

Research: COVID-19 variants: genomically confirmed case numbers

Genomically confirmed case numbers for SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and variants under investigation.

Research: HIV: South West annual data spotlight

Reports presenting annual epidemiological data for HIV in South West England.

UK marks anniversary of the 4 August Beirut blast

On the one-year anniversary of the devastating 4 August port blast that tore Beirut apart, killing more than 200 people and injuring thousands, the British Embassy Beirut held a series of events to commemorate the day. In his messages over the past week, British Ambassador to Lebanon Ian Collard told of his empathy for the Lebanese people's sense of devastation and quest for justice. He paid tribute to the bravery of front-line workers that day and called on Lebanese leaders to deliver a fair and transparent investigation.

Ambassador Collard added:

In Beirut's hour of need, the United Kingdom was among the first of Lebanon's international partners to respond to the blast and we will continue to stand by the people of Lebanon.

The UK's response to the 4 August blast included delivering military aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces, and deploying teams of humanitarian, medical and military specialists. Through the British Red Cross, the UK delivered PPE, ambulances, blood transfusion services, and more to the Lebanese Red Cross. Working with international partners, we provided shelter, psychosocial support, safe spaces, Gender Based Violence outreach to women and girls, counselling and legal assistance, and rehabilitation services including to

persons with disabilities. We also supported the NGO, March Lebanon's Beirut Relief programme, rehabilitating Civil Defence units, the Fire Department, cultural heritage sites and more.

On the morning of 4 August 2021, with the Embassy's Union Jack flag at half-mast, the British Ambassador led embassy staff in a memorial service at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Qasqas. The service was set to solemn music played by the band of the Queen's Royal Hussars, and attended by the UK's Defence Senior Advisor to the Middle East, Air Marshal Sammy Sampson, who was visiting. British Embassy and British Council colleagues paid tribute to those, including friends and relatives, whose lives were lost and others who were impacted on that tragic day.

A few minutes after 6 p.m., British Embassy staff held an online vigil to remember lost loved ones, family and friends, and all those affected by the blast. It was a moment to reflect on what happened a year ago, share experiences and support collective healing.

On the eve of the anniversary, the British Ambassador hosted a reception dedicated to frontline workers where he paid tribute to selflessness of heroes from the Red Cross to firefighters, members of civil society and NGOs, unknown soldiers and others for their response in the immediate aftermath of the blast and during the days that followed. He reiterated the UK's call on Lebanon's leaders for 'transparency and accountability that is needed to bring closure to the victims, their families and all of the people who continue to suffer'.

In a recorded video message at an international conference for Lebanon, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

As we remember the terrible Beirut blast one year ago, I reiterate the UK's strong support for the Lebanese people and urge Lebanon's leaders to deliver justice and accountability. They must form a government capable of addressing the crisis the country faces'. He added: 'The international community is ready to assist if they follow this path. But if they fail, Lebanon's friends must look at how we can tackle the corruption that has seen narrow vested interests placed above the needs of the people.'

The anniversary coincided with the visit of the UK Defence Senior Advisor to the Middle East Air Marshal Sammy Sampson who held a series of meetings with Lebanese officials.

Policy paper: Blue Planet Fund

The UK's £500 million Blue Planet Fund supports developing countries to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty.

Government scales up support to protect the world's ocean with multimillion boost for marine recovery

Blue Planet Fund delivers £16.2m for five programmes to tackle climate change, restore ocean health and reduce poverty in developing countries.