

Views being sought to tackle inequality in medical devices

- Contributions will inform an independent review into potential bias in all types of medical devices and the impact on patients from different socio-demographic groups
- The call aims to collect evidence and insights regarding potential and known equity issues and solutions to these issues across the entire life cycle of medical devices
- Academics, researchers, health professionals, engineers and device developers, as well as patients and general public, are invited to contribute

The Independent Review has launched a [call for evidence](#) to gather insights from experts and organisations, as well as patients and the general public, on the potential racial and gender bias of medical devices.

Through commissioning the Independent Review on Equity in Medical Devices led by Professor Dame Margaret Whitehead, the government is seeking to tackle disparities in healthcare. This consultation will support this by gathering new evidence on if and how medical devices and technologies may be biased against patients of different ethnicities, genders and other socio-demographic groups, and what solutions could mitigate these biases.

Through the call for evidence, which will be open for 8 weeks, it hopes to hear from those who work most closely with medical devices such as oxygen measuring devices and infrared scanners and other medical software and hardware, including databases and instructions for medical devices. This applies across a device's entire life cycle – from evaluation to marketing and implementation – to identify potential biases and solutions at each and every stage.

For example, some devices employing infrared light or imaging may not perform as well with patients with darker skin pigmentation, which has not been accounted for in the development and testing of the devices when patients with only a limited range of lighter skin tones were recruited.

The independent review, which the call for evidence will feed into, aims to improve equity in medical devices and help tackle existing healthcare disparities, ensuring people can receive the best-possible care throughout their patient experience regardless of their ethnicity or gender.

Health Minister Gillian Keegan said:

I am committed to ensuring all patients receive high-quality, innovative healthcare without discrimination.

The independent review is part of our vital work to tackle healthcare inequalities, and I invite the industry to share their

expertise in the call for evidence so we can ensure medical devices are free of any form of bias.

Members of expert and professional groups and organisations, including academics, researchers, engineers, healthcare professionals and industry representatives, are invited to submit evidence and insights regarding potential disparities and proposed solutions, with this evidence informing the independent review.

Members of the public, patients and carers can also contribute their views and insights on these topics.

Research suggests the way some medical devices are designed and used may be failing to account for differences related to ethnic background, gender or other characteristics – potentially exacerbating existing inequalities in healthcare.

While current UK regulations set out clear expectations on medical devices and technologies, they do not currently include provisions to ensure that medical devices are working equally well for different groups in the population based on their social or demographic characteristics.

The independent review will cover different types of medical devices, including devices enabled by artificial intelligence (AI) used in diagnosing illness and determining therapy pathways, as well as risk-scoring systems using genomics to make decisions about personalised medicine.

It will consider in what ways existing or future regulations could successfully address any biases in medical devices that arise at any stage of their design, development, evaluation, implementation and use.

Patients can be reassured that the NHS is expert in providing the best possible care, and the review is intended to accelerate the process of improving the quality and availability of medical devices to diverse communities.

Professor Dame Margaret Whitehead, chair of the independent review, said:

We aim to establish where and how potential ethnic and other unfair biases may arise in the design and use of medical devices, and what can be done to make improvements.

We especially encourage patients and members of the public, as well as health, technology and industry experts and researchers to share their views and any evidence concerning medical devices in order to help us tackle inequalities in healthcare.

The review chair will issue the panel's report to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care setting out clear options for consideration by spring 2023 with interim findings expected in winter 2022.

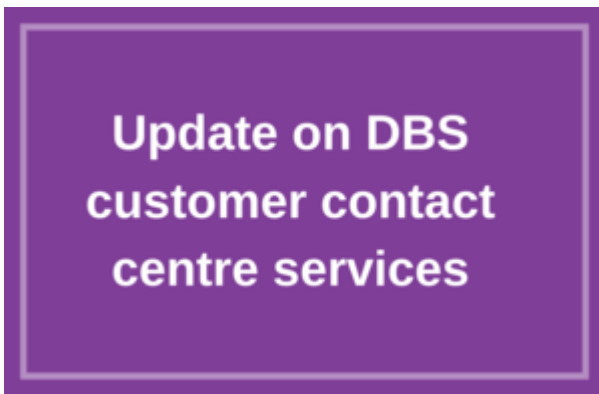
Call for evidence: [Equity in medical devices: independent review call for evidence](#).

See [Equity in medical devices: independent review](#) for the review's terms of reference, biographies of the panel members and details on how to contribute to the review outside of the call for evidence through the review mailbox.

Update on DBS customer contact centre services – 15 to 20 August

News story

Planned industrial action by staff from contractors Hinduja Global Solutions is set to affect DBS customer contact centre services from 15 August to 20 August.



Update on DBS customer contact centre services

Customers contacting the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) between Monday 15 to Saturday 20 August by telephone, email or webchat may face some disruption and delays. This is due to industrial action by staff working for Hinduja Global Solutions (HGS). HGS is contracted to provide DBS customer contact centre services as well as a certain number of DBS administrative functions.

During the industrial action, HGS is putting additional resources in place to try and minimise the inconvenience to customers as much as possible.

The industrial action is not expected to have any significant impact on turnaround times for DBS checks or barring decisions. Our core services will not be affected and employers and customers should continue to access them as normal.

Service operating hours 15 to 20 August

During the industrial action, the times of the customer contact centre will be reduced to:

- Monday 15 August to Friday 19 August – 9am to 5pm
- Saturday 20 August – closed

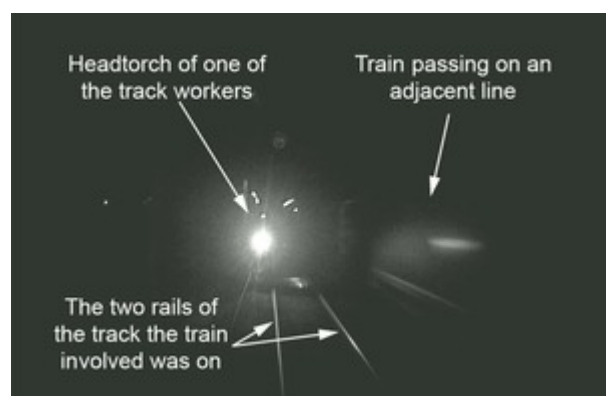
Webchat services will still be available to customers in normal operating hours (Monday to Friday, from 10am to 4pm). Webchat becomes available to customers when they access online services such as applying for a DBS check, making a barring referral or signing in to the Update Service.

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[Near miss with track workers at Penkrige](#)

News story

Investigation into a near miss with track workers at Penkrige, Staffordshire, 11 July 2022.



Forward-facing CCTV from the train involved in the near miss (courtesy of GB Railfreight)

At around 00:06 hrs on Monday 11 July 2022, two track workers were almost struck by a freight train travelling at 61 mph (98 km/h) just south of Penkrige station, Staffordshire. The track workers moved clear of the path of the train less than one second before it reached their position. Another train was passing the track workers on an adjacent line as the freight train approached them.

At the time of the incident, the track workers involved were investigating an ongoing fault with the overhead line equipment which was preventing trains with electric traction from using this section of line, causing significant levels of disruption to train services in the area.

Our investigation will seek to identify the sequence of events which led to the incident and will include consideration of:

- the actions of those involved
- the arrangements to protect the track workers from moving trains
- the roles, responsibilities and working patterns of relevant staff
- how the competence of staff was managed
- any relevant underlying factors.

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

You can [subscribe](#) to automated emails notifying you when we publish our reports.

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[PM call with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed: 11 August 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, UAE.



The Prime Minister spoke to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, UAE, today.

The leaders thanked one another for their support and friendship. They agreed that great strides have been made in the UK-UAE relationship in recent years.

The Prime Minister praised the Crown Prince's success in bringing prosperity to both the UAE and the Gulf more generally. The Crown Prince paid tribute to the role the Prime Minister has played in driving trade and investment between our countries.

The Prime Minister said UK-UAE cooperation on global priorities including Ukraine, regional stability and climate change is hugely important for the world. He expressed his confidence that this cooperation will continue in the years ahead.

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[Scottish apprentices celebrated for support to UK armed forces](#)

- New and qualified apprentices recognised at defence facility in Beith, Scotland
- Munitions site employing around 250 people plays a crucial role in UK Defence
- Part of a two-day visit to Scotland by UK Defence Procurement Minister

The important role apprentices play in driving innovation and keeping the UK safe was recognised during a Ministerial visit to key defence sites in Scotland this week.

Visiting Defence Munitions (DM) in Beith – a Defence Equipment & Support facility which employs around 250 people and can produce, test and store weapons for the UK's Armed Forces – Minister for Defence Procurement, Jeremy

Quin saw the contribution the site is making to current and ongoing operations in Europe and further afield.

DM Beith boasts a sought-after apprenticeship programme, with the latest intake of six apprentices officially starting later this month. The outgoing apprentices had their contributions to UK Defence recognised through an end of apprenticeship ceremony.

During Minister Quin's visit, he handed over the Deeds for the dozen apprentices who have completed training over the previous two years and who have all been offered permanent roles at the facility.

The Minister also awarded the company's Apprentice of the Year award to Calvin, who will now be taking up a technical role within the DM Beith Operations Team.

Defence Procurement Minister Jeremy Quin said:

It is always a pleasure to meet apprentices across the country to discuss their exciting and educational journey in Defence and this week to congratulate those who have finished their formal apprenticeships.

We're pleased to provide these opportunities for technical training and to offer challenging and varied ongoing career opportunities in Ayrshire, whilst investing in the prosperity of the area.

Head of Weapons Support at Defence Equipment & Support, Neil Rixon said:

I was delighted to congratulate our apprentices who have completed their placements and to welcome the next tranche. I'm very proud that our Weapons apprenticeship programme enables us to invest in developing crucial mechanical and electrical engineering skills. The work undertaken at Beith is absolutely critical to our armed forces, and the skills our apprentices are learning are invaluable to Defence Equipment & Support.

During the tour of DM Beith, Minister Quin was shown the in-house complex weapons processing, engineering, storage and deployment capabilities.

As part of his two-day visit to Scotland, the Minister also visited the British Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre (BUTEC) at Applecross, on the north-west coast which tests underwater weapons. He then travelled to the MOD Hebrides range, run by Qinetiq for the MOD, where ground-based air defence weapons are tested and complex weapons trials are run.