

Final barriers removed for Armed Forces personnel with HIV

From today, serving personnel who are taking suppressive treatment for HIV, and whose blood tests show no detectable virus, will now be recognised as fully fit for all service. The policy change also applies to anyone wishing to join the military, meaning living with HIV is no longer a barrier for those wishing to serve.

Today's announcement follows the significant policy changes made on World Aids Day last year to allow those taking Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) medication to prevent HIV infection could join the [Armed Forces with immediate effect](#).

The changes demonstrate Defence's recognition of advances in the management, treatment and prevention of HIV and its commitment to ensuring the Armed Forces become a more modern and inclusive employer.

Chief of Defence People, Lieutenant General James Swift said:

Our people are our greatest asset and as part of the drive to modernise our Armed Forces we are making these long overdue policy changes so people with HIV, but no detectable virus, are now able to join the military and those serving will be declared fully fit.

This welcome change in policy is a recognition of the superb medical advancements that have been made and the decisive work by those that helped to bring about these changes. We will continue to ensure that all our people have the best experience possible, where their health and wellbeing is prioritised, and they can serve with pride and feel valued and supported in a modern Armed Forces.

Ian Green, Chief Executive at Terrence Higgins Trust, said:

Forty years since the start of the HIV epidemic, this historic rule change shows the truly remarkable progress that's been made. We've made huge strides in the fight against HIV and you can now live a long, healthy life with the virus. That means no career should be off limits – including serving in our armed forces.

It's crucial it is now properly implemented to see the real-life impact of this momentous change for both existing serving personnel and those wishing to join. We also need to see an end to the final barrier in place which stops military aircrew and air traffic controllers taking HIV prevention pill PrEP to protect themselves against the virus. This must be reviewed and implemented as soon as

possible.

Lieutenant Commander Oli Brown said:

From today I can be considered fully fit by the Royal Navy for the first time since I told them about my HIV diagnosis. Being labelled as limited deployable made me question myself and doubt my capability – it took a toll on my mental health. The biggest thing about this change is knowing that no-one else will feel how I did.

The message is loud and clear – people living with HIV are not limited in any way. I take one tablet a day which makes my HIV undetectable and that I can't pass it on. There is no reason why I, or anyone else, should be restricted in the Armed Forces and today's change reflects that reality.

The changes announced today will be welcome news to those currently unable to deploy on operations. The new policy will ensure that people living with HIV will be provided personal medical supplies to last throughout their deployment. If this should get lost or damaged, it can be replaced using the same process that already exists for other personnel needing regular medication.

The policy changes aim to remove unnecessary restrictions and processes and ensures that HIV is managed in the same way as any other comparable medical condition. These changes will remove the stigma around HIV and encourage everybody to get tested and treated, ensuring a better outcome for everyone.

Alongside this Defence continues to provide a comprehensive and high-class clinical service for those serving personnel who are living with HIV.

This delivers on commitments made at the end of last year to ensure our Armed Forces remain at the forefront of medical advancements and continue to be a world leader in the treatment of our serving personnel.

PM Boris Johnson: The Commonwealth gives Britain a boost

There was something magical about watching the Platinum Pageant outside Buckingham Palace – the sheer joy and enthusiasm of the crowds, the dash and exuberance of the parade and then the deafening cheer as the Queen appeared on the balcony.

Below her stood her Guardsmen, scarlet islands in a human sea of acclaim, and

nearby were the khaki tunics and varied headgear of soldiers from Commonwealth nations across the world.

I have no doubt that Her Majesty would have been looking out for the Commonwealth contingents because she never forgets something that her British subjects are occasionally inclined to overlook. She is more than our beloved Queen: she is also Head of the Commonwealth.

And there is a fact of geopolitics that I never forget: this unique association of sovereign states is becoming ever more significant and valuable.

This week I will go to Rwanda for a Commonwealth summit and around the table will be 54 countries encompassing about a third of humanity.

You could point out that Commonwealth members are vastly different in just about every way and of course you would be right. The Pacific archipelago of Tuvalu (population 11,000) will be at the same table as India (population 1.3 billion).

Yet for all the differences between us, we are joined by an invisible thread of shared values, history and institutions and of course the English language. We will meet on equal terms as old friends who know one another well.

If you retort that this all sounds vague and whimsical and no job was ever created and no parsnip buttered by invisible threads or shared values I would have to point out that you are mistaken – demonstrably and provably mistaken.

It is an amazing fact that those invisible threads – particularly a common language and familiar legal and administrative systems – are of immense practical value for trade. Today the “Commonwealth advantage” knocks 21 per cent off the cost of trade between members.

The same applies to investment, which is 27 per cent higher between Commonwealth nations than for other country pairs.

All of this creates a unique opportunity for Britain whereby the Commonwealth – and only the Commonwealth – combines vast and rapidly growing markets with a real and quantified trading advantage.

That is why we are mobilising the UK’s regained sovereignty to sign free trade or economic partnership agreements with as many Commonwealth countries as possible.

So far we’ve done 33, including Australia and New Zealand, and we’re aiming for India, the biggest of them all, by Diwali in October.

You only have to look at the sheer scale of economic expansion in many of the club’s biggest members to see why the Commonwealth trade advantage is going to become ever more important for British jobs and livelihoods.

The Commonwealth’s GDP – \$13.1 trillion – has risen by a quarter since 2017.

Over the next five years, it's forecast to jump by close to another 50 per cent to \$19.5 trillion.

Here are the growing markets for British exports that will create jobs at home and, at the same time, ease the pressure on the cost of living.

Is it just about trade, you might ask? Do those invisible threads amount to anything more than an opportunity for commerce?

I would reply that of course they do. Next month, we will host the Commonwealth games in Birmingham; once again, athletes and visitors from across the world will converge on the UK.

And the Commonwealth comprises over a quarter of the total membership of the United Nations: together we have the weight to exert global influence. In the past, the Commonwealth's quietly effective diplomacy helped to hasten the end of apartheid in South Africa.

If that sounds a bit far away, it was only in 2020 that Britain delivered the first Joint Statement by all 54 Commonwealth members at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, recalling our "proud history of acting to strengthen good governance and the rule of law".

I will go to the Commonwealth summit ever more convinced that our unique association, already proving its worth every day, will become yet more valuable in the decades ahead. Like the Queen, we should all cherish the Commonwealth.

First Visit of UK Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to New Zealand

World news story

David Mundell MP arrives in New Zealand on his first visit since being appointed by UK PM Boris Johnson as Trade Envoy.



UK Trade Envoy to New Zealand David Mundell shaking hands with Auckland Mayor Phil Goff and Deputy Mayor Bill Cashmore.

Agritech, infrastructure and financial and professional services will be the focus of the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy during this first visit to New Zealand. He will outline the importance of UK-NZ trade and investment in his engagements which will see him meet with stakeholders across government and business.

Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to New Zealand David Mundell said:

I am delighted to finally visit in New Zealand to start meeting businesses and stakeholders across a range of sectors to unlock the benefits of the Free Trade Agreement. There is so much opportunity to boost trade and investment between our countries. More trade means more jobs – here and in the UK – and I am looking forward to a busy first visit.

Trade Envoys are unpaid and voluntary roles, designed to boost British business in key markets. The UK-New Zealand Trade Agreement was signed on 28 February 2022 with negotiations launched in June 2020. The agreement needs to be ratified in both Parliaments before it can come into effect.

Laura Clarke OBE, British High Commissioner to New Zealand said:

Having successfully negotiated an historic Free Trade Agreement I am keen to make sure we make the most of this fantastic opportunity. We must build on the strong historic links between New Zealand and the UK and to also grasp new opportunities.

Louise Cantillon, British Consul General and Deputy Trade Commissioner Asia Pacific (Australia & New Zealand) said:

This visit will help unlock huge opportunities for British businesses and investors in New Zealand. The New Zealand trade team are already working to support British businesses and investors to make the most of current – and future – opportunities. This visit will unlock even more opportunities for business and investors looking to expand.

Media Contact:

Bailee Dean

Public Relations and Communications Manager of Australia and New Zealand for the UK Government

British Consulate General Sydney

e: bailee.dean@fcdo.gov.uk

m: +61 (0)4 22 852 462

About the UK's Department for International Trade:

The UK's Department for International Trade (DIT):

- helps businesses export
- drives inward and outward investment
- negotiates market access and trade deals
- champions free trade

Find out more about [DIT](#).

Published 21 June 2022

[Sir Ian Botham returns to Australia as UK Trade Envoy](#)

World news story

Today Sir Ian Botham begins a nation-wide programme across Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth as the UK PM's Trade Envoy to Australia.



Sir Ian Botham with the UK Government team in Brisbane on the first day of his programme 21 June 2022.

Botham will be meeting with a variety of key stakeholders across business and government and will be attending a wide range of events. His programme strongly focuses on tech, innovation and sport which also encompasses the Commonwealth Games. Throughout the duration of his visit he will be promoting the benefits of bilateral trade and investment between the UK and Australia, current and future opportunities.

UK Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Australia, Ian Botham said:

I am excited to be back on the ground in Australia and I am ready to dive into all things related to UK-Australia trade and investment. This is my second visit already this year and we are making great progress engaging with both business and government across all the sectors our UK teamwork within Australia. I have a very action-packed week ahead so we can continue making progress.

Trade Envoys are unpaid and voluntary roles created by UK PM Boris Johnson to boost British business in key markets. The UK's relationship with Australia is a top priority. This is evident from the signing of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement in December 2021.

Vicki Treadell, British High Commissioner to Australia said:

The UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement was the first the UK negotiated 'from scratch' since leaving the EU. We are like minded countries. We share the same values, the same language and the same rule of law. Our bilateral trade and investment relationship has continued from strength to strength. This visit will only continue that momentum.

Louise Cantillon, British Consul General and Deputy Trade Commissioner Asia Pacific (Australia & New Zealand) said:

With an already very successful trade and investment relationship there are growing opportunities for future business and partnerships between the UK and Australia. The UK offers Australian investors a robust and business friendly environment to reliably expand, trade and invest.

The UK is also leading the race to a net zero carbon economy which is seeing an even greater focus on developing sectors like green finance, clean tech, hydrogen, and sustainable infrastructure. With Sir Ian Botham's visit we hope to engage with the local business community to explore these opportunities and celebrate our successes.

Media Contact:

Bailee Dean

Public Relations and Communications Manager of Australia and New Zealand for the UK Government

British Consulate General Sydney

e: bailee.dean@fcdo.gov.uk

m: +61 (0)4 22 852 462

About the UK's Department for International Trade:

The UK's Department for International Trade (DIT):

- helps businesses export
- drives inward and outward investment
- negotiates market access and trade deals
- champions free trade

Find out more about [DIT](#).

Published 21 June 2022

Responding to the call from humanitarians at Syria's border

Thank you President. I join others in thanking the Secretary-General, USG Griffiths and Mr Agha for their briefings.

As we've heard, the Security Council will soon consider the UN's mandate to deliver cross-border aid into Syria.

The UK is in no doubt that this Council should take decisions that alleviate humanitarian suffering and contribute to peace and security.

We base our decisions on evidence and the advice of humanitarian actors on the ground working to save lives.

This month, a UK Ministerial delegation visited the Turkish-Syrian border and witnessed the enormous effort that goes into ensuring regular and transparent cross-border humanitarian operations.

As we heard today, the situation in Syria, driven by 11 years of conflict, continues to worsen, with 80% of the population in need of humanitarian assistance.

The call from humanitarians at the border, as well as UN leaders and over 32 NGO leaders this past week, is clear: an end to the mandate would be catastrophic.

It would mean:

- nearly 2.5 million people losing food, water and basic services;
- reduced access to services for women and girls, who represent 80% of the North-West population;
- the loss of oversight provided by the UN's 'gold standard' Monitoring Mechanism, which has scrutinised over 56,000 trucks since 2014 and prevented aid from getting into the hands of terrorists;
- and, it would be a devastating hindrance to efforts to tackle COVID-19 in the North-West, where only 5.7% of the population is fully vaccinated.

The closure of previous crossings should serve as a clear warning: needs in the North-East have escalated since the closure of Yaroubiyah.

Across Syria, there have been over 2.9 million indirect beneficiaries of early recovery projects this year, of the sort that Under Secretary-General Griffiths set out and those are backed by \$195 million of international funding.

The UK will continue to play its part: we have pledged nearly \$200 million in

humanitarian support in 2022. This will support ongoing early recovery across all areas of Syria, supporting urban and rural livelihoods, rehabilitation of water networks and quality education for children. But without mandate renewal, early recovery projects in northwest Syria would be compromised.

So I urge Council members to review the evidence and listen to the experts: humanitarian need and regional stability necessitates that resolution 2585 be renewed and expanded.

The UN and humanitarian partners require a minimum 12-month extension in order to continue to expand early recovery programming.

There is no justification for bringing this vital lifeline to an end. As Mr Agha said, there are more than 4 million reasons to renew the cross-border mandate and those are the people who depend on it. We must stand by the people of Syria.