

## New data shows drop in HIV diagnoses due to fewer tests and less opportunity for transmission

The [report shows](#) there were 2,630 new diagnoses in 2020 compared to 3,950 in 2019. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic changed patterns of sexual behaviour, affected HIV testing and limited access to sexual health and HIV services, all of which will have impacted on the number of HIV diagnoses.

The decline in new HIV diagnoses in England was sharpest in gay and bisexual men, which fell by 41% between 2019 and 2020. The drop in testing was not as pronounced in gay and bisexual men, suggesting that the year-on-year reductions in transmission we have seen in this group have continued.

There is also evidence gay and bisexual men had fewer partners in 2020 and accessing pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) continued. However, the decline in new HIV diagnoses were not seen across all gay and bisexual men, and was steepest in white men, men living in London and younger men.

The 23% reduction in new HIV diagnoses in heterosexuals is likely due to declines in testing; the number of heterosexuals having an HIV test fell by 33% between 2019 and 2020.

In 2020, the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets were met across the UK for the first time with 95% of all people diagnosed, 99% of those in care on treatment and 97% of those on treatment virally suppressed, meaning that 91% of all people living with HIV in care were virally suppressed in England and the UK.

However, the total number of people with diagnosed HIV infection who accessed HIV services in 2020 was lower than in 2019. An estimated 97,740 people were living with HIV in England in 2020 and of these, an estimated 4,660 were unaware of their infection.

Detecting HIV early allows effective treatment to start sooner and people diagnosed can expect to have a normal life expectancy. In addition, people living with HIV who are treated and maintain an undetectable level of virus cannot pass HIV even if having sex without condoms or PrEP, known as Undetectable = Untransmissible (U=U).

Tests are free and available through GP surgeries, local hospitals and sexual health clinics, as well as by using a self-testing kit.

The overall risk of dying with HIV infection remains low. There were 620 deaths among people with HIV. Of the 99 COVID-19 deaths that occurred in people with HIV during the first wave, almost all occurred in people with co-morbidities associated with COVID-19. It is likely that the vaccine programme and social distancing measures reduced the risk of severe COVID-19 infection among people with HIV.

The annual report demonstrates the importance of testing as part of a combination prevention approach – as set out in HIV Action Plan (2022 to 2025) for England, also published today. Designed to meet a commitment to end HIV transmission and AIDS, to decrease the number of HIV-related deaths and to end HIV-related stigma by 2030, it sets out a combination approach focussed on prevent, test, treat and retain. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be published in 2022.

Dr Valerie Delpech, Head of HIV Surveillance at UKHSA, said:

The continued decline in HIV diagnoses made in England is encouraging, but last year's data needs to be considered in the context of a COVID-19 pandemic which saw prolonged and unprecedented public health restrictions, coupled with intense pressure on health services resulting in a decline in HIV testing overall.

It is now crucial that we continue to ramp up testing and start people on treatment at the earliest possible opportunity. We must address inequalities and find creative ways to achieve a reduction in transmission across all populations. We welcome the HIV Action Plan and expanding of HIV testing to provide greater opportunities for people to be offered an HIV test throughout the NHS .

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## [Children's Minister speaks to the National Network of Parent Carer Forums](#)

Good morning and thank you for inviting me here to mark the inspirational work you do. I'm very glad to be speaking to you today as the new Minister for Children and Families.

Throughout the pandemic, parent carer forums went above and beyond. You did everything possible to keep in touch with parent carers, working with local authorities and services to help meet families' needs. You have persevered day in, day out, to support families and improve services so that people can thrive.

I have been impressed by the way many of you have gone above and beyond every day to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Your work exemplifies the impact and importance of the forums, to families across the country and to us in government.

In my first 3 months, I have been listening hard to as many varied voices as I can. I have visited mainstream and special schools and providers, met with sector organisations and hosted roundtables. I have also spoken to children and young people, their parents and families – listening, and learning as much as I can.

It'll be no surprise to you that Mrunal [Sisodia, Co-chair] and Tina [Emery, Co-chair] were high up on my list of people to speak to. I know I can trust them to relay the realities of your experiences and to give support and vigorous challenge to me and the department.

Going forward, I pledge to listen carefully to the lived experience of parents, that I will always speak to you straight, and that I will put you and your children first as we forge a new path forward.

Because I have heard how you have suffered disproportionately during this pandemic. How it has intensified existing issues. I have heard, loud and clear, that too few children and young people with SEND maintained access to all their usual support, and particularly therapies, and too many are still waiting to have their full menu of support put back in place.

And while, as a father, I know how important it was to get children back to school, for some it has understandably been really, really difficult.

So why am I talking about forging a new path forward? I am here because I recognise improvements to the SEND system are urgently needed. I am here because we know what will happen if we fail to act.

We need to take action now and in the future.

As just one example of the steps we can take to support children and young people now, earlier this year we offered training to teachers in using assistive technology which can reduce or remove barriers to learning for children with SEND.

Today I'd like to take this opportunity to announce that from January, we will be working with Nasen and MicroLink to launch a pilot which will test how training can increase school staff confidence and capability in using assistive technology.

But of course, we need to do more. And we will.

I am fully alive to the frustration many feel with delays to the SEND review and have committed to seeing it published for public consultation in the first 3 months of 2022.

What I say to you today, and to all parents and families of those with SEND who are not getting the help they need, is that this review is a priority for me. It is a priority for the Education Secretary and Health Secretary. It is a priority for this Government.

Work is moving at pace to finalise proposals. But we would not have got this far without you, the forums. As forums, you've contributed a lot to our

understanding and really helped to shape the work of the SEND Review. You – and others – you have told us what we should focus on. You’ve offered constructive engagement and helpful solutions.

It is clear we need to get mainstream provision right so that needs are identified and met early and effectively across mainstream settings – whether in early years, schools or further education. We must reduce inconsistency of practice and end the postcode lottery.

Alongside this, you can expect the review to have a strong focus on clarifying accountabilities at every level of the system.

There will also always be a place for a strong specialist sector for those whose needs cannot be met by high quality mainstream provision. That is why I was so delighted to see the October spending review provided new investment of £2.6 billion between 2022 and 2025 to deliver new places and improve existing provision for pupils with SEND or who require alternative provision. This funding represents a transformational investment to improve the lives of so many of the nation’s most vulnerable children.

Fundamentally, our proposals must lead to improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND and improved confidence in a financially sustainable system. They must realise the benefits of aligned education, health and care provision and prepare children and young people for a happy and rewarding adult life.

That means improved outcomes in attainment, health and wellbeing, employment and independence – every facet of life. I want to see high aspirations across education, health and care at every level. I want to ensure we have the right resource, in the right place, at the right time, always.

And through all of this, the voice of children, young people and their families must remain central.

I know I will need to take some difficult decisions. It is clear that the issues the SEND system faces are extraordinarily difficult. I do not and will not shy away from that fact.

I know we have a duty to get this right, which is why public consultation on our proposals will be critical to shape our future reforms. We will make the consultation as accessible as possible so that we capture the widest range of views – and I hope you will encourage as many parents as possible to take part.

And finally, I want to say thank you.

For the work you have done to be a candid friend of local and national government.

For the leadership and courage you demonstrated throughout the pandemic and the work you are doing to help us improve the SEND system.

For the real difference, over many years, you have made to families.

Thank you.

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## [The Prime Minister has appointed Lord Marland of Odstock and Priyanka Wadhawan as Trustees of the British Museum](#)

### **Lord Marland of Odstock**

Lord Marland is a Life Peer and former Founding Director of Jardine Lloyd Thompson Group. He is Chairman of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, and has previously served as a Minister with the Department for Energy and Climate Change, and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills until 2013. He also held roles as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy and

Chairman of the Prime Minister's Business Ambassador's Network until January 2014.

Lord Marland has extensive fundraising expertise, and a great interest in art and ancient history, and has held Trusteeships with the Holburne Museum in Bath and the Royal Academy Development Board, as well as Chairmanship of the Tate Partons Collectors' Forum.

Lord Marland brings to the board of the British Museums extensive business acumen, international leadership and political expertise.

## **Priyanka Wadhawan**

Priyanka Wadhawan is Director of Insights & Innovation at Amazon, where she has worked for over 15 years. In that time, she has led a variety of product, technology and business teams.

Priyanka moved from Seattle to the UK four years ago, to build Amazon's Insight and Innovation team in Europe. This group focuses on solving large scale strategic problems that don't have a clear answer. In this role, she works with cross functional global teams using data, economic science, analytics and automation.

Originally from India, she has over 20 years of experience in building successful products and businesses in high growth technology organisations across India, USA and Europe. At Amazon, she is widely recognized as a strategic thinker and innovative leader, having developed and launched outstanding products to enhance the customer experience, including Amazon Prime in the UK, Germany and Japan, 'Prime Pantry' (Patent awarded) and the recently launched 4star store in the UK.

Priyanka is a passionate champion for diversity, gender equality and inclusion. She is also a founding member of the National Numeracy Leadership Council in the UK which aims to improve national numeracy levels. She has a Bachelor of Commerce from Mumbai University, India and an MBA from University of Virginia's Darden School of Business, USA.

These roles are not remunerated. These appointments have been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Lord Marland has declared that he is a Conservative Peer, President of the Salisbury Conservative Association, and has previously stood as a Conservative Party candidate in the 2001 general election. Priyanka Wadhawan has not declared any activity.

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# Points-based immigration system: delivering on people's priorities

One year ago today, the government launched the points-based immigration system and opened the Skilled Worker Visa, marking the UK's biggest shift in immigration policy in recent history.

Twelve months on and this has delivered on the public's priorities to attract top talent from across the globe, while encouraging businesses to invest in the British workforce.

The new points-based immigration system means the British immigration system is now under the control of the UK government. This has given British firms the freedom to recruit and employ people based on the skills and talent they offer, rather than basing employment decisions on the country where someone comes from.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Our departure from the European Union enabled us to end freedom of movement and introduce a new points-based immigration system to control who can come to our country legally.

One year on, our system is making it easier for businesses to hire the skills and talent they need, while incentivising investment in our domestic workforce, boosting wages across the country.

But illegal migration remains a long-standing problem with the number of small boats crossing the Channel unsafe, unfair and unacceptable. My New Plan for Immigration will reduce the pull factors in our asylum system enabling us to have full control of our immigration system.

The Skilled Worker route, which accounts for 61% of work-related visas granted, saw the largest increase in visa numbers, up 45,866 or 57% to 126,017 and the Global Talent route increased from 595 to 2,786 visas issued by the end of September 2021.

In comparison, 110,721 Skilled Worker visas were granted by the end of September 2019 and 80,151 granted by the end of September 2020 – highlighting the impact of the pandemic on migration, while the end of free movement a year ago allows the UK to count all skilled workers coming to the country.

This has meant that over the last year, the UK has welcomed thousands of workers with the skills the country needs including IT workers, scientists, plumbers, architects, butchers, doctors, creative workers and bricklayers.

As well as helping to support public services, boost growth and drive

international competitiveness of the UK's most innovative companies, these skilled workers are complementing the UK workforce – helping to boost wages and opportunities.

The number of visas issued across work and study routes has recovered to pre-pandemic levels – demonstrating that the UK continues to attract worldwide talent and skills to support the post-pandemic economic recovery.

Minister for Safe and Legal Migration Kevin Foster said:

As we recover from the pandemic, our points-based immigration system encourages businesses to focus on their UK workforces, investing in British people and skills, while boosting growth and the economy.

At the same time, we recognise there are jobs where we need the expertise and skills of overseas workers and extraordinarily talented people who want to make the UK their home. Under our points-based immigration system, people who want to contribute to our society will be welcome, based on their skills and talents, not where their passport is from.

Lynne Watson, Vice President of Human Resources, Thales UK said:

The work we do at Thales, from engineering to manufacturing, is highly skilled and requires us to draw on talent from across the globe to deliver cutting edge technology and products for our customers.

We are very proud of our diverse workforce at Thales and we see our sponsored route visa workers as a strong asset to that. We are pleased that the UK continues to be such an appealing place for so many of our global employees to live and work.

All states have a responsibility to control their borders, which is why the points-based immigration system supports the government's New Plan for Immigration, ensuring the system is fair to UK workers while allowing employers to recruit those who have the skills the country needs and to contribute to society.

The points-based immigration system is a simple system, awarding points for people who have a skilled job and are paid at a rate that does not drive down wages, as well as having a good standard of English. Supporting the UK to build back better, the points-based immigration system is working in tandem with government initiatives such as the Plan for Jobs and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee which are designed to help more people secure a great job while ensuring businesses have access to the workforce they need now and in the future.

Plan for Jobs has delivered with unemployment falling and the number of employees on payrolls back above pre-pandemic levels. Meanwhile the government's Kickstart Scheme is helping young people develop skills, confidence and experience to support them into long-term sustainable employment, with over 100,000 now in work.

In spring 2022, more visa routes will open, including the Scale-Up, High Potential Individual and Global Business Mobility routes. These will provide more opportunities for businesses to recruit leading people in their fields and encourage brilliant innovators and entrepreneurs to open enterprises in the UK – supporting British jobs, contributing to the economy and improving the UK's standing on the world stage.