

# Change of British High Commissioner to New Zealand: Iona Thomas

Press release

Ms Iona Thomas OBE has been appointed British High Commissioner to New Zealand and Governor of the Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands.



Ms Iona Thomas OBE has been appointed British High Commissioner to New Zealand and Governor of the Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands in succession to Ms Laura Clarke OBE. Ms Thomas will take up her appointment during August 2022.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

2019 to present	Islamabad, Political Counsellor
2017 to 2018	FCO, Additional Deputy Director Middle East and North Africa Directorate
2015 to 2017	Tunis, Deputy Head of Mission Tripoli and Libya Office
2012 – 2015	New York, Spokesperson and Head of Press and Public Affairs UK Permanent Representation to the United Nations
2012	FCO, Private Secretary to Baroness Warsi, Minister of State
2010 to 2012	FCO, Afghan Department, Team Leader – Political Internal
2006 to 2010	Department for Communities and Local Government, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State and Team Leader, Prevent

Published 16 February 2022

---

# Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid opens new A&E

- Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid thanks NHS staff across the North West and West Midlands for their unwavering work during the pandemic.
- He opened a new £15 million A&E department at Leighton Hospital, Crewe
- Visits are part of a week-long national tour reinforcing government commitment to reform, integrate and fund the NHS and social care and level up health across the country.

NHS staff across the North West and West Midlands were today (Wednesday 16 February) thanked for their tireless efforts to provide care over the course of the pandemic by the Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid.

Marking day three of his 'Road to Recovery' tour across England, he visited three sites across the region:

- Deeplish Community Centre, Rochdale
- Leighton Hospital, Crewe
- Birmingham Heartlands hospital

Staff shared their experiences of working under immense pressure during the pandemic and discussed the government's plans to reform, integrate and fund the NHS and social care, in a drive to build back better.

The Health and Social Care Secretary saw first-hand how key sites in the North West and West Midlands are improving patient care and set out how a more joined up health and care system will mean better care for everyone and help tackle disparities.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid said:

It's been fantastic to visit the health services in the North West and West Midlands to thank staff for their efforts throughout the pandemic and outline our commitment to reform, recovery and funding for our NHS and social care.

We are committed to tackling the COVID-19 backlog and building a health and social care system for the long term that works for everyone.

Our recent Elective Recovery Plan is a vital step in rethinking how our health and care services deliver operations, treatment and checks as we level-up services up and down the country.

As part of his commitment to levelling up healthcare across the country, the Health and Social Care Secretary joined staff at Deeplish Community Centre in Rochdale for their quarterly equalities team coffee morning, to learn about the issues facing ethnic minority communities in the area. These included language skills, funding for pharmacies, nurse pay and hours and access to face-to-face GP appointments.

He discussed the importance of the centre's upcoming "cancer awareness campaign" to build awareness of screening services to support early diagnosis within the community and urged the team to respond to the ongoing call for evidence to help shape the government's 10-Year Cancer Plan for England.

The Health and Social Care Secretary then travelled to Leighton Hospital in Crewe where he met staff and officially opened their new £15 million A&E department.

The Trust secured funding as part of the government's ongoing commitment to investing in modern facilities, and the A&E began taking patients yesterday (Tuesday 15 February).

These new facilities will help staff continue to provide world class care and enable the hospital to better meet the needs of the people of Cheshire. With a dedicated paediatric unit, more resuscitation bays and more mental health assessment rooms, patients will be seen quicker, in a larger and safer environment.

Moving to the Birmingham Heartlands hospital, the Health and Social Care Secretary met with participants in the cutting-edge PANORAMIC antivirals trial. As part of the trial, patients with pre-existing conditions can benefit from new antiviral treatments for COVID-19 to reduce the need for hospital admission and help them recover quickly.

He also visited the site of the new Heartlands Treatment Centre due to open later this year. Backed by £97.1 million of government funding, the centre will provide a modern, spacious environment for patients to receive non-emergency procedures and treatments including diagnostics, day surgery and outpatient appointments that will help tackle the COVID-19 backlog by treating 5000,000 patients.

Staff across all sites emphasized the need to look beyond the pandemic and reform health and social care to ensure services can continue to meet the needs of the population. The Health and Social Care Secretary discussed initiatives including the delivery plan to tackle the COVID-19 backlog of elective care, Integration White Paper and his personal mission to eradicate health disparities, which will include the publication of a Health Disparities White Paper later this year.

James Sumner, Chief Executive of the Mid Cheshire Trust, said:

"We were delighted to welcome the Secretary of State to Leighton today, at a time when we are investing in enhanced hospital services for our local community. The purpose-built A&E ensures a bigger, better and safer

environment for both patients and staff. A&E attendance has increased across the country in recent years, so this provides an excellent opportunity to meet the needs of our growing population of 300,000.”

Dr David Matthews, Clinical Director of Emergency Care at Mid Cheshire Trust, added:

The NHS has been tested to the maximum by a combination of higher patient attendances, the Coronavirus pandemic and the annual winter pressures.

This facility is really exciting for the Trust – it has been carefully designed to allow for the clear separation of children and adults in a modern, welcoming environment that will greatly improve the patient experience.

University Hospitals Birmingham Chief Executive, Prof David Rosser said:

We’re proud to have the opportunity to highlight the progress made on the Heartlands Treatment Centre to the Health Secretary today. We are grateful that he also took the time to listen to the experiences of my tremendous colleagues who have been on the front line of the pandemic.

Heartlands Treatment Centre will provide a modern environment for our clinicians to give exceptional standards of care, state-of-the-art diagnostics, and more non-emergency day-case surgery for up to half a million people in our communities – vitally supporting our ability to get back on track and improve waiting lists for patients in the wake of COVID-19.

This new facility is on time and on budget, and it will also bring huge potential for staff development and excellent career opportunities for local people.

---

**[PM call with UN Secretary-General](#)**

# Antonio Guterres: 16 February 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres this evening, to discuss the crisis on Ukraine's border.

The Prime Minister said there is currently little evidence of Russia disengaging, and they agreed any invasion of Ukraine would have catastrophic and far-reaching consequences.

The leaders reiterated states' responsibility to abide by their obligations under the United Nations Charter and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of UN members.

The Prime Minister and Secretary-General also reaffirmed the importance of all parties working in good faith to implement the Minsk Agreements. The UK will be represented by Europe Minister James Cleverly at a UN Security Council meeting tomorrow [Thursday] to discuss implementation of the Agreements.

They agreed to continue working closely together to pursue an urgent diplomatic resolution and avert a disastrous military escalation and humanitarian crisis.

Published 16 February 2022

---

## Guatemala: UK statement on rule of law



The United Kingdom expresses its concern over the 10 February decision of the Guatemala Attorney General to arrest and detain former International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) personnel. We are also concerned at the stripping of judicial immunity from judges involved in prosecuting corruption cases. These actions will further undermine domestic and international confidence in the rule of law in Guatemala.

The United Kingdom calls on the authorities to ensure the safety of those detained and to safeguard their right to due process. We will continue to work closely with international partners to monitor the situation, and continue to call on the Government of Guatemala to support the rule of law and judicial independence.

The United Kingdom considers a strong and independent judiciary to be essential for Guatemala to enjoy the benefits of a healthy democracy, to foster prosperity, to protect human rights and guarantee due process for all its citizens.

Published 16 February 2022

Last updated 16 February 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 16 February 2022

Added translation

2. 16 February 2022

Added translation

---

## JCVI updates advice on vaccinations

## for 5 to 11 age group



Although this age group is generally at very low risk of serious illness from the virus, a very small number of children who get infected do develop severe disease.

Latest evidence suggests that offering the vaccine ahead of another potential wave will protect this very small number of children from serious illness and hospitalisation – and will also provide some short-term protection against mild infection across the age group.

The committee has therefore advised a non-urgent offer to all 5 to 11 year olds of 2 (10mcg) doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech paediatric vaccine. The 2 doses should be given with an interval of at least 12 weeks between doses.

The recommendation should not displace the delivery of other non-COVID-19 childhood vaccinations, or any other part of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Uptake of some non-COVID-19 childhood vaccination programmes, such as MMR and HPV vaccinations, have been affected by the pandemic. The committee has advised that the addition of a COVID-19 vaccine rollout to this age group should not impact the recovery of these programmes.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, Chair of COVID-19 immunisation on the JCVI, said:

The committee has carefully considered the potential direct health impacts of vaccination and potential indirect educational impacts.

The main purpose of offering vaccination to 5 to 11 year olds is to increase their protection against severe illness in advance of a potential future wave of COVID-19.

Other important childhood vaccinations, such as MMR and HPV, have fallen behind due to the pandemic. It is vital these programmes continue and are not displaced by the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine to this age group.

## Background

In December, the JCVI recommended the vaccine be offered to at-risk 5 to 11 year olds – the rollout of which officially began at the beginning of February.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England will advise on their plans for operationalising the latest JCVI recommendations in due course.

Parents are urged not to contact the NHS until further details have been set out.

Published 16 February 2022

Last updated 16 February 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 16 February 2022

First published.