

News story: Investment Management System (IMS) closure arrangements

To allow greater time for the processing of schemes and programme management in the run up to year end, we will be extending the opening hours of IMS.

From Friday 1st March to Thursday 28th March, the opening hours will be extended from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Exceptions will be the agreed change release dates and any other extra emergency release dates.

From Friday 29th March, IMS will close down to users at midday to allow completion of the year end activities and will reopen on Monday 1st April at 8am.

IMS will be supported during office hours and the Homes England service desk will be open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. The second line IMS user support will be open from 10am to 4pm.

Scheduled payments that have been approved by close of business on Friday 29th March will be processed on that evening. Approved payments will continue to be paid against normal timescales whilst IMS is closed.

To ensure system issues are not missed during year end, you can log IMS issues with the Homes England Service Desk on 01908 353604 or by sending an e-mail to servicedesk@homesengland.gov.uk

Please ensure you include all the required information in the email, with screenshots where appropriate, to help us deal with calls efficiently.

Any questions about the data being entered in IMS or policy should be first directed to your Homes England lead in the relevant area office.

Press release: New UK aid to feed millions of people in Yemen

The UK is stepping up its humanitarian support to help millions of people at risk of starvation in Yemen, the Prime Minister announced today.

New UK aid worth £200 million will feed millions of people and provide water and sanitation to those most in need. This new announcement brings the total that the UK has committed since the start of the four-year conflict to £770 million.

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, said:

Yemen is suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Millions of people edge ever closer to famine every day that the conflict continues. Today's UK aid package will feed millions of Yemenis who face constant uncertainty over when they will next eat.

But aid is not enough. We are also doing all we can to support the UN-led peace process. The only way to end this crisis and the suffering of the Yemeni people is for both parties to agree a political settlement.

The new UK aid package will:

- Give cash and vouchers to 3.8 million vulnerable Yemenis across the country that they can use to buy food;
- screen and treat 20,000 children for malnutrition this year; and
- give 2 million people better access to water supply and basic sanitation, which will also help prevent the spread of water-borne diseases such as cholera.

On Tuesday (26 February) the UK will host a side-event at the UN pledging conference in Geneva, bringing together leading donors and UN agencies for a renewed international effort to ensure aid reaches the most vulnerable Yemenis.

UK leadership has already helped make sure food, fuel and medicine get through Yemen's Red Sea ports, where the majority of supplies enter the country. The UK has deployed seven experts to support the inspections of ships in Djibouti – to provide reassurance that weapons are not being smuggled on commercial ships.

The UK continues to press both parties to the conflict to implement the Stockholm agreements which will enable progress on the political process, help get vital aid across front lines and open up supply routes around the Red Sea port of Hodeidah.

This financial year, 2018/19, UK aid is:

- covering 25% of the costs of the first ever cholera vaccination campaign in Yemen (through GAVI) for nearly a million Yemenis;
- bringing together the Met Office, NASA and US scientists to use a world-leading approach to accurately predict the spread of cholera and target support to areas at greatest risk;
- providing medical support, legal services and psycho-social counselling to over 1,700 survivors of female sexual and gender-based violence; and
- reaching over 200,000 people who have fled their homes with access to health services and legal assistance.

Notes to editors

- The UK's pledge to provide £200 million in UK aid for the 2019/20 financial year is from the DFID budget and comes ahead of the 2019 High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen.

- On 22 January 2019, the Foreign Secretary announced £2.5 million in additional UK funding to the peace process in Yemen, following the agreements made between the parties at the UN-led peace talks in Stockholm in December.
- Yemen remains the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, with 24 million people requiring humanitarian assistance and nearly 10 million people now at risk of starvation.

ENDS

[News story: Health and Social Care Secretary bans pagers from the NHS](#)

NHS trusts will be required to phase out pagers by the end of 2021. All hospitals will be expected to have plans and infrastructure in place to ensure this is possible by the end of September 2020.

Staff will instead use modern alternatives, such as mobile phones and apps. These can deliver more accurate 2-way communications at a reduced cost.

A pilot project at West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (WSFT) in 2017 saved junior doctors 48 minutes per shift and nurses 21 minutes on average.

The NHS uses around 130,000 pagers at an annual cost of £6.6 million. More than one in 10 of the world's pagers are used by the NHS.

Most mobile phone companies have phased out support for pagers, leaving only one provider in the UK. This means a single device can cost up to £400.

Removing pagers brings a number of benefits to NHS staff:

- Pagers only offer a one-way form of communication. The recipient is unaware who is contacting them, the reasons why, or the level of urgency. This can interrupt work, waste time, make the prioritisation of tasks difficult and the evidence trail of communications is limited.
- Pagers do not support the sharing of information between staff on the move. Mobile phones and apps are able to do all of this more quickly and at a reduced cost.

NHS trusts will be allowed to keep some pagers for emergency situations, such as when wifi fails or when other forms of communication are unavailable.

The WSFT pilot project used Medic Bleep, a messaging and calling system

similar to Whatsapp, with enhanced data protection.

The move to replace pagers with modern technology is the next step in achieving a fully digitised NHS – a crucial part of the [tech vision](#) and the [NHS Long Term Plan](#).

Digital services and IT systems used by the NHS will soon have to meet a clear set of open standards to ensure they can talk to each other across organisational boundaries and can be continuously upgraded.

Any system which does not meet these standards will be phased out and the government will look to end contracts with providers which do not understand these principles for the health and care sector.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Every day, our wonderful NHS staff work incredibly hard in what can be challenging and high-pressured environments. The last thing they need are the frustrations of having to deal with outdated technology – they deserve the very best equipment to help them do their jobs.

We have to get the basics right, like having computers that work and getting rid of archaic technology like pagers and fax machines. Email and mobile phones are a more secure, quicker and cheaper way to communicate which allow doctors and nurses to spend more time caring for patients rather than having to work round outdated kit.

We want to build a health and care service which is fully able to harness the huge potential of technology. This will save lives, support hard-working staff and deliver the cutting-edge care set out by our Long Term Plan for the NHS.

WSFT medical director, Nick Jenkins, said:

As a global digital exemplar trust, we're always keen to explore new digital opportunities that could improve experience for staff and patients.

There is scope for Medic Bleep to be used for everything from arranging shift cover to sharing patient observations. For us, it's about a digital tool helping our communications to become more efficient. Contact with other clinicians can be made much more easily than with a physical bleep, and responses are much quicker. All that time we save can be spent caring for patients, so we benefit, but more importantly, our patients benefit too.

[News story: RAF Typhoons use Brimstone capability for the first time](#)

Strikes have decreased in regularity this month, with the terrorists confined to a tiny enclave of territory where there is a significant number of civilians, who are being transported to safety by Syrian Democratic Forces.

However, a Typhoon was deployed to the River Euphrates on 19 February, where a boat used by Daesh had been identified and was destroyed using the Brimstone missile. The RAF also destroyed two Daesh strong-points, including a heavy machine-gun position, on 11 February using Paveway IV.

The Brimstone was one of three weapons upgrades fitted onto the Typhoon last month under 'Project Centurion', worth £425m over the past three years. This project not only enhanced the Typhoon with the precision attack missile Brimstone, but the aircraft also now has deep strike cruise missile Storm Shadow and air-to-air missile Meteor at its disposal. It means the jets have boosted capabilities to intercept airborne missiles and strike ground based targets, seamlessly taking over from the Tornado's attack role as it nears retirement.

Summary

- Monday 11 February – Typhoons supported the Syrian Democratic Forces east of Abu Kamal in Syria, striking two Daesh strong-points, including a heavy machine-gun position.
- Tuesday 19 February – Typhoons used a Brimstone 2 missile to destroy a boat used by Daesh on the Euphrates.

Detail

As the Syrian Democratic Forces have continued their operations to clear the last small remaining pocket of Daesh-held territory that has been identified in eastern Syria, Royal Air Force aircraft have maintained daily armed reconnaissance support, delivering air attacks if needed by the SDF on the ground. On Monday 11 February, the SDF encountered two Daesh strong-points on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, across the river from Abu Kamal. These strong-points were directing fire, including from a heavy machine-gun, at close range against the SDF, so assistance was requested from two RAF Typhoon FGR4s, supported by a Voyager air refuelling tanker. The Typhoons conducted an accurate simultaneous attack on both strong-points, hitting each with a Paveway IV guided bomb, and successfully eliminated the threat to the SDF.

A further pair of Typhoons patrolled the Euphrates valley on Tuesday 19 February; a boat had been identified as being used by Daesh, and was found by the Typhoons to be moored on the river bank due south of Baghuz Fawqani. A

Brimstone 2 missile was employed to deny the terrorists use of the craft, whether to bring in supplies or allow them to set up operations elsewhere. This was the first operational firing of a Brimstone 2 from a Typhoon FGR4, following the aircraft's recent upgrade.

[News story: Fashion industry unites to tackle slavery and trafficking in supply chains](#)

Ahead of Paris Fashion Week, the minister spoke at the Paris Supply Chains Conference today (Friday 22 February), where representatives from governments, the fashion industry, textiles and civil society came together to discuss measures businesses should take to eradicate modern slavery and trafficking in their supply chains.

The minister highlighted how UK's world leading Modern Slavery Act has helped transform business culture. She praised brands for changing their purchasing practices to protect vulnerable workers and innovative start-ups which are increasing transparency in the sector.

While recognising the progress that many responsible businesses are making the minister called on the industry to step up their action and increase their vigilance to understand the risks and intervene where necessary.

Both the UK and France have introduced transparency legislation to tackle forced labour in global supply chains and the conference provided a valuable opportunity to share best practice in tackling this insidious crime. The minister welcomed the French government's determination to stamp out modern slavery and called for continued collaboration to speed up eliminating this abhorrent crime.

In her speech Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Minister Victoria Atkins said:

I am proud to say that the UK is a world-leader in tackling slavery. In 2015, we introduced the landmark Modern Slavery Act to tackle slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking.

As we meet in Paris, I am also proud to say that the French government stands alongside us in their determination to eliminate human trafficking and labour exploitation.

Since legislation was introduced on both sides of the channel we

have seen progress made, however the scale of the challenge means that it can only be tackled by government, business and civil society working together.

In addition to the ground breaking Modern Slavery Act, the government has also:

- launched the “Principles to Combat Human Trafficking in Global Supply Chains” with the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand at the UN General Assembly in September 2018
- written to 17,000 businesses in the UK about their obligations to publish what they are doing to tackle modern slavery in their supply chains, with the Home Office planning to name non-compliant companies after the end of the financial year
- pledged to publish its own transparency statement in 2019
- launched the “Business Against Slavery Forum” to bring together CEOs of some of the world’s largest organisations to share best practice to tackle modern slavery

The minister also welcomed the appointment of Sara Thornton, who was today announced as the new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.