

Worldwide search launched to enhance digital services

Our digital services are accessed billions of times each year, by people all over the world. It's important that they're accessible and meet the needs of as many different users as possible.

To make sure our services are accessible, we want to increase the number of people on our user research panel.

The panel works to make sure that our services can be used by everyone, including people with accessibility needs.

1 in 5 people in the UK have a disability. This could be visual, hearing, motor or cognitive (affecting memory and thinking). But accessibility does not only apply to people with disabilities. All users will have different needs at different times and in different circumstances.

User research panel members do not need to be from the UK. We're able to carry out remote research with people from all over the world.

Sarah Combstock, a User Researcher at Companies House, says:

The digital services we provide at Companies House are well-used, and we have high rates of customer satisfaction.

We're passionate about ensuring that our research when we develop these services is as inclusive as possible. Our role is to represent the user, so it's vitally important that we understand their needs.

That's why we need as many people as possible to help us by joining our user research panel. Panel members will get a unique opportunity to help us understand how we can build and design services that are as user-friendly and intuitive as possible.

Lewes couple who befriended and robbed disabled man in his own home jailed for longer

A couple who robbed a disabled man in his own home, after one of them

befriended him, have had their sentences increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Kirsty Norris, 31, met the victim, 57, eighteen months before the planned attack. The victim believed that Norris was his friend, and showed her kindness by providing her with food and company.

The victim is a vulnerable person, who is disabled and suffers from serious medical conditions. The authorities had moved him to a new address after he became the target of attacks in his original home town.

On the morning of 16 October 2018, the victim saw Norris and invited her to his flat for a meal. Inside the victim's home, Norris phoned her boyfriend, signalling the pre-planned attack.

Her boyfriend, David Mercer, 25, then came to the victim's door, claiming to be from the council. When the victim refused to let him in, Mercer punched him multiple times in the face and neck. The offender then stole his Christmas savings and bank card before fleeing.

Throughout the attack, Norris feigned surprise and pretended to help the victim but he soon realised that he had been betrayed. Norris then left the victim's flat to find her boyfriend.

Once reunited, the offenders immediately made several purchases which were captured on CCTV footage.

The offenders were arrested at their home on Thursday 25th October.

Norris and Mercer originally appeared at Lewes Crown Court in October 2019 and were sentenced for robbery and five counts of fraud. They were both sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment, suspended for 2 years, with a rehabilitation activity requirement for a maximum of 35 days.

Today, following the Solicitor General's intervention, the Court of Appeal has increased their sentences to 3 years' immediate imprisonment.

Commenting on the increase, the Solicitor General said:

"This was a brutal, targeted attack against a vulnerable individual, who had already suffered abuse for his disabilities. The victim was betrayed and attacked and suffers psychological trauma as a result. It is only right that the Court of Appeal has agreed to increase the sentences to reflect this long-lasting harm."

[Addressing suicides among veterans and](#)

serving personnel

Mr Speaker, following an internal review commissioned by my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, I wish to make a statement about serving and former members of the Armed Forces ending their own lives. Speaking publicly about suicide requires a balance between risking similar episodes and ensuring that I follow through on the Prime Minister's intent to ensure that every serving or former member of the Armed Forces knows exactly where to turn in times of acute need.

I am very aware of how it feels to be a service family, particularly a spouse or relative of someone who feels they have nowhere to turn, or that Ministers are indifferent to the situation. It is this that has led me to make this statement to the House.

Suicide is almost never due to a single factor and some reasons are impossible to identify. However, the facts on suicide in the Armed Forces remain broadly consistent. Current data shows you are significantly less likely to take your own life if you are in the Armed Forces. The rates are about 8 in 100,000 compared to around 17 in 100,000 in the equivalent male population in the United Kingdom. But we are not complacent and I accept Governments have not acted fast enough to update our data and understanding of military suicide.

I am aware that we are currently experiencing a higher instance of suicide in a cohort who served at a specific time in Afghanistan. Some people want to make suicide about numbers; but suicide is not a number. One is too many and in my view any suicide is an individual tragedy for yes that person, for their family of course, but also the military as an institution. I must however challenge a false narrative that veteran suicide is an 'epidemic' or that professional clinical services are not there; they are. Such comments risk harming others by wrongly fuelling a perception that help is not there when it is.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, I wanted to outline to the House what I am doing about it. I am committed to providing better support for individuals in mental distress. To learning why suicide happens and what more can be done to stop an individual reaching the decision to end their life. I meet with families, widows and experts to understand when or if we could or should have intervened in those crucial weeks and months before an individual takes their own life. Even if sometimes the answer is tragically nothing.

Alongside this we are aiming to reduce suicide risk through tackling stigma, education and providing access to mental and physical health support. Armed Forces personnel now undergo "through life" psychological resilience training enabling them to recognise and manage mental ill-health in themselves and their colleagues. This actively encourages help seeking at an early stage.

But Mr Speaker, data is key to understanding what more needs to happen.

The MOD track all suicides for serving personnel and annually publishes data on Coroner confirmed suicides. What this tells us is that we are seeing more deaths in recent years but still well below levels observed in the 1990s, unlike in the 1990s this is not predominantly an untrained young Army male issue but it is predominantly a male issue, and in older age groups which reflects the trends in wider UK society.

A review in 2018 saw the implementation of new suicide prevention measures across Defence and a Defence Suicide Registry will capture information related to in-Service suicide across the Services.

For veterans the Office for Veterans' Affairs is funding the next stage of a long-term study of nearly 30,000 veterans who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Started in 2003 and led by the world's leading experts at Kings College, this provides data which better ensures better policy decisions about veterans in Government. Defence and health together will fund Manchester University to examine the 12 months leading up to veterans who have taken their own lives in the last five years.

A new Veteran mortality study will show the incidence of suicide among veterans who served since 2001, alongside other causes of death. I am expanding this study so that it provides, for the first-time a near real-time surveillance capability, ensuring we can respond quickly to any new cluster of events. The first report will be published later this year.

More importantly a shift is underway in the provision of veterans Mental Health support; help is out there. For many years, I and others, have called for this Nation to realise her responsibilities towards those who have served. That strategic change is happening.

It is the NHS in England and Devolved Administrations that delivers veterans' healthcare. Over the years our service charities have shouldered much of this, underpinned by the generosity of the public. This is changing and I commend the NHS' efforts to provide services, including those bespoke for veterans, some of which the NHS commission the charity sector to provide. It has transformed its Armed Forces provision. A clear clinical pathway exists for veterans' mental health services in England with the Transition Intervention and Liaison Service and Complex Treatment Service. I have worked with the NHS and Ministerial colleagues recently to accelerate the introduction of a new High Intensity Service for those in the most acute need, following the challenges faced by Combat Stress.

These services mean the State is now leading the way in supporting our veterans, through a range of partnerships which include the third sector and others. The help is there and we all need to be better at encouraging our family, friends and colleagues to seek it.

As a veteran you will have experiences, training, friendships, highs and lows like no other profession. Some may feel far from those times, challenged by the reality of resuming civilian life after intensive and unique experiences. I am ensuring the help is there to make this transition successfully.

I care and this Government cares. Record investment, reinforced through additional funding for veterans' mental health in the Budget yesterday. A strategic shift from reliance on the third sector to the State finally realising her responsibilities. Ensuring this country is the best place to be a veteran and everyone knows where to get help. This Prime Minister will accept nothing less. Having shared those battlefields with you, I have staked my personal reputation on it.

But it requires everyone to play a role: speak out, reach out; look after yourselves and each other.

And never ever give up.

I commend this statement to the House.

Civil Service says farewell to Clare Moriarty

Former Permanent Secretary of the Department for Exiting the European Union Clare Moriarty has today announced that she will leave the Civil Service.

This comes after the department successfully completed its work in delivering on the result of the referendum and securing a successful exit from the EU on 31 January.

Clare has held a number of critical roles in the Civil Service, previously as Permanent Secretary for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from 2015 to 2019. Prior to this she worked in the Department for Transport, latterly as Director General for Rail, and in the Ministry of Justice as Constitution Director.

Clare has long demonstrated commitment to leadership and change which is why she was called upon by Civil Service World to give their inaugural lecture on leadership in 2018. She has consistently promoted diversity and inclusion as the Civil Service Champion for Faith and Belief.

Government leaders have paid tribute to Clare's dedication and 35 years of public service.

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service Sir Mark Sedwill said:

I'm enormously grateful to Clare for the exceptional leadership she demonstrated as Permanent Secretary of DExEU and previously at DEFRA. She made an immeasurable contribution to both those departments during periods of great challenge, in addition to many years of dedicated public service in a number of other civil

service roles.

I want to pay particular tribute to her dedication to the causes of change and diversity. Through her work on leadership and talent, and as faith and belief champion, Clare played a big part in delivering on vital components of the Civil Service's corporate agenda.

I wish her all the very best for the future.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Michael Gove said:

I have had the great pleasure of working with Clare at two departments and I am deeply personally grateful for her hard work and dedication.

At both DExEU and Defra she led exceptionally broad portfolios of activity and deepened engagement with Parliament, business, industry, and civic society – work which was instrumental in our successful departure from the EU.

I am delighted to pay tribute to her enormous contribution to public service.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury and former Secretary of State for DExEU, Steven Barclay, said:

I was fortunate enough to work with Clare during one of the most challenging and rewarding tenures I've had in Government to date.

Her support was integral in delivering the mammoth task we were set in leaving the EU, and Clare is truly a credit to our Civil Service.

Clare Moriarty said:

I am immeasurably grateful to my colleagues in both Defra and DExEU for the commitment they showed in supporting negotiations and preparing for our future outside the EU. With DExEU's role now complete and the department wound up, it feels the right time to move on myself.

It has been a privilege to be a civil servant for nearly 35 years across seven departments. I'm proud to have played a part in helping the Civil Service to become more digital, more delivery-focused, more representative of the country we serve, and more inclusive. I will always be a huge supporter of the Civil Service.

[Final decision published in radio merger inquiry](#)

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has investigated Bauer Media's completed purchase of certain radio businesses of Celador Entertainment Limited, Lincs FM Group Limited and Wireless Group Limited, along with the entire business of UKRD Group Limited. These purchases included 50% of First Radio Sales Limited (FRS), a firm that currently provides more than 100 independent local radio stations with access to national advertisers. Income from those advertisers is an important source of revenue for most independent local radio stations.

As part of an in-depth Phase 2 investigation of these transactions led by an independent group of panel members, the CMA has found competition concerns in relation to the future viability of FRS, which is now jointly owned by Bauer. Bauer's purchase of the 4 radio businesses will take away over half of FRS' business, leaving it unviable.

If FRS were to shut down, independent local radio stations would have only 2 options for sales representation: Bauer or Global (the largest commercial radio group in the UK). This would leave stations with insufficient choice when trying to sell national radio advertising airtime and potentially lead to them paying higher commission rates.

The CMA was also previously concerned that Bauer's purchase of Wireless's Signal 107 station would reduce competition for local advertisers wishing to promote their products in the Wolverhampton area. Following further investigation, the CMA does not have concerns about this.

Due to the very unusual circumstances of this case, the CMA is not requiring Bauer to sell off the radio stations it has bought. In order to maintain FRS' customer base, Bauer would have to sell all the acquired radio stations, and the CMA was concerned that another buyer would not have sufficient incentive to maintain FRS as an active competitor to represent independent stations.

Instead, Bauer will be required to provide advertising representation to independent radio stations on the same terms the stations were receiving from FRS, for 10 years.

Stuart McIntosh, CMA Panel Chair said, "It's really important that independent radio stations have good access to representation for national radio ad sales as it is an important source of income for those stations. Without the CMA's remedy, it's likely that these stations would have to pay over the odds for national advertising representation."

For more information visit the [Bauer Media Group merger inquiry](#) page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.