

Health and Social Care Secretary oral statement 13 January 2022

Mr Deputy Speaker, can I start by paying tribute to Professor Sir Jonathan Van-Tam who, after four years as Deputy Chief Medical Officer, will be returning to his role at the University of Nottingham at the end of March.

There aren't many clinical advisers who can be recognised solely by three letters but JVT's unique and straightforward approach to communication has seen him rapidly become a national hero.

To use words that I think he might particularly like, we're grateful to have had him on loan for so many years. He's been a top signing and he's blown the whistle on time So I'm sure the whole house would want to join me in wishing Professor Sir Jonathan Van Tam the very best.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with permission, I'd like to make a statement on the Covid-19 pandemic.

We've started this year as the freest country in Europe – thanks to the decisions we made to open up over the Summer and the defences that we've built.

But we must not lose sight of the fact that this virus is still with us, and there are still likely to be difficult weeks ahead.

According to the ONS data which was published just yesterday there are encouraging signs that infections are falling in London and the East of England.

But we're still seeing infections rise in other parts of the country and the data does not yet reflect the impact of people returning to work and school.

So we must proceed with caution.

Omicron's far greater transmissibility still has the potential to lead to significant numbers of people in hospital.

Infections are falling in London the east of England. But we're still currently seeing infections rise in other parts of the country and the data does not as of yet reflect the impact of people returning to work and school.

So we must proceed with caution. Omicron's far greater transmissibility still has the potential to lead to significant numbers of people in hospital. There's already almost 17,000 Covid-19 patients in hospital in England, and due to the lag between infections and hospitalisations, the NHS will remain under significant pressure over the next few weeks.

It is encouraging, however, that during this wave we have not seen any increase in Covid-19 intensive care patients and there are already early

signs that the rate of hospitalisation is starting to slow.

We know that Omicron is less severe but no-one should be under any illusions it is severe for anyone that ends up in hospital and that's far more likely if you haven't had the jab.

In many major cities in the USA where the levels of booster vaccination are comparatively lower than the UK pressures in intensive care are approaching the levels of last winter and in Chicago they've already exceeded the peak from last January.

So we must remain vigilant and keep fortifying the pharmaceutical defences that we've built some of the strongest in the world.

Today I'd like to update the House on how we're making these pharmaceutical defences even stronger and how we're giving the NHS and this country what it needs to withstand this Omicron wave.

Our primary defence is, of course, the vaccination programme.

79 per cent of eligible adults have now had a booster including over 91 per cent of over 50s who we know are more vulnerable to the virus.

Per capita, we're the most boosted large country in the world.

Data from UKHSA which was published on Friday shows that around three months after those aged 65 and over received their booster their protection against hospitalisation remains at around 90 per cent.

These vaccines don't just protect ourselves and our loved ones but they protect the country's progress too.

The reason that we've been able to start the year with much greater freedom than last year with children back at school, shops opening their doors, this Chamber bustling with activity is because so many people have made the positive choice to get vaccinated. There are, of course, a small minority of people who could get the jab if they wanted to but they have chosen not to.

And let's be clear.

The reasons that those people have also been able to enjoy the freedoms they have today is because they are standing on the shoulders of those who have come forward – the 9 out of 10 people across the UK who've stepped forward to get the jab.

If we're to maintain this collective protection we've built up we need everyone to choose responsibly and take the simple step that will help secure greater freedom for us all.

People working in health and care look after some of the most vulnerable in our society, and so they do carry a unique responsibility.

Last month, this House approved our plans that anyone working in health or

wider social care activities that are regulated by the CQC will need to be vaccinated against Covid-19 if their roles involve direct contact with patients unless of course they're medically exempt.

This includes NHS hospitals, independent hospitals and GP and dental practices, regardless of whether a provider is public or private.

Uptake over the past few months has been promising.

Since the Government consulted on the policy in September, the proportion of NHS Trust healthcare workers vaccinated with at least a first dose has increased from 92% to 94%, and we remain committed to putting these measures into force on the 1st of April.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our next line of defence is testing – and we're doing more tests than any other country in Europe.

We raised the distribution of free lateral flow tests from 120 million in November to 300 million in December, to meet the demands of the Omicron wave and we're expecting to make around 400 million tests available over the course of this month – that's four times the pre-Omicron plan.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our third line of defence is antivirals and treatments, where we've built the most advanced programme in Europe.

We've now secured almost five million courses of oral antivirals, leading the whole continent in the number we've procured per person and we're already making these cutting-edge antivirals and treatments available directly to patients.

Last month, we contacted 1.3 million of those at the highest risk from Covid-19 – people such as those that might be sadly suffering with cancer or people with Down's Syndrome and we sent them a PCR test kit that they can keep at home.

If they test positive, they'll then be able to access either a monoclonal antibody or an antiviral which can either be sent to patients at home or they can access it through a clinician at one of the 96 COVID Medicine Delivery Units across England.

We're also making oral antiviral treatments available more widely through a national study.

Mr Deputy Speaker, any of our constituents that are aged over 50 or between 18 and 49 with an underlying health condition and if they get Covid-19 symptoms and they test positive they can sign up for this trial – if our constituents are interested – by visiting the website panoramictrial.org.

The more people who sign up, the more widely we can deploy these treatments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with these three defences the most boosted the most tested the most antivirals it's no wonder that we are freest country in Europe.

This country is leading the world in learning to live with Covid.

Just as we've strengthened these defences to keep people out of hospital we're also taking measures to ensure that the health service has what it needs.

As part of this work, we've looked at every available route to secure the maximum capacity possible across the NHS.

We've been working with the latest technology to create virtual wards where patients can be monitored by clinicians remotely in their own homes.

We're bringing on stream extra beds in hotels and hospices where people can be safely discharged once they're ready to leave hospital.

We're putting in place new Nightingale surge hubs within hospital grounds to provide extra resilience should we need it.

And we're making use of the independent sector.

This week we announced a new three month agreement which will allow NHS Trusts to send a wider range of patients for example those in need of cancer care to the independent sector for treatment.

These measures taken together, there are our insurance policy.

Helping us to plan for the worst while we hope for the best.

Like any insurance policy, we hope that we don't need to use it.

But it's the role of any responsible Government to prepare for all reasonable outcomes so that we can keep this country safe and protect the progress we've made.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, I've always said to the House that any curbs on our freedoms must be an absolute last resort and that we shouldn't keep them in place for a day longer than absolutely necessary.

With this in mind, we've been reviewing the isolation period for positive cases to make sure the measures we have in place maximise activity in the economy and education for example, but also minimise the risk of infectious people leaving isolation.

UKHSA data shows that around two thirds of positive cases are no longer infectious by the end of day five and we want to use the testing capacity that we've built up to help these people leave isolation safely.

After reviewing all of the evidence, we've made the decision to reduce the minimum self-isolation period to five full days in England.

From Monday, people can test twice before they go, leaving isolation at the start of day six.

These two tests are critical to these balanced and proportionate plans and

I'd urge everyone to take advantage of the capacity we've built up in tests so we can restore the freedoms to this country, while we are keeping everyone safe.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we've now entered the third year of this country's fight against Covid-19 and thanks to an incredible national endeavour, we're now better protected than ever before.

But this virus is not going away.

There will be more variants, and no-one can be sure what threat they might pose.

But we can be sure that our pharmaceutical defences – vaccines, testing, and antivirals are the best way to protect our health and our freedoms as we learn to live with Covid.

I commend this statement to the House.

[Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the effectiveness of the UKVI Chief Caseworker Unit's referral process \(September-October 2021\)](#)

News story

The inspection makes six recommendations, all of which the Home Office has accepted.



Publishing the report David Neal said:

I welcome the publication of this report which looked at the

operation of UKVI's Chief Caseworker Unit (CCU). Established in 2018 to champion culture change across the Home Office in the wake of the Windrush scandal CCU is considered by the Department to be an example of how the organisation was "going beyond the recommendations" contained in the Windrush Lessons Learned Review.

The inspection found that CCU had a positive reputation amongst internal stakeholders, and the referral process was clear, straightforward, and functioned well. CCU's staff had extensive experience of the Home Office and showed themselves to be dedicated and engaged in their work.

There were, however, four areas which required attention. Firstly, the internal service level agreements for the completion of work on a referred case had been set without consideration of the complexity of many of the referrals received and were therefore often not met. Secondly, the business support function of the Chief Caseworker Unit (CCU) was over-stretched and required additional resources. Thirdly, the management information used to monitor cases and assess performance was poor. Finally, the inspection also highlighted the need to refresh and refocus CCU's engagement strategy to ensure it adequately supported the unit's aims and objectives.

This inspection made six recommendations and I am pleased that the Home Office has accepted all of them, and particularly welcome the fact that work has already begun on their implementation.

David Neal Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Published 13 January 2022

Prime Minister to chair new council with devolved governments

- Landmark agreement on how UK government and devolved governments will continue to work together has been reached
- New ways of working agreed by the UK government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Government
- Reaffirmed principles agreed by all includes mutual respect, maintaining trust and positive working
- Agreement formalises a PM led council, overseeing strengthened working

A landmark agreement setting out how the UK and devolved governments will

work closely together to deliver for people across the whole of the United Kingdom has been published today (13 January 2022).

The [Intergovernmental Relations \(IGR\) Review](#) sets out new structures as to how the UK government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Government will work to deliver for people across the UK – based upon on the existing values of mutual respect, maintaining trust and positive working.

The new system will be a three-tiered structure and will formalise a new council, chaired by the Prime Minister, made up of Heads of the Devolved Governments.

The Prime Minister-led council and Ministerial groups will oversee and strengthen relations between all of the UK's governments. They will discuss issues that affect people across the UK, particularly where they cut across reserved and devolved policy – or are of shared responsibility.

Strong working and close co-operation has been vital in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including coordinating the response to new variants and the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. Other examples of joined-up work include investment through Growth Deals and the Afghanistan resettlement programme.

The new structures will be supported by an independent secretariat made up of civil servants seconded from all four governments and will serve the UK government and devolved governments equally.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

When team UK pulls together in common cause, spirit and endeavour we will always be at our very best.

We've shown time and time again the combined strength we have in facing off the shared challenges before us, while also seizing the opportunities ahead for the benefit of the whole United Kingdom.

Today's announcements build upon that strength as we all continue to work together to deliver for the British people.

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations Michael Gove said:

Devolution has empowered communities and resulted in huge benefits across the United Kingdom.

Today's landmark agreement will build on the incredible amount of collaboration already taking place between the UK government and the devolved administrations.

By working together even more effectively, we can better overcome the challenges we face, create greater opportunities and improve

people's lives for the better.

The new structures are based on a three tier levels for ministerial engagement – alongside a new mechanism for avoiding, escalating and resolving disputes; supported by joint or independent secretariats and based upon consensus.

Below the Prime Minister chaired council, the second tier will consist of two Interministerial Standing Committees, one chaired by the Minister for Intergovernmental Relations and one on finance. There will also be the option of time limited committees agreed by consensus to deal with specific issues as required.

The third tier will be made up of Interministerial Groups (IMG) led by individual departments, which will cover a wide range of policy issues within a given minister's or department's portfolio.

These will include regular meetings between devolved and UK government ministers on issues such as Health, Transport and Education.

The new structures and processes announced today are underpinned by a reaffirmed set of principles for collaborative working.

These are:

- Maintaining positive and constructive relations, based on mutual respect for the responsibilities of the governments and their shared role in governance of the UK
- Building and maintaining trust, based on effective communication
- Sharing information and respecting confidentiality
- Promoting understanding of, and accountability for, their intergovernmental activity
- Resolving disputes according to a clear and agreed process

The new structures create a more equal, transparent and accountable system to support collaboration and information sharing between the UK government and the devolved governments and continue to deliver for citizens across the UK.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

People in Wales want to see politicians working together to defeat the pandemic and focus on our recovery and throughout the past two years the UK government has worked with the Welsh Government more closely and productively than ever.

This agreement will strengthen these relationships still further as we work together to deliver the priorities of the people of Wales like jobs, prosperity and economic recovery

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Scotland has two governments, and people want to see them continue to work together to tackle covid and drive our recovery.

Throughout the pandemic, the Scottish and UK governments have worked closely together, to keep people safe, protect public services, and support businesses and jobs in Scotland.

This important agreement will build on that and help strengthen cooperation further – as we work together to deliver the priorities of people in Scotland on jobs, prosperity and economic recovery.

It also reflects the increased powers of the Scottish Parliament since 2016 and the UK's vote to leave the EU.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:

Today's agreement will enhance the positive working relationship between the UK government and the Northern Ireland Executive, to the benefit of everyone in Northern Ireland.

By ensuring that we work together in the best way possible, we will build on the fantastic collaboration which has stood us in good stead as we continue to deliver together for local people.

Please see the [written ministerial statement](#)

Foreign flagged ships detained in the UK during December 2021

During December, there were five new detentions of a foreign flagged vessel in a UK port.

1. In response to one of the recommendations of Lord Donaldson's inquiry into the prevention of pollution from merchant shipping, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) publishes details of the foreign flagged vessels detained in UK ports each month.
2. The UK is part of a regional agreement on port state control known as the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MOU) and information on all ships that are inspected is held centrally in an electronic database known as THETIS. This allows the ships with a high risk rating and poor detention records to be targeted for future

inspection.

3. Inspections of foreign flagged ships in UK ports are undertaken by surveyors from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. When a ship is found to be not in compliance with applicable convention requirements, a deficiency may be raised. If any of their deficiencies are so serious, they have to be rectified before departure, then the ship will be detained.
4. All deficiencies should be rectified or in agreed class/ flag condition before departure.

Notes on the list of detentions:

- Full details of the ship: The accompanying detention list shows ship's International Maritime Organisation (IMO) number which does not change throughout the ship's life and uniquely identifies it. It also shows the ship's name and flag state at the time of its inspection.
- Company: The company shown in the vessel's Safety Management Certificate (SMC) or if there is no SMC, then the party otherwise believed to be responsible for the operation of the ship at the time of inspection.
- Classification society: The list shows the classification society responsible for classification of the ship only.
- Recognised organisation: Responsible for conducting the statutory surveys and issuing statutory certificates on behalf of the flag state.
- White (WL), grey (GL) and black lists (BL) are issued by the Paris MoU on 01 July each year and shows the performance of flag state.
- Deficiencies: The deficiencies listed are the ones which were detainable. Further details of other deficiencies can be provided on request.

SHIPS DETAINED IN DECEMBER 2021

Vessel Name: SEA MOON

GT: 17431

IMO: 9228227

Flag: Liberia (white list)

Company: Genimar Shipping & Trading SA

Classification society: NKK

Recognised organisation: NKK

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: NKK

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: NKK

Date and place of detention: 5th December 2021 at Avonmouth

Summary: Nine deficiencies with two grounds for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes
07125 – Evaluation of crew performance (fire drills)	Lack of training	Yes

This vessel was released 13th December 2021

Vessel Name: AT 27

GT: 15935

IMO: 9136539

Flag: Belize (black list)

Company: Sung Marine Ltd

Classification society: NKK

Recognised organisation: NKK

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: DBS

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: DBS

Date and place of detention: 11th December 2021 at Sunderland

Summary: Thirteen deficiencies with three grounds for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
03108 – Ventilators, air pipes, casings	Damaged	Yes
07125 – Evaluation of crew performance (fire drills)	Lack of training	Yes
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes

This vessel was released 19th December 2021

Vessel Name: Huanghai Struggler

GT: 22362

IMO: 9695224

Flag: Hong Kong (China)(white list)

Company: Tianjin Xinhai Intl Ship Mgmt

Classification society: DNV

Recognised organisation: DNV, BV

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: BVDNV GL

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: DNV GL

Date and place of detention: 15th December 2021 at Teesport

Summary: Thirteen deficiencies with one ground for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes

This vessel was released 20th December 2021

Vessel Name: TRANSEUROPE

GT: 15545

IMO: 9586588

Flag: Liberia (white list)

Company: Rix Shipmanagement SIA

Classification society: RINA

Recognised organisation: RINA

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: RINA

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: RINA

Date and place of detention: 17th December 2021 at Hull

Summary: Twelve deficiencies with two grounds for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
01101 – Cargo Ship Safety Equipment (including exemption)	Invalid	Yes
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes

This vessel was released 20th December 2021

Vessel Name: HUNTETAL

GT: 2452

IMO: 9199139

Flag: Antigua & Barbuda (white list)

Company: Interscan Schiffahrtsges mbH

Classification society: DNV

Recognised organisation: DNV

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: DNV GL

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: DNV

Date and place of detention: 27th December 2021 at Teesport

Summary: Sixteen deficiencies with one ground for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes

This vessel was still detained 31st December 2021

DETENTIONS CARRIED OVER FROM PREVIOUS MONTHS

Vessel Name: EVER ALLIANCE

GT: 32309

IMO: 9423255

Flag: Panama (white list)

Company: First Steamship SA

Classification society: NKK

Recognised organisation: NKK

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: NKK

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: NKK

Date and place of detention: 24th November 2021 at Teesport

Summary: Twenty-two deficiencies with one ground for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes

This vessel was released 6th December 2021

Vessel Name: NAVIN HAWK

GT: 5087

IMO: 9522738

Flag: Marshall Islands (white list)

Company: Bright Denizcilik ve Gemi Isletmeciligi AS

Classification society: BV

Recognised organisation: BV

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: BV

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: BV

Date and place of detention: 26th November 2021 at Hull

Summary: Thirty-four deficiencies with seven grounds for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
07114 – Remote means of control (opening, pumps, ventilation, etc) Machinery spaces	Not as required	Yes
18408 – Electrical	Not as required	Yes
18420 – Cleanliness of engine room	Not as required	Yes
13101 – Propulsion main engine	Not as required	Yes
13102 – Auxiliary engine	Not as required	Yes
11113 – Launching arrangements for rescue boats	Inoperative	Yes
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes

This vessel was released 15th December 2021

Vessel Name: VILLE DE BORDEAUX

GT: 21528

IMO: 9270482

Flag: France (white list)

Company: Louis Dreyfus Armateurs SAS

Classification society: BV

Recognised organisation: BV

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: Flag Issued

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: Flag Issued

Date and place of detention: 30th November 2021 at Royal Portbury

Summary: Six deficiencies with three grounds for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
14104 – Oil filtering equipment	Inoperative	Yes
07114 – Remote means of control (opening, pumps, ventilation, etc) Machinery spaces	Inoperative	Yes
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes

This vessel was released 3rd December 2021

Vessel Name: POSEIDON

GT: 1412

IMO: 7363217

Flag: Iceland (Not listed)

Company: Neptune EHF

Classification society: NA

Recognised organisation: NA

Recognised organisation for ISM Doc: DNV-GL

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: N/A (SMC issued by Flag)

Date and place of detention: 19th July 2018 at Hull

Summary: Ten deficiencies with two grounds for detention

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
02106 – Hull damage impairing seaworthiness	Holed	Yes
07113 – Fire Pumps	Insufficient Pressure	Yes

This vessel was still detained on 31st December 2021

Vessel Name: TECOIL POLARIS

GT: 1814

IMO No: 8883290

Flag: Russian Federation (White list)

Company: Tecoil Shipping Ltd

Classification society: RMRS

Recognised organisation: RMRS

Recognised organisation for ISM DOC: RMRS

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: RMRS

Date and place of detention: 6th June 2018 at Immingham

Summary: Twenty-seven deficiencies with six grounds for detentions

Defective item	Nature of defect	Ground for Detention
10104 – Gyro compass	Inoperative	Yes
10127 – Voyage or passage plan	Not as required	Yes
15150 – ISM	Not as required	Yes
11104 – Rescue boats	Not properly maintained	Yes
11101 – Lifeboats	Not ready for use	Yes
01117 – International Oil Pollution Prevention (IOPP)	Invalid	Yes

This vessel was still detained on 31st December 2021

Vessel Name: CIEN PORCIENTO

GT: 106.

IMO No: 8944446.

Flag: Sweden (White list)

Company: Open Window Inc.

Classification society: Unclassed.

Recognised organisation: Not applicable.

Recognised organisation for ISM DOC: Not applicable.

Recognised organisation for ISM SMC: Not applicable

Date and place of detention: 4 March 2010, Lowestoft

Summary: Thirty deficiencies including seven grounds for detention

This vessel was still detained on 31st December 2021

Notes to Editors

- The MCA is a partner in the Sea Vision UK campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the sea and maritime activities. Sea Vision promotes the importance and economic value of the sector and works to highlight the exciting range of activities and career opportunities available to young people within the UK growing maritime sector.

- Follow us on Twitter: @MCA_media

For further information please contact Maritime and Coastguard Agency Press Office, on: +44 (0) 2380 329 401 Press releases and further information about the agency is available [here](#).

[Geofencing technology trialled with Defence Digital](#)

In an increasingly digital world, the demand for a more flexible workforce is growing; with more and more people choosing to work remotely. Although the benefits of a mobile workforce are well documented, it also presents many security risks. A key challenge faced by both industry and government employers is to find a way to facilitate a mobile workforce whilst maintaining control over security threats.

[TriCIS](#), in partnership with Booz Allen Hamilton, received support from DASA to provide proof of concept of District Defend® software to [Defence Digital](#) for use within the Ministry of Defence. District Defend® is an advanced endpoint security system which automatically reconfigures security permissions based on the location of the device. It uses contextual triggers such as location and user behaviours to automatically adjust mobile devices, such as laptops and tablets to the appropriate security settings.

The project included a 90 day trial, during which the software was tested and scrutinised by a multidisciplinary team of experts from Defence Digital, Dstl and the British Army in three separate scenarios:

- An open plan workspace which challenged the software to deactivate features such as microphone and webcam, but be able to detect a move into a private, secure office, and reactivate those features in order to conduct a video conference.
- A deployed location where the software was challenged to recognise when it was in a secured tent or in an open environment where it could interact with other technology.
- Inside and outside a secured vehicle, to test District Defend's capability to recognise its surroundings even in a small physical distance.

Paul Varcoe, Innovation Lead at Defence Digital said

There was a positive 'can-do' approach that enabled three scenarios

to be tested during the difficult COVID-19 lockdown period. All parties worked well together and DASA ensured this was a straightforward experience.

District Defend is a mature product which is already in use in the USA. TriCIS did not require funding for product development, but instead needed an introduction to UK Defence users and the opportunity to provide proof of concept. In this circumstance, DASA provided added value by bridging the gap between Science and Technology and Defence Equipment by facilitating a joint-funded project that could have otherwise fallen between the gaps.

Following the initial trials, the team have recognised a need to integrate the District Defend software with MOD hardware and systems for further testing.