Summarisation and Asylum Policy Search tools.

Anneliese Dodds: [129697]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to monitor outcomes from the Asylum Case Summarisation system to ensure that summaries are not provided to caseworkers if they (a) include missing information and (b) are inaccurate.

Alex Norris:
Asylum Case Summarisation (ACS) was designed with the ‘Human in the Loop’ principle in mind. This means it is not possible for decision makers to use the tool to decide an asylum claim; it is an aid to case working. The tool uses a Large Language Model to extract and summarise information from existing asylum interview transcript

documents to provide decision-makers with a concise summary document. Asylum Decision Makers are required to read all evidence and case notes specific to the claimant, before deciding a claim.

Part of the quality assurance framework asks if all documents submitted in support of a claim have been considered, with quality assurance checks regularly carried out on both asylum interviews and decisions.

As part of ongoing evaluation of the Asylum Policy Search (APS) tool, Subject Matter Expert (SME) testing continues in conjunction with the Country Policy and Information Team. A dedicated inbox was created for feedback and/or errors to be flagged and rectified. This is in addition to the existing quality assurance checks conducted in Asylum Operations. ACS has (as of today 27/04) become operational, and the same approach to ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms is being set out.

Asylum: Great Yarmouth

Rupert Lowe: **[128621]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is currently considering providing accommodation for asylum seekers in Great Yarmouth borough.

Alex Norris:
The Asylum Accommodation Plans are the mechanism via which the Home Office works towards achieving Full Dispersal and thus, a fair and balanced distribution of asylum accommodation across all local authorities nationally.

The Asylum Accommodation Plans are underpinned by an indexing model which accounts for a multitude of pressures within local authorities, including – availability of housing, levels of homelessness, availability of GP and dentists as well as levels of community cohesion. Development of the plans was informed by engagement with a range of national, regional and local stakeholders, to ensure that the evidence base was reflective of broader local authority feedback.

For the safety and security of those we accommodate and staff, it is our longstanding policy not to disclose information about sites which may or may not be utilised by the Home Office.

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of supported asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area, including those in dispersal properties. These statistics can be found at Immigration system statistics data tables Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK.

Rupert Lowe: **[128622]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what expenditure has been incurred by her Department on assessments of asylum accommodation sites in Great Yarmouth that did not proceed.

Rupert Lowe: [128623]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the value for money to the taxpayer of her Department conducting repeated site assessments for asylum accommodation on sites that do not proceed in (a) England and (b) Great Yarmouth constituency.

Alex Norris:
Home office undertakes routine assurance checks before committing to any accommodation particularly any large sites learning lessons from the past. Cost of these checks will be relatively modest but essential particularly in ruling out unsuitable options.

The Asylum Accommodation Plans are the mechanism via which the Home Office works towards achieving Full Dispersal and thus, a fair and balanced distribution of asylum accommodation across all local authorities nationally.

The Asylum Accommodation Plans are underpinned by an indexing model which accounts for a multitude of pressures within local authorities, including – availability of housing, levels of homelessness, availability of GP and dentists as well as levels of community cohesion. Development of the plans was informed by engagement with a range of national, regional and local stakeholders, to ensure that the evidence base was reflective of broader local authority feedback.

For the safety and security of those we accommodate and staff, it is our longstanding policy not to disclose information about sites which may or may not be utilised by the Home Office.

The Home Office publishes all available information on asylum expenditure in the Home Office Annual Report and accounts at Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK.

Biometrics

Clive Lewis: [129495]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has issued guidance on using experimental methods in conjunction with facial recognition.

Sarah Jones:
The Home Office has not issued specific guidance. Police use of facial recognition and similar technologies is currently governed by a legal framework that includes data protection, equality and human rights laws, national guidance, a code of practice and force level policies. The College of Policing has also published guidance and an Authorised Professional Practice setting out police forces use new technology. However, we intend to bring forward a new legal framework to provide clearer, more specific rules.

The Government's aim is that a new legal framework will ensure all police forces across the country can use facial recognition and similar technologies with greater confidence, and that their uses and limits are clear to the public.

Last year, we launched a public consultation on when and how biometrics, facial recognition and similar technologies should be used, and what safeguards and oversight are needed.

British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries

Mr Gregory Campbell: [129455]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help reduce waiting times for UK citizens travelling through airports in Schengen area countries in summer 2026.

Mike Tapp:
The Government is working with the European Commission and Schengen countries to understand the new border process changes and to promote flexible, pragmatic solutions for UK travellers.

Waiting times in Schengen area countries remain a matter for the European Union and individual member states.

Criminal Investigation: Self-harm

Alex Mayer: [129380]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued to police forces on assessing the risk of self-harm of people released under investigation.

Alex Mayer: [129381]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the numbers of people who have been released under investigation for more than a year during the last five years.

Sarah Jones:
Decisions on release and safeguarding are operational matters for individual and operationally independent police forces, taken in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, its Codes of Practice, and national professional guidance. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services regularly inspects police forces, including on how they protect vulnerable people.

The Home Office hold statistics on the numbers of individuals Released Under Investigation by duration in the Police Custody and Pre-Charge Bail release, which covers the years 2022/23 to 2024/25:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69d50f114d39faba1f3b27a9/released-under-investigation-data-tables-year-ending-march-2025.ods

Prior to this, for 2020/21 and 2021/22 the Released Under Investigation statistics were published as Experimental Statistics.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61b74f1fe90e070445fd782c/released-under-investigation-data-tables-police-powers-and-procedures-year-ending-march-2021.xlsx

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/636e3e4a8fa8f559604a0b2f/pre-charge-bail-statistics-police-powers-and-procedure-year-ending-march-2022.xlsx.ods

Due to the provisional and incomplete nature of this dataset, statistics on Released Under Investigation have been designated as 'Official Statistics in Development', to acknowledge that further development is ongoing to improve data quality.

Additionally, as different numbers of police forces have been able to provide Released Under Investigation data in each year, any trends on the number of people who were on Released Under Investigation for longer than a year should be interpreted with caution.

Home Office: Staff

Rupert Lowe: [129636]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what minimum English language proficiency requirements apply to (a) Border Force officers and (b) immigration enforcement staff; and whether her Department has conducted any audits or assessments in the last five years of the ability of non-native English-speaking staff in those roles to communicate effectively in English with members of the public.

Mike Tapp:
Border Force roles are classified as reserved posts and are therefore open only to UK nationals. Individuals who have settled status in the UK are required to meet English language requirements as part of the UK nationality process. This requirement is assessed by an approved provider at an authorised test centre. As a result, there is no separate English language requirement for Border Force roles, as this criterion will already have been met through the UK nationality process.

While no specific audit has been undertaken, communication proficiency is assessed through a robust recruitment and training process and ongoing performance management processes.

With regard to reading and writing proficiency, operational roles require GCSEs in English and Mathematics. While non-operational roles do not necessarily include GCSE requirements, they typically require specific skills, experience, or professional expertise that would exceed GCSE-level standards.

Home Office: Training

Sir John Hayes: [128646]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the list of training programmes used by civil servants in her Department since 2020.

Sarah Jones:
There is no single authoritative source that captures all locally commissioned or bespoke training activity across the Department.

Immigration

Neil O'Brien: [128354]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many grants of indefinite leave to remain have been revoked this month

Mike Tapp:
There were 8 grants of ILR revoked in March and 5 grants of ILR have been revoked in April 2026 to date.

Immigration: Syria

Afzal Khan: [128827]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent meetings she has had with Syrian representative and diaspora groups about changes to the asylum and immigration process.

Alex Norris:
Home Office ministers have met with a range of stakeholders since the Home Secretary announced proposed changes to the immigration system.

We understand how important these changes are to individuals, families and communities as we work to restore public confidence in our immigration system. For example, the Government ran a public consultation on the proposed earned settlement changes to gather views on the proposals.

In addition to the consultation, the Home Office also ran separate engagement sessions with our immigration advisory groups and other affected stakeholders.

The Home Office will continue to engage with a range of stakeholders as the government considers the consultation responses and develops the policy further.

Migrant Workers: Sponsorship

Max Wilkinson: [128314]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the payment of (a) PAYE income tax and (b) National Insurance contributions in respect of UK-based employees is considered as evidence that an organisation is operating in the UK.

Mike Tapp:
In relation to the licensing of businesses for the purposes of Sponsoring overseas employers, the evidential options to demonstrate that they have a UK footprint and trading presence are set out in Appendix A of the Sponsor guidance.

This can be found at: Sponsor guidance appendix A: supporting documents for sponsor applications - GOV.UK

Nitrous Oxide: Misuse

Mark Sewards: [126172]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support (a) local authorities and (b) police forces in tackling the misuse of nitrous oxide in public places and the associated littering of discarded canisters.

Sarah Jones:
The Government is aware of concerns about nitrous oxide misuse in public places and littering of discarded canisters, which places a burden on communities and local authorities.

Nitrous oxide has been controlled as a Class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 since 2023. Under the 1971 Act, nitrous oxide carries penalties of up to two years' imprisonment for illicit possession and up to 14 years for illicit supply. Exemptions for legitimate use are applicable where there is no intention of wrongful inhalation. The police and other law enforcement agencies are operationally independent, but we expect them to prioritise resources towards tackling crime, including drug related crime.

Local authorities are responsible for clearing litter from public and have powers to prosecute littering offenders or issue fixed penalty notices. Littering is a criminal offence punishable by a fine of up to £2,500 on conviction, or a fixed penalty of up to £500.

Additionally, the Government is increasing funding for waste crime enforcement and continues to work with police, councils and partners to discourage misuse, support enforcement and reduce associated environmental harm.

Nitrous Oxide: Sales

Mark Sewards: [126171]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve enforcement against (a) people and (b) businesses supplying nitrous oxide unlawfully.

Sarah Jones:
Nitrous oxide has been controlled as a Class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 since 2023. It is an offence to produce, supply, possess or import nitrous oxide, regardless of canister size, except for activities explicitly exempt under the 1971 Act.

Under the 1971 Act, nitrous oxide carries penalties of up to two years' imprisonment for illicit possession and up to 14 years for illicit supply. Exemptions for legitimate use are applicable where there is no intention of wrongful inhalation. The police and other law enforcement agencies are operationally independent, but we expect them to prioritise resources towards tackling crime, including drug related crime.

The Government also works to reduce harm through public information campaigns, including the 'Talk to FRANK' website. The Home Office works closely with the Department of Health and Social Care ('DHSC') to promote awareness. DHSC have

worked with the PSHE Association to develop lesson plans on drugs, alcohol and tobacco which include specific references to the dangers of nitrous oxide. Data shows that recreational use of nitrous oxide among 16 to 24-year-olds has fallen to its lowest level since records began.

Online sale of illegal drugs is further addressed through the Online Safety Act 2023. Under the 2023 Act, Ofcom can audit systems, require remedial action, and impose strong penalties on companies who fail to address criminality on their platforms - including fines of up to £18m or 10% of global turnover.

Offenders: Deportation

Chris Philp: [129285]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders were not removed from the United Kingdom in the most recent year for which data is available because of an Article 3 ECHR medical claim.

Chris Philp: [129288]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many deportation orders against foreign national offenders have been suspended, revoked or not enforced as a result of an Article 3 ECHR medical claim in each year since 2016.

Chris Philp: [129289]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for leave to remain have been granted on Article 3 ECHR medical grounds in each year since 2016.

Alex Norris:
The information that you have requested about Article 3 ECHR and deportation is not available from published statistics.

We are fully committed to making our communities safer by returning those who break our laws, which is why in the period between this government coming to power and January 2026, over 8,700 foreign national offenders (FNOs) have been returned from the UK. This is a 32% increase on the FNO returns recorded in the previous nineteen-month period ending June 2024, and we will continue to do everything we can to remove these vile criminals from our streets.

Offenders: Foreign Nationals

Rupert Lowe: [127258]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of recorded sexual offences and violent offences against women in the Great Yarmouth local authority area in each of the last five years involved suspects who were foreign nationals, broken down by offence type and immigration status at the time of arrest.

Alex Norris:
The Home Office collects and publishes recorded crime statistics from police forces in England and Wales including on sexual offences and violence against the person offences, broken down by year, and Community Safety Partnership (CSP) area, including for Great Yarmouth. These are routinely published as official statistics and can be accessed here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/police-recorded-crime-and-outcomes-open-data-tables

The police recorded crime series does not include data on the nationality and immigration status of suspects.

Police Custody: Photographs

Clive Lewis: [129496]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a statutory requirement for the deletion of custody images where no (a) charge and (b) conviction follows.

Sarah Jones:
The retention and deletion of custody images is currently governed by the statutory Police and Information Management Code of Practice, and the associated College of Policing's Management of Police Information (MoPI) guidance and Authorised Professional Practice. These require forces to retain images only where necessary and proportionate and to review and delete them in line with assessed continuing policing need. Individuals are also able to apply to the police to have their custody image deleted, where they believe continued retention is not necessary.

Following the recent public consultation on biometrics, facial recognition and similar technologies, the government intends to bring forward a new legal framework covering biometric retention rules.

Police: Finance

Shivani Raja: [125068]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Department intends to review transparency requirements for nationally operating police-associated units funded by private industry bodies.

Sarah Jones:
Transparency requirements, including in relation to funding, for national policing units is the responsibility of the National Police Chiefs' Council, or relevant agency which has responsibility for oversight and governance of that unit.

Police: Surrey

Helen Maguire: [129783]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department has given to local police officers in light of protests in Surrey.

Sarah Jones:
This Government is committed to protecting the right to peaceful protest, while ensuring public order legislation balances freedom of expression with protecting the public from serious disruption or harm. Under the Public Order Act 1986 the police have powers to manage protests, and it is for individual forces to determine the most appropriate approach based on the specific context.

The Home Office engaged with Surrey Police and the National Police Coordination Centre in relation to recent protest activity. The National Police Coordination Centre has recently received additional funding to improve its capabilities, including in relation to intelligence gathering and mobilisation to ensure it can properly support police forces in managing public order risks.

The Government is committed to supporting the mental and physical wellbeing of police officers, including during periods of heightened operational demands such as protests. We work closely with policing partners to ensure officers are properly supported. This includes continued funding for the National Police Wellbeing Service, which provides evidence-based guidance, advice, tools and resources to forces, supporting Chief Constables in their duty to safeguard the wellbeing of their workforce.

Sexual Offences: Surrey

Helen Maguire: [129784]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the number of specialist trained police officers in Surrey to support victims of sexual assault.

Jess Phillips:
The College of Policing is responsible for recording the number of specialists trained officers in each police force, such as those with specialist training in responding to sexual offences.

The Home Secretary has instructed all police forces in England and Wales, including Surrey, to implement a specialist rape and sexual offences team by 2029. These measures will mean that by the end of this Parliament, victims and their supporters can be confident that, wherever they live police forces have the specialist skills, knowledge and capability to necessary to bring offenders to justice.

More broadly, we have committed to strengthen training on violence against women and girls for policing and are working closely with the new National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection to delivery this.

Sudan: Overseas Students

Seamus Logan: [129655]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Sudanese nationals were granted student visas for study in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mike Tapp:
The Home Office publishes data on visas and extensions by route and nationality in the 'Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on visa grants are published in table 'Vis_D02' of the detailed entry clearance visas dataset, and data on extension grants are published in table 'Exe_D01' of the extensions detailed datasets. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. The latest data is up to the end of December 2025. The Home Office does not publish information on location of study in the UK.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the ' Research and statistics calendar '.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Fire and Rescue Services: Devon

Martin Wrigley: [129047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support fire and rescue workers in Devon.

Samantha Dixon:
Fire and rescue workers in Devon are employed by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority which is responsible for workforce wellbeing and operational deployment based on local risk.

Government supports fire and rescue services nationally through funding, policy and resilience arrangements, while operational and employment decisions remain a matter for local fire and rescue authorities, working with partners to respond to risks in their communities.

The 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement makes available almost £1.95 billion in core spending power for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England, representing an average increase of 4.71 per cent compared to 2025/26.

This is part of a multi-year settlement which will deliver a 12.75 per cent increase in core spending power by the end of the period, alongside a further £15 million secured since the provisional settlement to support services to plan, invest and strengthen workforce health and wellbeing.

Green Belt: Epping Forest

Dr Neil Hudson: [128831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the level of proposed development on Green Belt land in the Epping Forest District, and what steps his Department is taking to protect the Green Belt.

Matthew Pennycook:
The government is committed to preserving Green Belts, which have served England's towns and cities well over many decades. We have not changed the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework still contains strong protections for the Green Belt, making it clear that inappropriate development should not be approved unless justified by very special circumstances.

It is for local planning authorities themselves, including Epping Forest District Council, to determine whether exceptional circumstances exist that justify the release of Green Belt, and we expect them to first demonstrate that they have examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting identified need for development – including making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land, optimising the density of development, and working with neighbouring authorities to assess whether identified need might be sensibly accommodated.

Local Government: Cornwall and Devon

David Reed: [129393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he a) intends to require Cornwall, Devon, Torbay and Plymouth separately or together, to be part of a combined directly elected mayoral authority to access the full range of devolved powers b) has set a deadline for implementing this policy and c) has made an estimate of the costs of this additional layer of government.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:
We want to see all of England access devolved powers as soon as possible by establishing Strategic Authorities that can make the key decisions to drive economic growth and celebrate local identities. We are continuing to engage in conversations with local authorities in Cornwall, Devon, Torbay and Plymouth, to take the next step in unlocking the powers and functions available through the Devolution Framework for these areas, at a pace and configuration to be agreed with local leaders.

David Reed: [129394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the costs of implementing the re-organisation of local government in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay for each local authority and what funding will his department make available to meet them.

Alison McGovern:
As part of the local government reorganisation process, councils were required to set out assessments of implementation and transition costs within their proposals. It is expected that councils will be able to meet these costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

Alongside this, the Government has announced up to £63 million in capacity funding to support councils going through local government reorganisation. At least £900,000 will be provided for each new unitary council to help with transition and set-up costs.

The consultation for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay closed on the 26 March. The Secretary of State will now assess the proposals against the criteria, the consultation responses, and all other relevant information before deciding which, if any, proposal to implement.

Local Government: Devon

David Reed: **[129395]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he expects to publish the results of the consultation on local government reorganisation in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay which ended on 26th March 2026.

David Reed: **[129396]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the costs of conducting the consultation on local government re-organisation in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

David Reed: **[129397]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what is the number of individual correspondence his department received from a) members of the public, b) voluntary groups and c) business representative organisations in favour of the re-organisation of local government in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay prior to the recent consultation.

Alison McGovern:
The Government anticipates an announcement before the summer recess on which, if any, proposal for unitary local government will be implemented in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. A summary of the consultation will be published at the time of the announcement. A range of views were expressed to the Department as proposals were developed, and local residents and groups have now been able to have their say through the consultation.

The Government provided £7.6million last year for councils in England with two-tier local government to develop proposals for unitary local government. This helped councils meet the cost of proposal development, including consultation and engagement with their local communities. All five proposals for local government in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay were consulted on via the recent statutory consultation.

Local Government: Reorganisation

Paula Barker: [129240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's document entitled Summary of the local government reorganisation process, published on 25 July 2025, if he will help support incoming shadow authorities to ensure that contracts that have been novated are fiscally deliverable for providers.

Alison McGovern:
The Government continues to provide guidance and support to councils throughout the reorganisation process. We have issued explanatory guidance to councils undergoing local government reorganisation on Financial decisions before local government reorganisations and further guidance on decision making. We are working with the Local Government Association and other sector organisations to ensure appropriate support is provided at all stages.

Local authorities are independent financial bodies, and their assets and liabilities, including contracts, will move to new councils. Decisions on service delivery, contracts and if there is any renegotiation of terms with providers, will be a matter for individual local authorities as needed.

Local Government: Supported Housing

Llinos Medi: [129573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many non-metropolitan county councils in England are supported housing providers.

Alison McGovern:
This data is not collected centrally by the UK Government.

New Businesses: Finance

Gareth Snell: [128798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of security deposit requirements on the cash flow of new start-up businesses.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:
Security deposits are common in commercial leases. Contractual terms, such as security deposits, are a private matter to be negotiated between parties. However, we would always advise that, where possible, parties seek advice before agreeing to any terms.

The Government has commissioned the Law Commission to review key aspects of commercial leasing to ensure they are fit for a modern day context. This work is underway and further detail will be provided in due course.

Planning: Reform

Sean Woodcock: [129388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many members of the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel have been allocated to support the drafting of (a) primary and (b) secondary legislation in pursuit of planning reforms, in (i) total headcount and (ii) full-time equivalent.

Samantha Dixon:
Within the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) and Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) legal teams there are lawyers working on MHCLG related business, alongside members in the Government Legal Department. There is no group of Parliamentary Counsel within OPC that is assigned to work exclusively on planning reform for MHCLG.

Temporary Accommodation: Children

Catherine West: [129494]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help improve the health and wellbeing of children living in temporary accommodation.

Alison McGovern:
Homelessness levels are far too high, and this can have a devastating impact on those affected, especially children.

The Child Poverty Strategy and our National Plan to End Homelessness set out our commitments to eradicate unsuitable or poor-quality accommodation and ensure children in temporary accommodation do not experience gaps in health care provision or disruption to their education.

This includes our commitment to eliminate the unlawful use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for families by the end of this Parliament and improve the supply of good quality temporary accommodation.

Alongside this, the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill will provide the strongest protections in a generation, making sure vulnerable children are identified and supported. We are also introducing a new temporary accommodation notification duty, to inform schools and specified health providers when a child is placed in temporary accommodation, to allow additional or different support to be provided to these children.

We will ensure families in temporary accommodation are proactively contacted by health services, and have committed to introduce a new clinical code, to improve data and improve outcomes in temporary accommodation, and end the practice of discharging newborns into Bed and Breakfast or other unsuitable shared accommodation.

We have also set out our ambition to cut school days lost for children in temporary accommodation, backed by data so that targeted support can be provided more

effectively. To achieve this, there will be a stronger role for pastoral teams to work closely with families in temporary accommodation including preventing unlawful removal from a school's roll.

Temporary Accommodation: Pregnancy

Catherine West: [129497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support pregnant women living in temporary accommodation.

Alison McGovern:
Homelessness levels are far too high, and this can have a devastating impact on those affected. Our National Plan to End Homelessness sets out tangible actions and targets for delivery in this Parliament, which will act as milestones on the way to achieving our long-term vision to end homelessness and rough sleeping. We are providing over £3.6 billion in funding for homelessness and rough sleeping services from 2026/27 to 2028/29, which will help local areas deliver tailored solutions to tackle all forms of homelessness.

The law is clear that B&B accommodation is never suitable for pregnant women except for very short-term emergencies. The Homelessness Code of Guidance makes clear that temporary accommodation must be suitable to the household's needs, and kept under review. Suitability is assessed by considering all aspects of the accommodation in light of the relevant needs, requirements and circumstances of the homeless person and their household.

The Government is committed to ensuring that all pregnant people, including those experiencing homelessness, can access safe, personalised and equitable maternity care. That is why the Government is also working with councils and the NHS to end the practise of mothers with newborn babies being discharged into B&Bs or other unsuitable shared accommodation.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority: Lobbying

Sir James Cleverly: [124729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 2 March 2026, to Question 113631, on West Yorkshire Combined Authority: Lexington Communications, and of 12 March 2026, to Question 117739, on Local Government: Lobbying, if the departmental Accounting Officer will undertake an assessment of whether departmental funding to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority is being spent in a manner which is compliant with HM Treasury guidance of Managing Public Money by hiring a lobbying firm to lobby the government.

Alison McGovern:
MHCLG is not aware of West Yorkshire Combined Authority breaching any grant conditions in relation to funds it provides. Mayoral Strategic Authorities are expected to follow the existing principles and processes described in the English Devolution

Accountability Framework and Scrutiny Protocol, which sets out how Mayors will be held to account by central government, at local level and by the public. This includes a duty to ensure value for money.

JUSTICE

Bail: Young Offenders

Shivani Raja: [128774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of bail conditions in reducing reoffending and protecting the public in cases involving persons under the age of 18 accused of violent offences.

Jake Richards:
The Government is clear that when the courts are considering bail for children charged with violent offences, public protection should always be the foremost priority, alongside reducing the risk of offending. For children, there is the option of imposing Bail Intensive Support and Supervision which includes high levels of contact, monitoring, structured activity and in some cases electronic tags.

While evidence specifically on the effectiveness of different bail conditions on reducing offending or protection of the public is limited, there is evidence on the factors that reduce the chances of a child offending. The key principles of lowering the risk of offending include therapeutic rather than punitive responses, and family-based interventions that draw on community support and address wider needs, such as education and health. A strong and robust bail package is expected to address these key principles to ensure public safety.

Deputy Prime Minister

Paul Holmes: [77626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the new Deputy Prime Minister will have an office in 70 Whitehall office; how many staff he will have; and whether he plans to create an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr David Lammy:
The Deputy Prime Minister has an office in Dover House. He is supported by an Office of Deputy Prime Minister which coordinates work across Departments and supports the delivery of the Deputy Prime Minister's priorities.

Deputy Prime Minister: Departmental Responsibilities

Paul Holmes: [77625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the policy responsibilities will be of the new Deputy Prime Minister; and whether he will have responsibility for (a) industrial relations and (b) employment law.

Mr David Lammy:
Responsibilities of the Deputy Prime Minister are published on gov.uk.

Employment Tribunals Service: Compensation

Mr Will Forster: [128938]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of delayed payments to people who have won employment tribunals.

Sarah Sackman:
The Ministry of Justice does not collect or publish data on delays to awards, whether or not awards have been paid, or data on the outcomes of Employment Tribunal enforcement actions. The Department of Business and Trade will collect additional updated data on payment outcomes through the Survey of Employment Tribunal Applications later this year.

Workers should receive the payments they are entitled to in a timely manner. As part of the Government's Plan for Change, we will look at ways of strengthening enforcement options and will work closely across Government to do this as effectively as possible, including through the newly established Fair Work Agency (FWA). The FWA will work closely with HMRC, the Insolvency Service and other relevant enforcement bodies to strengthen enforcement options. The proposed powers of the FWA are set out in the Employment Rights Act, and we are committed to ensuring that it has the appropriate resources to discharge its responsibilities.

Funerals: Regulation

Dame Caroline Dinenage: [121330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department is responsible for reforming the regulation of funeral directors.

Alex Davies-Jones:
The Department of Health and Social Care will lead on co-ordinating cross-government work to raise standards in relation to the care and treatment of the deceased, supported by the Department of Business and Trade, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Public Appointments

Nick Timothy: [128806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans his Department has to publish an advertisement for the position of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons once it becomes vacant in October 2026.

Jake Richards:
Following consultation with the Justice Select Committee (JSC) about campaign plans to recruit to this position, we plan to advertise the role shortly. We will update the JSC on the timetable in due course.

Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime Review

Kerry McCarthy: [128197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, (a) what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of Lord Farmer's 2017 review and (b) whether further steps are planned.

Jake Richards:

Lord Farmer's 2017 review highlighted the importance of family and supportive relationships in rehabilitation and reducing re-offending. Since then, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has taken extensive action to put those recommendations into practice, with the majority now completed. All prisons are required to publish local family and 'significant other' strategies, to seek and respond to the views of families in supporting people in custody, including in relation to release planning, and to identify and support prisoners without family or relationship contact. These principles are now embedded within HMPPS Family Services and continue to inform practice across the prison estate.

HMPPS has also implemented recommendations on the positive role of prisoner-to-prisoner relationships, strengthening peer support and mentoring through existing roles such as peer mentors, Listeners, wing representatives and learning tutors. Work is under way to develop a common set of standards for peer support and mentoring, using an evidence-led approach to testing, evaluation and potential future scaling up, to improve quality, consistency and safeguards.

The Ministry of Justice and HMPPS continue to work with Lord Farmer and delivery partners to monitor and strengthen delivery through inspection and performance frameworks. Further work is planned to build on this foundation, particularly to strengthen family engagement and pro-social peer relationships as part of a wider rehabilitative culture informed by desistance principles and psychologically informed practice.

Marriage: Reform

James Cartlidge: [128708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his department plans to recognise independent celebrants as part of marriage law reform.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Government recognises the contribution that independent celebrants make to the wedding industry. We have been seeking their views, together with a range of others, in order to inform the development of a consultation. We will invite views as to allowing independent officiants to carry out legally binding weddings and the potential consequences of this as part of the consultation

Ministry of Justice: Training

Sir John Hayes: [128645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the list of training programmes used by civil servants in his Department since 2020.

Jake Richards:
The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Parenting Orders

Mr Peter Bedford: [128982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Parental Orders were issued in 2025, 2024 and 2023.

Alex Davies-Jones:
The Ministry of Justice publishes regular data on parental orders in our quarterly Family Court statistics bulletin: Family Court Statistics Quarterly - GOV.UK.

Post-mortems

Sir Oliver Dowden: [129465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will take steps to reduce the timescale allowed for a second post-mortem examination.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [129466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will make an assessment of the adequacy of the timescale permitted for a second post-mortem examination.

Alex Davies-Jones:
Once a death has been reported to a coroner, the deceased person's body remains in the legal control of the coroner until released for burial or cremation. During this time, decisions relating to the body, including on whether to order a post-mortem examination or permit a second post-mortem examination, are a matter for the coroner as an independent judge.

The Chief Coroner has provided guidance for coroners which makes clear that, where a second post-mortem examination is permitted, it should be carried out as quickly as possible following the first examination and, unless there are exceptional circumstances, within 28 days of the death being reported to the coroner. The coroner must inform the deceased person's next of kin or personal representative if the body cannot be released for burial or cremation within this period.

Prison Officers: Protective Clothing

Sir Julian Lewis: [128629]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that the process of procuring up to 10,000 sets of protective body armour for prison officers is (a) open, (b) transparent, and (c) effective.

Sir Julian Lewis: **[128630]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the tender for providing up to 10,000 sets of protective body armour for prison officers was made public, and if he will make a statement.

Sir Julian Lewis: **[128633]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many bids were accepted for the contract to provide up to 10,000 sets of protective body armour for prison officers; and whether any provider of new sets of protective body armour for prison officers has previously provided similar equipment for use by police officers.

Jake Richards:
The Ministry of Justice has awarded a contract to Safariland UK LTD for 6,250 sets of Body Armour for Prison Officers. The Ministry of
Justice received two bids from suppliers and accepted one.

This contract was tendered via a Bluelight Commercial Framework. This initial opportunity for this Framework was published by BlueLight Commercial on 8 July 2022 [Provision of General Patrol and Firearms Body Armour - Find a Tender] and then awarded on 16 March 2023 [Provision of General Patrol and Firearms Body Armour - Find a Tender]. The Ministry of Justice, following Cabinet Office guidelines to utilise frameworks where appropriate, conducted a further competition via this framework and subsequently published the award on 22 January 2026 [Supply of Protective Body Armour - Find a Tender].

The Bluelight Framework at the initial opportunity was available for all the market to bid for, so therefore open. The Ministry of Justice has followed all the guidelines and published notices in accordance with the regulations. The process was effective as Frameworks offer the shortest route to contract award and in line with Cabinet Office policy.

The requirements of the body armour for prison officers are ballistic, knife and spike and the product sourced meets the Home Office Standard [Body armour standard 2017: [CAST Publication number: 012/17 Body armour standard 2017 - GOV.UK]. The Home Office standard is frequently used by other Government agencies, so in that respect the Police will have similar body armour. For example, Safariland UK Ltd has supplied various Police forces and the Ministry of Defence Police with body armour that meets the Home Office Standard.

Sir Julian Lewis: **[128632]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether representatives of prison officers were consulted over the (a) design, and (b) procurement of new protective body armour.

Jake Richards:
His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) is committed to equipping up to 10,000 staff with protective body armour by March 2027. Work is continuing to support delivery against this commitment, ensuring it is implemented in a controlled and proportionate manner, with appropriate governance and oversight in place.

Both the Prison Officers Association and the Prison Governors Association were consulted in the initial stages about all aspects of the protective body armour project, including in relation to the product selection. Monthly engagement takes place with both unions to enable ongoing consultation.

HMPPS engages in quarterly discussions with recognised trade unions. These meetings form part of HMPPS's formal engagement and allow unions to raise concerns on safety matters.

Prisoners' Release

Nick Timothy: [128805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department taking to help prevent prisoners from avoiding their Release on Temporary Licence.

Jake Richards:
Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) is a key part of preparing individuals for safe resettlement into the community. The Ministry of Justice takes the risk of prisoners failing to return from ROTL extremely seriously. I have assumed that it is this risk that you are referring to when you ask about preventing prisoners from 'avoiding their Release on Temporary Licence'.

ROTL is only granted following a rigorous risk assessment and is available only to prisoners who meet strict eligibility criteria. Decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the prisoner's behaviour and compliance in custody, the nature of their index offence, and the purpose of the release.

Where ROTL is approved, prisoners are subject to clear licence conditions, monitoring requirements and, where appropriate, curfews and checks on employment or resettlement placements. The inherent risk that offenders breach the trust placed in them is closely managed through robust controls.

Any failure to return from ROTL is a criminal offence and can result in recall to custody, removal of future ROTL, and prosecution with a custodial sentence imposed. Where a prisoner fails to return, prisons and the police act promptly to locate and return the individual to custody.

Prisoners' Release: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [128191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were released early in Lincolnshire in the last 12 months.

Jake Richards:
This Government inherited prisons days from collapse. We had no choice but to take decisive action to stop our prisons overflowing and keep the public safe.

Without the changes this Government made, courts would have had to halt trials and the police cancel arrests, undermining public safety and leading to a disastrous impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system.

We regularly publish data on release from prison, including on forms of early release – for example we publish SDS40 data alongside the quarterly Offender Management statistics: Standard Determinate Sentence (SDS40) release data - GOV.UK.

Whilst measures like the SDS40 change provided the intended medium-term relief to the system, this was only ever a temporary change as a bridge to a more sustainable solution. That is why the Sentencing Act has now been passed, to ensure we never run out of prison space again and to deliver a more sustainable solution to the prison capacity crisis.

Prisoners: Parents

Kerry McCarthy: **[128198]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what comparative assessment he has made of the level of support in prisons for parents on remand or serving custodial sentences with the potential impact on rehabilitation.

Jake Richards:

We know that supporting and maintaining positive family relationships, where safe and appropriate, is an important factor in reducing reoffending and desistance from crime, with recently published research finding that prisoners who received visits were 3 percentage points less likely to reoffend within one year of release (25% vs 28%). Prisons will assess the need for individual, tailored family support on a case-by-case basis, noting that this is not always appropriate for all prisoners or their families.

Family support is a central component of a rehabilitative prison environment and is recognised as critical to the wellbeing of individuals in custody, regardless of their legal status. To support this, prisons across England and Wales offer a range of services to maintain family relationships including social visits, family days and the award-winning charity led initiative Storybook Mums and Dads, enabling parents in prison to record bedtime stories for their children. Both remand and convicted prisoners can access the full range of family support services, which includes access to family support workers, parenting support, and signposting to advice and external agencies.

Support for maintaining family contact is consistent across remand and convicted prisoners, who can contact their family through visits, telephone and video calls, and letters. Under Prison Rules, remand prisoners are entitled to a greater number of visits than convicted prisoners which reflects the legal distinction between those awaiting a trial or sentencing, and those who are convicted. Additionally, remand prisoners can spend more money on phone credit or postage stamps, should they wish to send additional mail. This is a result of statutory entitlements, and beyond these distinctions, there is no difference in the family support offer between remand and convicted prisoners.

Kerry McCarthy: [128200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making support for parents in prisons a Key Performance Indicator.

Jake Richards:
Decisions on changes to prison key performance indicators, including whether to introduce new or more explicit measures focused on support for parents in prison, must balance the benefits of clearer accountability with the need to ensure performance frameworks remain proportionate, measurable and focused on outcomes.

Any proposed changes are considered alongside inspection evidence and operational priorities.

Families provision in prisons is currently monitored by the family ties performance measure. The Department will continue to consider how best to reflect the role of family and parental support in prison performance measures as we develop the prison performance framework.

Prisons: Research

Mr Gregory Campbell: [128643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to respond to the Ipsos MORI research project on the retributive benefit of prison before summer recess 2026.

Jake Richards:
The Department is working to start an academic Peer Review of the Ipsos Mori Retribution survey ahead of publication to ensure it is analytically robust and the results are interpreted correctly. The process will begin in Summer this year.

Prisons: Visits

Kerry McCarthy: [128677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with representatives from prisons on allowing prisoners to have virtual visits with their children through longer and high-quality video calls.

Kerry McCarthy: [128678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with representatives from prisons on making prison visits more suitable for children and families.

Jake Richards:
Ministry of Justice Ministers have frequent discussions with prison staff on all aspects of the prison experience. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) encourages prisons to make the experience of those visiting prisoners the 'best it can be', and to seek feedback from visitors on how to improve services. Information on

the quality of social visits, including feedback from stakeholders, is included in the HMPPS Families Performance Improvement Measure.

Supporting consistent contact between parents in prison and their children where it is safe and appropriate, helps to mitigate the harm arising from separation caused by imprisonment.

Making prison visits family-friendly is an important element of maintaining family ties and supporting effective rehabilitation. Visiting a prison can be a daunting experience for anyone, particularly those already coping with the emotional impact of having a loved-one in custody. A welcoming visiting environment helps to reduce fear, anxiety and stigma, enabling families to feel safe and supported during what may be a stressful experience.

Family-friendly visits allow relations to interact more naturally, supporting healthy attachment and emotional wellbeing. Simple measures such as clear information, trained staff, suitable facilities and access to play or activity areas can make a significant difference to the experience. These features help visits to feel more like a normal family interaction and allow parents in custody to maintain a meaningful role in their child's life.

Prison video calling is already an established part of the prison communications offer. The provision of secure social video calls, as a supplement to letters, telephone calls and in-person visits, supports the maintenance of family ties and reflects key recommendations made in Lord Farmer's reviews, which highlighted the importance of strong family relationships in reducing the risk of re-offending.

Weddings: Reform

James Cartlidge: [128298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to conduct a public consultation on wedding reform.

Alex Davies-Jones:
Yes, we will be consulting on the reform of weddings law in England and Wales.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland Office: Artificial Intelligence

Sir John Hayes: [128187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether his Department has used artificial intelligence to assist with drafting (a) legislation and (b) policy in the last 12 months.

Hilary Benn:
The drafting of primary and secondary legislation is the responsibility of a large number of officials across government departments. A range of tools are used to assist with this drafting, including AI which is most commonly used to check, critique,

and otherwise interrogate drafts. Work is continuously underway to identify ways of improving the efficiency of this work, including collaboration between departments to share ideas and emerging practices.

While AI can be used to assist with the drafting of legislation, the production of the draft remains the responsibility of a lead human drafter to meet the high standards expected of Government legislation. It is Parliament's responsibility to scrutinise and amend legislation as it sees necessary.

We have an internal operational framework in place for all NIO staff. While this a practical guide, it mandates that all AI use must align with the Civil Service Code and NIO's security and data protection policies. This framework enforces strategic principles by referencing the UK Government's AI Playbook and strictly restricting AI from making any final decisions that affect people, ensuring human control. All use of AI in the NIO must be checked by a human, including when used to support the development of policy.

Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann: [129597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the legal status is of the remedial order brought against the Northern Ireland Legacy Bill.

Hilary Benn:
The Remedial Order was laid on 14 October 2025 as part of the Government's commitment to repeal and replace the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023. The Remedial Order does not yet have legal effect, whilst it awaits the consideration of the House of Lords.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) concluded in their report that there are compelling reasons for proceeding by way of Remedial Order for the purposes of Section 10(2) of the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Remedial Order passed with a large majority in the House of Commons and I am committed to seeing it debated and passed in the House of Lords, at which point it will become law.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

AI Growth Zones: Investment

Dame Chi Onwurah: [126561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department will take to prevent further withdrawal of planned AI investment from the UK, in the context of OpenAI's decision to pause its Stargate UK project.

Kanishka Narayan:
Decisions on investment are a matter for private companies. The Government has been clear that it will encourage and support investments that will enable UK firms

and people to benefit. Many of the large-scale AI infrastructure projects in the UK have been publicly announced, with most of these having press releases available on Gov.uk. The Government continues to engage across the board on these investments to ensure that they deliver the best outcomes for the UK.

Our focus is on continuing to create the right conditions for investment in the UK's AI data centre infrastructure. We are continuing to work with OpenAI and other leading AI companies to strengthen UK compute capacity.

Animal Experiments

Ben Obese-Jecty: [125666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the olicy paper: Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, how much of the £8 million from DSIT's new Sovereign AI Unit has been spent on OpenBind to date.

Kanishka Narayan:
UKRI will report on its portfolio of investments in alternative methods, including any AI focused methods, in 2026. The Government will publish a delivery update, alongside key performance indicators on progress across all elements of the Replacing Animals in Science strategy, later in 2026.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [127876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress she has made on developing mechanisms to enable regulators to increase uptake of the MHRA's scientific advice service.

Kanishka Narayan:
The strategy sets out seven commitments to increase confidence in the validation and regulatory uptake of alternative methods.

On 24 March, the MHRA announced it will offer early regulatory review of non-animal data, including data generated using in silico approaches, to provide clarity on how such data will be assessed ahead of clinical trials. MHRA is the first UK regulator to offer this service, setting a precedent which the Government expects other regulators to follow.

The Government will publish a delivery update, including the regulatory elements of the strategy, later in 2026.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [128380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November

2025, what progress she has made on collecting data annually on the number of clinical trial applications that include toxicity tests conducted in 2 species.

Kanishka Narayan:
I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 20th April to Question UIN 125672.

Ben Obese-Jecty: **[128387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress she has made in obtaining the full validation of the Comprehensive in vitro Proarrhythmia Assay (CiPA) initiative to predict the proarrhythmic potential of new drugs.

Kanishka Narayan:
The strategy has not committed to obtaining the full validation of the Comprehensive in vitro Proarrhythmia Assay (CiPA) initiative to predict the proarrhythmic potential of new drugs.

Basket 2 of the strategy outlines long-term ambitions which must be science-led, partnership-based, and delivered over time.

The strategy aims to use validated alternative methods to reduce the use of dogs and non-human primates in dedicated Pharmacokinetic studies for human medicines by at least 35% by 2030.

Irene Campbell: **[129341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has considered whether the relationship between the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) and Understanding Animal Research (UAR), including NC3Rs' sponsorship of UAR activities, ensures adequate levels of (a) balance and (b) engagement with relevant stakeholders, in the context of animal protection organisations not being included in NC3R organised events.

Kanishka Narayan:
The NC3Rs does not sponsor UAR activities beyond being a signatory and participant in the UK Concordat on Openness on Animal Research which is managed by UAR.

The NC3Rs works with a range of relevant stakeholders across the life sciences sector, including animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA, to ensure balance and engagement in its programmes of work to advance the 3Rs.

Animal Experiments: Artificial Intelligence

Ben Obese-Jecty: **[128385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11

November 2025, what progress her Department has made in (a) developing AI prediction tools and (b) obtaining kinetic data from combining tests with general toxicity testing.

Kanishka Narayan:
This is an area of extensive effort across industry and stakeholders. NC3Rs are funding development of a virtual dog to replace dogs in second species testing (Virtual Second Species Innovation Platform). We continue working with partners to develop resources to expand these efforts.

The strategy has not committed to obtaining kinetic data. Basket 2 sets out long-term ambitions that must be science-led, partnership-based and delivered over time.

The strategy aims to use validated alternative methods to reduce use of dogs and non-human primates in dedicated Pharmacokinetic studies for human medicines by at least 35% by 2030.

Animal Experiments: Heart Diseases

Ben Obese-Jecty: [128386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods, published on 11 November 2025, what progress she has made in reducing animal use in cardiovascular safety studies.

Kanishka Narayan:
Basket 2 of the strategy outlines long-term ambitions which must be science-led, partnership-based, and delivered over time.

Innovate UK in partnership with NC3Rs launched a funding call supporting the development and commercialisation of alternative methods for assessing the preclinical cardiovascular safety of new medicines: Contracts for Innovation: industrial human relevant drug models – UKRI. This follows work led by IUK and NC3Rs to build a community around this opportunity. https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/contracts-for-innovation-industrial-human-relevant-drug-models/

The strategy aims to use validated alternative methods to reduce the use of non-human primates and dogs in dedicated cardiovascular safety studies by at least 50% by 2030.

Artificial Intelligence: Safety

Afzal Khan: [128813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring independent safety assessments before AI systems with dangerous offensive capabilities are developed.

Kanishka Narayan:
AI is a general-purpose technology with a wide range of applications, which is why the UK believes that the vast majority of AI systems should be regulated at the point

of use. In response to the AI Action Plan, the government committed to work with regulators to boost their capabilities.

The role of the AI Security Institute (AISI) is to build an evidence base of these risks, to inform government decision making and help make AI more secure and reliable.

AISI works in close collaboration with AI companies to assess model safeguards and suggest mitigations. To date, AISI has tested over 30 models from leading AI companies, including OpenAI, Google DeepMind and Anthropic. AISI's findings lead to tangible changes to AI models before deployment, reducing the risk from day one.

Cybersecurity: Artificial Intelligence

Afzal Khan: **[128812]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the UK's preparedness for AI-enabled cyber threats.

Kanishka Narayan:
The cyber security of the UK is a priority for the government and we have robust measures in place to protect our critical national infrastructure and essential public services. It is clear that artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities are accelerating quickly, which presents both risks and opportunities for cyber security.

The government takes these accelerating capabilities very seriously. We have been clear ongoing action is needed to improve UK cyber defences. We are already taking significant steps, including working across government and industry to understand the latest developments, publishing evaluations of the latest AI models, and taking widespread action to improve cyber resilience across the economy and help organisations protect against AI-driven threats.

On 15 April the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Security Minister wrote an open letter to businesses urging them to strengthen their cyber resilience. On 22 April the government announced further measures to improve UK cyber resilience, including £90m of new funding to boost cyber security, and the new Cyber Resilience Pledge companies can take to demonstrate their commitment to cyber security.

The Cyber Security and Resilience Bill is currently making its way through Parliament and later this year we will publish a new National Cyber Action Plan. Cyber security is a shared responsibility and both industry and government must play their part in tackling this challenge. This includes the urgent need for tech companies to ensure they develop secure by design software and devices, aligned to agreed standards and codes of practice.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Training

Sir John Hayes: [129073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will list the training programmes used by civil servants in her Department since 2023.

Ian Murray:
The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) provides training for civil servants through a combination of cross-government, departmental and locally procured learning, alongside apprenticeships and structured development schemes.

We define *training programmes* as a broad term covering both individual courses and collections of interventions delivered under a single scheme.

Since its establishment, DSIT has accessed learning through Civil Service Learning, the Government Campus, and specialist external providers, which together support core, functional, profession-specific and domain-specific capability-building. The Department has offered learning covering core skills, leadership and management, and specialist skills, including artificial intelligence.

DSIT also offers internal learning through departmental-led provision, including learning supported through professions and initiatives focused on leadership development, specialist capability-building, and talent and career development.

DSIT does not hold a single, centrally maintained list of all individual training courses undertaken. Learning is delivered through multiple teams and platforms aligned to business and professional needs, which is consistent with practice across government departments.

Internet: Children

Richard Burgon: [127477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which (a) departmental officials, (b) external academic partners, and (c) private contractors were responsible for designing the methodology and key performance indicators (KPIs) of the 6-week digital wellbeing pilot studies currently being conducted by the Government.

Kanishka Narayan:
The pilots were developed by professional analysts within DSIT, with advice from the Government Office for Science. This included a roundtable convened by the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Dame Angela McLean, of academics and Chief Scientific Advisers from FCDO, DfE and College of Policing. Private contractors were not involved in designing the methodology.

The pilots are qualitative studies, intended to generate in-depth insights into young people’s navigation and experience of social media. The research is not designed to be statistically representative, so KPIs are limited to delivery logistics, such as recruitment targets, rather than impact measures.

Internet: Misrepresentation

Mr Andrew Snowden: [125064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to prevent websites from imitating legitimate digital services in order to mislead consumers into entering paid subscriptions.

Kanishka Narayan:
The Online Safety Act lists certain fraud offences as 'priority offences', meaning regulated services must prevent users encountering user-generated fraudulent content, swiftly remove it when appearing, and mitigate and manage the risk of their services facilitating fraud. Ofcom has robust powers to act where services are failing in their regulatory duties.

Online platforms must comply with The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, which clarifies that online platforms must exercise professional diligence in relation to consumer transactions promoted or made on their platforms. The legislation carries criminal penalties and is enforced by Trading Standards officers and the Competition and Markets Authority.

Internet: Safety

Gill German: [129557]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of online safety protections for vulnerable adults, including neurodivergent adults such as those with autism and ADHD; and whether she plans to take steps to improve safeguarding and platform accountability.

Kanishka Narayan:
The Online Safety Act places legal duties on platforms to make their services safer for all users, including vulnerable adults and those that are neurodivergent.

Services are required to protect users from illegal content and activity online, which may impact vulnerable adults disproportionately. In addition, the largest services will also have additional duties put on them, to offer adults user empowerment tools. These will allow adults to have greater control over their online experience.

Ofcom has robust enforcement powers and we have been clear that Ofcom has the government's full backing to take enforcement action.

We continue to build on the Act to keep users safe online, such as making content that promotes self-harm priority offences.

Members: Correspondence

Clive Jones: [129632]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when the correspondence sent on 22nd October 2025 by the Hon. Member for Wokingham, reference number MC2025-00013812, will receive a response.

Kanishka Narayan:
The Department apologises for the significant delay in responding to the hon. Member's correspondence on this occasion. I provided a full response on 24 April 2026.

Mobile Phones: Public Places

Mr Andrew Snowden: [129247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to ensure equitable mobile network coverage during large public gatherings and events.

Kanishka Narayan:
There is a widespread and dynamic commercial market for providing mobile coverage to gatherings and events in permanent indoor sites such as stadiums, and for providing short-term solutions for special outdoor events in temporary locations.

Connectivity solutions are available from mobile network operators, as well as some third parties, for such events to handle high-capacity demands. This includes the deployment of temporary mobile masts, known as Cells on Wheels (COWs) to provide additional capacity for those attending, for traders operating at events and for event organisers.

The Government has supported the UK pioneering such connectivity solutions for large events through the 5G Innovations Regions Programme. For example, as a consequence of the programme, Belfast City Council partnered with BT to deliver 5G Standalone network slicing capabilities over the EE mobile network at Belfast's Christmas Market in December 2025, supporting faster services and more resilient mobile payments. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has also supported the deployment of connectivity solutions at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland.

Government also works to ensure that the UK has the right policy framework in place to maximise the overall value of spectrum use to the UK, while supporting wider policy objectives. The Government has set out an expectation in the Statement of Strategic Priorities for Telecommunications, the Management of Radio Spectrum, and Postal Services, that technological trends and future spectrum needs for Programme Making and Special Events should be reviewed, recognising their critical role in supporting large-scale cultural and sporting events across the UK.

Mobile Phones: Standards

Ben Lake: [128431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the answer of 20 April 2026 to question 125033, what is her Department's estimate of the number of premises in (a) Ceredigion Preseli constituency, (b) Wales and (c) the UK that will still be without access to adequate mobile coverage from any mobile network

operator when the UK's Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) are switched off.

Kanishka Narayan:
The estimated number of premises currently without access to good mobile coverage for each of these areas based on the latest Ofcom data was provided in our answer to question 125033.

The Government is committed to ensuring that any risks from the industry-led migration of the copper based Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) are mitigated for everyone across the UK, including in Ceredigion Preseli. The Government has had confirmation from major communication providers that no existing PSTN customers will be left without a landline alternative.

All network operator's have committed significant investment in line with Government's ambition for standalone 5G to be available in all populated areas by 2030. In addition, the Shared Rural Network, jointly funded by the Government and the UK's mobile network operators (MNOs), is utilising Government funding to incentivise mobile network operators to deliver commercial outdoor mobile coverage in rural areas, where there was previously limited or no 4G coverage at all. The programme has been successful in helping to achieve 96% 4G coverage from at least one operator across the UK landmass.

Government does not hold data on MNO's future deployment plans. Along with the emergence of Direct to Device connectivity, this means that we cannot provide a reliable estimate of how many premises would be left without adequate mobile coverage from any operator at the point in time when the PSTN and Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) are switched off. No existing PSTN customers will be left without a landline alternative.

Ofcom: Powers

Adam Jogee: **[126213]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Ofcom's powers.

Kanishka Narayan:
The adequacy of Ofcom's powers is kept under review. For example, the Mobile Market Review call for evidence launched in February 2026 will enable the government to ensure that our policy and regulatory framework supports the sector.

And, for example, Ofcom has strong and extensive powers under the Online Safety Act, including the ability to request information, investigate non-compliance and fine companies up to 10% of qualifying worldwide revenue. Recently, the Government strengthened Ofcom's role under the Online Safety Act by making intimate image abuse and cyberflashing priority offences, placing clear duties on platforms to prevent this content and reinforcing Ofcom's oversight of compliance.

Offences against Children: Social Media

Sir Mark Hendrick: [128185]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking steps to prevent and restrict social media sites from being used for child sex trafficking activity.

Kanishka Narayan:
Child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) is an abhorrent and serious crime and tackling it online is an absolute priority for this Government. The Online Safety Act places its strongest protections around children, imposing robust legal duties on online services to prevent their platforms from being used to groom, exploit and sexually abuse children.

Ofcom has set out measures in its codes of practice, including automated detection, moderation, and anti-grooming safeguards. These duties have been in force since March last year. Ofcom keeps its approach under review, is consulting on further measures and has already carried out enforcement with a particular focus on CSEA.

Pornography: Internet

Marie Goldman: [128985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Government's commitment in March 2026 to achieve regulatory parity for pornography, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the role of a statutory auditor to help ensure online platforms proactively remove violent and abusive content that fails to meet British Board of Film Classification offline standards.

Kanishka Narayan:
The Government announced the joint pornography team as part of the VAWG strategy in December. In March, it committed to produce a delivery plan setting out how the government can most effectively close the gap between the regulation of online and offline pornographic content. This will test audit and reporting functions and will consider which regulatory frameworks can best address the issue, noting the interactions with the BBFC’s existing remit and that of Ofcom under the Online Safety Act.

Public Sector: ICT

Navendu Mishra: [128838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential implications for its policies of the French Government’s decision to transition public sector desktops to the Linux operating system; and whether she has considered the potential merits of a similar approach in the UK public sector.

Ian Murray:
The Government is aware of strategic decisions made in France regarding their choice of operating systems. The UK will always be diligent in assessing the benefits to ensure it selects the most appropriate operating system for its context, balancing costs, functionality, upkeep and wider requirements.

Social Media: Civil Disorder

Helen Maguire: [129775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment her Department has made on the merits of introducing legislation which would mandate social media platforms to share data from times of public disorder crises.

Helen Maguire: [129777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of misinformation and disinformation online on local communities.

Kanishka Narayan:
While social media can play an important role in society, it is unacceptable that people use it to threaten our communities. Government engages with local authorities to monitor issues affecting cohesion, including misinformation and disinformation.

Under the Online Safety Act, Ofcom has broad information-gathering powers and has consulted on a new crisis measure which includes an expectation on platforms to conduct post-crisis analyses to improve transparency.

In *Protecting What Matters* – the government's plan to improve social cohesion – we further committed to reviewing the Online Safety Act's crisis powers to ensure they are fit for purpose and adequately tackling issues including mis- and disinformation.

Social Media: Women

Anneliese Dodds: [128765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the answer of 25 February 2026, to Question 112303, on online censorship of women's health, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of censorship by social media companies of information on how bystanders can administer CPR to women.

Kanishka Narayan:
We recognise the important role of trusted online health content. The Online Safety Act places duties on services to protect their users including from illegal content and content harmful to children. It does not prevent adults or children from accessing legal content about women's health. Users of the largest categorised services will have access to effective complaints procedures to appeal when content is unduly taken down.

Sovereign AI Fund

Iqbal Mohamed: [128601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the Sovereign AI fund will invest in companies that train AI models on copyrighted work without a license.

Kanishka Narayan:
The Government has been clear that copyright rules should be respected. Use of copyright works to train AI in the UK requires a licence unless an exception applies. Companies supported by the Sovereign AI Fund are expected to comply with applicable UK law.

Telecommunications: National Security

Graeme Downie: [127672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of telecommunications equipment containing components manufactured in countries deemed to pose a security risk.

Kanishka Narayan:
Telecoms supply chains are complex and international and are managed by industry. However, the government is committed to ensuring secure and resilient telecoms supply chains.

The robust Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021 regime places obligations on public communications providers to manage supply chain risks, including to identify, reduce and prepare for the risk of security compromises to their networks. Ofcom monitors compliance with these obligations through its information gathering powers, and the Secretary of State makes decisions on enforcement based on this information and additional advice. The Act also gives ministers powers to restrict the use of vendors in UK networks on national security grounds.

The previous government have used the Act's national security powers to designate Huawei in 2022, and issue legally binding directions restricting their use in UK telecoms networks, supported by a strengthened underpinned by an enforcement regime including clear financial penalties for non-compliance.

The telecoms security Code of Practice was introduced in 2022, which sets out in detail the technical and organisational steps public communications providers must take to identify, reduce and manage supply chain and vendor-related security risks, with compliance overseen and enforced by Ofcom. We are currently in the process of updating the Code of Practice to provide public telecoms providers with further guidance, reflecting recent changes in threats and technologies

We are also committed to growing the UK's role in Advanced Connectivity Technology supply chains. The government is supporting targeted R&D programmes with UKRI and other partners to support the development and commercialisation of

next generation technologies. This will enable UK firms to participate more fully in global telecoms supply chains and reduce UK dependence on other countries.

Telecoms supply chain risks are considered as part of cross-government efforts to improve the security and resilience of supply chains. The government works with business to address these risks, building the conditions required to deliver secure growth. The government continues to monitor and respond to turbulence in global sectors and supply chains that are crucial to the UK's economic and national security.

Telephones: Fraud

Gill German: [129556]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment her Department has made of the scale of spoofing scams using UK telephone numbers; and whether she plans to strengthen obligations on network operators to prevent fraudulent number allocation and misuse.

Kanishka Narayan:
The most recent Ofcom research on the scale of spoofing calls reveals that in February 2025, two in five phone users said they received a suspicious call in the last three months. Tackling fraud and pursuing the criminals behind it is a priority for the government. We are working closely with industry and regulators to reduce spoofing and other forms of telecoms-enabled fraud.

In November 2025, the Government published the second Telecommunications Fraud Sector Charter, signed by major mobile network operators including BT EE, Virgin Media O2, and VodafoneThree. Through the Charter, signatories' committed to measures to tackle spoofing, including adopting common standards to reduce fraud and abuse across all network-originated messaging channels.

As the independent regulator, Ofcom also consulted in 2025 on proposals to strengthen rules on overseas calls that falsely present UK numbers, including updates to its Calling Line Identification Guidance. The Government supports this work and continues to engage with Ofcom and industry to protect customers. More recently, on 9 March 2026, the Home Office also published its new Fraud Strategy which sets out how the Government will work with all partners, including law enforcement and industry, to make the UK a much harder place for criminals to operate.

SCOTLAND

Scotland Office: Artificial Intelligence

Sir John Hayes: [128184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether his Department has used artificial intelligence to assist with drafting (a) legislation and (b) policy in the last 12 months.

Kirsty McNeill:
(a) The drafting of legislation is the responsibility of a large number of officials across government departments.

A range of tools can be used to assist with this drafting, including AI which is most commonly used to check, critique, and otherwise interrogate drafts. Work is continuously underway to identify ways of improving the efficiency of this work, including collaboration between departments to share ideas and emerging practices.

While AI can be used to assist with the drafting of legislation, the production of the draft remains the responsibility of human drafters to meet the high standards expected of Government legislation. The Scotland Office has not led primary legislation in the last 12 months.

It is Parliament's responsibility to scrutinise legislation as it sees necessary.

(b) The drafting of policy documents and advice is the responsibility of a large number of officials across government departments. Scotland Office officials work closely with departments in policy development, and in producing advice to Ministers.

While AI can be used to assist with the drafting of policy advice, the production of the draft remains the responsibility of a lead human policy advisor to ensure the advice is factual and meets the high standards expected of Government Ministers.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Elections

Kevin Hollinrake: [129178]

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, whether there is a memorandum of understanding between the Electoral Commission and the Metropolitan Police on electoral law enforcement.

Sir Jeremy Wright:
The Electoral Commission does not have a memorandum of understanding with the Metropolitan Police. It works closely with police forces to support them in their understanding of electoral law.

Elections: Campaigns

Kevin Hollinrake: [129177]

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2026 to Question 118899 on Elections: Campaigns, whether the Electoral Commission has made an assessment whether an imprint in a foreign language is accessible and legible to electors who only speak and read English.

Sir Jeremy Wright:
The Electoral Commission has not made such an assessment.

There are no requirements in law on the language of imprints. Campaigners may wish to produce campaign material in other languages to reach voters whose first language is not English. The purpose of an imprint is to ensure that voters seeing the material, know who is responsible for it. Providing an imprint in the same language as the campaign material would be one way to ensure transparency for those voters that the material is targeting.

Members: Finance

Kevin Hollinrake: [129179]

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, whether there is a memorandum of understanding between the Electoral Commission and the House of Commons on the reporting and enforcement regime for political donations for hon. Members.

Sir Jeremy Wright:
The Electoral Commission has a memorandum of understanding with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, which outlines how the two reporting regimes operate in a way which reduces the administrative burden on MPs. The Commission regularly reviews how the regimes operate and makes recommendations to Parliament to ensure the systems work effectively together and minimise the administrative burden on parliamentarians.

Political Parties: Finance

Kevin Hollinrake: [129174]

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2026 to Question 118895 on Political Parties: Finance, what guidance the Electoral Commission has provided to Members' Associations on how sponsorship revenue deemed to be as a commercial transaction should be treated under donation reporting requirements.

Sir Jeremy Wright:
Commercial transactions may be sponsorship, if the purpose of the payment can reasonably be seen to be to help the members association meet the costs of an event, publication, or research study. For example, a payment for advertising at an event run by a members association would be sponsorship and the full amount must be treated as a donation.

The Commission will publish updated guidance on sponsorship shortly.

Polling Stations: Religious Buildings

Kevin Hollinrake: [129175]

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2026 to Question 118900 on Polling Stations: Religious Buildings, whether the Electoral Commission holds any data on the number of polling stations located in (a) synagogues and (b) mosques.

Sir Jeremy Wright:
Individual local authorities are responsible for designating polling places. The Electoral Commission does not hold a central list of polling stations.

Kevin Hollinrake: [129176]

To ask the Right hon. Member for Kenilworth and Southam, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2026 to Question 118900 on Polling Stations: Religious Buildings, what advice the Electoral Commission has issued on whether (a) synagogues and (b) mosques are deemed accessible.

Sir Jeremy Wright:
The Commission provides guidance to Returning Officers on identifying suitable polling station venues. This includes evaluating the suitability of the polling stations that are available for use in the appropriate electoral areas.

The Commission has recently drawn Returning Officers' attention to existing security guidance. It also provides accessibility guidance, which outlines the actions Returning Officers should take when assessing the accessibility of venues, including ensuring venues have sufficient space for voting to take place, and considering which equipment may be necessary to support voters, such as ramps or temporary floor coverings.

TRANSPORT

Avanti West Coast: Internet

Adam Jogee: [128563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will work with Avanti to improve internet connectivity on board their trains on the route between Manchester Piccadilly and London Euston

Keir Mather:
The DFT Operator (DFTO), on behalf of the Secretary of State, meet with Avanti West Coast (AWC) regularly to discuss services for passengers, including onboard Wi-Fi connectivity.

AWC is upgrading its onboard Wi-Fi system which is intended to improve connectivity speeds and performance. Additionally, AWC previously completed a positive trial

using laser window etching technology to improve connectivity and will be undertaking further testing with the view to roll out across its Class 390 fleet. These projects will improve connectivity for passengers across all AWC services but particularly those operated by Class 390 trains, including the London to Manchester route.

More generally, services on the West Coast Main Line will benefit from the Spending Review funding to deploy low earth orbit satellite connectivity, to significantly improve the on-train Wi-Fi. The DfTO Telecoms Policy team is currently working through the procurement strategy and business case process and further details will be announced in due course. Also, Project Reach will improve the mobile signal in 57 tunnels on the three mainline routes on the East Coast Mainline, West Coast Mainline and Great Western.

Operators are required to achieve challenging customer experience targets across a range of measures, including Wi-Fi connectivity. These standards are regularly and independently inspected via the Service Quality Regime and there are accountability and financial consequences for failure.

Courier Services: Blood

Perran Moon: [128603]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has considered introducing national provision to permit registered volunteer blood bike services to use bus lanes.

Simon Lightwood:
Installation of bus lanes is the responsibility of local traffic authorities. Whether to allow blood bike services to use bus lanes lies with local traffic authorities, taking into account the impact on bus services, compliance and enforcement considerations. The Department has no plans to mandate this nationally.

Department for Transport: Electric Vehicles

Justin Madders: [129476]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her department encourages officials to rent electric vehicles when hiring vehicles for official business.

Keir Mather:
The Government's policy is that all official travel must be efficient and cost-effective. The Department does encourage the use of electric vehicles for vehicle hire. However, short-term vehicle hires can happen at short notice and are subject to vehicle availability at the time and the policies of the hire company.

Department for Transport: Electronic Government

Gideon Amos: [126916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that GOV.UK websites provide accessible digital services.

Simon Lightwood:
GOV.UK is run by the Government Digital Service (GDS) which is part of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

The Department for Transport follows the GDS GOV.UK design system accessibility guidelines when drafting and building its GOV.UK content and digital services.

Department for Transport: Nepal

Shivani Raja: [129518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 24 March 2026 to WPQ 120039, what the purpose was of the flight to Nepal; which Ministers and senior officials approved the visit; how many officials travelled on that occasion and at what grade; what the cost was of the visit; and whether an assessment was made of whether those engagements could be (a) conducted remotely and (b) combined with other travel.

Simon Lightwood:
The Nepal flights were an 'additional journey', which is for DfT staff posted overseas. Such journeys are to enable staff and accompanying dependents at qualifying hardship posts to take a break away from local conditions during their posting. This was for an SEO plus partner as an additional journey from their posting in New Delhi. Total costs are only the flight costs totalling £332.10. This is in line with DfT policy and agreed at senior civil service level.

Driver Information Systems

Dr Scott Arthur: [129739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is considering mandating the calibration of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems when vehicle's windscreens are replaced.

Dr Scott Arthur: [129740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is considering mandating an assessment of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems as part of the MOT test.

Dr Scott Arthur: [129741]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish guidance on maximising the potential safety impact of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems technologies through calibration.

Dr Scott Arthur: [129742]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has assessed the potential impact of (a) defective and (b) poorly maintained Advanced Driver Assistance Systems on road (i) fatalities and (ii) serious injuries over the last decade.

Lilian Greenwood:
As set out in the Road Safety Strategy, the Government is committed to taking advantage of vehicle technologies to make our roads safer. The Strategy adopts the

internationally recognised Safe System approach, acknowledging that vehicle technologies can significantly reduce risk when they function as intended, and that responsibility for safety is shared across government, manufacturers, repairers and the wider transport sector.

My Department is currently exploring options for future policy decisions to maximise the benefits of vehicle technologies. This includes engagement on a wide range of issues related to advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), including vehicle maintenance. My Department is also consulting on mandating a range of ADAS in new vehicles, alongside a call for evidence seeking views on the ongoing maintenance of these systems.

Given the importance of properly maintained vehicles for road safety, the Government keeps the MOT under continual review to ensure it remains effective as vehicle technology evolves. This includes considering how increasingly sophisticated systems, such as ADAS, can be appropriately monitored as part of wider vehicle safety assurance. Officials continue to gather and assess evidence to inform any future changes.

Driverless Vehicles: Criminal Liability

Caroline Voaden: [129340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the criminal liability framework applicable in cases where (a) autonomous and (b) connected vehicles cause (i) death and (ii) serious injury.

Simon Lightwood:
With regard to autonomous vehicles, the Department has undertaken significant work to establish a revised liability framework, as enacted by the Automated Vehicles Act 2024. This Act follows the recommendations of the Law Commissions in 2024 that new legal entities be required to take liability when a vehicle is driving itself. These legal entities and their senior managers will be under a duty of candour requiring honest and transparent disclosures to Government, with failure to comply with this duty constituting a criminal offence (which may be aggravated in the case of death or serious injury).

This approach underpins the regime set out in the Automated Vehicles Act 2024 and consequent regulations. The Department is currently considering responses to the “Developing the Automated Vehicles Regulatory Framework” Call for Evidence, which relates to these regulations.

The facility to communicate beyond the vehicle, as connected vehicles do, does not of itself affect the liability of the driver under existing criminal law.

Electric Vehicles: Prices

Kim Johnson: [128870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the review of the Zero Emissions Vehicle (ZEV) mandate will (a) take into account the latest data published by Autotrader

showing that the average price of a new Electric Vehicles is now lower than petrol vehicles and (b) consider the role of the ZEV mandate in helping to achieve this outcome.

Keir Mather:
The long-committed Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate Review will be published by early 2027 and we will begin engagement this year. This Review will take into account a wide range of data to understand ZEV market conditions.

European Company for the Financing of Railroad Rolling Stock

Dr Scott Arthur: [129339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timetable is for the UK's potential accession to EUROFIMA; and what the next steps are in the Government's consideration of participation.

Keir Mather:
The Department is exploring a range of financing structures to support investment in rolling stock, in partnership with private finance. The Department remains in active engagement with Eurofima, as one element of this work, to assess how its financing mechanisms could support future investment in the UK rolling stock market. The Government will update the House in due course once decisions have been taken on accession to the Eurofima Convention, to support wider rolling stock investment plans.

Immobilisation of Vehicles

Mr Richard Holden: [129277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 20 April 2026 to Question 125015 on Immobilisation of Vehicles, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of immobilisation devices unlawfully removed from vehicles.

Simon Lightwood:
The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) works closely with its national wheel clamping contractor to monitor where wheel clamps have been forcibly removed and to identify patterns of concern.

When a vehicle is clamped, the registered keeper can secure the vehicle's release by paying the required fee within 24 hours. In areas where the unlawful removal of immobilisation devices is a known issue the contractor will, where possible, immediately remove vehicles to reduce the risk of the clamp being removed unlawfully.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition systems alert enforcement officers where there is a previous history of the clamp being removed so that immediate removal of the vehicle can be arranged.

Measures to strengthen the securing chains on wheel clamps are also being considered to increase resistance to tampering. While this will not completely prevent

deliberate damage, it is expected to significantly increase the time required to remove a clamp and so increase the likelihood of the offender being detected.

Motor Vehicles: Insurance

Navendu Mishra: [128839]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions her Department has had with the insurance industry and relevant regulators on the rising cost of motor insurance in England.

Lilian Greenwood:
Ministers and officials regularly engage with representatives from the insurance industry and regulatory bodies.

Furthermore, in order to fulfil the government's commitment to tackling the soaring cost of motor insurance in the UK, the cross-government taskforce on motor insurance was formed in October 2024. The taskforce's final report was published on 10 December 2025 and though the taskforce has now concluded, the government will continue its work to deliver against the actions set out in the report.

The annual average cost of cover in 2025 was £564, 9% (£58) lower than the average annual cost in 2024.

Motorways: Lighting

Justin Madders: [129475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is her department taking to ensure National Highways includes the views of local residents in stakeholder consultations when deciding to remove lights over motorways.

Simon Lightwood:
The Department expects National Highways to carry out appropriate consultation where changes to the strategic road network may impact local communities. Where a proposal to remove lighting would directly affect a local community, National Highways would seek residents' views through stakeholder consultation.

Office of Rail and Road

Julia Buckley: [129358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how competition regulations on state aid are applied by the Office of Rail and Road when assessing applications for Open Access rail services; and what changes are expected following the ORR's move into her Department.

Keir Mather:
Under the current framework, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) is responsible for making access decisions in line with its statutory duties. Moving forward, this will change as Great British Railways takes over responsibility for managing access to the network and ORR takes on a new role to hold GBR to account and ensure

fairness and transparency for all operators. ORR will not, however, become part of the Department for Transport – it will remain independent.

All public bodies, including ORR and the future GBR, are obliged to comply with subsidy control and competition legislation across all of their activities, and this will remain the case.

Railways: Concessions

Mims Davies: **[R] [129299]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number of staff affected by the ending of the reciprocal staff rail pass for Brighton and Hove Buses and Metrobus staff on 31 May 2026.

Keir Mather:
[Holding answer 27 April 2026]: The Department does not hold details on the total number of Brighton & Hove and Metrobus staff affected by the ending of such discretionary arrangements. Under the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006) process, the Department is currently consulting Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) staff affected.

Railways: Devon

Martin Wrigley: **[128412]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average duration has been of full closures of the rail line between Newton Abbot and Dawlish for planned works in the latest period for which data is available.

Simon Lightwood:
During the 2025-26 Financial Year, there were planned closures for two midweek nights during the last week of February, for 6 hours each night. On the first weekend in March, there was a planned closure for 52 hours. On the second weekend in March, there was a planned closure for 10 hours. All other access required for maintenance of our infrastructure is carried out during ‘rules of the route possessions’ when no trains are running, to avoid impact to train operators.

Martin Wrigley: **[128413]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance the Department issues on the acceptable duration of full closures of rail lines for planned engineering works, with particular reference to the coastal route between Newton Abbot and Dawlish.

Simon Lightwood:
The Department for Transport does not set acceptability criteria for access to rail lines for engineering works. Access is agreed through the established regulatory and contractual framework. Network Rail engages train operators via the Network Code and Access Agreements to agree possessions, taking account of passenger and stakeholder impacts.

Railways: Essex

James McMurdock: [128926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of (a) trends in the level of rail commuting from Essex into London and (b) the potential impact of rail disruption on commuter towns.

Keir Mather:
Data on journeys specific to commuting or strictly from Essex into London are not available. However, the Office of Rail and Road collects regional rail usage figures presented below in Table 1.

Table 1: Journeys between London (region) and Essex (million passenger journeys)

Time Period	Journeys (millions)
Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	33.5
Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	39.6
Apr 2024 to Mar 2025	40.6

Source: Regional rail usage | ORR Data Portal

Ahead of the establishment of GBR, integrated leadership teams are being set up across publicly owned train operators and Network Rail routes to increase collaboration and accountability, in turn delivering improvements for passengers and freight users. Jamie Burles, Integrated Managing Director, will drive this change across the Anglia region.

Railways: Greater London

Julia Buckley: [129359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which English counties do not have a direct train link to London; and whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the lack of such links on those counties.

Keir Mather:
The only English county that does not have a direct train service from London is Shropshire.

The department requires its operators to plan services and rail timetables that are designed to meet expected passenger demand and provide value for money for the taxpayer. Looking ahead to GBR, this offers us the opportunity to go further with optimising train services and driving up utilisation. Through GBR's directing mind function, services and timetables will be developed in a coherent fashion that drives up network performance and improves the journey experience.

Railways: Information Services

Mark Pritchard: [128237]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will commission research into the impact of noise pollution from (i) repeating passenger information announcements and (ii) the decibel levels used for passenger information announcements on the customer experience and health of railway passengers.

Keir Mather:
The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) is currently leading a research project, 'Cost Benefit Analysis of Noise Mitigation on the Rail Network', to support the Government's Noise Action Plans and development of future rail noise policy. There are no plans at the current time to commission research specifically on the impact of noise pollution from passenger information announcements.

Roads: Accidents

Connor Naismith: [129648]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, (a) whether her Department monitors roads with a high number of serious traffic collisions, including fatalities; (b) whether her Department has provided guidance to local authorities on reviewing and intervening on these roads; and (c) if she will consider introducing national criteria or minimum thresholds to ensure that frequent collision hotspots are subject to regular review and remedial action.

Lilian Greenwood:
The Department does not directly monitor individual roads for collision risk. Instead, it collects national reported road traffic collision statistics, while local highway authorities are responsible for analysing collisions on their own networks and taking appropriate action.

A range of guidance has been published to support local highway authorities in reviewing and improving safety on their road networks. This includes Setting Local Speed Limits, which supports decisions on appropriate speeds, and Manual for Streets, which provides guidance on the design of streets to improve safety for all road users. Through the recently published Road Safety Strategy, the Department has committed to updating relevant guidance.

There are no current plans to introduce national criteria or minimum thresholds for the review of collision hotspots. Decisions about reviewing and intervening on specific roads are matters for local highway authorities, which are best placed to consider local circumstances. The Department will continue to support local authorities through guidance.

Transport: Finance

Julia Buckley: [129050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, of the £21 billion of new local transport funding announced across the Comprehensive Spending Review period, how much funding is allocated to (a) Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities, (b) Mayoral Strategic Authorities, and (c) local councils not within a combined authority.

Lilian Greenwood:
Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will receive c£7.7bn of transport funding through their integrated settlement over the Spending Review period from 2026/27 to 2029/30 (to 2028/29 for Resource Funding).

Mayoral Strategic Authorities with a mayor in place will receive c£4bn of transport funding through the Mayoral Transport Fund over the same period.

All other local transport authorities will receive c£9.6bn of local transport funding over the Spending Review period, via the Integrated Transport Fund and Bus Services Fund. This includes c£1.2bn for Foundation Strategic Authorities (combined authorities without an elected mayor) and c£2.9bn for local authorities that are part of the Devolution Priority Programme and are due to be established as Mayoral Transport Authorities.

TREASURY

[Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Jayne Kirkham: [908898]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to promote economic growth in Cornwall.

James Murray:
The Budget confirmed a new £30 million fund to invest in Cornwall's particular comparative sectoral advantages including critical minerals, marine energy and space. In addition, the government is funding £26m of growth-driving transport investment via the Local Transport Grant (2026/27 – 2029/30), part of the £725 billion of economic and social infrastructure investment across the country over the next decade.

The National Wealth Fund has also invested over £80m into Cornwall, backing firms to support the next generation of good jobs.

Bank Services: Digital Technology

Dr Scott Arthur: [129609]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with the Financial Conduct Authority and other relevant regulators on improving accessibility in digital banking; and what the outcomes were of those discussions.

Lucy Rigby:
HM Treasury ministers regularly meet with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to discuss consumers' experiences of financial products and services. As a member of the Financial Inclusion Committee, the FCA was closely involved in the development of the Financial Inclusion Strategy which I published in November 2025.

The Strategy includes a focus on digital inclusion and access to banking and considers accessibility as a theme across all product areas examined. It includes a range of interventions to address these issues, including the launch of an industry-led inclusive design working group which will examine how to make financial products more accessible. Consumer representatives have been invited to make submissions to the group which will inform its focus going forward.

More widely, the Government works closely with the FCA to ensure that consumers get the right support with financial products and services. FCA guidance highlights the actions firms should take to understand the needs of customers who may be vulnerable and to consider these needs appropriately. This includes offering multiple channels of communication to their customers where possible, to ensure their products are accessible.

The FCA's Consumer Duty also seeks to raise the standard of care expected from firms for all customers. It aims to deliver products and services that offer fair value and are designed to meet customers' needs, with a focus on delivering good outcomes and preventing harm.

In addition, under the Equality Act 2010, all service providers must make reasonable adjustments to ensure their services are accessible.

Bank Services: Financial Conduct Authority

David Smith: [128885]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the Treasury expanding the FCA's remit to include in-person banking services.

Lucy Rigby:
The Government supports initiatives which give customers access to in-person banking, as well as digital access.

The Government is committed to supporting the financial services industry's roll-out of 350 banking hubs by the end of this Parliament. Over 275 hubs have been announced so far, and more than 230 are already open.

The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 provides the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) with responsibilities and powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of cash access services, including free withdrawal and deposit facilities for personal current accounts. Additionally, the FCA's existing regulatory framework and guidance expect firms to consider the impact of changes to their services on customers, including those who rely on in-person banking, and to put appropriate alternatives in place, where needed.

The Government keeps the effectiveness of current arrangements under review through regular engagement with industry and the FCA to ensure they meet the needs of local communities.

Banks: Misconduct

Tulip Siddiq: [908897]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help ensure that regulators hold banks to account for financial misconduct.

Lucy Rigby:
This country is a world leader in financial services because we adhere to high standards. Both the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority have powers to enforce regulation, the ability to apply a range of sanctions to firms and individuals who breach their rules, and to prosecute offences in the criminal courts.

Charities: Crime

Iqbal Mohamed: [129010]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that Gift Aid is not given to charities linked to illegal activity.

Dan Tomlinson:
The Government implements safeguards to prevent payments to charities associated with illegal activity. Most charities are required to be registered with their local regulator such as the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW), Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), and Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI). In order to claim Gift Aid, they must also be registered with HMRC. This ensures that only organisations subject to regulatory oversight, trustee accountability and enforcement powers can access tax reliefs such as Gift Aid. HMRC conducts validation and risk-based checks at registration and thereafter.

These checks involve reviewing Gift Aid claims supplied by the charity. Charities must also obtain valid Gift Aid declarations from all donors in respect of whom Gift Aid is claimed. They must maintain records linking each donation to a valid declaration, including donor identity and donation details.

HMRC monitors charities through risk assessments and sector trends to ensure funds are used appropriately and reliefs are granted only where entitled.

The government introduced legislation, enacted in Finance Act 2026, which strengthens HMRC’s ability to challenge illegal and abusive arrangements.

Childminding: Tax Allowances

Monica Harding: [129631]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of the removal of the 10 per cent wear and tear allowance on self employed, Ofsted

registered childminders; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of (a) reinstating this allowance and (b) introducing an alternative mechanism to cover additional household costs for childminders who provide childcare from their own homes.

Dan Tomlinson:
Childminders make a significant contribution to children's development, learning, and wellbeing. The Government has eased rules on working from schools and community centres and increased early years funding rates above 2023 average fees. These increases reflect increased costs, and from April 2026, local authorities must pass at least 97 per cent of funding to providers.

Only a small proportion of childminders with qualifying income over £50,000 have been mandated into Making Tax Digital (MTD) for income tax from April 2026. Childminders moving to MTD for income tax can continue to claim tax relief for household costs, wear and tear of household items and furniture, and food and drink, by deducting actual business costs. This ensures childminders receive tax relief for all of the costs that they incur in relation to their childminding business. The Government has recently published updated guidance for childminders to help them claim relief for these costs.

The Government will monitor the impact of MTD for income tax on childminders and other home-based childcare providers in the same way as it will for all sole traders moving to MTD for income tax. We will also review the impacts of moving from the 10% deduction to actual costs for wear and tear claims.

Childminding: Taxation

Connor Naismith: [128450]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Making Tax Digital reforms on childminders who (a) employ assistants and (b) operate from their own homes and have fixed property-related costs, including the proposed removal of the 10 per cent wear-and-tear allowance for those with qualifying income above £50,000.

Dan Tomlinson:
Childminders make a significant contribution to children's development, learning, and wellbeing. The Government has eased rules on working from schools and community centres and increased early years funding rates above 2023 average fees. These increases reflect increased costs, and from April 2026, local authorities must pass at least 97 per cent of funding to providers.

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Government has recently published updated guidance for childminders to help them claim relief for these costs.

The Government will monitor the impact of MTD for income tax on childminders and other home-based childcare providers in the same way as it will for all sole traders moving to MTD for income tax. We will also review the impacts of moving from the 10% deduction to actual costs for wear and tear claims.

Directors

Joe Powell: [908895]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she has taken with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle rogue company directors.

Dan Tomlinson:
I commend the Honourable Member for his relentless work on this issue, and I share his concern, because communities like Portobello Road and Notting Hill Gate should be places where legitimate businesses thrive, not where rogue traders and repeat directors play the system.

Since Budget 2025, action against rogue directors and abusive phoenixism has been stepped up.

£25 million over five years has been allocated to the Insolvency Service to establish a new Abusive Phoenixixm Taskforce, alongside changes to the Company Directors Disqualification Act to widen the circumstances in which directors who break the law can be disqualified.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Perran Moon: [128602]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government's review of the cost of public electric vehicle charging will consider the difference in VAT between public and domestic electric vehicle charging.

Dan Tomlinson:
The supply of energy for domestic use attracts the reduced rate of VAT (five per cent). Whilst this relief was not designed or introduced for charging EVs at home, it applies for all uses of domestic energy, as it is not possible for energy companies to distinguish between electricity used to charge an EV and electricity used for general domestic purposes. Public EV charging, on the other hand, is subject to the standard rate of VAT (twenty per cent). This matches the VAT treatment of petrol and diesel, as well as all non-domestic electricity.

The Government will review the cost of public electric vehicle charging, looking at the impact of energy prices, wider cost contributors, and options for lowering these costs for consumers. Terms of Reference for the review will be set out in due course and the review will report later in 2026.

Electricity Generation: Taxation

James McMurdock: [129580]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Decisive action to break influence of gas on electricity prices, published on 21 April 2026, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increasing the Electricity Generator Levy on investment in renewable energy generation.

Dan Tomlinson:
The Government wants sustainable investment in renewable energy generation and therefore the Electricity Generator Levy (EGL) has strong protections for new investments, which are exempt from the levy.

The government is accelerating the transition to cleaner energy through the Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme. Renewable energy generation using the CfD scheme is exempt from the EGL.

James McMurdock: [129581]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Decisive action to break influence of gas on electricity prices, published on 21 April 2026, what estimate she has made of the additional revenue raised through changes to the Electricity Generator Levy.

Dan Tomlinson:
Revenues raised by the rate increase, that takes effect from 1 July 2026, will depend on gas prices in future months. The OBR will score this in the usual way in the Autumn.

Electricity: Prices

Chris Bloore: [129230]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of marginal electricity pricing on the Consumer Prices Index since July 2024.

Torsten Bell:
Forecasting the economy, including the impact of Government policy decisions on inflation, is the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). The OBR has not published a specific estimate of the impact of marginal electricity pricing on Consumer Price Index inflation.

The electricity market operates on the principle of marginal cost pricing, where gas-fired generation frequently sets the wholesale price, meaning electricity prices have closely tracked gas prices. This is link is already weakening as more renewable energy comes online. The Government is taking further steps to reduce this link: we will set out plans for legacy low-carbon generators to move onto fixed-price arrangements from 2027, and the Electricity Generator Levy's rate has been increased, and it will be extended beyond its scheduled end date. Further details on these measures will be provided in due course. As reliance on gas falls, electricity

prices are expected to be set increasingly by lower-cost generation, including renewables.

Electronic Cigarettes and Tobacco: Smuggling

Sir John Hayes: [128189]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to reduce the number of illegal tobacco and vaping products on sale in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Dan Tomlinson:
The Government is committed to reducing the number of illicit tobacco and vaping products on sale nationally.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has a robust strategy to tackle the illicit tobacco trade ' Stubbing Out the Problem'.

HMRC works closely with National and Local Trading Standards to disrupt the illicit tobacco trade at retail level through Operation CeCe, which has since it began in January 2021removed more than 74 million illicit cigarettes, 19,750kg of hand-rolling tobacco and almost 175kg of shisha products from sale.

HMRC has also introduced a strengthened sanctions regime for breaches of the UK Tobacco Track and Trace System to combat illicit tobacco sales. This granted new powers to Trading Standards, enabling them to refer cases to HMRC where they find evidence of high street retailers selling tobacco products that do not comply with the System. HMRC can then then investigate and issue civil sanctions, including penalties of up to £10,000.

£100 million of new 'smokefree' funding has been allocated over 5 years to boost existing HMRC and Border Force enforcement capability.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, HMRC and Border Force seized 1.36bn cigarettes and 92,435kg of hand-rolling tobacco.

As with tobacco, there is a cross-government approach to reducing the number of illegal vapes. The vaping equivalent of Operation CeCe - Operation Joseph led to the seizure of over 1 million illegal vapes in 2023-24, the last full year for which statistics are available.

HMRC are working closely with both Trading Standards and Border Force to develop a robust compliance approach for the introduction of Vaping Products Duty (VPD) on 1 October 2026.

VPD is a new excise duty on vaping products, which will introduce additional compliance powers and controls across the vaping supply chain. This includes the introduction of a Vaping Duty Stamps (VDS) scheme, which will require highly secure stamps to be placed on all duty paid goods, supporting enforcement agencies and customers to identify illegal products.

HMRC are recruiting over 300 staff to strengthen this compliance approach and deliver VPD.

Enterprise Investment Scheme

Sarah Green: [908894]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the withdrawal of previously granted Enterprise Investment Scheme relief on investor confidence.

Lucy Rigby:
This Government is focused on making the UK the best place to start and scale a business. That's why at Budget 2025 we announced the doubling of investment limits and gross asset thresholds for the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and Venture Capital Trust Schemes and expanded eligibility for the Enterprise Management Incentive Scheme.

In respect of EIS, HMRC applies the legislation to the facts of each case, including after and investment is made.

Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation

Lizzi Collinge: [128564]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is the value of payments made to With-Profits Annuitants under the Equitable Life Payments Scheme to date.

Torsten Bell:
The previous Government allocated £1.5 billion to the Equitable Life Payment Scheme.

Of the £1.5 billion, £775 million was allocated to be paid as lump sums to with profits non-annuitants, and £625 million allocated to With-Profit-Annuitants (WPAs) to be paid annually for the duration of the annuity, as they were the most vulnerable group. This includes a £100 million contingency fund to ensure there is provision for annuitants, should they live longer than their actuarial forecast and brings the total allocated to WPAs up to £725 million.

Financial Services and Legal Profession: Fraud

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [128204]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a) what assessment she has made of the potential impact on the international competitiveness of UK financial and legal services of instances in which High Court fraud judgments are not enforced overseas; and b) whether her Department has considered the potential implications of the High Court judgment in Njord Partners SMA-Seal LP & ors v Astir Maritime & ors [2024] for investor confidence in cross-border enforcement.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [128206]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a) what role the enforceability of UK court judgments plays in the Government's assessment of financial services cooperation and market access discussions with the United Arab Emirates; and b) whether the non-enforcement to date of the High Court judgment in Njord Partners SMA-Seal LP & ors v Astir Maritime & ors [2024] has been raised in that context.

Lucy Rigby:

HM Treasury takes a range of factors into account when discussing financial services cooperation and market access with overseas jurisdictions, including the regulatory framework in those jurisdictions and the competitiveness of the UK market. HM Treasury has not discussed with the UAE in that context the High Court judgment in Njord Partners SMA-Seal LP & ors v Astir Maritime & ors [2024].

Civil and commercial judgments from courts in the UK may be enforceable in other countries if permitted by the domestic law of the country concerned. Additionally, by joining the 2019 Hague Judgments Convention, the Government took an important step in strengthening the UK's framework for the recognition and enforcement of such judgments.

The Convention entered into force for the UK on 1 July 2025 and may provide greater certainty, reduced costs and quicker resolution in relevant cross-border disputes. Being Party to the Convention offers a clearer route to the enforcement of in-scope UK civil judgments, including those based on fraud, in other Contracting Parties.

The UAE is not Party to the 2019 Hague Convention. Whether a particular UK civil judgment is enforceable in the UAE is therefore determined by UAE domestic law.

Financial Services: Digital Technology

Callum Anderson: [129412]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure the UK remains internationally competitive in financial technology innovation.

Lucy Rigby:

The UK is a world leader in Fintech, and attracted $3.6 billion of investment in 2025, second only to the US. The Government is committed to making the UK the world's most technologically advanced global financial centre, and remaining a leading jurisdiction for Fintech firms to start, scale, list, and stay.

In addition to measures announced in the Financial Competitiveness and Growth Strategy and at Budget, the Government set out at UK Fintech Week 2026 further detail on how it intends to modernise payment services regulation and update it to support new innovations in money and payments, ahead of soon publishing a consultation inviting the payments sector to feedback. This includes improving the regulation of payment services and electronic money by better integrating it with the UK's core regulatory approach for financial services; regulating stablecoins for their use in payments, where these stablecoins have been issued under the forthcoming

new regulated activity for stablecoin issuance in the UK; exploring how the regulation of payments services should adapt to payments conducted by AI agents; and providing the FCA new powers to regulate the future of Open Banking. The Government also published as part of the package draft secondary legislation to cut administrative burdens for companies wanting to provide stablecoin payments.

The Government has also appointed Chris Woolard CBE as Wholesale Digital Markets Champion, to provide market leadership and support industry progress on the development of a tokenised wholesale financial markets ecosystem.

First Time Buyers: Taxation

Shockat Adam: [908893]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking through the tax system to support first time homebuyers.

Lucy Rigby:
This Government is committed to enabling more people to realise the dream of home ownership and mortgages have become more affordable under this Government thanks to increased economic stability and 6 interest rate cuts.

Fraud: Crime Prevention

Dr Luke Evans: [128852]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to monitor the work of the Fraud Prevention Centre to help ensure investigations are completed in a timely and efficient manner.

Dan Tomlinson:
The Fraud Prevention Centre (FPC) has been set up to strengthen defences against identity-based fraud and improve coordination of prevention, detection and response across the department. It is bringing together previously decentralised activity into a single, accountable function, to improve oversight, consistency of investigations, and support for affected customers. As the capability matures, the operation of the FPC continues to be monitored as it embeds within HMRC's wider fraud response.

Fuels: Excise Duties

Dr Roz Savage: [128555]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of current fuel duty levels on the agricultural sector; and whether she is considering any temporary reductions or exemptions for red diesel used in farming.

Dan Tomlinson:
Farmers retained the entitlement to use red diesel for agricultural machinery after it was withdrawn from most sectors in 2022. Red diesel used in agriculture is subject to fuel duty at just 10.18p per litre compared to 52.95p for diesel used on roads, representing savings of almost £300m p.a.

At Budget 2025, the Government extended the temporary 5p fuel duty cut alongside extending the proportionate percentage cut for rebated fuels, which includes red diesel. This maintains the red diesel rate at the levels set in March 2022 at 10.18p per litre until the end of August 2026, with rates then gradually returning to March 2022 levels by March 2027, an increase of less than 1p a litre. The planned inflation increase for 2026-27 has also been cancelled.

The Government keeps fuel duty under review.As the Chancellor has set out, a rapid de-escalation in the Middle East remains the best way to bring down fuel prices but the Government will also take the necessary decisions to help families with the cost of living and protect the public finances.

Ben Lake: **[129482]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the revenue raised from fuel duty between January and April (a) 2026 and (b) 2025; and if she will consider offering targeted support to the road haulage sector.

Dan Tomlinson:
Fuel duty receipts total approximately £8 billion for the period January to April 2025. Tax receipt data is available on GOV.UK, where data for April 2026 will be published in due course.

Fuel duty is charged as a fixed amount per litre, so receipts depend on the volume of fuel sold, as opposed to pump prices.

Since Autumn Budget 2024, the Government's decisions to freeze fuel duty will save hauliers 11 pence per litre compared to the plans inherited from the previous government.

In addition, in order to support the haulage sector, the Government and industry are jointly providing up to £35.7m of investment to enhance truck stops across England, in addition to joint investment by National Highways and industry of up to a further £30 million.

Gregory Stafford: **[129767]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she (a) is taking steps to reduce fuel duty and (b) has considered halving fuel duty to help reduce the cost of living.

Dan Tomlinson:
The Government has already taken action on fuel affordability at the pump.

At Budget 2025, the Government extended the 5p-per-litre cut for a further five months, until the end of August this year.

The Government has also cancelled the increase in line with inflation for 2026/27. Instead, rates will only gradually return to early 2022 levels by March 2027.

Since Autumn Budget 2024, the Government's decisions to freeze fuel duty will save the average motorist over £90.

Fuel duty raises approximately £24 billion each year, where this revenue helps fund the vital public services and infrastructure that people across the UK expect.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps fuel duty under review.

Lincoln Jopp: [908896]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the amount of revenue received from forecourt fuel in January to March in (a) 2025 and (b) 2026.

Dan Tomlinson:
Based on available data, fuel duty receipts are estimated to be around £6 billion between January and March 2025 and £5.7 billion between January and March 2026.

The Treasury does not hold figures specifically for “forecourt fuel”, as fuel duty is paid at refineries or import terminals, and covers all uses.

Gyms and Leisure: Business Rates

Martin Wrigley: [129344]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the business rates relief given to pubs to independent gyms and other leisure businesses.

Dan Tomlinson:
Pubs rents in business rates valuations are analysed differently to some other sectors. While most hospitality and leisure properties are valued by comparing the size of the property, pubs are valued by comparing their turnover potential. Industry bodies have highlighted concerns with how costs are accounted for in this methodology, particularly during periods of high inflation. The Government agrees this needs to be looked at and is therefore launching a review which will explore how pubs are valued for business rates. In the meantime, pubs are being provided with additional support.

Independent gyms and other leisure businesses will continue to benefit from the wider £4.3 billion support package announced at Budget, which protects against ratepayers seeing large overnight increases in bills.

The Government has also introduced new permanently lower multipliers for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties. These new multipliers are worth nearly £1 billion per year and benefit over 750,000 properties, including gyms and other leisure businesses.

As a result, over half of ratepayers see no bill increases this year, including 23 per cent whose bills go down. Most properties seeing increases have them capped at 15 per cent or less this year, or £800 for the smallest.

Hospitality Industry: Business Rates

Dr Ellie Chowns: [129634]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to her email of 7January 2026 acknowledging receipt of my letter ref MC2025/27941, whether she will set out (a) the reasons for the widely differing changes to rateable values and (b) her Department's longer-term projections for reliefs to reduce the business rates burden on the hospitality sector.

Dan Tomlinson:
At the Budget, the Valuation Office (VO) announced updated property values from the 2026 revaluation. This revaluation is the first since the pandemic, which has led to significant increases in rateable values for some properties. The VO are independent and are happy to talk to ratepayers if they have queries about how a rateable value has been assessed. Ratepayers can also challenge their rateable value through the online Check and Challenge process if they believe it is incorrect.

The Government has introduced a support package worth £4.3 billion to protect ratepayers against ratepayers seeing large overnight increases in bills. This means most properties seeing increases have them capped at 15 per cent or less in 2026/27, or £800 for the smallest.

The Government has also introduced new permanently lower multipliers for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) properties. These new multipliers are worth nearly £1 billion per year and benefit over 750,000 properties.

In addition, this year, every pub and live music venue is receiving 15 per cent off its business rates bill on top of the support announced at Budget. Bills will then be frozen in real terms for a further two years.

Members: Correspondence

Dr Ellie Chowns: [129635]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the acknowledgement of my letter of 7 January 2026, its referral in error to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the subsequent allocation of reference MC2025/27941 on 16 March 2026, (a) what steps her Department is taking to improve the handling of and response times to correspondence received from Members and (b) when she will provide a full written response to that letter.

Dan Tomlinson:
HM Treasury recognises the important role Parliament has in holding the Government to account and the need to provide full and timely responses to requests for information.

Treasury Ministers have received significant volumes of correspondence since the Budget, which has led to a backlog.

In response, officials are working with Ministers' offices to prioritise and clear outstanding cases as quickly as possible. Additional resource has been secured to assist Ministers' offices with drafting and clearances.

The Treasury correspondence unit has also recently recruited two additional drafting officials to ensure appropriate resourcing of this important function and are working across the department to prioritise responses.

A response to case MC2025/27941 was issued on 27 th April 2026 to the hon. Member for North Herefordshire.

Mortgages: First Time Buyers

Mr Lee Dillon: [128521]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support her Department is providing to help first-time buyers access mortgage finance and enter the housing market.

Lucy Rigby:
The most sustainable long-term method to improve housing affordability and help people into homeownership is to increase the supply of housing. The government is committed to building 1.5 million homes this parliament.

The Government is bringing forward ambitious reforms to streamline and improve the planning system to deliver on its Plan for Change. We have announced major changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility to deliver 170,000 additional homes and add £6.8bn to the economy by 2029/30.

The Government recognises the difficulties some prospective first-time buyers face in buying a home and is committed to helping them get on the housing ladder. To address these issues, we introduced a new permanent Mortgage Guarantee Scheme in July 2025. It is designed to support and sustain the availability of low deposit mortgage products for credit-worthy borrowers.

The government will also consult on introducing a new, first-time buyer only ISA product that will provide a government bonus when a person uses it to buy a house, removing the need for a withdrawal charge and giving savers flexibility in case their circumstances change.

It will remain possible to open a Lifetime ISA until the new product becomes available and for account holders to continue to save into their Lifetime ISA in line with the existing rules indefinitely.

This sits alongside our work with the financial regulators to give mortgage lenders more flexibility, including on how they assess affordability, which means borrowers can now borrow 10% more than they could at the start of last year. Thanks to our work with the Bank of England, lenders also have more flexibility to offer larger loans. They estimate this could help as many as 36,000 more customers become first time buyers in the first year. Those looking to buy their first home should speak with a mortgage broker to learn more about what's available to them.

Mortgages: Interest Rates

Mr Joshua Reynolds: [128931]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of recent changes to mortgage rates, including those influenced by recent global economic conditions, on housing market activity.

Lucy Rigby:
The Government keeps the economic outlook, including the housing market, under close review. The path to lower interest rates is through low inflation, and the government is fully committed to supporting the Bank of England get inflation back down to the 2% target.

The pricing and availability of mortgages is ultimately a commercial decision for lenders in which the Government does not intervene. Despite recent global developments, the mortgage market remains open, resilient, and competitive across all major product types and segments, and the average offered mortgage rates on 2-year, and 5-year fixed rates remain below their peaks in 2023. The Government remains committed to addressing the cost of living and helping more people to own their own home.

We do not yet have official data on housing market activity covering the period following the start of the conflict in Iran. The latest HMRC statistics on the number of UK property transactions covering up to and including February 2026 show that transactions increased by 6% compared to January 2026.

Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Tristan Osborne: [129006]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made a recent comparative assessment of the adequacy of Vehicle Excise Duty treatment for (a) motorcycles and (b) cars; and if she will review the basis on which motorcycles are taxed.

Dan Tomlinson:
VED, sometimes known as 'road tax' or 'car tax', is a tax on vehicles used or kept on public roads. Different VED rates apply to cars, vans, and motorcycles, and the rate for each vehicle is calculated according to a range of factors, such as its date of first registration, weight, or CO2 emissions. Revenue from motoring taxes helps to fund vital public services and infrastructure, including investment in roads and transport.

VED for motorcycles is currently based on engine size. There are four engine size ranges, with the lowest rate applying to zero emission motorcycles and the smallest engines sized 150cc or less (currently £27). The highest rate applies to engines sized 600cc and above (currently £125). This compares with the standard rate for cars registered on or after 1 April 2017 which is currently £200. Motorcycles also do not pay different rates in the first year of purchase, unlike cars where first year rates vary from £10 to £5,690 for the most polluting vehicles.

The Government annually reviews the rates and thresholds of taxes and reliefs to ensure that they are appropriate and reflect the current state of the economy. The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events in the context of the public finances.

Pensions: Inheritance Tax

Bradley Thomas: [129062]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Question 121253, what assessment has been made of the potential impact on beneficiaries of them paying a net tax rate of 68% when the pension holder passes away after the age of 75 resulting in a 40% inheritance tax and a 45% income tax charge on the remaining private pension.

Dan Tomlinson:
More than 90 per cent of UK estates will continue to have no inheritance tax liability in 2030-31 following the reforms to the inheritance tax treatment of pensions. The reforms will only affect a minority of those with inheritable pension wealth.

Income tax is only due from beneficiaries in certain circumstances. It is due at the beneficiary's marginal income tax rate. Significant tax relief is provided on pension contributions when payments are made into a pension because the Government wishes to encourage pension saving to help ensure that people have an income, or funds on which they can draw, throughout retirement. In cases where income tax is due on pension benefits paid to a beneficiary, contributions into the pension scheme will have received this tax relief when they were made. If the pension benefits had been withdrawn by the original member, they would have been liable to income tax. If the original member died with the cash, or assets purchased with that cash, then this would then generally be included in the valuation of their estate for inheritance tax purposes too and inheritance tax paid if appropriate.

Income tax will not be due on the amount of relevant death benefits equal to any inheritance tax due on that pension death benefit. This means the same value will not be subject to both inheritance tax and income tax. For example, if beneficiaries choose to withdraw their taxable benefits and pay income tax on the full amount, the legislation provides for them to reduce their taxable pension income by any inheritance tax paid. Guidance on this will be published in due course ahead of the changes taking effect in April 2027.

Post Offices: Business Rates

Kate Osamor: [128242]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of extending the business rate relief granted to pubs and music venues to post offices.

Dan Tomlinson:
The Government recognises the vital role that the Post Office plays in the economy and wider society.

At the Budget, the Government acted to limit increases in business rates bills, announcing a support package worth £4.3 billion. The Government has also introduced new permanently lower tax rates for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties. These new tax rates are worth nearly £1 billion per year and benefit over 750,000 properties.

Post offices are also eligible for 100 per cent rural rate relief if they meet certain conditions.

There are a wide range of factors that the Government needs to consider when introducing new tax reliefs, for example whether these support wider Government objectives, or add disproportionate complexity into the tax system. It is likely that a new relief would have to be paid for, at least in part, by increased taxes for other taxpayers or reducing expenditure on public services.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process. The Chancellor will announce any changes to the tax system at fiscal events in the usual way.

Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann: [126944]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to WPQ 124367, answered 13th April at 11:04, to detail the date when the open book exercise was completed for each Northern Ireland Department.

James Murray:
The open-book review was a condition of the £400m reserve claim the Northern Ireland Executive received at Supplementary Estimates 2025-26. The review's Terms of Reference were agreed between HM Treasury and the Northern Ireland Executive.

The exercise has now concluded, and HM Treasury has shared the report with the Northern Ireland Department of Finance.

Refineries: UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

Justin Madders: [129478]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential economic impact of delaying the inclusion of the refineries sector in a CBAM on the sector.

Dan Tomlinson:
The government recognises the role that refineries play in energy security and the UK's industrial base. The Government published a call for evidence (https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/future-of-the-uk-downstream-oil-sector/future-of-the-uk-downstream-oil-sector-call-for-evidence) on the future of the fuel sector on 23rd February 2026 in order to help understand the current state of the refining sector.

Following a strategic and technical assessment by HMG, it has been decided not to expand the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to refined oil products in January 2028. We are continuing to work with the sector to assess the options and case for expanding CBAM to refined oil products at a later date.

We are unable to conclude that expanding the CBAM to refined oil products is technically feasible for January 2028, especially in an uncertain global environment where the potential adverse impacts of inclusion could not necessarily be managed effectively at such accelerated timelines.

Regional Planning and Development

Adam Thompson: [908892]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help increase regional economic growth.

James Murray:
The government is committed to ensuring that growth is felt in every region of the UK, and the Chancellor named regional growth as one of her three main economic focuses in her recent Mais lecture.

At the Budget and Spending Review, we committed to £725 billion of economic and social infrastructure investment across the country over the next decade. We have also published a new Green Book to ensure all parts of the country get a fair hearing on public spending decisions.

Revenue and Customs: Sodexo

John McDonnell: [129068]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions HMRC is having with Sodexo over the contractor's decision to reduce the number of cleaning and facilities staff at Erskine House and Carne House in Belfast.

John McDonnell: [129069]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assurances have been provided that there will be no reduction in service to the staff at Erskine House and Carne House in Belfast following Sodexo's decision to reduce the number of cleaning and facilities staff at these sites.

Dan Tomlinson:
Sodexo are contracted to deliver facilities management services, including cleaning, in Erskine House and Carne House on an output specification basis. This means it is for Sodexo to determine the level of resourcing required to achieve the contracted standards and specifications.

HMRC regularly audits contract performance and meets on a weekly basis to discuss performance against the contracted standards and key performance indicators.

Shareholders: Digital Technology

Olivia Blake: [128429]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what consideration has the Government made of the potential impact of shareholder digitisation on a) cooperatives, b) small businesses and c) social enterprises.

Lucy Rigby:
The Digitisation Taskforce, chaired by Sir Douglas Flint, published a report in July 2025 with its recommendations on how to modernise the UK's shareholding framework, including removing paper shares. The report focused on companies whose securities are traded publicly, and did not cover private, unlisted companies or other entities. The government has accepted his recommendations. The Dematerialisation Market Action Taskforce (DEMAT), chaired by Mark Austin, is now taking forward work to implement the recommendations from the report.

Sports: Regulation

John McDonnell: [129078]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2026 to Question 122645 on Sports: Regulation, and with reference to the FCA Perimeter Report published in March 2026, which regulator Parliament has conferred powers upon for the regulation of sports spread betting and other non-financial spread betting products.

John McDonnell: [129079]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Question 122645 of 23 March 2026, whether she has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to clarify or amend the regulatory boundary between the Financial Conduct Authority and the Gambling Commission for sports spread betting and other non-financial spread betting products.

Lucy Rigby:
As set out in the government's previous answer on 31 March, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has clarified that non-financial spread betting products are not financial instruments, and that the FCA's regulatory framework does not account for gambling activity in relation to events which are not connected to financial markets. The Gambling Commission does not licence products whose name, branding or marketing contain language associated with financial products.

The government and parliament are responsible for setting the remits for the FCA and Gambling Commission, including setting out in legislation what types of activities are regulated. The remits of both regulators are detailed and complex, reflecting the diversity and complexity of products available. Responsibility for determining this is a cross-departmental effort.

Stocks and Shares

John Glen: [128228]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of the proportion of equity trading taking place on lit markets.

John Glen: [128229]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the proportion of equity trading taking place on lit markets on perceptions of capital market liquidity.

John Glen: [128230]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she has taken to ensure that consolidated tape architecture does not create single points of failure in UK market infrastructure in the context of the Financial Conduct Authority consultation on the framework for a UK equity consolidated tape.

Lucy Rigby:
The FCA is responsible for protecting and enhancing the integrity of the UK financial system, and making sure that markets are effective, efficient and reliable.

The FCA have published a discussion paper, including analysis, on the levels of lit and dark trading in the UK, which can be found in Chapter 4.

CP25/20: Consultation Paper on the SI regime for bonds and derivatives

The previous government legislated to give the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) responsibility for the policy design and the procurement process of a UK consolidated tape. The FCA consulted on the policy design of an equities tape in November 2025, including the importance of operating to high standards of operational resilience. As noted in the FCA consultation, an equities tape aims to help market participants to understand the full picture of UK liquidity.

CP25/31: The framework for a UK equity consolidated tape

Treasury: Furniture

Charlie Dewhirst: [128433]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much her Department has spent on podiums used for Ministerial press conferences since 4 July 2024.

Lucy Rigby:
Government lecterns and podiums are regularly used at press conferences and speeches. This is managed on a case by case basis, depending on the location. Associated costs may be included within wider event production costs and therefore is not readily available to report on.

VAT: Non-payment

Ben Lake: [129484]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many non-established taxable persons liable to be registered for VAT under Schedule 1A to the VAT Act 1994 have an overdue VAT bill.

Dan Tomlinson:
HMRC holds management information on VAT liabilities, but data for non-established taxable persons is not robust enough to provide reliable estimates of the population with VAT debt or amounts overdue.

Ben Lake: [129520]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value is of overdue VAT owed by non-established taxable persons registered for VAT under Schedule 1A to the VAT Act 1994.

Dan Tomlinson:
HMRC holds management information on VAT liabilities, but data for non-established taxable persons is not robust enough to provide reliable estimates of the population with VAT debt or amounts overdue.

VAT: Repayments

Ben Maguire: [128604]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the processing of VAT repayments to businesses.

Dan Tomlinson:
Between 1 June to 30 November 2025, HMRC processed around 1.4 million VAT repayment returns, with around 93% paid promptly, within 5 days. As part of its responsibilities for the collection and management of the VAT system, HMRC will select cases where necessary to undertake further enquiries to verify that the repayment is due and correct. These checks are treated as a high priority, and HMRC seeks to resolve any checks as quickly as possible while minimising involvement or inconvenience for businesses.

Ben Maguire: [128605]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many business VAT repayment claims have been outstanding for more than 30 days as of 20/04/2026.

Dan Tomlinson:
HMRC does not publish figures on VAT repayment claims that are outstanding for more than 30 days or any specific time period, as this could risk providing insight into repayment controls and may be exploited for fraudulent purposes. Such figures would also not reflect the dynamic nature of VAT repayment processing, with cases opening, progressing and resolving on a daily basis.

Ben Maguire: [128606]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC is taking to help ensure that businesses awaiting VAT repayment(s) receive their funds within an adequate timeframe.

Dan Tomlinson:
HMRC aims to ensure that businesses receive VAT repayments promptly by applying automated checks when returns are received and undertaking further enquiries only where required. This approach balances the need for timely repayment with appropriate safeguards. HMRC keeps these processes under regular review and actively seeks opportunities to increase efficiency, and cases are handled as a priority to minimise delay and inconvenience for businesses

VAT: Tax Evasion

Ben Lake: [128304]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate her Department has made of the level of loss to public finances of VAT non-compliance by overseas retailers through online marketplaces.

Dan Tomlinson:
HMRC's best estimate of VAT losses, for 2021 to 2022, as a result of overseas seller non-compliance occurring through online marketplaces is £150 million per annum as published in the NAO report Tackling tax evasion in high street and online retail - NAO report. This will not include any subsequent compliance activity to recover any losses from OMPs.

HMRC can raise assessments to recover unpaid VAT against an OMP should they incorrectly determine the establishment of an overseas seller unless they can demonstrate they have taken all reasonable steps to make that determination, leading to an under declaration of VAT.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

Candidates: Equality

Marie Goldman: [122818]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2026 to Question 117942, which stakeholders she plans to engage with on the commencement of Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010; and what her planned timeline is for that engagement process.

Marie Goldman: [122819]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer to Question 117942 on Candidates: Equality, whether Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 can be commenced in time to apply to candidate selections for the next General Election.

Seema Malhotra:
I refer the Hon member to the answer on 16 March 2026 (PQ 117942).

Employment: Menopause

Adam Dance: [128456]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade to help ensure adequate levels of workplace (a) support and (b) flexibility for women experiencing menopause symptoms in Yeovil constituency

Seema Malhotra:
Effective workplace support for menopause symptoms is crucial not only for employee wellbeing, but also because if women cannot access the support they need, employers will miss out on their skills and experience.

This Spring, we launched voluntary action plans for large employers, encouraging them to publish what they are doing to support employees experiencing menopause, alongside the steps they are taking to address their gender pay gap.

We have published step-by-step guidance, including a list of evidence-informed actions, to support employers in developing their action plans. Our common-sense actions include menopause training for managers, transparent, flexible working policies, and tailored workplace adjustments.

This guidance is available to employers across the country, including in Yeovil constituency, to support employers in providing effective support and flexibility for employees experiencing menopause.

In addition, other measures introduced under the Employment Rights Act 2025 encourage more supportive and flexible workplaces; for example, improved access to flexible working and enhanced Statutory Sick Pay can help employees manage menopause symptoms.

Victoria Collins: [128525]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what workplace support the Menopause Action Plan will deliver for constituents in Harpenden and Berkhamsted constituency.

Seema Malhotra:
This Spring, we launched voluntary action plans for large employers, encouraging them to publish what they are doing to support employees experiencing menopause, alongside the steps they are taking to address their gender pay gap.

We have published step-by-step guidance, including a list of evidence-informed actions, to support employers in developing their action plans. Our common-sense actions include menopause training for managers, transparent, flexible working policies, and tailored workplace adjustments.

Action plans aim to enhance workplace support and tackle the barriers faced by women, benefiting both employers and employees across the country, including those in the Harpenden and Berkhamsted constituency.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Access to Work Programme

Helen Maguire: [128502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will set out the support for disabled workers whose reconsideration Access to Work Scheme request is refused.

Sir Stephen Timms:
The support that a customer will receive from Access to Work is dependent upon their needs and circumstances at the time they make an application or award renewal. Case managers will use the current guidance to ensure Access to Work principles are considered when making a decision on support.

Separate to the Access to Work scheme, we have a range of specialist initiatives to support disabled individuals, including those that join up employment and health systems.

Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres, as well as joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies, and WorkWell.

Apprentices: Finance

Steve Darling: [129534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of age restrictions on Level 7 apprenticeships on (i.) the future skills needs of employers; (ii.) on learners both currently and in the future who plan to stair case up levels of apprenticeships to complete a L7 apprenticeship; and (iii.) access to professional services jobs.

Andrew Western:
I refer the hon. Member for Torbay to the answer of 16 March 2026 to Question 115133.

Apprenticeships: British National (Overseas)

Claire Hazelgrove: [128449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of enabling British National (Overseas) visa holders to access apprenticeship programmes in (a) the health and social care sector and (b) other sectors before completing three years' residence in the UK.

Andrew Western:
The department regularly reviews the apprenticeship funding rules, often in consultation with others, including the Home Office and the Department for Education.

This includes the requirements for ordinary residency. This three-year residency requirement is longstanding within the apprenticeship programme. It applies to both

UK and non-UK nationals. It is applied consistently to ensure that the individuals have a connection to the UK and are committed to living in the country before they are eligible for training funded by the taxpayer.

Construction: Training

Adam Dance: [127989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on Yeovil constituency of the Construction Industry Training Board's decision to cease funding local and regional construction training groups.

Andrew Western:
The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) has reformed its approach to employer support by replacing Training Groups with Employer Networks, which the CITB has assessed as a more accessible, responsive and cost-effective model.

Employers who are within scope of CITB's industry levy can continue to access CITB funded support for their skills needs through their local Employer Network. This includes direct adviser support, funding contributions for skills training, and locally determined training aligned to employer need.

Employers who are not currently participating in an Employer Network can continue to engage directly with CITB for information, advice and guidance, and may choose to join or establish a Network in future where there is sufficient employer interest.

Employment Schemes: Staffordshire

Adam Jogee: [128471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of when young people in a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and b) Staffordshire will be able to benefit from the Youth Guarantee scheme.

Andrew Western:
I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave on 24 March 2026 to Question UIN 114579 which provides details of the Government's recent announcements on the Youth Guarantee.

As part of the Youth Guarantee, the Government is expanding support for young people looking for work on Universal Credit. This includes tailored employment support and a structured path into a job, apprenticeship, work experience, a Sector-based Work Academy Programme, learning or training from their first appointment in the Jobcentre. Rollout of this support began this month on a phased basis and will be in place in all Jobcentres across Great Britain by the end of the year. Young people in Newcastle-under-Lyme and across Staffordshire will benefit through this national rollout.

Youth Guarantee also includes the Jobs Guarantee. This will provide every eligible 18–24-year-old who has been claiming Universal Credit and looking for work for 18 months a guaranteed, fully subsidised six-month paid job, alongside a wraparound

employability and in-work support to help them move into sustained employment. National roll out of the Jobs Guarantee will begin across Great Britain later in 2026, providing a total of 90,000 jobs over the next three years.

We are also introducing a new hiring grant of £2,000 for non-levy paying employers, typically SMEs, that take on 16–24-year-old apprentices as new employees. It will apply to apprenticeship starts from October, as long as they have joined their employer within the past 3 months i.e. from July 2026.

Delivery of the Youth Guarantee is a partnership between central government, Jobcentres, employers, and local partners. Local DWP teams are responsible for delivery in their areas, working closely with employers and stakeholders. As a Member of Parliament, the Honourable Member can support young people locally by encouraging employers in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire to engage with the Youth Guarantee. Your most useful contact will be your local DWP team – details of local DWP Service Leaders are published online.

Employment: Menopause

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [129295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of menopause symptoms on women's labour market participation.

Dame Diana Johnson:
The Department has conducted a literature review to collate evidence on women's employment and menopause, which was published in July 2025: Menopause in the Workplace Literature Review - GOV.UK

The economic costs of the menopause on the labour market has been estimated by the following study: Womens health economics investing in the 51 per cent

Employment: Migraines

Johanna Baxter: [R] [128342]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of migraines as a driver of health related economic activity.

Dame Diana Johnson:
I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on the 30 March 2026 to Question UIN 122660.

Johanna Baxter: [R] [128343]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether migraine has been considered as part of cross government efforts to improve workforce participation among people with long term conditions.

Sir Stephen Timms:
Good work is good for health, so we want everyone to get work and get on in work when they can including people who suffer from migraine. In our Pathways to Work Green Paper we set out our Pathways to Work offer, backed by £1 billion a year of new funding by the end of the decade.

Disabled people are a diverse group so access to the right work and health support for every individual is key. We therefore have a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals to stay in work and get back into work, including those that join up employment and health systems. Existing measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) in Jobcentres and Access to Work grants. Our Supported Employment programme, Connect to Work, is supporting disabled people, people with health conditions and people with complex barriers to employment across England and Wales.

DEAs in the Jobcentres supporting the constituency hold in-depth Work Ability conversations that focus on strengths, suitable work options, workplace adjustments and confidence building.

Our Pathways to Work support offer will ensure a coherent and navigable offer of support, building on and bringing together initiatives such as Connect to Work, WorkWell and local Trailblazers. We are building towards a guaranteed offer of personalised work, health and skills support for all disabled people and people with health conditions on out of work benefits. We anticipate that the Pathways to Work offer, once fully rolled out, will include a support conversation to identify support needs and signpost to services, one-to-one caseworker support, periodic engagement and an offer of specialist long-term work, health and skills support.

Local Housing Allowance

Emma Lewell: **[128722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Local Housing Allowance in helping low-income tenants meet their housing costs.

Sir Stephen Timms:
The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions reviewed Local Housing Allowance rates and confirmed in his written statement on 26 November 2025 (HCWS1101) that rates would be maintained at their current levels for 2026/27.

Renters facing a shortfall in meeting their housing costs can apply for discretionary support through the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) Housing Payments from local authorities in England. In Wales and Scotland Discretionary Housing Payments apply.

Pensions

Kevin Hollinrake: [128745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that historic communications and reasonable expectations of pension scheme members are reflected in trustee governance and decision-making.

Torsten Bell:
The Pensions Regulator has published guidance on trustee duties and expects trustees, when considering discretionary benefit increases, to assess whether doing so would be in members' interests, including any consistent history or practice of making such awards.

DWP's recent consultation, " *Trust based pension schemes: Trustees and governance, building a stronger future* " sought views on ensuring that trustee boards take into account the perspectives of members in their decision making. We are currently analysing responses to the consultation.

Personal Independence Payment

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128557]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate has his Department has made of how many individuals who receive Personal Independence Payments use this income to cover (a) rent (b) other housing costs, and (c) transport to and from work.

Sir Stephen Timms:
Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a non-means-tested benefit intended as a contribution towards extra costs arising from a long-term health condition or disability, and recipients are free to use it in the way that best meets their individual needs. The Department does not routinely collect data on how PIP is spent.

Personal Independence Payment: Cystic Fibrosis

Adam Dance: [129327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure better understanding amongst Personal Independent Payment assessors of how much Cystic fibrosis symptoms can vary.

Sir Stephen Timms:
The department is committed to ensuring that individuals with cystic fibrosis receive high-quality and accurate Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments. All health professionals (HPs) carrying out PIP assessments receive comprehensive training in disability analysis, with a clear focus on understanding the functional effects of a claimant's condition rather than the diagnosis itself.

To support this approach, the department provides assessment suppliers with core training and guidance materials on the varying symptoms of cystic fibrosis. These materials include clinical background information and detail the potential functional

impacts of the condition, enabling HPs to deliver informed, consistent and accurate assessments.

In addition, all training and guidance materials are currently subject to a comprehensive review and update programme. A dedicated team is overseeing this work to ensure alignment with national best practice helping to ensure that guidance remains accurate, relevant and up to date.

Mr Lee Dillon: [129616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance his Department provides to Personal Independence Payment assessors on assessing people with cystic fibrosis, including the range of symptoms associated with the condition.

Sir Stephen Timms:
The department is committed to ensuring that individuals with cystic fibrosis receive high-quality and accurate Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments.

All health professionals (HPs) carrying out PIP assessments receive comprehensive training in disability analysis, with a clear focus on understanding the functional effects of a claimant's condition rather than the diagnosis itself.

To support this approach, the department provides assessment suppliers with core training and guidance materials on the varying symptoms of cystic fibrosis. These materials include clinical background information and detail the potential functional impacts of the condition, enabling HPs to deliver informed, consistent and accurate assessments.

In addition, all training and guidance materials are currently subject to a comprehensive review and update programme. A dedicated team is overseeing this work to ensure alignment with national best practice helping to ensure that guidance remains accurate, relevant and up to date.

Personal Independence Payment: Internet

Peter Prinsley: [126890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has considered introducing an online system for Personal Independence Payment claimants to report a change in circumstances, in line with other Government departments that offer digital self-service options; and if he will make an assessment of the potential benefits of such a system for accessibility, efficiency, and user experience.

Sir Stephen Timms:
The Health Transformation Programme is transforming the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) service to improve efficiency, accessibility, and user experience, build trust in our decisions, and support people to enter or remain in work.

Customers can access an online service to submit their health information after calling us to start their claim and this is already available to over 90% of new PIP customers. This is benefiting customers by removing postage times and increasing accessibility.

Personal Independence Payment: Terminal Illnesses

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [126116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have been assessed at a Personal Independence Payment assessment as having a terminal condition; how many of those people were in receipt of a fixed-term award; and what was the length of these fixed-term awards in each of the latest 12 months for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department does not collect information centrally for analysis about whether a claimant's condition is terminal. However, claimants claiming under the Special Rules for End of Life (SREL) are terminally ill and we can provide information about their awards. A PIP claimant is currently regarded as being end of life if they "suffer from a progressive disease, and the person's death in consequence of that disease can reasonably be expected within 12 months." [S.82 Welfare Reform Act 2012]

Claims by people with end of life are fast tracked – currently 3 days for new claimants; in the last five years to January 2026, 99% of special rule claims were successful, excluding withdrawn claims. The majority of awards are made for 3 years. The three-year awards given to SREL claims strikes a balance that recognises making a prognosis is not an exact science.

Someone already in receipt of PIP under the normal rules, where there is a wide variety of award lengths, can report a change in their circumstances that they are now terminally ill. This change of circumstances is similarly fast tracked.

The tables below detail the number or SREL claimant assessments for PIP over the last 12 months and fixed-term awards for SREL claimants for the same period.

Table 1: Volume of SREL claimant assessments over time

	VOLUME
Feb-25	1,500
Mar-25	1,500
Apr-25	1,190
May-25	1,470
Jun-25	1,870
Jul-25	1,540
Aug-25	1,480
Sep-25	1,510
Oct-25	1,720

	Volume
Nov-25	1,430
Dec-25	1,390
Jan-26	1,570

Table 2: Volume of SREL fixed-term awards by duration

	Less than 1 year	1 year to less than 2 years	2 years to less than 3 years	3 years to less than 4 years	4 years to less than 5 years	5 or more years	Total
Feb-25	10	X	20	1,220	0	10	1,260
Mar-25	10	X	30	1,170	0	X	1,210
Apr-25	10	X	20	970	X	10	1,010
May-25	10	X	30	1,140	0	20	1,200
Jun-25	20	X	40	1,470	X	10	1,540
Jul-25	20	X	20	1,220	0	10	1,270
Aug-25	10	10	10	1,200	X	10	1,230
Sep-25	10	X	10	1,230	X	20	1,260
Oct-25	10	X	10	1,400	X	10	1,440
Nov-25	10	X	10	1,130	X	X	1,160
Dec-25	10	10	20	1,110	X	X	1,150
Jan-26	10	X	20	1,260	0	X	1,300
Total	130	30	240	14,510	10	100	15,020

Notes:

- Values have been rounded to the nearest 10. Where a value is less than 5 but not 0 it has been replaced by an X for disclosure control.

- Figures are for claimants under DWP Policy Ownership (England, Wales and Abroad) and exclude claimants where PIP has been devolved to the Scottish Government in Scotland or The Department for Communities in Northern Ireland.

Poverty: Carers

Shivani Raja: [128935]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of carers who are in poverty because they have accrued National Insurance credits through caring responsibilities but are not eligible for contributory working-age benefits.

Sir Stephen Timms:
Support for unpaid carers on low incomes is primarily provided through Universal Credit and Pension Credit, which include carer amounts in addition to the standard allowance or Standard Minimum Guarantee. These additions are worth up to £2,500 a year. In England and Wales, support is also available through Carer's Allowance.

For those who are able to balance paid work with their caring responsibilities, this is also a means of increasing household income. It also contributes to the wellbeing of the carer, and to the skills available to employers. The Carer's Leave Act 2023 gives employees a right to time off to provide care, and the Government will be consulting on further changes to care leave. The Employment Rights Act 2025 contains provisions to support improved work-life balance, including measures to strengthen access to flexible working.

Unpaid carers receiving Carer's Allowance receive a Class 1 National Insurance Credit which helps protect entitlement to the State Pension and contributory working-age benefits. Those receiving Universal Credit or a Carer's Credit receive a Class 3 National Insurance Credit which helps protect entitlement to the State Pension. In all cases other contributions and entitlement conditions for the benefits or pension concerned would also need to be satisfied.

State Retirement Pensions: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee: [128470]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to maintain the level of the state pension in real terms for pensioners in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Torsten Bell:
Ensuring a decent State Pension for pensioners as a foundation for a secure retirement is a priority for this Government.

The Government is committed to protecting the value of the State Pension in real terms. That is why, for the duration of this Parliament, we have committed to maintaining the Triple Lock, which increases the basic and new State Pension each year by the highest of earnings growth, price inflation or 2.5 per cent. This ensures that pensioners' incomes keep pace with the cost of living and benefit from rising wages. In addition, Pension Credit is uprated in line with earnings, providing extra protection for pensioners on the lowest incomes. This year, the State Pension increased by 4.8%, boosting incomes for over 12 million pensioners.

State Retirement Pensions: Women

Sir John Hayes: [128657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the constitutional implications of rejecting the recommendations of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman report on changes to women's state pension age, published 21 March 2024.

Jess Brown-Fuller: [128969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Government's response to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report of 21 March 2024 on public confidence in the Ombudsman process.

Torsten Bell:
We have taken the PHSO's report seriously and given the findings the close examination that they deserved. We have set out the detailed reasons for our decision in our new response, on the 29 January, which has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Surveys: Pets

Ruth Jones: [129250]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department plans to include variables relating to companion animal ownership in a) future labour market and b) household surveys.

Ruth Jones: [129251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has undertaken any joint work with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to assess the a) societal and b) economic impact of companion animal ownership.

Ruth Jones: [129252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department plans to undertake research into the potential impact of companion animal ownership on a) labour market participation, b) productivity and c) flexible working.

Ruth Jones: [129253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of (a) informal caregiving responsibilities and (b) companion animal care on labour market participation.

Dame Diana Johnson:
I refer my Hon. friend to the answer I gave on 13th April to PQ 122869.

Universal Credit: Childcare

Christine Jardine: [125367]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the requirement to pay childcare costs in advance prior to reimbursement through Universal Credit on levels of employment; and what steps she is taking to support affected families.

Sir Stephen Timms:
The Office for Budget Responsibility, in their Spring 2023 and October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, published their economic impacts of various policy measures, including childcare. These can be found here: The economic effects of policy measures - Office for Budget Responsibility, Monitoring and evaluating the supply-side effects of policy measures - Office for Budget Responsibility.

Parents who need help with their upfront childcare costs to move into work or increase their working hours may be eligible for support from the Flexible Support Fund.

The Flexible Support Fund's Upfront Childcare Costs can be used to pay 100% of the upfront costs of up to one month of childcare. This is designed to ensure that any costs that the Universal Credit customer incurs in relation to childcare when starting work or increasing their hours is not a barrier to taking up this work.

We are streamlining the process and extending eligibility to parents returning from parental leave to improve access to upfront childcare support. We will also extend eligibility to parents returning from parental leave to ease the difficult transition back to work.

Universal Credit: Self-employed

Ann Davies: [129349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed Universal Credit claimants with caring responsibilities.

Sir Stephen Timms:
Universal Credit for self-employed individuals aims to encourage sustainable work choices and support self-employment where it is a realistic route to financial self-sufficiency.

The Minimum Income Floor is designed to encourage low-earning customers to increase their earnings and grow their business. The level of the Minimum Income Floor is calculated using the number of hours per week that a customer is expected to work, tailored specifically to customers individual circumstances, including for health conditions and caring responsibilities. It is set at a maximum of 35 hours for individuals with no limitations on their expected working hours.

To align with the offer of 30 hours of free childcare for working parents, self-employed individuals with children aged 3-12 typically have their Minimum Income Floor set using a maximum of 30 hours per week.

Universal Credit: Students

Shivani Raja: [128756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the interaction between Universal Credit and student finance results in appropriate support for eligible students.

Sir Stephen Timms:
Students are generally expected to access support for tuition fees and living costs through the student support system. This means most full-time students are not usually eligible for Universal Credit, unless they fall into specified exception groups (e.g. disabled students, students with children, some young people without parental support).

Students who are eligible for Universal Credit have their maintenance loans treated as income for the purpose of Universal Credit. The student support system is designed to meet their living cost needs during study.

Tuition fee loans are disregarded in the calculation of a Universal Credit award, along with grants such as those recognising a disability or for childcare costs. Any Special Support Loan/Grant is also disregarded in these calculations.

Universal Credit: Uprating

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [127500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what consideration his Department makes of trends in the costs of essential goods and services when setting the basic rate of Universal Credit during the uprating process.

Sir Stephen Timms:
The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) estimates how the prices of goods and services bought by households rise or fall and is used as an indication of inflation in Universal Credit uprating. Last year, The Secretary of State increased most working age benefits across Great Britain for 2026/27 by 3.8% in line with CPI in the year to September 2025.

Universal Credit: Young People

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [128527]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has been done as to the potential impact on employment prospects for under 22s who will no longer receive the health element of Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:
I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 2 March 2026 in response to Question UIN 114204.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

UK Export Finance: Media

Mike Wood: [126604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the transparency data entitled Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for government's most important contracts, Data for October to December 2025 for all departments, published on 31 March 2026, for what reason the UK Export Finance contract for Media Buying Services with Optimum Media Buying Limited requires the supplier to ensure 33% multicultural representation by year 2 in the media advertising; and what the definition used is for multicultural representation.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 April 2026. The correct answer should have been:

Chris Bryant:

~~The contract in question was called off in 2022 from the Crown Services Framework, RM6123 Media Services, which requires suppliers to consider social value policy themes, and to support contracting authorities to deliver priorities relating to delivering a diverse supply chain. That is why a KPI for social value (specifically, promoting diversity, inclusion & social mobility in attraction recruitment) was set at '33% multicultural representation by year 2 (media industry avg. 18.7%).~~

~~UK Export Finance is currently reprocuring the contract under updated legislation, with revised key performance indicators.~~

~~For the purposes of this key performance indicator, the supplier uses self-identification of participants across a range of ethnicities.~~

The contract in question was called off in 2022 under the previous government from the Crown Services Framework, RM6123 Media Services. That framework required suppliers to consider social value policy themes, and to support contracting authorities to deliver a diverse supply chain. It was as a consequence of that requirement that a KPI for social value (specifically, promoting diversity, inclusion & social mobility in attraction recruitment) was set at '33% multicultural representation by year 2 (media industry avg. 18.7%). For the purposes of this key performance indicator, the supplier uses self-identification of participants across a range of ethnicities.

UK Export Finance is currently reprocuring the contract under the Procurement Act 2023, which came into force in February 2025. These negotiations, which are currently at an early change, will include new and different key performance indicators.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Mobile Phones: Standards

Ben Lake: [125033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what estimate Department estimate of the total number of households in (a) Ceredigion Preseli constituency, (b) Wales and (c) the UK without access to good mobile signal strength as defined by Ofcom.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 April 2026. The correct answer should have been:

Kanishka Narayan:
Ofcom publishes mobile coverage data in its Connected Nations reports at the premises level, but this does not distinguish between premises type. This means there is no differentiation between households and places of work for example.

Following the launch of the Map Your Mobile tool in June 2025, Ofcom's threshold for good mobile coverage, combining 4G and 5G, is a predicted received signal strength of −95dBm. Predicted coverage at this threshold is also now included in Ofcom's Connected Nations report.

Our estimated number of premises without access to good mobile coverage for each area is provided in the table below. Data for total number of premises and the percentage of premises with good mobile coverage is presented as in Ofcom's Connected Nations Report 2025.

Area	Total number of premises	Percentage of premises with access to good mobile coverage from any mobile network operator	Estimated number of premises without access to good mobile coverage from any mobile network operator
Ceredigion Preseli	51,741	95.31%	2,427
Wales	1,569,275	**99.08** ~~99.64~~ %	14,437
UK	32,355,397	**99.64** ~~99.08~~ %	116,479

TRANSPORT

Driving Tests: Recruitment

Joe Robertson: [128529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) driving examiners were employed by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency in each month since July 2024, (b) examiners were fully qualified and deployable in each of those months and (c) vacant driving examiner posts there were in each month for which data is available.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 April 2026. The correct answer should have been:

Simon Lightwood:

Answers to written questions 101471 of 6 January, 104860 of 22 January, 122532 of 25 March, and 124195 of 17 April 2026, respectively provide data on how many full-time equivalent (FTE) driving examiners (DE) employed by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) were (a) in post and (b) delivering practical car driving tests for each month from July 2024 to March 2026.

In March 2026, DVSA provided car practical driving tests from 318 driving test centres (DTC). The national average utilisation figure was 75.74% in that month. The attached spreadsheet (WPQ-00066952) provides the utilisation figures for all DTCs in the same period. The capacity of each DTC will vary depending on the services it provides and whether DEs work full or part-time.

DVSA takes a view of the number of DEs it needs, based on demand at a national level, then split down to test centre. The agency is working on a detailed view of DE requirements, based on demand forecast modelling at test centre level, rather than nationally. DVSA expects to have that view in summer 2026.

Utilisation of DE time measures how much of a DE’s available deployable working time is used to deliver driving tests, rather than individual effort or productivity.

The intention of the forthcoming changes to practical test booking arrangements will make the system fairer for genuine learners by reducing exploitation and churn. Other measures DVSA is deploying (such as recruiting more examiners and carrying out more overtime) are designed to improve waiting times and utilisation.

Attachments:

1. **Copy of Attchment for WPQ-00066952.xlsx**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

United Kingdom Trade Envoy Programme

Minister of State (Chris Bryant): [HCWS1544]

The Secretary of State has today made the following appointment to the United Kingdom's Trade Envoy programme.

The United Kingdom's Trade Envoys are important to this Government's growth agenda. They support Ministers to deliver trade and investment outcomes within the industrial and trade strategies and attract foreign direct investment across UK regions.

Working in close partnership with our Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and His Majesty's Trade Commissioners, Trade Envoys support deeper bilateral trade relationships, lead trade missions, welcome inward delegations, and address market access challenges to ensure British firms can compete and succeed.

The role as a United Kingdom Trade Envoy is unpaid and voluntary with cross-party membership from both Houses.

The Secretary of State is pleased to appoint:

The Hon Member for Rugby (John Slinger MP) as the United Kingdom's Trade Envoy to the Republic of Korea.

Today's appointment means there are now 32 Trade Envoys focusing on 73 markets.

CABINET OFFICE

The State of the Estate in 2024-25 Report

Minister of State without Portfolio (Cabinet Office) (Anna Turley): [HCWS1546]

I have today laid before Parliament, pursuant to Section 86 of the Climate Change Act 2008, the "State of the Estate in 2024-25".

This report describes the progress made in improving the efficiency, sustainability and performance of the central government estate.

The report confirms that the central government estate comprised 203,400 assets in 2024–25. This included 181,100 built assets and around 22,400 land assets. The built estate had a total floor area of 159.1 million square metres, while the government also held 640,400 hectares of land. The freehold value of the estate increased by 9.1% to £208.4 billion.

For the central government estate within the scope of the Greening Government Commitments, the following changes were reported through that framework against the baseline 2017-18 financial year: by 2024-25, overall emissions had reduced by 42.1%, with energy costs reduced by an estimated £323.6 million.

Annual running costs reduced by 0.9% to £26.6 billion, despite continued inflationary pressures across utilities, maintenance and facilities management. Costs remain concentrated in a small number of operationally intensive portfolios, particularly health, defence and schools.

Efficiency savings reached £750 million, surpassing the £500 million target a year early, with the government also raising £2 billion from property disposals ahead of time.

The ‘State of the Estate’ report is published on an annual basis.

DEFENCE

The Armoured Cavalry Programme

Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry (Luke Pollard): [HCWS1545]

I am releasing this statement to the House today to provide Parliament with a further update on the Armoured Cavalry Programme, commonly known as Ajax, following issues raised on Exercise Titan Storm in November 2025.

Since my last update to this House, where I provided the findings of the Ministerial Review, the Army Safety Investigation Team (ASIT) investigation has now completed its investigation. ASIT’s findings indicate no single causal mechanism of the symptoms reported by our soldiers but rather a combination of multiple factors. Specifically on noise and vibration, levels were found to be below legal exposure limits. Instead, these symptoms were likely the result of a combination of factors, including technical issues related to platform conditions at the time of the exercise — such as incorrect track tension and loose or missing engine deck bolts — alongside environmental and human factors, including variability in training and experience, cold exposure, and air quality within the Ajax vehicle itself.

The Independent Expert Panel Review remains ongoing, with a final report due soon, and will focus on the less well understood human and environmental factors relevant across Defence more broadly.

In January this year I updated this House on the Ministerial Review which examined the quality of advice that Ministers, senior officials and military leadership across the MOD received. On receiving further advice from the MOD’s Permanent Secretary, we commissioned a further independent review to explore this issue. I can confirm that the Terms of Reference have been agreed and a lead reviewer has been identified and will be appointed shortly.

The safety of our people is non-negotiable. That is the standard our Armed Forces deserve, and it is the standard this Government will uphold.

I can confirm today that all personnel have now returned to normal duties following Exercise Titan Storm. The majority of soldiers who felt ill during this exercise suffered from temporary symptoms and with the ASIT report concluding that there was no single causal factor for the symptoms experienced by the soldiers, I have now agreed to restart the acceptance of vehicles from General Dynamics. However, I accept that the

experience for our soldiers using Ajax has not been good enough and that is not acceptable.

I have implemented strict new controls on the reintroduction of the Ajax vehicles that is focussed on providing a significantly improved user experience.

Given that the issues presented on Exercise Titan Storm, and to ensure the safety of our personnel, I can confirm that the 23 vehicles on the Exercise will be treated separately and will not be put back in the hands of soldiers until we have confirmed that it is appropriate to do so.

We have been engaging extensively and directly with our soldiers throughout this process – their experiences matter and they are shaping much of what we do next. As a result, we are considering a phased approach to restarting the Ajax programme.

The first phase will include the restarting of trials using the current version of Ajax. A limited number of vehicles will be used and under very controlled circumstances and maintenance regimes.

The second phase will see the delivery of a number of improvements relating to the use of air filtration, crew compartment heating, and the electrical power generation system – key themes identified and prioritised following Exercise Titan Storm.

In addition to these improvements, we will further bolster the safety approach to the Ajax programme. Taking lessons from the aviation industry, we will instigate an approach which will instil a common thread between design, maintenance and operation.

Included as part of that work, there will be named individuals within the Army Chain of Command who will hold the separate responsibilities for operating and maintaining the vehicle. This is to ensure there cannot be instances where desire to operate a vehicle within the chain of command compromises the necessity for the highest standards of safety. That is why any return to training will also be very controlled with a crawl-walk-run staged progression ensuring safety is paramount throughout.

Using the information gathered from our soldiers, we will continue to proceed safely, responsibly, and transparently to deliver an improved Ajax vehicle for our soldiers.

While we are proceeding cautiously with Ajax, we know we have more to do to rebuild confidence in the vehicle, and we do not underestimate the work still ahead. We aspire to deliver a vehicle into service that is effective on the battlefield and works for our soldiers.

We will continue to work with General Dynamics to proceed safely, responsibly, and transparently to deliver an improved Ajax user experience for our soldiers. The above commitments will be met within the existing programme scope and financial envelope.

As I have done, I will continue to keep the House closely updated on the progress of the programme.

Update on the Afghan Resettlement Programme

Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry (Luke Pollard): [HCWS1547]

Today I am able to provide the House with a further update on the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP) as we continue to make good progress towards our intent of concluding the programme in this Parliament. This statement provides an update to the House on:

- the progress Ministry of Defence (MOD) is making with eligibility decisions,

- the changes to how we deliver relocations for Afghans under the programme, and

- resettlement in the UK.

Since closing all schemes to new applicants in July 2025, we have made good progress with the application pipeline (falling from circa 25,000 outstanding applications in July to now fewer than 17,000) and are publishing quarterly Key Performance Indicators to hold ourselves to account and ensure maximum transparency. We aim to have made all decisions in the current caseload by Spring next year.

I announced last month that we have concluded the Triples Review.

We have also now initiated the closure of the Review of the Ex-Gratia Medical Payments Scheme. The scheme was set up in 2020 to provide support to former locally-employed staff in Afghanistan who were injured during their employment with MOD. In 2020, the MOD initiated a process for reviewing the EGMP cases relating to individuals who wish to have their cases re-assessed. Further detail on this is available at Ex-Gratia Medical Payments reviews - GOV.UK

Having closed ARP schemes to new applicants last year and as we work to draw ARP to a close, we estimate there are fewer than 9,000 EPs still to relocate to the UK. This is in part because we are finding far fewer applicants meet the eligibility criteria than in the years after the scheme opened.

As part of the commitment to relocate and resettle those found eligible under the ARP schemes, MOD has been using a third-party organisation to support individuals moving out of Afghanistan. This support has been aimed at ensuring eligible individuals and their families can safely and legally reach a UK visa application centre (VAC) in a third country to progress through their Home Office entry clearance stages.

This year, however, more eligible Afghans have self-moved to a third country. Having seen increased evidence of successful self-moves and after assessing carefully again the risks to this cohort and other factors, including the value for money for the taxpayer, we have decided to end in country assistance for movements out of Afghanistan. This decision will have the effect of more closely aligning ARAP and ARR with the ACRS, which is based on a self-move policy. We will keep the ARP support offer under review as the context evolves.

Eligible Afghans will need to make their own way to a Third Country when they are able to do so. We are contacting all those immediately impacted by this change.

I want to reassure eligible Afghans that once they reach a safe Third Country, we maintain provision of our current support until 2028.

As I previously reported to the House, we cannot sustain ARP support indefinitely. To enable us to deliver on our ambitions to conclude this programme well within this Parliament and for us to prepare sensibly for the transition of ARP resources to other Defence priorities, we intend to:

- enforce the provision within the Immigration Rules that requires eligible individuals to attend a VAC appointment within 12 months – save for exceptional circumstances; and
- introduce a backstop of December 2028 for MOD's support in third countries, including submission of entry clearance applications to Home Office. Save for exceptional circumstances, December 2028 will therefore mark the end of relocations to the UK.

As set out by the Defence Secretary in his statement to Parliament on 18 December 2024, it remains the Government's aim to reduce the reliance on the Defence Estate as transitional accommodation.

The Defence Estate has played a vital role in providing transitional accommodation for Afghan families in recent years, enabling them to begin their new lives in the safety of the UK. But the use of the Defence Estate for the ARP was never intended to be a long-term solution. We have therefore ceased to run transitional sites on the Defence Estate, with the small number of Afghans remaining in transitional accommodation now supported by Local Authorities. We are also piloting an approach which empowers Local Authorities to make tailored decisions on where and how ARP households are accommodated, which will bring positive community outcomes. MOD is committed to reducing the number of Service Family Accommodation properties being used as settled accommodation and ending their use by the end of 2028.

The small number of hotels procured to help with transitional pressures also play a valuable role in providing safe and secure accommodation for Afghans as they begin their new lives in the UK. However, with a better sense of numbers yet to relocate and the strong progress made in moving those already here into settled accommodation, I can confirm we have started to reduce the use of hotels and will have closed two of six by this May.

I want to take the opportunity to thank our partners in local government and other supportive local organisations, who have, and continue to provide critical support to eligible Afghans in the resettlement process to date.

I want to restate this Government's commitment to work with all those involved in ensuring that the ARP delivers on our commitment to resettle those eligible Afghans, many of whom who do so much in support of the UK and contribute to our communities and economy.

I remain confident in progress towards our goal of concluding central government's delivery of this programme well before the end of this Parliament and believe the

measures we have taken and set out in this statement will help us deliver on that. I will continue to keep the House updated accordingly.

JUSTICE

Contingencies Fund Advance

Minister of State for Justice (Sarah Sackman): [HCWS1543]

I hereby give notice of the Ministry of Justice's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund totalling £1.7m.

This follows the introduction of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill, currently going through Parliament, and which we anticipate will receive Royal Assent by Autumn 2026.

Accessing the Contingency Fund allows the Department to manage the expenditure associated with developing a digital system for the Legal Aid Agency to effectively administer the provision of legal aid under the provisions of the Bill, which will expand the scope of legal aid for inquests. This expenditure will ensure that we are able to implement the legal aid provisions of the Bill as quickly as possible following Royal Assent. The expenditure will also mean that we develop this system in a way that ensures the continuing recovery and effective operation of existing legal aid digital systems and protects work underway to deliver transformed digital systems for legal aid.

Parliamentary approval for resource of £1,700,000 for this new service will be sought in a Main Estimate for Ministry of Justice. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £1,700,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund. The cash advance will then be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent of The Public Office (Accountability) Bill.