Press release: UK Public Health Rapid Support Team appoints first director

Funded by the UK Government, the UK-PHRST is jointly run by Public Health England (PHE) and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, with Oxford University and King's College London as academic partners.

The UK-PHRST consists of public health experts, scientists, academics and clinicians ready to respond to urgent requests from countries around the world within 48 hours to support them in preventing local disease outbreaks from becoming global epidemics.

When not responding to outbreaks, the UK-PHRST will conduct rigorous research to improve the response to future epidemics. It will also have a strong focus on helping vulnerable low- and middle-income countries develop their own capacity to identify and control disease outbreaks, working with counterparts in developing countries to train and support their responders.

The team will also assist with training a group of public health reservists to maintain the UK's capability to rapidly scale up the response to any disease outbreak or health emergency.

Professor Daniel Bausch, a specialist in emerging infectious diseases trained in internal medicine, infectious diseases, tropical medicine, and public health, will take up the position of Director of the UK-PHRST in April. He has extensive experience in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia combatting deadly global health threats such as Ebola virus, hantavirus, and SARS coronavirus.

Professor Bausch's most recent role was as the technical lead for the Epidemic Clinical Management Unit in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Pandemic and Epidemic Diseases Department. He is a tenured Professor at the Tulane University Health Sciences Center in the United States and has served as a regular consultant for the WHO, the United Nations and the US National Institutes of Health.

In addition to his expertise in the sciences, Professor Bausch places a strong emphasis on capacity building in all his projects and also has a keen interest in the role of the scientist in promoting health and human rights.

The 2014 Ebola virus crisis in West Africa highlighted the need for the international community to develop a system to help countries respond to and control disease outbreaks that threaten public health before they can develop into global emergencies. The UK-PHRST was established in response to this need as part of the UK's contribution to global health security.

The government has made £20 million available from the UK development assistance budget to fund the team over 5 years. This new capacity reflects the UK's enhanced commitment to being a global leader in public health and

science and at the forefront of fighting global threats.

Public Health and Innovation Minister, Nicola Blackwood said:

> Deploying emergency support rapidly overseas to investigate disease outbreaks will help save lives and prevent emergencies like the Ebola crisis happening again.
>
> Professor Bausch brings a vital background in tackling epidemics with the United Nations and World Health Organisation. I am confident he will continue the UK’s proud tradition of being at the forefront of fighting global threats.

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive at PHE, said:

> Professor Bausch brings a wealth of expertise in dealing with international disease outbreaks. The UK-PHRST will work with countries across the globe to stop the spread of deadly diseases, not only protecting the UK but playing a vital role at the forefront of global public health security.

Professor Peter Piot, Director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said:

> Professor Bausch’s extensive experience means he is ideally placed to lead the UK-PHRST. He combines expertise in academic research and the practical control of emerging infectious diseases, and has worked around the world, including in West Africa during the recent Ebola epidemic. Under his leadership the team will work to support countries and prevent disease outbreaks from escalating into large epidemics that can devastate societies around the world.

Daniel Bausch, Director of the UK-PHRST, said:

> Effective control of outbreaks will require a multi-pronged approach, including innovative solutions to optimise preparedness and emergency response capacities, long-term commitments to strengthen surveillance and response systems in resource-poor areas of the world, and advocacy and action to ensure the universal right to health.
>
> The UK-PHRST represents an opportunity to create a model programme at the forefront of these endeavours, with real impact to limit disease not only overseas but also in the UK.

Current UK-PHRST research projects focus on various elements key to

understanding and controlling outbreaks, including in the areas of epidemiology, patient-based research, laboratory science, social science, and mental health and well-being.

Background to Professor Daniel Bausch

Professor Bausch is a tenured professor in the Department of Tropical Medicine at the Tulane University Health Sciences Centre in New Orleans, USA. He has a Masters of Public Health degree in tropical medicine and is a specialist in the research and control of emerging tropical viruses. He has extensive experience working with deadly global health threats, such as SARS coronavirus and Ebola.

Professor Bausch has also held the position of Chief of the Epidemiology Unit of the Viral Special Pathogens Branch at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, USA; Head of the Virology and Emerging Infections Department at the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit in Lima, Peru; and Technical Lead for the WHO Epidemic Clinical Management Unit in Geneva, Switzerland. He has served as a regular consultant for the WHO, United Nations, and U.S. National Institutes of Health.

Professional achievements

- 1996 to 2003: Medical Officer (and Acting Chief 2001 to 2002), Epidemiology unit, Special Pathogens Branch, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, USA
- 1996 to 2002: Director, CDC Lassa Fever Research Field Station, Guinea, West Africa
- 2001 to 2003: Commander, Public Health Service Commissioned Corps
- 2002: Secretary’s Award for Distinguished Service, Uganda Ebola Outbreak Response Team, DHHS
- 2002, 2003: Foreign duty service awards, Public Health Service
- 2003 to present: Professor with tenure, Department of Tropical Medicine, Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
- 2004 to 2009: Senior medical-technical coordinator, WHO Mano River Union Lassa Fever Network
- 2004: Secretary’s Award for Distinguished Service, SARS Outbreak Response Team (Vietnam), DHHS
- 2011 to 2015: Head of Virology and Emerging Infections Department, U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No 6, Lima, Peru

Background to the UK-PHRST

The UK-PHRST continually monitors infectious diseases and other hazards globally, identifying situations where the deployment of specialist expertise could mitigate these threats.

Informed by surveillance data, the UK-PHRST will be able to deploy on behalf of UK Government in response to requests from low- and middle-income countries, as well as with the WHO and the Global Outbreak and Response Network (GOARN).

The deployable team includes experts in:

- tracking the progress of an outbreak (epidemiologists)
- diagnosing the cause of an outbreak (microbiologists)
- advising on outbreak control measures (infection prevention and control) and community responses to outbreaks (social scientists)
- developing the best clinical response measures (clinical researchers)

The core team consists of:

- epidemiologists
- clinical researcher
- social scientist
- microbiologist
- data manager, analyst and systems expert
- infection prevention and control expert
- logistician

The core team will be backed by a reservist team who will trained to UK-PHRST standards and protocols but will have routine ‘day jobs’ in their employing organisation.

Press release: New Counter-Extremism Taskforce to help tackle extremism behind bars

The specialist taskforce will analyse intelligence compiled by about 100 counter-terrorism experts working across the country to assess the threat posed by radicalisation in prisons.

It will advise prisons in England and Wales on how to deal with specific threats, as well as instruct and train prison and probation staff on how best to deter offenders from being lured into extremism.

The unit – jointly formed between HM Prisons and Probation Service and the Home Office – is being brought forward as part of the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper. It will work closely with the police and other enforcement agencies, and builds on progress already made in addressing extremism.

This includes increased training for prison governors and staff, more resources to identify and remove extremist literature in prisons and holding the most dangerous extremists in specialist units in the high security estate instead of within the general prison population.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said: > > Extremism is a danger to society and a threat to public safety. It is right we come together to bolster our response to the threats posed by radicalisation behind bars, and give our hard-working staff the skills and knowledge they need to keep our prisons and communities safe. > > This new team will lead this strand of important work to help combat and defeat terrorist threats posed by offenders in the prison estate and in the community. By countering the poisonous and repugnant activities of extremists, we will help ensure the safe running of our prisons and keep the public safe. >

The taskforce is being launched on 3 April 2017 and boosts the current team carrying out work in this area. It will be the nerve centre for all counter-terrorism and counter-extremist work across the prison estate and probation service.

Specialist staff will gather and exploit evidence gleaned from frontline staff – work essential to the safe running of prisons and fundamental to public protection.

Experts will also advise on the management of dangerous and high-profile extremist prisoners, and train frontline prison and probation staff so they are equipped to deal with extremist behaviour.

A strategy centre based in London will be supported by specialist regional teams across the country – ensuring resources are focused on addressing the most serious risks.

The new unit will build on last year's formation of a new directorate for Security, Order and Counter-Terrorism – responsible for monitoring and dealing with this evolving threat.

Governors have also been instructed to ban extremist literature and to remove anyone from communal worship who is promoting anti-British beliefs or other dangerous views.

A new training package to identify, report and combat extremism is being rolled out to all prison officers and new pre-employment vetting checks for chaplains were introduced in February 2017.

News story: Civil news: updated mental health guidance published

Revised mental health guidance for use with the 2014 Standard Civil Contract.

Updated guidance has been published which helps providers with questions

about mental health work under the 2014 Standard Civil Contract.

Development of this update follows constructive discussions with the Mental Health Lawyers Association and the Law Society.

The updated document clarifies a small number of provisions in the 2014 Standard Civil Contract. For example, the requirements for triggering a Level 2 (Mental Health Proceedings) Fee.

The questions covered in the document are the most common ones raised by providers since the introduction of a standard fee scheme for this work in 2008.

Standard Civil Contract 2014 – to download 'Legal aid guidance: mental health 2014'

Press release: PM dedicates £1bn in aid money for Syrian refugees and host countries

The Prime Minister will today set out the details of a £1 billion jobs and education package to support the most vulnerable victims of the Syrian conflict.

The overseas development funding, an allocation of £840 million pledges made last year at the London Syria Conference along with £160 million of new money, will provide vital support for refugees and the countries hosting them across the region.

This includes Jordan where there are currently over 650,000 registered Syrian refugees. The Prime Minister will witness the challenges facing Jordan first-hand today as she visits a school in the country educating young Syrian refugees and Jordanian children.

Today's announcement comes ahead of a UK co-hosted Syria conference in Brussels later this week and builds on the UK's leadership at the London Syria Conference last year, where the UK made education for children and the creation of jobs in the Middle East the main focus. At the event – following extensive UK lobbying – more than £9.6 billion was pledged in total by the international community, bringing hope to millions of people across the region.

The package of UK support will focus on creating new incentives for refugees to remain close to home so they don't feel forced to make the perilous and potentially life-threatening journey to Europe.

It will focus on providing more education, skills and jobs for refugees and others in countries like Jordan that border Syria, bringing them the stability and resilience to cope with the ongoing influx of people seeking shelter and giving those people the chance to build themselves meaningful long-term futures in the region.

The UK support includes:

- humanitarian aid including food, vaccinations, shelter and basic health care for millions of vulnerable people inside Syria and across the region
- education for tens of thousands of children in Jordan and Lebanon over the next 3 years, along with work to improve standards and provide vocational training for pupils in Jordan, making it easier for families to build a future in the region
- new funding for infrastructure in Jordan and Lebanon potentially creating thousands of new jobs, providing refugees and host communities with opportunities in the region while supporting vital building work potentially including waste water plants, schools and roads
- new support and advice to small and medium-sized businesses in Lebanon to create more jobs for host communities and Syrian refugees
- British expertise and technical advice to the governments of Jordan and Lebanon to accelerate private sector-led growth and job creation

Speaking ahead of her visit to Jordan, the Prime Minister said:

> Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives and millions more have been forced to flee their homes by the barbarity of the Syria conflict. The UK has led the international response to the defining humanitarian crisis of our generation, and will continue to set the pace.
>
> The ambitious approach agreed in London last year is delivering real results and giving refugees what they want – opportunities and education close to home that provide a meaningful alternative to risking their lives trying to reach Europe. This is clearly in the UK's national interest.
>
> I will be urging the countries attending the Brussels Conference to follow Global Britain's lead and deliver on the promises we made in London by stepping up assistance to the millions of people affected by the ongoing Syria conflict and helping to build resilience across the region.
>
> We are a kind and generous country that will never turn our backs on those who so desperately need our support.

The London Conference on Syria and the region took place on 4 February 2016 and was co-hosted by the UK, along with Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the United Nations. It brought together more than 60 countries and organisations, including 33 heads of state and Governments. In excess of £9.6 billion was

pledged by the international community – the most that has ever been committed for a humanitarian crisis in a single day.

Historic ‘Compact’ agreements struck with Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan as part of the London Conference aimed to create at least 1.1 million jobs in the region. Refugee-hosting countries agreed to ensure that no child missed out on the chance of an education as a result of the conflict, including a pledge to deliver education to all refugee and host community children in countries neighbouring Syria.

Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have now received new training and job opportunities and nearly half a million Syrian refugee children are now in quality education in both Lebanon and Jordan.

The UK committed £1.2 billion in new funding at the London Conference, taking our total commitments at that point to more than £2.3 billion. By the end of 2016, the UK had delivered £550 million in new funding, £40 million more than the £510 million it had pledged for 2016.

Total UK funding for the Syria crisis now stands at £2.46 billion.

The Brussels Conference will take place on 4 and 5 April and will bring ministerial representatives from a large number of delegations, including the EU and the region but also the wider international community, the United Nations, major donors and civil society, humanitarian and development organisations. The UK is once again co-hosting the Conference, along with the European Union, Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar and the United Nations. The Foreign Secretary and the Development Secretary will jointly represent the UK.

Press release: UK and Iraq signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

On 5 March, Frank Baker, Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Iraq, and Prof. Dr. Abdul Razak Abdul Jaleel Al- Essa, the Acting Minister for Finance, signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Under this new agreement, UK Export Finance (UKEF) will work closely with the Iraqi authorities to identify suitable infrastructure development projects to utilise UKEF’s export finance support for UK companies.

This landmark agreement reaffirms the UK’s commitment to its friendship with Iraq, and its support for continued economic cooperation and development. This particular MoU will support investment in critical infrastructure in Iraq. This infrastructure, like water and electricity, will improve the lives

of millions of Iraqis. It will also help reinvigorate the private sector in Iraq, and may lead to new jobs for Iraqis.

UKEF is able to consider applications to support eligible infrastructure development projects in Iraq where the project sources goods and services from the UK. The support can take the form of loan guarantees or direct loans.

UKEF and the Government of Iraq are already exploring a number of projects for support under the MoU which will benefit from high-quality goods and services from the UK, and improve quality of life across Iraq.