



Ruth Cadbury >

(Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)

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T1. If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities. (Unique identification number 906268 (Unique identification number))

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office >

(Oliver Dowden)

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Tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, and it is of course right that as a country we honour Her late Majesty's legacy. As a first step towards that, the Government, jointly with the royal household, have established a new Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee. That committee will develop proposals for a permanent memorial to the late Queen and a broader legacy programme that will enable everyone in the nation to commemorate her life of service to us.

The Cabinet Office plays a critical role in strengthening our national resilience, and over the summer we published the most comprehensive edition of the national risk register to date. That important piece of work will help the Government and the whole country prepare for the challenges we face.

Ruth Cadbury >

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The Cabinet Office is currently carrying out a review into Homes England, and my concern is about the Help to Buy scheme, which helps people to get on to the housing ladder. The Government outsourced that service to Lenvi earlier this year, and since then my constituents have faced huge delays in getting their applications processed. Is the Minister proud of creating a Help to Buy scheme that is doing the exact opposite of what it says on the tin?

Oliver Dowden >

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Of course, it is incumbent on Ministers to drive efficiencies in arm's length bodies such as Homes England. I am very happy to pick that up with my relevant ministerial colleagues.

Mr Gagan Mohindra >

(South West Hertfordshire) (Con)

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T2. Can my right hon. Friend tell us anything more about the Government's plans for the late Queen Elizabeth II's memorialisation? (Unique identification number 906270 (Unique identification number))

Oliver Dowden >

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I have already met with Lord Janvrin, who will be leading the committee. He of course has two decades of experience in service to the royal household, including as private secretary to Her late Majesty. The aim we are working towards is that the committee will report by 2026, which would have been Her late Majesty's 100th birthday.

Mr Pat McFadden >

(Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)

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I begin by associating myself with the Secretary of State's comments on marking the anniversary of the death of the late Queen.

The responsibilities of the Cabinet Office include the National Security Council and co-ordinating the Government's response to crises. Last night, we learned of a major breach of security with the escape from Wandsworth prison of Daniel Abed Khalife, a terror suspect who was accused of gathering information that could be useful to a hostile state. Can the Secretary of State update the House on the search for Mr Khalife, and whether—in the light of his Department's responsibilities for national security and resilience—he has asked why such a terror suspect was being held at a lower security category prison such as Wandsworth in the first place?

Oliver Dowden >

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May I begin by welcoming the right hon. Gentleman to his new position? It is wonderful that the great tradition of gingers across the Dispatch Boxes continues—although, if he does not mind, one should perhaps describe him as a legacy ginger. He brings a wealth of experience to the role, and I look forward to our exchanges.

The right hon. Gentleman is of course right to raise this case. As he will know, the Lord Chancellor has asked for an urgent investigation, working with the Prison Service to find out the exact circumstances of what happened in respect of this escape. Clearly, the initial law enforcement response will be led by the Home Office, but I will be working with the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary and others to ensure that we rapidly apprehend this individual and learn the lessons of what led to this escape in the first place.

Mr McFadden >

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I thank the Secretary of State. I can only say to him that the hair may go but the skin remains the same, so in solidarity I wish him well in the current heat.

It is reported that Mr Khalife managed to escape by clinging to the underside of a food delivery van. This is obviously an extraordinary situation, given the strict procedures that are supposed to govern the entry and exit of vehicles on the prison estate, so can the Secretary of State outline how those procedures will now be reviewed; what other aspects of prison security will also be reviewed, and over what timescale; and when the public and Parliament will be informed of any changes made as a result of this very serious breach of security?

Oliver Dowden >

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The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct to raise all of these questions, and that is precisely what my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is overseeing with an examination into that right now. If the individual escaped in those circumstances, that clearly should not have happened. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend takes it very seriously indeed, and will of course

update the House on the outcome of the investigation. Of course, the Home Secretary will update the House, alongside the Lord Chancellor, on steps to apprehend the individual.

Mark Fletcher >

(Bolsover) (Con)

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T4. Over the summer I once again visited Rolls-Royce and met some of its brilliant apprentices, and last year, with the armed forces parliamentary scheme, I was shadowing our Royal Navy. It is clear that some of the challenges on nuclear skills are mirrored in the military and the private sector. What is the Cabinet Office doing to bring together extra work and extra career paths, so that those who have nuclear skills can transition between the two? (Unique identification number 906272 (Unique identification number))

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs >

(Johnny Mercer)

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I thank my hon. Friend for his very important question. Alongside a lot of the support mechanisms we have introduced—Operation Fortitude, Operation Courage, Operation Restore and Operation Nova—we have a series of missions or sector initiatives for accelerating veterans who have come out of the military with specialist skills into a job and making sure those skills are not going to waste. Having a job remains the No. 1 factor in improving the life chances of veterans. Veteran employment is at 87%—it has never been higher—but there is more to do, and I look forward to working with my hon. Friend in the months ahead.

Madam Deputy Speaker >

(Dame Eleanor Laing)

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I call the SNP spokesperson.

Kirsty Blackman >

(Aberdeen North) (SNP)

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It is clear from their actions that the Tories want to privatise our health service, selling data from England's NHS to a Trump-backed business, Palantir, under a £27 million data deal. This was done without a competitive tender. Not only that, but they also accepted a £5 million donation from a rich health tycoon this week. Does the Deputy Prime Minister not agree with me that the only way to guarantee protection and integrity for Scotland's NHS is to keep it out of Westminster Tory hands and keep it in the hands of the people of Scotland?

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office >

(Alex Burghart)

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The hon. Lady will know, because she sat on the Procurement Bill Committee, that we have a new procurement regime coming in, but in the case she refers to it is my understanding that everything was above board and in line with due process.

David Duguid >

(Banff and Buchan) (Con)

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T8. Madam Deputy Speaker, may I join you in wishing my hon. Friend the Minister a happy birthday? Given that the constitution is reserved to this UK Parliament, and given that there did not appear to be much in the way of anything new in the programme for government set out this week, does my hon. Friend agree that the First Minister of Scotland would do well to focus on the real issues that matter to the people and businesses of Scotland, rather than obsessing with breaking up the United Kingdom? (Unique identification number 906276 (Unique identification number))

Alex Burghart > [Share](#)

As ever, my hon. Friend has his finger on the pulse. I was lucky enough to be on a work trip to Edinburgh and Glasgow just before the summer break, and all the people I met there were interested in employment, skills, the state of the health service, and law and order. Not one person raised a second referendum with me, which is because it is not among people's priorities in Scotland. People's priorities are the same as those of the Westminster Government.

Debbie Abrahams >

(Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab)

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T3. Ipsos recently published its annual poll on trust in politics, which revealed that only 12% of respondents actually believed what a politician was saying—the lowest level in 29 years. Will the Minister look again at my Elected Representatives (Codes of Conduct) Bill, which is aimed specifically at restoring trust and confidence in politics and politicians? (Unique identification number 906271 (Unique identification number))

Alex Burghart > [Share](#)

I am very happy to look again at the hon. Lady's work. Our general belief is that it is our actions in this place and outside it as elected representatives that will restore trust in politics rather than legislation, and that is a job for all of us.

Jo Gideon >

(Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con)

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The cost to Government of ill health runs into hundreds of billions. The economic impact of obesity alone is estimated to be over £58 billion, accounting for the cost to the NHS and social care, lost productivity, workforce inactivity and welfare payments. Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that it is time for a taskforce to look holistically at health and societal challenges and to develop early intervention strategies on a multi-departmental basis?

Oliver Dowden > [Share](#)

My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight those challenges. The health service—I have seen this in my own constituency—is coming up with innovative models to look at wider public health, and to address exactly that issue. We want to get more people back into the workforce, and we need to deal with some of those long-term challenges.

Chris Elmore >

(Ogmore) (Lab)

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T5. Although the police data leak in Northern Ireland was caused by human error, it raises wider concerns about cyber-security and data for our public service workers. I have been approached by constituents who work particularly within policing. They would like some reassurance that the Cabinet Office is working with forces across England and Wales to ensure that those types of data breaches do not happen again, and that the Cabinet Office will do more work on securing people's personal data, particularly when they are working in services such as the police force. (Unique identification number 906273 (Unique identification number))

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General >

(Jeremy Quin)

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The hon. Gentleman is right to say that this issue is local to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, but he is also right—I fully acknowledge this—that there may be questions to learn across Government about how we make certain that people’s data is secure. It is critical that individuals working and providing a service to the country know that their data is secure. I agree with him on that, and I have had discussions with officials about what we can do to ensure we can give that reassurance.

Andrew Selous >

(South West Bedfordshire) (Con)

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Will the Cabinet Office convene an inter-ministerial committee —between the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the Treasury—to consider what to do where we have built tens of thousands of houses but section 106 money has not been allocated for adequate health facilities? This is a problem across our country and on both sides of the House. I hope we will solve it for the future with what we are doing with the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill and the infrastructure levy, but there is a legacy problem that needs the attention of the Cabinet Office. Given its co-ordinating role in Government, that would be a very useful thing for the Department to do, and an extremely necessary one.

Oliver Dowden >

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That is an interesting proposal. If we are to get public consent for the number of houses we need to build, we must be able to reassure people that the infrastructure is in place. That is precisely what the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill seeks to do. I will look at my hon. Friend’s proposal for an inter-ministerial group. I am always a little cautious about setting up more inter-ministerial groups, unless I can be sure that they will actually deliver some further outcomes, but I take his proposal seriously.

Mary Glendon >

(North Tyneside) (Lab)

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T6. Cleaning and security staff in three Whitehall Departments are now striking over a poverty pay offer by the outsourced contractor ISS. What are Ministers doing to help resolve that dispute with the Public and Commercial Services Union, and to end the race to the bottom for the pay and terms and conditions of vital workers due to outsourcing? (Unique identification number 906274 (Unique identification number))

Jeremy Quin >

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I am sorry that strike action is ongoing. Ultimately, this is a matter between the employees and their employer.

Anna Firth >

(Southend West) (Con)

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Will the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs update the House on the Northern Ireland legacy legislation?

Johnny Mercer >

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Yesterday the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill passed this House. Legacy is an incredibly difficult issue. Victims have been let down for many years. Veterans have been let down. This Government made a commitment that we would see through our promises to both those groups, and that is what we did yesterday. I am disappointed that the Opposition voted against it again, but politics is about choices, and I am proud of what this Government have delivered.

Jessica Morden >

(Newport East) (Lab)

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T7. Further to the question on the infected blood inquiry from my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson), why will the Government not get on with extending the interim payments now, as they could do and as was recommended by Sir Brian Langstaff? It is absolutely shameful to delay that any longer, and there is no excuse. (Unique identification number 906275 (Unique identification number))

Jeremy Quin > [Share](#)

I have heard many times from the hon. Lady about this subject and about her constituents. She speaks about it passionately in this House and has done so for a number of years. I come back to my earlier answer: we paid interim compensation last year, as the House is aware, and the second interim report has come through. I am expecting the final report in the autumn, putting us in a place to respond as swiftly as possible once it is received.

Ms Anum Qaisar >

(Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)

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Yesterday marked a year since the Prime Minister's predecessor took office, and as you may remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, a lettuce ended up outlasting her. Due to Tory economic mismanagement, that same lettuce would now cost around 20% more. The cost of food might not be an issue for the Prime Minister, who is the richest MP in the House of Commons, but it is a concern for my constituents. What discussions have Ministers had with Cabinet colleagues on tackling food insecurity?

Oliver Dowden > [Share](#)

I know that the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Chancellor of the Exchequer engage regularly with supermarkets, food providers and others to make sure that we continue to keep prices low. It is the case that since the Prime Minister came to office, we are now seeing inflation falling, and we have seen a record upward revision in growth numbers, which now show that we recovered faster from covid than any other European country, contrary to the repeated assertions of the parties on the Opposition Benches.

Dame Diana Johnson >

(Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)

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I am going to have another go: why is it that the Minister has not been able even to implement recommendation 17 of the second interim report, which is to set up a bespoke psychological service for those infected and affected, when other nations of the United Kingdom have been able to do that? Why has England been left out? Why have the Government not been able to do that?

Jeremy Quin > [Share](#)

That issue is being taken forward, as the right hon. Lady knows, by the Department of Health and Social Care. I know it has made substantial progress on exactly such a scheme, and I look forward to it making an announcement in due course.

Peter Grant >

(Glenrothes) (SNP)

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The forthcoming by-election in Rutherglen and Hamilton West will be the first in Scotland under the new requirement for voter identification. We know that thousands of voters in England were disenfranchised at council elections because they did not have a passport or driving licence. What specific steps is the Cabinet Office taking to make sure that the voters of Rutherglen and Hamilton West, who want to turn out in their thousands to elect Katy Loudon as their MP, are not prevented from doing so because they are too poor to own a passport or driving licence?

Alex Burghart >

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I hope the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that people can only vote if they have a passport or driver's licence. If he does not know that that is untrue, he now does. We have had a widespread publicity campaign to ensure that people understand the identity requirements at elections. At the local elections, despite considerable scaremongering from Opposition parties, the disruption was minimal.

Madam Deputy Speaker >

(Dame Eleanor Laing)

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That concludes questions. I pause for a moment to allow the change of dramatis personae on the Front Bench—there is quite a lot of movement this morning.

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