Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat Annual Report

April 2025 – March 2026

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1. Foreword by the Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat

We are pleased to present the fourth Annual Report of intergovernmental activity produced by the Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat ("the Secretariat").

The production of an annual report is one of the key functions of the Secretariat set out in the Review of Intergovernmental Relations ("the Review"). A summary of the structures established by the Review and the role and functions of the Secretariat is included in Section 2. Further detail is provided in the Review itself and the Policy Paper on the Function and Role of the Secretariat.

This annual report provides an overview of intergovernmental relations, undertaken within the structures established by the Review, between the United Kingdom (UK) Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland (NI) Executive.

This reporting period covers from 1 April 2025, through to 31 March 2026.

Key political events during this reporting period included a UK Government Cabinet reshuffle in September 2025.

The Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat was fully staffed from the start of the reporting period until August 2025, when the Welsh Government post became vacant. It remained vacant for the rest of the reporting year. There were no other staffing changes within the Secretariat during this period.

The information presented has been compiled from a range of published sources. It provides a summary of key information but is not intended to supersede any of the original publications. We are grateful to officials from all governments for their support in preparing this report.

Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat

2. Purpose and Structure

2.1 The Secretariat and the Review of Intergovernmental Relations

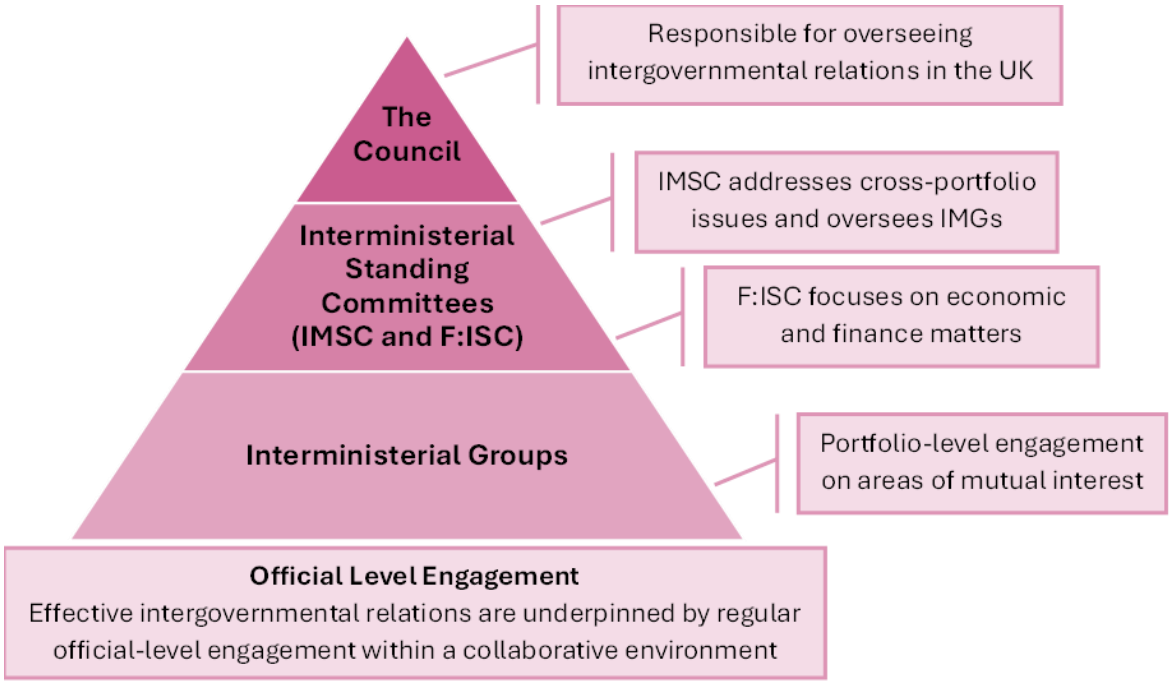
The Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Secretariat was established as part of the Review of Intergovernmental Relations, published in January 2022. More detail on the function and role of the Secretariat is set out in a UK Government policy paper, published in November 2023.

The Review sets out new tiered structures for IGR and ways of working, including the IGR Secretariat. The IGR Secretariat is impartial and is staffed by officials across governments. The IGR Secretariat promotes the efficient and effective maintenance of intergovernmental relations across tiers, facilitates handling of disputes, and provides administrative support across the structures. Its functions include publishing an annual report on intergovernmental activity.

The information presented in this section of the report summarises the structures of IGR as they are set out in the Review. These structures have developed and evolved in practice over the intervening period.

2.2 Tiers of Engagement

The Review sets out three tiers of engagement for intergovernmental relations:



The Top Tier

The top tier of engagement is the Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Governments Council ("the Council"). All middle tier and portfolio tier engagements, as well as the IGR Secretariat, are ultimately accountable to the Council. The review sets out that the Council will meet annually, with the ability to meet extraordinarily as required. The Council is chaired by the Prime Minister and is attended by the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales, and the First Minister and deputy First Minister of NI. The Council is supported by the IGR Secretariat**.**

The Middle Tier

The middle tier of engagement is the Interministerial Standing Committee (IMSC) and the Finance Interministerial Standing Committee (F:ISC). The IMSC usually consists of ministers with responsibility for intergovernmental relations from each government. The IMSC considers issues which cut across ministerial portfolios to ensure positive policy collaboration across all four governments. In accordance with the Review, it is intended that the IMSC meets every other month, however, it can meet more or less frequently according to need and if agreed by consensus. Chairing of the IMSC rotates between its members. The IMSC is supported by the IGR Secretariat, which is responsible for coordinating meetings, capturing minutes and actions, and preparing and publishing communiqués.

The F:ISC consists of ministers with responsibility for finance and budgeting from each government and considers the impact of economic and finance matters affecting the UK. In accordance with the Review, the F:ISC should meet quarterly, but meetings may occur less or more frequently if agreed unanimously, and meetings should take place around key events. The F:ISC is chaired by the UK Government or a Devolved Government finance minister on a rotating basis. The F:ISC is supported by its own Secretariat, known as the F:ISC Secretariat, led collectively by officials from all four governments.

Tier One

Tier one is portfolio level engagement, consisting of the Interministerial Groups (IMGs). The IMGs cover a range of policy areas and consist of relevant portfolio ministers from each government. IMGs are organised, and secretariat support provided, by officials from participating teams in each government. The IMGs meet in accordance with their jointly agreed Terms of Reference and publish their own communiqués. When the Review was published, it set out a number of preliminary IMGs to be established. This list was not intended to be exhaustive or definitive and, as seen in this report and previous iterations of the IGR Secretariat's Annual Report, IMGs have been adapted according to evolving needs. The IMGs envisaged in the review were:

Science and Research	Business and Industry	Net Zero[1]
Elections[2]	UK-EU Trade & Cooperation Agreement[3]	Culture
Sports Cabinet	Tourism	Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Education[4]	Higher Education[4]	Transport
Health and Social Care	Trade	Work and Pensions
Home Office[5]	DLUHC[6]	Justice

These three tiers of ministerial forums are in place to consider and - where appropriate - facilitate agreement on issues of mutual interest across various policy areas. Ministerial oversight is essential for promoting effective collaboration and ensuring political accountability, however, effective IGR is underpinned by ongoing regular engagement between officials.

[1] Became Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change
[2] became Elections and Registration
[3] Became UK-EU Relations
[4] Education and Higher Education merged to form the UK Education Ministers Council
[5] Became Safety, Security and Migration
[6] became Housing, Communities and Local Government

3. Engagements

3.1. Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Governments Council

The Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Governments met in person in London on **23 May 2025**. The meeting was attended by:



The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom



The Rt Hon John Swinney MSP
First Minister of Scotland



The Rt Hon Eluned Morgan MS
Prif Weinidog Cymru



Michelle O'Neill MLA
First Minister of the NI Executive



Emma Little-Pengelly MLA
deputy First Minister of the NI Executive

The Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP, then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, also attended from the UK Government. Matters discussed included:

- The current global context and its impact on domestic policy;
- Trade Agreements with the European Union, the United States of America, and India;
- Working together to grow the economy and the potential for the UK Government Spending review to support this.

The Terms of Reference for the Council can be found here. A communiqué of the 23 May meeting can be found here.

3.2 Interministerial Standing Committee / Finance Interministerial Standing Committee

There were **three** meetings of the IMSC and **three** meetings of the F:ISC within the reporting period. A link to the published communiqué from each meeting can be found at Annex A.

Meetings of the IMSC

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
26 Jun 2025	SG	• Industrial Strategies • Statutory review of the UK Internal Market Act (2020) • UK legislation and UK Government plans to strengthen the Sewel Convention • Current affairs, including the situation in the Middle East and the shared risk of future civil disorder across the UK
20 Nov 2025	WG	• The upcoming publication of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 2ABC Report • The impacts of international events on domestic policy • Community cohesion within the UK • The upcoming UK Government Budget • UK Government Legislation • Ongoing joint work to develop a MoU on the Sewel Convention • An update on activity of Interministerial Groups
17 Feb 2026	UKG	• Election Security • Government responses to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 2ABC Report

Meetings of the F:ISC

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
26 Jun 2025	UKG	• Outcome of the UK Government Spending Review and its impact on Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and devolved government budgets • Collaborative working across the Industrial Strategy and the 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy to ensure the delivery of economic growth • The approach to devolved government fiscal flexibilities
17 Oct 2025	SG	• The upcoming UK Autumn Budget and priorities for each of the devolved governments • Ways of enhancing fiscal flexibilities available to devolved governments • Ways of improving the operation of the Barnett formula
19 Mar 2026	NIE	• The latest economic outlook • The Spring Statement • Proposals to enhance transparency and consistency in the operation of the Barnett formula • Shared priorities including: Public Financial Institutions, the use of Financial Assistance Powers under the UK Internal Market Act and fiscal flexibilities available to devolved governments

3.3 Interministerial Groups

15 IMGs met formally within the reporting period. Overall, there were **33** IMG meetings. This compares to 17 meetings across 12 IMGs in the previous reporting period (2024/25), a notable increase in activity.

The IMG meetings that took place in 2025/26 can be broken down as follows:

Business & Industry 2 meetings	**Culture & Creative Industries** 1 meeting	**UK Education Ministers Council** 1 meeting
Elections and Registration 3 meetings	**Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** 3 meetings	**Health and Social Care** 2 meetings
Housing, Communities & Local Government 2 meetings	**Justice** 2 meetings	**Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change** 3 meetings
Safety, Security and Migration 3 meetings	**Trade** 3 meetings	**Transport** 2 meetings
Tourism 1 meeting	**UK-EU Relations** 3 meetings	**Work & Pensions** 2 meetings

The Sports Cabinet was the only IMG that did not meet in 2025/26 - it did meet on one occasion in 2024/25. The frequency of meetings of all other IMGs was the same, or greater, in 2025/26 than in the previous reporting year (2024/25). Four IMGs that had not held any meetings in the previous reporting year (2024/25) - **Justice**; **Housing, Communities & Local Government**; **Work & Pensions**; and **Tourism** did meet in 2025/26.

A summary of the chairing arrangements and key matters discussed at each meeting is provided below. A link to more information on each IMG and the published meeting communiqués can be found at Annex A.

Meetings of the Business & Industry IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
6 May 2025	WG	● The importance of continued partnership and collaboration in the implementation and delivery of the UK industrial strategy ● Approaches to place-based policy and how the industrial strategy can promote a thriving UK global market ● The National Wealth Fund and strategic priorities
3 Feb 2026	NIE	● Recent economic developments across the UK and the importance of continued partnership and collaboration in delivering the UK industrial strategy ● Approaches to place-based policy and ensuring benefits are felt across all parts of the UK ● The role of public finance institutions, including the National Wealth Fund, in supporting investment and strategic priorities ● Preparations for maintaining continuity of work during the upcoming election period, including continued senior official engagement.

Meetings of the Culture and Creative Industries IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
16 Jul 2025	UKG	● A communique for this IMG has not been published

Meetings of the UK Education Ministers Council IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
13 Nov 2025	WG	● Curriculum review and reform - sharing learning and best practice ● Effective practices for addressing the challenge of misbehaviour in schools since the COVID-19 pandemic ● Preparing learners for an increasingly AI-driven world ● Joint work on the arrival of Chevening scholars and full-scholarship students from Gaza

Meetings of the UK Elections and Registration IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
30 Jun 2025	WG	● Electoral activity in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland ● Implementation of the UK Government's commitments for electoral reform ● Absent Voting (Elections in Scotland and Wales) Private Members' Bill ● Election security and ensuring the security of democratic processes ● Work to promote democratic engagement
30 Oct 2025	SG	● Government updates including ○ Scottish Government secondary legislation on dual mandates ○ A Private Members Bill in Scotland on recall of MSPs ○ Evaluation of the Automatic Voter Registration pilots in Wales ○ Awareness raising around the new electoral system for 2026 Senedd election ○ Engagement with the Electoral Commission in Northern Ireland ○ The UK Government's work to draft an Elections Bill ● Democratic engagement and security ● Terms of Reference (Re-adoption)
11 Feb 2026	UKG	● Government updates including ○ Representation of the People Bill ○ Flexible voting pilots at the May 2026 local elections in England ○ Senedd Cymru Member Accountability and Elections Bill ○ Absent Voting (Elections in Scotland and Wales) Act 2025 ○ The Welsh Government's Automatic Voter Registration pilots ● Election preparations for May 2026 (and May 2027 in Northern Ireland)

Meetings of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
23 Jun 2025	SG	• Shared priorities to support the transition to a circular economy • The importance of biosecurity • UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement • Bovine electronic identification • Arrangements for administering the UK 'Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund' • Common Frameworks
24 Nov 2025	WG	• Water quality • The EU-UK Common Understanding Agreement • Border biosecurity arrangements while the SPS is being negotiated and implemented • The UK 'Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund'– devolution arrangements • UK Autumn Statement - sector funding requirements • The CO_2 supply chain for the agri-food industry • Welsh Government's proposal for an exclusion regarding the Deposit Return Scheme • UK Government Food Strategy
5 Feb 2026	NIE	• Allocations of the UK 'Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund' • EU-UK SPS Agreement negotiations • Farm Profitability Review (Batters Review) • UK Government Food Strategy • Legislation to ban the use of peat in horticulture • The availability of sheep shearers • The African Swine Fever outbreak in Spain

Meetings of the Health and Social Care IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
30 Apr 2025	WG	• Mental Health • Pandemic preparedness • 10-Year Health Plan and changes to NHS England • Performance and productivity
11 Dec 2025	NIE	• Health inequalities • Patient safety and safe care • Health reform and reset • Statistics on healthy life expectancy across the 4 nations • Other business - Exercise Pegasus, US deal on medicines pricing and life sciences, anti-obesity medication

Meetings of the Housing, Communities & Local Government IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
4 Jun 2025	UKG	• Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 Report • Plans for a single regulator and Chief Construction Advisor • Workforce capacity, competency and resilience of key professions in the building control and fire safety sectors • Construction product reform and regulation • Positive cross-government working on building safety
4 Feb 2026	NIE	• Place-based policy for housing • Challenges and solutions to increasing housing supply across all tenures

Meetings of the Justice IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
3 Jul 2025	UKG	• Agreement of revised Terms of Reference • Prison capacity • Court Caseloads, and the impact of improved digital innovations • Legal Aid • Future meeting agendas
11 Dec 2025	WG	• Digital Innovation and Strategy • Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) • Court Caseloads • Policy papers on Prison Capacity and Legal Aid

Meetings of the Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
6 May 2025	WG	• The future direction and objectives of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme
21 Oct 2025	SG	• The UK Government's process and approach to Carbon Budget 7 • Shared priorities, risks and opportunities emerging from the Climate Change Committee's Carbon Budget 7 Advice • The UK Government's preparations for COP 30
26 Jan 2026	UKG	• Warm Homes Plan • The proposed Warm Homes Agency, and development work to date

Meetings of the Safety, Security and Migration IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
21 May 2025	UKG	• Regular and irregular migration • Immigration White Paper and Labour Market Evidence Group • Asylum and resettlement accommodation across the UK
12 Nov 2025	UKG	• Public safety matters in the UK • Continuing close intergovernmental working
25 Mar 2026	UKG	• Lessons identified from public disorder • The UK Fraud Strategy • Earned Settlement Consultation

Meetings of the Trade IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
2 Jun 2025	UKG	• The UK's trade relationship with the EU • The UK's trade relationship with the US • The UK-India Free Trade Agreement • The UK-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Free Trade Agreement • Progress of the UK's Trade Strategy
8 Jan 2026	UKG	• UK free trade agreement programme • A review of the Interministerial Group for Trade • The US Economic Prosperity Deal
4 Mar 2026	UKG	• UK-US trade • The UK steel trade measures • The UK-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Free Trade Agreement negotiations

Meetings of the Transport IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
5 Nov 2025	SG	• Memorandum of Understanding for data sharing between governments • Road safety issues • HGV and HDV decarbonisation • Cross-border and rural charging infrastructure for electric vehicles • The Vehicle Emissions Trading Scheme (VETS) Memorandum of Understanding
16 Mar 2026	UKG	• The ongoing response to the fire near Glasgow Central Station • Bus-related matters • Respective transport strategies • The UK's relationship with the EU • The Department for Transport's response to the ongoing situation in the Middle East

Meetings of the Tourism IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
22 Jul 2025	UKG	• State of the tourism sector • The upcoming Visitor Economy Growth Strategy • The impact of the cut to the GREAT international marketing budget • The UK Government's ambitions for the World Travel Market event in London

Meetings of the UK-EU Relations IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
12 May 2025	UKG	• The progress of UK-EU talks • Devolved government priorities on UK-EU issues • The upcoming 19 May 2025 UK-EU Summit
23 Sep 2025	UKG	• Outcomes of the 19 May 2025 UK-EU Summit • The progress of UK-EU negotiations • The devolved governments' priorities on EU issues
21 Jan 2026	UKG	• The progress and priorities of UK-EU negotiations • The progress of Trade and Cooperation Agreement implementation • The devolved governments' priorities on UK-EU issues

Meetings of the Work & Pensions IMG

Date	Chaired by	Matters Discussed
26 June 2025	UKG	● Terms of Reference for the Group ● UK Government's Green Paper 'Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working' ● The UK Government's White Paper 'Get Britain Working' ● Changes to Winter Fuel Payments in England and Wales from 2025 to 2026
19 Jan 2026	WG	● Employability support for disabled people and for young people

4. Conclusion

The publication of this report supports the commitment to transparency in intergovernmental relations activity, as set out in the IGR Review.

Over the reporting period, progress was made in further developing and embedding the structures and processes recommended by the Review.

The Top Tier of the IGR Structures - the Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Governments Council – met to discuss economic growth and joint working to promote international investment across the UK.

The IMSC and the F:ISC both held three meetings, covering topics including collaborative working to drive economic growth and ensuring the security of forthcoming elections.

IMGs engaged across various policy areas, with **33** meetings held within the reporting period.

All but one of the established IMGs met during the reporting period, with most of these meeting on more than one occasion. Only one IMG envisaged in the Review - Science & Innovation - remained unestablished at the end of the reporting period.

The IGR Secretariat extends its gratitude to all contributors.

Glossary of Abbreviations

CO_2	Carbon Dioxide
COP 30	The 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference
EU	European Union
F:ISC	Finance Interministerial Standing Committee
GCC	Gulf Co-Operation Council
GREAT Campaign	The GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland Campaign is the UK's international communications programme
IGR	Intergovernmental Relations
IMG	Interministerial Group
IMSC	Interministerial Standing Committee
NIE	The Northern Ireland Executive
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
SG	The Scottish Government
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
UK	United Kingdom
UKG	The UK Government
US	United States of America
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VETS	Vehicle Emissions Trading Scheme
WG	The Welsh Government

Annex A – Terms of Reference and Meeting Communiqués

Interministerial Standing Committee

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Standing Committee
- Interministerial Standing Committee: 26 June 2025
- Interministerial Standing Committee: 20 November 2025
- Interministerial Standing Committee: 17 February 2026

Finance Interministerial Standing Committee

- Terms of Reference for the Finance Interministerial Standing Committee
- Finance Interministerial Standing Committee: 26 June 2025
- Finance Interministerial Standing Committee: 17 October 2025
- Finance Interministerial Standing Committee: 19 March 2026

The Interministerial Group for Business and Industry

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Business and Industry
- Interministerial Group for Business and Industry: 6 May 2025
- Interministerial Group for Business and Industry: 3 February 2026

The Interministerial Group for Culture and Creative Industries

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Culture and Creative Industries
- Interministerial Group for Culture and Creative Industries: 16 July 2025. A communiqué for this IMG has not been published

The Interministerial Group for Education

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Education have not been published
- Interministerial Group for Education: 13 November 2025

The Interministerial Group for Elections and Registration

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Elections and Registration
- Interministerial Group for Elections and Registration: 30 June 2025
- Interministerial Group for Elections and Registration: 30 October 2025
- Interministerial Group for Elections and Registration: 11 February 2026

The Interministerial Group for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Interministerial Group for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: 23 June 2025
- Interministerial Group for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: 24 Nov 2025
- Interministerial Group for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: 5 February 2026

The Interministerial Group for Health and Social Care

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Health and Social Care have not been published
- Interministerial Group for Health and Social Care: 30 April 2025
- Interministerial Group for Health and Social Care: 11 December 2025

The Interministerial Group for Housing, Communities and Local Government

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Housing, Communities and Local Government have not been published
- Interministerial Group for Housing, Communities and Local Government: 4 June 2025
- Interministerial Group for Housing, Communities and Local Government: 4 February 2026

The Interministerial Group for Justice

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Justice
- Interministerial Group for Justice: 3 July 2025
- Interministerial Group for Justice: 11 December 2025

The Interministerial Group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change
- Interministerial Group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change: 6 May 2025
- Interministerial Group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change: 21 October 2025
- Interministerial Group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change: 26 January 2026

The Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration
- Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration: 21 May 2025
- Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration: 12 November 2025
- Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration: 25 March 2026

The Interministerial Group for Sports Cabinet

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Sports Cabinet have not been published

The Interministerial Group for Trade

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Trade
- Interministerial Group for Trade: 2 June 2025
- Interministerial Group for Trade: 8 January 2026
- Interministerial Group for Trade: 4 March 2026

The Interministerial Group for Transport Matters

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Transport Matters have not been published
- Interministerial Group for Transport Matters: 5 November 2025
- Interministerial Group for Transport Matters: 16 March 2026

The Interministerial Group for Tourism

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Tourism have not been published
- Interministerial Group for Tourism: 22 July 2025

The Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations
- Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations: 12 May 2025
- Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations: 23 September 2025
- Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations: 21 January 2026

The Interministerial Group for Work and Pensions

- Terms of Reference for the Interministerial Group for Work and Pensions
- Interministerial Group for Work and Pensions: 26 Jun 2025
- Interministerial Group for Work and Pensions: 19 Jan 2026