

[Chevening OCIS /Abdullah Gül Fellowship applications for 2023/2024 are now open](#)

The Chevening Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS) Fellowships are aimed at mid-career academics or professionals who are dedicated to the promotion of academic activities which encourage a more informed understanding of the culture and civilisation of Islam and contemporary Muslim societies.

The following fellowships are a collaboration between the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and [OCIS](#):

- Chevening OCIS Fellowship
- Chevening OCIS Abdullah Gül Fellowship

Course/programme structure

Fellows will undertake a 6-month period of self-directed research focusing on their own project on the culture and civilisation of Islam and contemporary Muslim societies in a global context.

Fellows will benefit from meeting a multi-disciplinary group of scholars focusing on the Islamic world and have the opportunity to develop contacts with relevant individuals, discuss issues relating to the Islamic world, including Islamic history, classical Islamic sciences, economics and Islamic finance, and the study of Muslims in the West. Fellows will contribute to the Centre's objective to encourage and promote sustained dialogue and collaboration within the global academic community of the culture and civilisation of Islam and contemporary Muslim societies.

OCIS is a recognized independent centre for the University of Oxford and provides a meeting point for the Western and Islamic worlds of learning.

This fellowship programme will commence in October 2023. Fellows will need to develop their own research project to focus on during their fellowship prior to arriving in the UK.

Fellows must reside in Oxford for the duration of their award. OCIS can provide information about accommodation options in Oxford upon selection.

Benefits

- 6-month period of research at OCIS
- Living expenses for the duration of the fellowship
- Return economy airfare from home country to the UK
- Allowance package for research-related activities
- Access to a programme of cultural events and activities organised by the FCDO and the Chevening Secretariat.

Eligibility

The Chevening OCIS Abdullah Gül Fellowship is available to applicants from Turkey.

To be eligible for a Chevening OCIS Fellowship, you must:

- Demonstrate the potential to rise to a position of leadership and influence
- Demonstrate the personal, intellectual and interpersonal attributes reflecting this potential
- Be a citizen of Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Philippines, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, or Uzbekistan
- Return to country of your citizenship at the end of the period of the fellowship
- Hold a postgraduate level qualification (or equivalent professional training or experience in a relevant area) at the time of application
- Have significant professional and/or academic research experience (at least five years)
- Provide evidence of meeting at least the minimum English language abilities for Chevening Awards
- Not hold British or dual-British citizenship
- Not be an employee, a former employee, or relative of an employee (since August 2020) of Her Majesty's Government (including British embassies/high commissions, the Department for International Development, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office), or a staff member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Please note that applicants who have previously received financial benefit from a HMG-funded scholarship or fellowship are eligible to apply after a period of five years following the completion of their first HMG funded award. In these cases, applicants will be required to demonstrate their career progression from that point.

For more detailed information on the eligibility criteria for fellowships, read the guidance page on the [Chevening website](#).

[Boris Johnson's final speech as Prime Minister: 6 September 2022](#)

Well this is it folks

thanks to all of you for coming out so early this morning

In only a couple of hours from now I will be in Balmoral to see Her Majesty The Queen

and the torch will finally be passed to a new Conservative leader

the baton will be handed over in what has unexpectedly turned out to be a relay race

they changed the rules half-way through but never mind that now

and through that lacquered black door a new Prime Minister will shortly go to meet a fantastic group of public servants

the people who got Brexit done

the people who delivered the fastest vaccine roll out in Europe

and never forget – 70 per cent of the entire population got a dose within 6 months, faster than any comparable country

that is government for you – that's this conservative government

the people who organised those prompt early supplies of weapons to the heroic Ukrainian armed forces,

an action that may very well have helped change the course of the biggest European war for 80 years

And because of the speed and urgency of what you did – everybody involved in this government

to get this economy moving again from July last year in spite of all opposition, all the naysayers

we have and will continue to have that economic strength

to give people the cash they need to get through this energy crisis that has been caused by Putin's vicious war

And I know that Liz Truss and this compassionate Conservative government will do everything we can to get people through this crisis

And this country will endure it and we will win

and if Putin thinks that he can succeed by blackmailing or bullying the British people then he is utterly deluded

and the reason we will have those funds now and in the future is because we Conservatives understand the vital symmetry between government action

and free market capitalist private sector enterprise

we are delivering on those huge manifesto commitments

making streets safer – neighbourhood crime down 38 per cent in the last three years

13,790 more police on the streets

building more hospitals – and yes we will have 50,000 more nurses by the end of this parliament and 40 more hospitals by the end of the decade

putting record funding into our schools and into teachers' pay

giving everyone over 18 a lifetime skills guarantee so they can keep upskilling throughout their lives

3 new high speed rail lines including northern powerhouse rail

colossal road programmes from the Pennines to Cornwall,

the roll-out of gigabit broadband up over the last three years, since you were kind enough to elect me, up from 7 per cent of our country's premises having gigabit broadband to 70 per cent today.

And we are of course providing the short and the long term solutions for our energy needs

and not just using more of our own domestic hydrocarbons but going up by 2030 to 50 GW of wind power, that is half this country's energy electricity needs from offshore wind

alone, a new nuclear reactor every year

and looking at what is happening in this country, the changes that are taking place,

that is why the private sector is investing more venture capital investment than China itself

more billion pound tech companies sprouting here than in France, Germany and Israel combined

and as a result unemployment as I leave office, down to lows not seen since I was about ten years old and bouncing around on a space hopper

and on the subject of bouncing around and future careers

let me say that I am now like one of those booster rockets that has fulfilled its function

and I will now be gently re-entering the atmosphere and splashing down invisibly in some remote and obscure corner of the pacific

And like Cincinnatus I am returning to my plough

and I will be offering this government nothing but the most fervent support
this is a tough time for the economy

this is a tough time for families up and down the country

we can and we will get through it and we will come out stronger the other
side but I say to my fellow Conservatives it is time for the politics to be
over folks

and it's time for us all to get behind Liz Truss and her programme

and deliver for the people of this country

because that is what the people of this country want, that's what they need
and that's what they deserve

I am proud to have discharged the promises I made my party when you were kind
enough to choose me,

winning the biggest majority since 1987 and the biggest share of the vote
since 1979.

delivering Brexit

delivering our manifesto commitments – including social care

helping people up and down the country

ensuring that Britain is once again standing tall in the world

speaking with clarity and authority

from Ukraine to the AUKUS pact with America and Australia

because we are one whole and entire United Kingdom whose diplomats, security
services and armed forces are so globally admired

and as I leave I believe our union is so strong that those who want to break
it up, will keep trying but they will never ever succeed

thank you to everyone behind me in this building for looking after me and my
family over the last three years so well including Dilyn, the dog

and if Dilyn and Larry can put behind them their occasional difficulties,
then so can the Conservative party

and above all thanks to you, the British people, to the voters for giving me
the chance to serve

all of you who worked so tirelessly together to beat covid to put us where we
are today

Together we have laid foundations that will stand the test of time

whether by taking back control of our laws or putting in vital new infrastructure

great solid masonry on which we will continue to build together

paving the path of prosperity now & for future generations

and I will be supporting Liz Truss and our new government every step of the way.

Thank you all very much.

Remarks by H.E. Governor Nigel Dakin CMG at the Queen's Birthday Parade

Good morning, Turks and Caicos, and a particularly warm welcome to all who are with us in the nation's Capital celebrating not only Her Majesty's 96th Birthday, but also her Platinum Jubilee – an extraordinary 70 years of unbroken service and making Her Majesty the longest-reigning monarch in British History.

Before saying another thing, let me commend those on parade today for your turnout, your foot and rifle drill, and most importantly your service. The 'shine' our security and emergency services show here on parade ground, belies the necessary 'grime' of their day-to-day efforts on behalf of our Territory. We all thank you for your service. Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in a round of applause recognising your uniformed services.

Over the last three years I've come to understand your respective roles but also how that work impacts on your families and your wider lives. For your families here, supporting you, as they support you every working day of your life, I pass on my personal thanks.

With the mention of families and children, given this extraordinary 70 year Jubilee, I am going to focus on the early years of Her Majesty's reign because I hope, even with the distance of time, young people here with us today will be able to appreciate what it must have been like for Her Majesty, as both a child and as a young woman, to assume enormous lifelong responsibilities and then stick to her vows. In this I do think she is a global role-model.

We often associate hefty responsibilities with those in middle, or later age, but leadership and the burden of service can – and at times must – be shouldered by the young. Given the impact the Pandemic had on youth and youth activities it is so heartening to see the Cadets, Scouts and Cubs here on parade in such numbers and looking so grand. So, Mums and Dads, Uncles and

Aunts, brothers, and sisters, let's recognise our young people with us today, on parade, who carried themselves and their Turks and Caicos Islands Flags with such exuberance and joy.

None of us know – least of all our children – what their futures hold and our Queen, as a young child, did not expect to be Monarch. Her destiny changed on the unexpected abdication of her Uncle – Edward VIII – when her father George VI, assumed the Throne.

As a result, the now Queen made her first radio broadcast in the early months of the Second World War when, aged just 14, she recorded a message on the BBC in support of young people across Europe evacuated from their homes: “I can say to you all” – she said – “that we children at home are full of cheerfulness and courage”. “We are trying to do all we can to help our gallant sailors, soldiers and airmen, and we are trying, too, to bear our own share of the danger and sadness of war.”

Princess Elizabeth's first solo public engagement was on her 16th birthday, when she inspected the Grenadier Guards at Windsor Castle. During the war, she remained with the Royal Family in London even as Buckingham Palace was bombed. She enlisted becoming the first woman in the Royal Family to join the armed services as a full-time, active member and learned to be a vehicle mechanic.

At just 18, Princess Elizabeth was appointed a Counsellor of State during the King's absence as he toured Italian battlefields and for the first time, she carried out some of the duties of Head of State. On Victory in Europe Day, she and her sister Princess Margaret, aged 19 and 14 respectively, joined the crowds in London incognito, Princess Elizabeth with her military cap pulled down over her face.

In 1947, Princess Elizabeth, then 21, married Prince Philip of Greece. The couple went on to have four children: Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward. Queen Elizabeth now has three generations of heirs in line for the monarchy. Her son Charles, Prince of Wales, is followed by her grandson, William, the Duke of Cambridge, and the newest heir, her great grandson, George.

In February 1952, Elizabeth became Queen at just 25, after her father died of cancer. Three million people lined the route from Westminster Abbey back to Buckingham Palace after her coronation ceremony. Britain was slowly emerging from the privations of wartime, rationing and shortages. The sudden accession of a beautiful 25-year-old woman, someone the public had watched since she was an infant, created newfound hope. Prime Minister Winston Churchill talked about “a new Elizabethan age” to shed the sorrows and losses of war.

To place this in context she became our Queen while we in TCI were still a dependency of Jamaica. It would take a further 10 years before John Glenn would splash down just off Grand Turk following his three orbits of the earth, a further 21 years before TCI had its first Governor and 24 years until JAGS McCartney won the 1976 election.

She has, as a result, been on the throne during the time in office of 14

British Prime Ministers and 14 US Presidents. She has been Defender of the Faith during the time of 7 Popes – of whom she has met four – and she has seen the baton pass nine times between Secretary Generals of the United Nations while she has been Head of the Commonwealth. A remarkable record of Service and of experience.

Importantly I think, for us here today, the Queen is a committed Christian and churchgoer and has often spoken of her faith in her speeches and broadcasts. In her 2014 Christmas Broadcast she said: “For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life”. “A role model of reconciliation and forgiveness, he stretched out his hands in love, acceptance and healing. Christ’s example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people of whatever faith or none.

The longest overseas tour that the Queen has undertaken began in Bermuda in November 1953 and ended in Gibraltar in May 1954. She was away for 168 days. The greatest number of countries that the Queen has visited in one trip is 14. This was during her 1966 trip to the Caribbean which included TCI.

Looking back many, including myself, are fond of recalling the words Her Majesty said on her 21st Birthday – “I declare before you all, that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.” Isn’t it inspiring to think of a young woman, making such a profound promise, on her 21st Birthday and then living up to that promise – all the way through her life to her 96th Birthday.

If I were to be presumptuous, and suggest what Her Majesty’s greatest accomplishment is, it would have to be the Commonwealth. Queen Elizabeth, then still in her 20s, threw herself behind a fledgling group her father had initially overseen. The Queen made the Commonwealth a priority and, under her stewardship, it has grown from eight members to 54 members today. In the words of her son, Prince Charles: “As a family of some 2.6 billion people, from fifty-four nations across six continents, the Commonwealth represents a rich diversity of traditions, experience and talents which can help to build a more equal, sustainable and prosperous future”. Helping build a global organisation second only to the United Nations in size, is a remarkable and positive legacy.

Now, back to the Parade ground. We will be presenting medals today to those on Parade who have served for 18, 25 and 30 years. There are many not on Parade today who will receive their awards separately. To commemorate the Jubilee, those who completed five full years of service, on 6 February 2022, in the Emergency Services and Armed Forces will also receive the Platinum Jubilee medal. It carries on it a Latin Inscription that translates as: “Elizabeth II, By the Grace of God, Queen, Defender of the Faith”. To not unduly keep those on Parade in the sun, many on Parade are already wearing their medal and, I will therefore present to just a representative sample.

I end on welcoming, for the first time on this Parade and stood beside the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force, a Force with a 220 year history, the newest addition to those who protect us; those who represent the Officers

and Marines of our very own Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment. Not only the first time on this parade, it is also the first time they have worn their new ceremonial uniform which draws on the theme of their green berets and their affiliation with the largest – and to my mind the best – Infantry Regiment of the British Army – ‘The Rifles’.

The previous British Chief of Defence Staff (the most senior military officer in the UK across the Navy, Army and Royal Air Force) and the present Chief of the General Staff (the most senior officer in the British Army) are both ‘Rifles’ Officers and I’m grateful to them both for the support they have given us, not least in having one of their best Non-Commissioned Officers working permanently with our Marines.

Presently they number a little over 40 and they are set to grow again in the coming months by around 30 – and given their success we expect further growth next year. The majority are part-time volunteers, but they are consistently operational, in support of our Maritime Police and our Immigration Enforcement Team. They are the only Overseas Territory Military force operational every night, and their contribution is already significant. It would be fair to say their story has only just begun. I am incredibly proud to be able to take the salute at their first Queens Birthday Parade.

So in celebration of this Platinum Jubilee, may God Bless Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. May God bless the Turks and Caicos Islands. May God bless all those before me and everything you represent in terms of serving our people and securing our future. With that it only remains for me to say, in the words of the national anthem: ‘Long May She Reign Over us. God Save the Queen’.

Thank you.

H.E. Governor Nigel Dakin CMG

Turks and Caicos Islands cadets

Remarks to TCI’s women in Policing Conference BY H.E. Governor Nigel Dakin CMG

A very good morning to you all.

I find myself asked to speak about women in policing. It will be self-evident to you that I am neither a women, nor a Police Officer, which makes what I

have to say a little more challenging. The risks of being patronising, clumsy or simply irrelevant seem to me to be pretty high.

So let me start on safe ground. Given I rarely get to address such a large audience, of all ranks, what I can say – with complete confidence – is three important ‘thank you’s to both female and male Police Officers.

The first is the way you all policed the pandemic. When Governor’s and Governments have emergency powers, when laws are being brought into play at pace, when a population is, at least initially, very fearful, when curfews are imposed and normal personal liberties suspended, any Police Force, anywhere in the world, could get the balance between policing with consent, and policing through coercion wrong – and some Forces did.

You – the RTCIPF – did not – and as a result you burnished rather than tarnished this Force’s reputation during that difficult time. I think you will see a longer term benefit to this as you roll out community policing. There are certainly important stakeholders in a variety of different communities who reference this period to me as a very positive example of measured policing.

Second, my thanks to you for what you do – day in, day out. I receive the emails from 911 that report serious crime, as it is ongoing, and as a result have a very good understanding of the intense tempo of work you and your male colleagues tackle – on both land and at sea.

Sitting in the Cabinet room yesterday to hear a long burst of rapid gunfire linked to the incident at CIBC took me back to a different time, place and career. Please have no doubt that I do understand the courage you display daily – courage the public expect you to display and which I think they may rather take for granted. I do not take it for granted. That you run towards trouble, as others run away, is not lost on me.

The third thank you is one I give in advance. There’s little more we can do to prepare locally for hurricane season – each year there’s incremental improvement – but this year a post pandemic hurricane strike, as we bounce out of the difficult period of the last two years, stronger economically than we entered it, would be beyond unfortunate.

So much got put on hold because of the pandemic – Government’s bandwidth, indeed my own bandwidth, was all but overwhelmed in terms of controlling COVID while reigniting the economy and what we all want now is a clear run at delivering a whole range of changes that were delayed, and which the Territory needs.

However, if that calamity does occur then you – and the other uniformed services – come into your own. You did an amazing job in 2017 and I know the sacrifices you made – and the discipline you showed – in terms of prioritising the needs of a broken Territory, over and above the devastation in some of your personal lives – was remarkable. As I go into this hurricane season I can’t tell you what a reassurance it is knowing I have the RTCIPF, who have been tested on this recently, and not found wanting, stood alongside

myself and the Premier and others who will be co-ordinating our response.

Now to the reason we are here. I'd been in the role of Governor for, I think, less than a month when I attended a ceremony to mark the departure of Commissioner James Smith and the promotion to Commissioner, of Mr Trevor Botting. My predecessor, Governor Freeman, had run the appointment process so this was the first time I was to hear the new Commissioner speak, let alone hear about his priorities. I knew I'd be interested because, being promoted from Deputy Commissioner, he would have seen the Force from a perspective where he was well informed.

I admit to being surprised, on two fronts. The first was that, of the three or so priorities he identified, one was to support women in the Force achieve their full potential. The second was that this was the one moment where there was spontaneous applause from the floor. There was clearly both a significant issue that could be seen from near the top of the Force, and experienced throughout the Force.

It made me think of a conversation I'd had some years earlier with a woman in my team – who I'd just given an outstanding appraisal to and we went on to talk about what was holding her back from going- eventually – for one of the top jobs in the organisation. Because to my mind that was a very straight-forward career path for her, from where she was.

She asked me to imagine how I would feel if every Line Manager I had, between myself (as a man) and the very top of the organisation – were occupied by women? What if every photograph on the wall, of every person who had led the organisation, was a woman. How would it feel – to me as a man – if the objectives of the organisation, determined in a previous century, had been seen as traditional roles that women delivered? And what, if as a result of these three things, the culture that had developed in the organisation was essentially a female culture.

In this situation – and bear in mind nothing I've so far said suggests any individual behaving in a way that was or is inappropriate – how would I see myself in terms of my own freedom of expression, my own ability to bring my whole self to work and most importantly how could I imagine myself at the top – or near the top – of that organisation as compared, say, to a female colleague who was joining alongside me and seemed to be immediately surrounded by leaders and organisational heroes who looked like her.

My answer was – of course – that in those circumstances I would have found it very difficult. As a result of that conversation I do recognise – as I almost certainly didn't recognise at the start of my career – how many advantages I had, that were not because of any talent or work ethic, but bestowed on me because the culture I had joined was a culture that was very much in the image that I saw myself.

So I think the first thing this network is, is a statement that the Force recognises there is this challenge and that for women in the Force to reach their full potential many things have to change but there certainly has to be a cultural shift. Culture does not change quickly, and embedded cultures –

which organisations such as the RTCIPF has – frankly risk changing glacially – unless there is some form of forcing mechanism.

There will be pioneers within you who have already pushed hard on this agenda, or managed to navigate the present culture, but there's a saying I rather like – because I've experienced it – which is that it's 'the pioneers that take the arrows and the settlers that take the land'.

In other words a small number of pioneers are almost essential for any serious change to occur but if you want to embed that change you need 'mass'. You need numbers. You need to grind the problem down, not just seek a rapid individual route through it thinking that you alone can change the overall culture.

Some of you in this group will relish being pioneers and I applaud you for it – you are more than necessary – and I'm assuming you have taken some arrows on the way – but if this is to work you need, I think, to move forward as a group – steadily and in your own way as an unstoppable force.

If it helps I've seen this work in other organisations and I could use my own as one. When I was appointed in 2019 every single Governor of every Overseas Territory was a man – in fact a white man. Today, 50% of our Governors are women, including one Black woman and one Asian woman. Change came incredibly slowly but it reached a moment where there was a tipping point and then it came quickly.

Beyond that our Ambassadors in Washington, Canada, Australia, the United Nations, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Beijing and Ukraine are all women. Just a few years ago that list would have been almost exclusively male.

So if we get this right, if you get this right, change is going to occur. I am confident that in this audience there has to be a future Commissioner of the RTCIPF. If you don't believe that – if you don't believe in yourself – no one else can, so please use this network to reaffirm to yourself that your ability and handwork will indeed get you there.

But this isn't just about developing potential leadership. I want us to imagine a future – for a moment – where that change has happened. Let's imagine a meeting where 50% of the leadership of the Force, say from ASP upwards, are women. In this case would a women's network be necessary?

I think it probably would, and let me explain why. To the great credit of TCI, women are in the top roles of Government. When I arrived there was of course a female Premier. The Deputy Governor, the Attorney General, the Chief Justice – who are the people the Territory most relies on – are all women. The Cabinet is 50% women. Most of the Permanent Secretaries are women, including one all of Government relies on – PS Finance – plus the PS's who have had a particularly high profile during the pandemic: Health, Tourism and Immigration. In fact women do so well at the top of Government that the BBC ran an article on this rather remarkable position we are in.

But because I work closely with them – and I have my own family – I know

there is a whole set of societal and cultural expectations on them that are not – for example – on me. When our children hit an emotional low point it's Mandy that gets the text or the call, not me – I get the good news, she gets the bad news. When the AG goes home – almost always late – and walks through her front door she stops being the Honourable Rhondalee Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, QC, and becomes a wife and mother with all the expectations that brings. I could go on – some of the PS's are single parents for example – but I think you get the point, because many of you live the point.

However fast gender stereotypes shift they aren't going to have shifted fast enough for you – during your working lives – to not have to manage a whole set of competing priorities that many of your male counterparts do not have to face so – to answer my own question – I do think this type of support network is not only important in terms of helping change a culture within the Force, but also support those in the Force from the extra pressures that other aspects of wider culture bring with it.

I suspect a significant challenge you have already discussed, or will have thought about, is how this network, in trying to solve one set of issues doesn't generate a different set. There is enough division in this Territory without us actively causing more. There will be some male officers who see the formation of this group as a threat. If it allows you to have the confidence to callout and illuminate unacceptable behaviours, that allows disciplinary action to occur, then there is frankly a small group who should feel threatened by this initiative.

But again I suspect one of the most important things you can do is to not allow this group to cement division, but instead use this group to educate and recruit male allies. There may be more than you suspect not least because there is something in this for many of them. Once stereotypes are broken down, as to who is, and who is not successful in an organisation, it's not just – in this particular case – women who will benefit, but also men who do not fit a traditional stereotype of what a senior Police Officer should look like, or indeed how such a person should think or behave.

Beyond the case of 'fairness', and being treated with respect at work – and you can make the case on only those grounds – the organisational business case sits squarely around the benefits that diversity of thought brings. If I hadn't completely absorbed this point before taking on this role – I have now. There is not a paper that has been brought to Cabinet that is not better for having been discussed and contributed to by every member of Cabinet. I think we made some smart collective decisions during the pandemic but none of those would have been made without the contribution of all.

And we need to be clear when we talk about this sort of diversity that I, for one, am not particularly interested in teams that might increasingly look physically different but all think the same way. So as this network starts to deliver, I'm reasonably confident that – in the wake of your work – a group of men will prosper in the Force, who once might not have prospered.

That is because, what this group will do is help build a genuine understanding in the Force that 'diversity of thought, and experience, and

inclusion of all staff' makes the organisation far stronger rather than a Force that is homogenous in its thinking, and a Force where many are excluded. Such a force builds brittleness and weakness. I know which type of Force I want, and the type of Force the Public needs – and I know you do to.

So I wish this network well. I look forward to tracking progress. It's important in that regard that you have the four clear objectives that you do, and at some future point I'd be interested in seeing how we measure progress against each.

You will, I know, forget much I have said but if I can leave you with just one thought it would be to hold in your head the image of a leadership team where 50% or more of those present in the room are women.

If you can see and hold that image – and support each other towards that sort of future – I believe you will find it is achievable. Sustainable change tends to happen very slowly to start with, and very quickly once a tipping point is reached. I am very confident that you are the people, in this Forces long 220 year history, that are going to be remembered as the generation that made that happen. And if I can support you in that endeavour, I most certainly will.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay Oral Statement on urgent and emergency care

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with permission, I'd like to make a statement on our support for urgent and emergency care.

I know that this is an issue that has been of great concern to Honourable Members and I wanted to update the House – at the earliest opportunity – on the work that we've been doing over the summer.

Bed occupancy rates have broadly remained at winter-type levels with Covid cases in July still high, at 1 in 25 testing positive – that compares with 1 in 60 currently.

This is without the decrease in occupancy that we would normally see after winter ends and ambulance wait times have also continued to reflect the pressures of last winter, although I am pleased, Mr Deputy Speaker to see recent improvements for example the West Midlands today is meeting their Category 2 time of less than 18 minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to update the House on the nationwide package of measures that we are putting in place to improve the experience for patients

and colleagues alike.

First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have boosted the resources available to those on the frontline.

We've put in an extra £150 million of funding to help Trusts deal with ambulance pressures this year and on top of this, we've agreed a £30 million contract with St John Ambulance so that they can provide national surge capacity of at least 5,000 hours per month.

We're also increasing the numbers of colleagues on the frontline.

We've boosted national 999 call handler numbers to nearly 2,300, about 350 more than September last year and we have plans to increase this number further to 2,500 by December, supported by a major national recruitment campaign.

By the end of the year, we'll have also increased 111 call handler numbers to 4,800.

As well as this, we have a plan to train and deploy even more paramedics and Health Education England has been mandated to train 3,000 paramedic graduates nationally each year – double the number of graduates that were accepted in 2016.

Second, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are putting an intense focus on the issue of delayed discharge – which is the cause of so many of the problems that we have seen in urgent and emergency care, and I think that's recognised across the House.

This is where patients are medically fit to be discharged but remain in hospital, taking up beds that could otherwise be used for those being admitted.

Delayed discharge means longer waits in A&E, lengthier ambulance handover times and the risk of patients deteriorating if they remain in hospital beds too long – particularly the frail elderly.

The most recent figures, from the end of July, show that the number of these patients is just over 13,000 similar numbers to the winter months.

We've been working closely with trusts where delayed discharge rates are highest, putting in place intensive on-the-ground support.

More broadly, our National Discharge Taskforce is looking across the whole of health and social care to see where we can put in place best practice and improve patient flow through our hospitals. And as part of that of work, we've also selected Discharge Frontrunners who will be tasked with testing radical solutions to improve hospital discharge – and we're looking at which of these proposals we can roll out across the wider system and launch at speed.

This, of course, is not just an issue for the NHS.

We have an integrated system for health and care and must look at the system in the round, and all the opportunities where we can make a difference.

For instance, patients can be delayed as they are waiting for social care to become available and here too, we have taken additional steps over the summer.

We have launched an International Recruitment Taskforce to boost the care workforce and address issues in capacity.

And on top of this, we'll be focusing the Better Care Fund, which allows Integrated Care Boards and local authorities to pool budgets, to reduce delayed discharge.

And in addition, we are looking at how we can draw on the huge advances in technology that we've seen during the pandemic and unlock the value of the data that we hold in health and care and that includes through the Federated Data Platform.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, we know from experience that the winter will be a time of intense pressure for urgent and emergency care.

The NHS has set out its plans to add the equivalent of 7,000 additional beds this winter, through a combination of extra physical beds and the virtual wards which played such an important role in our fight against Covid-19. Another powerful weapon this winter will be our vaccination programmes.

Last winter, we saw the impact that booster programmes can have on hospital admissions, if people come forward when they get the call.

This year's programmes gives us another chance to protect the most vulnerable and reduce demands on the NHS.

Our autumn booster programmes for Covid-19 and flu are now getting under way and will be offered to a wider cohort of the population, including those over 50 with the first jabs going in arms this week, as care home residents, staff and the housebound become the first to receive their Covid-19 jabs. And over the summer, we became the first country in the world to approve a dual-strain Covid-19 vaccine, that targets both the original strain of the virus and the Omicron variant.

And indeed this weekend, the MHRA approved another dual-strain vaccine, from Pfizer, and I'm pleased to confirm that we will be deploying that as well, along with the Moderna dual-strain vaccine as part of our Covid-19 vaccination programme, and in line with the advice of the independent experts at the JCVI.

Whether it's for Covid-19 or flu, I'd urge anyone who's eligible to get protected as soon as you are invited by the NHS, not just to protect yourself and those around you but to ease the pressure on the NHS this winter.

Today, I have also laid before the House a Written Ministerial Statement on the work that we've been doing over the summer and I just wanted to draw the

House's attention to one particular feature within that written ministerial statement that has garnered interest in the House in the past. In November 2021 the government announced that it would make £50 million available in funding for research into motor neurone disease over five years. Following work over the summer between the Department of Health and Social Care and BEIS, through the National Institute for Health Research and UKRI, to support researchers to access funding in a streamlined and coordinated way, we're pleased to confirm that this funding has now been ringfenced. The Department of Health and Social Care and BEIS welcome the opportunity MND scientific community of researchers as they come together through a network and link through a virtual institute.

I commend this statement to the House.