

UK science and the fight against COVID-19

The UK's world-class science, research and innovation institutions are working around the clock to understand and tackle the COVID-19 pandemic – both domestically and around the world. It is doing this by supporting vaccine trials in British labs and by collaborating with international partners to ensure a COVID-19-free world for all.

Leading a united global push

On the 4th of June, the UK will host the Gavi Global Vaccine Summit 2020. The event aims to unite countries in committing to global health security and ensuring that communities around the world have equitable access to vaccines. Earlier UK aid for Gavi is already underway in vaccinating 76 million children, saving 1.4 million lives from vaccine-preventable diseases by 2020 and we have now pledged an additional £330 million a year for the next five years. This makes us the single largest donor to the Alliance that has already helped vaccinate over 700 million children globally.

This is but the latest initiative in a series of UK's science-led international collaborations, embodying what PM Johnson has referred to as 'humanity against the virus'.

In April, the government launched the UK Vaccine Taskforce and pledged £250 million towards international efforts to develop a vaccine. A further £14 million was committed to 21 new research projects to rapidly progress treatments and vaccines. In addition, the UK co-hosted the International Coronavirus Global Response pledging event on 4 May that raised £6 billion for R&D towards COVID-19 vaccines, testing and treatment.

More recently, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) launched the Hygiene Hub – a new and free online platform backed by £500k of UK aid that will support governments in developing countries in strengthening their health and education systems to prevent future pandemics.

UK-Singapore collaborations in COVID-19 treatment

The LSHTM is also collaborating with the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health at the National University of Singapore on COVID-19 modelling studies. This is one in a number of UK-Singapore joint research on possible COVID-19 treatments that build on the strong alliances between our universities and labs. Another great collaboration was between researchers in the Nanyang Technological University Singapore and the University of Oxford who published a report on primary care handling of COVID-19 that fed into NICE telemedicine guidelines for medical practitioners around the world.

Extending beyond Singapore, the UK's Wellcome Trust is supporting a

serological survey of COVID-19 infection risk in Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand.

The UK stands with the world, fighting COVID-19 together

Delivering key collaborations across the region

The UK's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and Newton Fund Agile COVID-19 Response call funds COVID-19 research projects in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In addition, several Newton Fund calls in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have been re-focused to address pandemic impacts on local communities, such as the Newton funded project CONI (COVID-19 Network Investigation Alliance) in Thailand, which uses genomic technology to investigate and monitor COVID-19 infections in the country.

The UK has also recently launched the Global Effort on COVID-19 (GECO) Health Research call that focuses on delivering priority areas in the WHO COVID-19 Roadmap and is especially targeting low and middle income countries, including in the Southeast Asian region.

Funding COVID R&D in the UK

Back in the UK, the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has been at the forefront of supporting domestic R&D in COVID-19 treatment, diagnostic and vaccines. It has made available £25 million through the UKRI/NIHR rapid response call for COVID-19 research, and an additional £42.5 million to support clinical testing of vaccines at the University of Oxford and Imperial College London.

With government funding, the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca are collaborating on a potential recombinant adenovirus vaccine aimed at preventing COVID-19 infection from SARS-CoV-2. Human trials of this have now begun. Simultaneously, government support has enabled clinical trials of 40,000 healthcare workers as the University races to study the effectiveness of anti-malaria treatment on the COVID-19 virus.

A recent £93 million boost in funding will accelerate the establishment of a specialist Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (under construction in Oxfordshire, south central England) in mid-2021, a year ahead of schedule.

Putting science at the heart of recovery

The cure for COVID-19 is yet a way off but the achievements of our researchers, back home in the UK and those in labs around the world, give us reason to stay fiercely optimistic.

With government support led by science and innovative businesses and academia working hand-in-hand, the UK is fully committed to ensure that not only will

we find a solution together, but that when we do, it will be accessible to anyone who needs it, no matter where they are.

Further information

About the UK Science and Innovation Network

The UK Science and Innovation Network team in Singapore stands ready to support relevant bilateral government engagement, academic research collaborations, and industry innovations to tackle this pandemic. For UK organisations seeking collaborators in Singapore, and vice versa, please feel free to contact us at SEAsiaSI@fco.gov.uk

About the British High Commission in Singapore

The British High Commission in Singapore works to develop and sustain the important and longstanding relationship between the UK and Singapore. This is done to build prosperity, safeguard national security, champion British values and support British nationals overseas.

Winners of the 2020 Queen's Award for Voluntary Service announced

Charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups from Bristol to Belfast and Derbyshire to Dumfries have received the highest award given to organisations delivering exceptional service within their communities.

Many of those honoured have adapted their services to respond to the coronavirus outbreak as the voluntary sector continues to play a vital role in the national effort.

Coinciding with Volunteers' Week (1-7 June), this year's Queen's Award for Voluntary Service celebrates the work of a fantastic, diverse range of volunteer groups whose work has enhanced and supported local communities over a number of years.

The Queen's Award offers a chance to highlight their outstanding contribution to society and also to recognise the crucial role many have played to support vulnerable people during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Independent Committee Chair Sir Martyn Lewis, said:

This year's Queen's Awards highlight the considerable achievements of groups of volunteers who have been making a real impact to the fabric of our country for many years – in some cases decades.

Inspired by all that is best in the human spirit, they are made up of local people who have come together to address particular issues and problems facing their communities – often in new and imaginative ways.

All of these award winners have demonstrated a long-term commitment to volunteering that gives real meaning to society, and which shows Britain at its best. Moreover, some of them have also managed to provide valuable support with the fight against Covid-19. We owe them our gratitude – and our congratulations.

Minister for Civil Society, Baroness Barran said:

This prestigious award recognises the important work being done by volunteers across the country and I'd like to congratulate all of the winners for their hard work and dedication supporting their communities.

Charities, social enterprises and their volunteers are the glue that holds our communities together. In these challenging times, they have stepped up their response and been vital to the national effort, for which we are all grateful.

This year's recipients demonstrate the diversity of organisations supporting our communities and also their ability to innovate – many have been able to adapt their services in light of the coronavirus outbreak including:

- Forward Assist, in Tyne and Wear, has been supporting veterans in the community by setting up a virtual support service, in which a therapist checks in with 'safe and well' calls and offers one-to-one counselling. It has also arranged food parcels, offered financial advice and updated CVs for vulnerable, isolated veterans.
- When a local food bank closed in Neath Port Talbot because its volunteers were self-isolating, the Cymer Afan Community Library quickly decided to repurpose their building, staff and volunteers and transform the library into a temporary food bank for the community.
- North Somerset Black and Minority Ethnic Network have supported the local community through providing advice and assistance over the phone and have delivered over 5000 hot meals to vulnerable people, free of charge.
- To support the mental health and wellbeing of older people who usually attend the Eglinton Community Centre in Derry-Londonderry, volunteers have been running online dance exercise classes so people can keep

active in their living rooms and kitchens while they stay at home.

- Gairloch Community Car Scheme in the Scottish Highlands have adapted their car service to collect and deliver groceries, pharmacy items and other shopping for those who are isolated during the pandemic. They have also extended the area they cover to a 150 mile radius to ensure the more remote, outlying families can access the help they need.

The recipients of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service are announced every year on 2 June, the anniversary of The Queen's Coronation.

Any volunteer-led group comprising two or more people having a positive impact on the lives of others in an exceptional way can be nominated for an award. A group must satisfy the eligibility requirements before the nomination can be processed through to the assessment stages of the award. More details can be found on the [Queen's Award for Voluntary Service website](#).

Nominations for the 2021 awards close on 25 September 2020.

Notes for editors

1: Find winners near you on our [map](#).

2: Lord Lieutenants represent the monarch in each of the UK's ceremonial counties. This year there were 230 recipients of The Queen's Award Voluntary Service from across the UK. More information on the recipients and the [Award](#).

3: Any group of two or more people that has participated in voluntary work for more than three years can be nominated for the award. [Full details on how to nominate](#).

[Yemen: New UK aid will help stop the spread of coronavirus](#)

A new package of UK aid worth £160million will help fight coronavirus and address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced today.

Speaking ahead of today's UN conference on Yemen's humanitarian crisis, the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:

This targeted UK aid package will mean the difference between life and death for thousands of Yemenis who now also face the threat of coronavirus. Our support will help ensure families can feed

themselves and access clean water and medical care.

I pay tribute to aid workers on the frontline who are working around the clock to get help to where it is needed. To achieve lasting peace, Yemeni leaders must urgently agree to the UN Special Envoy's peace plan to bring an end to this terrible conflict.

Even before the pandemic, Yemen was already experiencing the largest humanitarian crisis in the world with more than 24 million people, over 80% of the population, requiring some form of assistance. Nearly a quarter of Yemen's districts have no doctors and only half of the country's health facilities are still functional, with 20 million people lacking any access to medical care.

The Foreign Secretary is expected to tell delegates at the virtual UN High Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen that aid workers will struggle to deliver this assistance unless restrictions placed upon them, particularly by the Houthis, are lifted.

The UK's package, from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), will help to tackle the spread of COVID-19 in Yemen and expects to provide over 700,000 medical consultations, train 12,000 healthcare workers to work safely in a COVID-19 environment, and provide a much-needed boost to nearly 4,000 health centres to continue providing existing health services.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Yemen is suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis with millions of people at risk of starvation. The ongoing conflict as well as the coronavirus outbreak could make what is already a dire situation worse.

The UK continues to be at the forefront of the humanitarian response. Today's UK aid pledge will help feed millions of Yemenis who face constant uncertainty over when they will eat their next meal.

The new funding also aims to provide support to at least 300,000 vulnerable people each month to help them buy food and household essentials, treat 40,000 children for malnutrition and provide 1 million people with improved water supply and basic sanitation.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The new package takes the total amount of UK funding since the conflict began to £970 million. This support has provided urgent funding for food supplies for vulnerable households as well as health care and sexual and

reproductive health services.

- The World Health Organisation's "optimistic" estimate is that over an 18 month period there will be over 16 million coronavirus cases in the country. The death toll will be significantly higher if access for health workers and aid agencies remains restricted.
- DFID has already provided £150 million to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust, will provide the world's poorest countries, including Yemen, with IMF debt relief over the next six months.
- UN data shows that restrictions on access, particularly in Houthi controlled areas, are now affecting the delivery of assistance to almost 9 million people across Yemen, an all-time high.

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UK Government to bring home more British travellers from Central and South America

Press release

Over 400 British travellers will be able to return home from six Central and South American countries on the latest special charter flights organised by the UK Government.



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Two transatlantic flights, from Costa Rica and Ecuador, will leave for London Stansted on 11 June. Sweeper flights will take British travellers from Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Chile to Costa Rica & Ecuador for the transatlantic flights.

The details of the charter flights are as follows:

- 11 June: San Jose, Costa Rica – London Stansted
- 11 June: Quito, Ecuador – London Stansted

This follows UK Government chartered flights from Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Honduras bringing back over 2100 British travellers and their families.

FCO Minister for the Americas, Wendy Morton said:

This is a complex operation with British travellers wanting to return home from across Central and South America.

We have already brought home over 2100 British travellers from the region on charter flights and these two additional flights will bring home hundreds more.

Our teams across the region are doing everything they can to get as many people as possible home to their families and will continue to provide support to British nationals who remain.

Initial priority will be given to short term British travellers who are vulnerable. This includes those over 70 and others who have medical requirements, those travelling with young children, and those located in more remote or at-risk areas.

The UK Government is working with the airline industry and host governments across the world to bring back British travellers to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab (30 March) – with up to £75 million available for special charter flights to priority countries,

focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The charter flights are for short-term British travellers who normally reside in the UK, as well as their direct dependants. Non-British citizens with appropriate residency rights will be included if there is capacity.
- To register their details and interest in these flights, British travellers should check the [FCO Travel Advice pages](#).
- British travellers who have registered their interest in returning to the UK on a chartered flight will be contacted by the British mission in their country or territory explaining how to book these flights. Anyone who has not yet registered their interest should contact their local British mission using the details in the FCO's country travel advice.
- Those who are eligible to fly will be sent information on getting to airports and flight itineraries directly when their seat is confirmed.
- Details regarding luggage allowance, flight costs and carriers will be available on the booking portal.
- Our dedicated consular teams across Central and South America will continue to provide consular support to any British travellers seeking to return to the UK that have been unable to do so.
- Guidance on how to book onto a government charter flight back to the UK can be found [here](#)

Published 1 June 2020

[Civil news: transfer of court assessed claims to Legal Aid Agency](#)



The transfer on 17 August means civil court assessed claims will be handled by the Legal Aid Agency's (LAA) civil finance team instead of the courts.

Why is this happening?

In recent weeks many providers have gone without payment for cases because of court closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bringing this work in-house will remove the need for claims to go before the courts. This will mean faster payments in both the long and short-term for your work.

When is this happening?

Following consultation with representative bodies on amendments to the Cost Assessment Guidance, the transfer of court assessed claims from HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to the LAA will take place 17 August.

From this date all claims must be sent to the LAA for assessment. Any claims for assessment received by HMCTS from this date will be returned without being processed.

The Senior Courts Costs Office (SCCO) will reject any claims submitted via CE File on or after 17 August and refund the court fee paid in the usual way.

Claims submitted before 17 August

Any claims submitted to HMCTS before 17 August may be returned to you for submission to the LAA if the HMCTS assessment process has not started.

Claims submitted to SCCO will be processed by the court with an aim to complete within 4 weeks of the date of receipt.

The LAA is already set up to receive these claims and has been processing them since 1 June.

Providers can start sending claims to the LAA before 17 August transfer date to avoid unnecessary delay with assessment of their claims.

Operational guidance for firms wishing to submit claims – see below.

Further information

[Transfer of claims assessed at court to the legal aid agency ahead of consultation closing](#)

Published 1 June 2020

Last updated 15 July 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 15 July 2020

Transfer date confirmed as 17 August.

2. 1 June 2020

First published.