

£5 million launched to support suicide prevention services

- Funding will help these services meet increased demand from the pandemic
- £4 million suicide prevention grant fund will support Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector suicide prevention services
- Grant to focus on supporting high risk groups, including children and young people and those with pre-existing mental health conditions

People experiencing suicidal thoughts or approaching a crisis will be supported by a £5 million boost to suicide prevention charities, following increased demand during the pandemic.

The suicide prevention Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector saw an increase in the number of individuals seeking support – with some services seeing up to 20% more contacts over the last year, compared to previous years.

Recognising the increased pressures, the £4 million grant fund will open next week for applications from VCSE organisations that support suicide prevention.

The support will be targeted at high-risk groups who have struggled most during the pandemic, such as people with a pre-existing mental illness, children and young people, NHS and social care staff who've faced enormous pressure over the last 18 months, and people in contact with the criminal justice system.

The funding will provide organisations with additional resource that will enable them to either set up new projects or expand or sustain current services to ensure people are supported. The other £1 million of the funding has been set aside to support existing and ongoing voluntary sector suicide prevention programmes.

Minister for Mental Health, Gillian Keegan, said:

I know the last 18 months have been really challenging and many more people have been asking for help with their mental health.

I want to be clear: we are here to support anyone struggling – and if you need help, I encourage you to reach out.

The entire suicide prevention voluntary sector has played a crucial role in providing people with the help and support they need throughout the pandemic and I encourage them to apply for this funding so we can continue to support our communities.

This fund is on top of £10.2 million already given to mental health charities over the course of the pandemic, and will ensure that suicide prevention organisations can continue to provide support to all those who need it.

More widely, the Mental Health Recovery Action Plan, backed by £500 million, has ensured the right support is being offered to people with a variety of mental health conditions who have been impacted most by the pandemic.

£200,000 of the grant funding will also be ring-fenced specifically to help support small community groups and organisations which play a vital role in responding to local needs, ensuring communities up and down the country can access suicide prevention support.

Earlier this year, the government published the latest progress report against the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which included a refreshed cross-government suicide prevention workplan to reduce suicides as far as possible. Actions taken during the pandemic to reduce suicides as far as possible include:

- The acceleration of rolling out 24/7 all-age crisis services, so anybody requiring urgent support could access those services rapidly
- NHSE embedding a comprehensive package of emotional, psychological, and practical support for NHS staff, available online, including a specific helpline and text service for counselling and support

Alongside NHS services, the VCSE sector is crucial to providing support to people, which is why the government is supporting them to continue delivering their life-saving projects.

Professor Louis Appleby, Advisor to the Government on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, said:

The response of suicide prevention charities to the pandemic has been nothing short of outstanding. They were among the first to respond to the distress that many have felt. They have worked tirelessly to support people who are anxious, isolated or at risk. They have been an invaluable partner to the NHS.

All this has stretched their resources to the limit, at a time when fund-raising from the public has been harder. This grant funding opportunity is in recognition of the contribution they have made.

- The VCSE grant fund is being administered by PwC on DHSC's behalf, following an open tender process.
- A specialist panel will assess the applications to decide who the funding should be awarded to. The panel will include experts from within the suicide prevention sector and people with lived experience.
- The application portal for the VCSE grant fund will open on 2 December 2021.
- A breakdown of the £500 million funding announced in March can be found [here](#)

- For anyone who needs support, visit the [NHS website](#)
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[UK government publishes Union Connectivity Review: proposed transport investments for stronger and better-connected United Kingdom](#)

- Prime Minister underlines commitment to stronger transport connections across the UK, as government publishes Sir Peter Hendy's independent Union Connectivity Review
- Prime Minister invites devolved administrations to work with UK government to progress proposals which level up opportunity and prosperity across the country
- UK government to progress creation of UKNET, a UK-wide strategic transport network, to plan and deliver vital improvements that better connect all the nations of the UK

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has today (26 November 2021) committed to forging and strengthening transport bonds that will create a more cohesive and connected United Kingdom.

As the UK government publishes Sir Peter Hendy's [final report of the Union Connectivity Review](#), the Prime Minister has underlined the importance of better connections – on both local and national transport networks – to bring all UK communities within closer reach of social and economic opportunities.

The Prime Minister has particularly welcomed, and intends to accept, the proposal for the creation of UKNET – a strategic transport network spanning the entire United Kingdom.

UKNET will assess and map out for the first time the key points across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom that are essential to stronger, more direct transport connections.

This will help boost economic growth, support job creation and level up opportunity by expanding the transport system and creating quicker and easier travel for passengers, freight and businesses alike.

The UK government has invited the devolved administrations to work collaboratively in defining and developing the necessary improvements to union connectivity, supported by specific projects, which will inform the UK government's response.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

If we want to truly level up the country then it's vital that we improve connectivity between all corners of the UK, making it easier for more people to get to more places more quickly.

Sir Peter Hendy's review is an inspiring vision for the future of transport, which we will now consider carefully. Determined to get to work right away, we will set up a strategic UK-wide transport network that can better serve the whole country with stronger sea, rail and road links – not only bringing us closer together but boosting jobs, prosperity and opportunity.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Transport is key to binding the family of nations that is the United Kingdom closer together so that prosperity can be shared more evenly. It is not good enough that certain areas of the UK thrive while others fall behind. We must realise our full national potential and that means mobilising the resources and skills of all parts of this country.

I am indebted to Sir Peter for his work. We will consider his recommendations carefully, engage closely with the devolved administrations, and work collegiately to ensure these proposals strengthen the ties that bind us, now and for the future.

The independent [Union Connectivity Review](#) was launched in October 2020, led by Sir Peter Hendy CBE, to undertake how a detailed review of the quality and availability of transport infrastructure across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life.

Specific recommendations for improvements for connections across the United Kingdom include for improved connectivity with:

- **Scotland:** proposals include reducing rail journey times and increasing capacity on the West Coast Main Line, and conducting an assessment of the East Coast road and rail corridor
- **Northern Ireland:** upgrading the key A75 link to improve freight and passenger connectivity
- **Wales:** improvements on the A55, M53 and M56, the South Wales Corridor, improvements to the North Wales Coast Main Line and rail links to the Midlands from Cardiff

The recommendations published today also include that the UK government should:

- design and implement UKNET – a strategic transport network for the whole of the UK, and commit to providing additional funding to improve the network, in particular, the parts that are not performing well
- plan improvements to the network using multimodal corridors, which should be reviewed regularly and appraised on a wider economic basis in order to support government objectives such as levelling up and net zero
- support the development of sustainable aviation fuel plants in parts of the United Kingdom that are particularly reliant on aviation for domestic connectivity

Independent Chair of the Union Connectivity Review, Sir Peter Hendy, said:

My recommendations provide comprehensive, achievable and clear plans forward to better connect the whole of the United Kingdom, leading to more growth, jobs, housing and social cohesion.

I welcome the enthusiasm shown by the Prime Minister and the government to my final report and I look forward to their formal response to my recommendations, which aim to spread opportunity and prosperity right across the United Kingdom.

The UK government will now carefully consider the Union Connectivity Review's recommendations in detail, working collaboratively with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive to identify the solutions that work best for the people of the UK, and make tangible and meaningful progress as swiftly as possible.

DIT removes 20% more trade barriers to unlock major markets for British business

The United Kingdom has broken down hundreds of trade barriers around the world in the year to April, opening up new opportunities for British businesses, according to new data published today [Thursday 25 November].

The Department for International Trade has published statistics showing a total of 217 trade barriers across 74 countries were removed over the 20-21 financial year, representing an increase of almost 20% on the previous 12 months.

Trade barriers are regulatory, legislative and administrative measures imposed by other countries that restrict the flow of goods and services. Getting rid of them makes it easier for businesses to trade around the world

as we build back better and boost exports.

As well as securing new trade agreements, DIT is using its expertise to remove individual barriers wherever British businesses face them and in sectors that matter most to our economy, supporting SMEs and securing access to new and exciting markets.

Some of the barriers addressed over this period include:

- Working with the Jordanian government to open up British food exports worth £32 million, by changing labelling rules that will help our producers to increase sales to a country that imports £2.5bn worth of food annually
- Unlocking access to finance in Hong Kong to enable UK education providers to build new schools there from early next year
- Cooperating with Indian counterparts to enable more investment in India's £4bn insurance market- 74% foreign ownership now allowed, up from 49% – a sector in which the UK has world-class strengths
- In Colombia, helping British asset managers enter a green investment market worth £835m per year
- In Bulgaria, supporting UK business to access products to develop cutting-edge technology that will extend the life of vaccines, helping overcome logistical and distribution challenges from the pandemic.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

“As an independent trading nation – the UK is opening up brand new opportunities in major economies around the world. Each and every one of these 217 trade wins are fantastic news for our UK businesses who sell their products abroad – and we will continue to open doors for the many more that will export more in future.

Minister for International Trade Ranil Jayawardena said:

“In the last year, we have been tearing down even more trading barriers than the year before – 20% more, in spite of Covid-19 – which is proof that Global Britain is delivering for our dedicated exporters, supporting local jobs and boosting the economy.

“This is just the beginning. We want businesses in every corner of the country to tell us about the barriers they want us to tackle next, so they can focus on what they do best – making world-class products and selling them to the world.” .

As part of this continuing work, more recent successes have seen poultry exports allowed into Japan following a series of complex negotiations. Industry estimates predict this will boost the sector by up to £65 million over five years, which is in addition to the 99% tariff-free trade secured when the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into force in October 2020.

Pork can also now be exported to Mexico for the first time which means a

potential increase in sales of £50 million over the first five years of trade.

Businesses facing market access issues can also report barriers online using our first-class digital system and find out information on barriers that are relevant to them. This includes the recently launched Export Support Service to make it easier for British businesses to find help with practical questions about exporting to Europe.

Notes to Editors

- Market Access wins are counted for financial year 2020/21 which runs from 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021
- The Digital Market Access Service (DMAS) is the internal government database of trade barriers facing UK businesses that enables closer collaboration across government in Whitehall and at overseas Posts to analyse and progress action to try and resolve them where feasible.
- DMAS is not a comprehensive repository of all market access issues facing UK exporters, and reporting rates vary widely across countries and regions. As such, aggregate figures should be interpreted as an indicative estimate based on a selective sample.
- The number of countries across which the 217 barriers have been resolved represents the number of different countries in which at least one entry was listed as being present on DMAS. It is subject to the same uncertainties and limitations as all DMAS statistics, as outlined above.
- Figures on the value of UK exports and the value of partner country imports are based on existing published UK and International Statistic series drawn from ONS and UN Comtrade datasets. Further details on methodology for these are available in the DIT statistical publication: Market Access barrier statistics: Financial year 2020/2021.

[Digital trade key to unlocking opportunities of the future](#)

A new report published today (26 November) by the Board of Trade – Digital Trade – outlines the huge opportunities digital trade presents for boosting UK exports, turbocharging economic growth, and creating high-paying jobs across all parts of the UK.

From purchasing items online to streaming music, digital trade is something that everyone depends on and is therefore vital for business growth across the UK. The UK exported over £200bn worth of digitally delivered services in 2019 and this is set to increase, with investment in global digital transformation rising worldwide following the pandemic.

The new report will be launched by Anne-Marie Trevelyan at the Board of Trade

meeting today as part of a two-day visit to Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has over 100 cyber security firms, employing approximately 2,300 people, and the International Trade Secretary will meet a host of digital and data businesses who export their products globally.

The Government is negotiating ground-breaking digital provisions in new trade deals and leading on tackling protectionism in online trade internationally, to the benefit of UK businesses and consumers. Advancing digital trade could also help to boost wages, with employees in the digital sector earning around 50% more than the UK average.

With the expansion of DIT's Export Academy and the launch of Trade and Investment Northern Ireland, the International Trade Secretary will encourage businesses to take advantage of this support in a bid to further unlock Northern Ireland's exporting potential.

Secretary of State for International Trade, Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, said:

Digital trade presents huge opportunities for our brilliant UK businesses, that's why we're building a global network of next-generation trade deals that drive productivity and boost high-paying jobs and growth in all parts of the UK.

By addressing digital protectionism on the global stage and championing a free, open, and competitive digital economy, more UK companies will be able to export their innovative, high-quality services and goods globally.

This report builds on the game-changing digital agreement that the International Trade Secretary negotiated between the G7 countries last month, and encourages the UK to take further action to tackle digital protectionism and discrimination on the global stage.

The UK is using its free trade agenda to boost digital trade; negotiating modern free trade agreements (FTAs) that include comprehensive digital provisions like those agreed with Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, and digital-focused agreements like the Singapore Digital Economy Agreement.

This report recommends that the UK leverages its trade agenda to be at the forefront of the digital revolution by:

- Focusing its digital trade policy around five goals: open digital markets; free and trusted data flows; consumer and business safeguards; digital trading systems; and partnerships to shape global rules, norms, and standards.
- Concluding accession to CPTPP and building a pipeline of modern digital FTAs.
- Pursuing a ground-breaking Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore.
- Pushing for substantial progress in ongoing WTO e-commerce negotiations.

- Using its G7 Presidency, and membership of the G20, OECD, and WTO, to advocate for an open, inclusive digital economy. *Continuing to promote UK exports globally and showcase the UK as a strong and competitive place to invest and do digital business.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, said:

Digital technology is the future, and in Northern Ireland we have one of the best digital infrastructures in the UK.

As the Board of Trade gets ready to be hosted here, it is exciting to see how businesses in Northern Ireland are building a global network for trade and commerce.

With over 100 cyber security firms in Northern Ireland, employing approximately 2,300 people, the cybersecurity and fintech sectors are thriving. We will continue to capitalize on this momentum and build our global reputation.

Board of Trade Adviser and Economist, Dr Linda Yueh, said:

By playing a global role in helping to ensure that digital trade is fair as well as free, the UK can do a lot in this area for its economy and its people to make the most of this fast-growing aspect of the 21st century world economy.

techUK CEO, Julian David, said:

Digital trade has taken centre stage in the UK Government's trade strategy after Brexit. techUK is a longstanding advocate for, and supporter of, a UK strategy that combines advanced digital trade provisions in bilateral trade agreements with international regulatory cooperation.

Today's Board of Trade report outlines the right priorities for the UK to continue to advance its leadership, both in new bilateral agreements, like the Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore, and in multilateral forums, at the G7 and the WTO. We support the vision outlined in this report that allows the world-leading UK tech sector to scale up and offer their services to customers across the world and we will continue to work closely with the government to deliver on those promises.

Lord Mayor of the City of London and Board of Trade Adviser, Vincent Keaveny, said:

The free and trusted flow of data between various jurisdictions is vital for UK financial and professional services.

Restrictions on data flows and localisation requirements lead to increased operational costs for firms and less choice for consumers.

The UK should seek to develop the technical and regulatory security mechanisms which can reduce and remove these barriers. Free and trusted data flows must be a priority for our digital trade policy.

Six African countries added to red list to protect public health as UK designates new Variant under Investigation

- From midday Friday 26 November, South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe and Namibia will be added to the UK's travel red list
- Passengers arriving from 4am Sunday in England will be required to book and pay for a government-approved hotel quarantine facility for 10 days
- British nationals arriving from these six countries between midday Friday and 4am Sunday, and who have been in these countries within the last 10 days, must quarantine at home for 10 days and take NHS PCR tests on Day 2 and Day 8, even if they already have a lateral flow test booking
- Direct flights from the six countries will be banned from midday Friday until hotel quarantine is up and running from 4am Sunday 28 November
- Precautionary move follows designation of a new Variant under Investigation by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

The government is taking decisive precautionary action against a new COVID-19 variant by introducing travel restrictions on arrivals from South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe and Namibia from midday tomorrow (Friday 26 November).

It comes as Variant B.1.1.529 is declared a Variant under Investigation (VuI) by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

The variant includes a large number of spike protein mutations as well as mutations in other parts of the viral genome. These are potentially biologically significant mutations which may change the behaviour of the virus with regards to vaccines, treatments and transmissibility. More investigation is required.

No cases have been identified in the UK. We are taking these precautionary measures to protect public health and the progress we've made so far through our successful vaccination programme.

From midday on Friday 26 November, non-UK and Irish residents who have been in these countries in the previous 10 days will be refused entry into England. This does not apply to those who have stayed airside and only transited through any of these countries while changing flights.

UK and Irish residents arriving between midday Friday 26 November and 4am Sunday 28 November from these six countries will be required to self-isolate at home for 10 days. They must take PCR tests on Day 2 and Day 8 post-arrival. These can be NHS PCR tests and passengers should take them even if they have already booked or taken their lateral flow test.

UK and Irish residents arriving from 4am Sunday must isolate in a government-approved facility for 10 days. During their stay, they will be required to take a coronavirus test on day 2 and day 8.

A temporary ban on commercial and private planes travelling from the six countries will also come into force at midday on Friday until 4am Sunday to reduce the risk of importing this new variant under investigation while hotel quarantine is stood up. This excludes cargo and freight without passengers.

The UK government thanks the government of South Africa for its surveillance of this variant and its transparency. Meanwhile the UKHSA continues to monitor the situation closely, in partnership with scientific and public health organisations across the world, and we will offer to work collaboratively with the six countries that have been currently placed on the UK red list to understand the virus and possible mitigations.

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

As part of our close surveillance of variants across the world, we have become aware of the spread of a new potentially concerning variant, which UKHSA has designated a Variant under Investigation.

We are taking precautionary action to protect public health and the progress of our vaccine rollout at a critical moment as we enter winter, and we are monitoring the situation closely.

I want to pay tribute to our world-leading scientists who are

working constantly to keep our country safe, and I urge everyone to keep doing their bit by the getting the job and following public health guidance.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We've always maintained public safety is our number one priority, which is why we've kept in place measures which allow us to protect the UK from new variants.

We're taking this early precautionary action now to protect the progress made across the country, and will continue to keep a close eye on the situation as we continue into the winter.

Dr Jenny Harries, UKHSA Chief Executive, said:

Scientists at UKHSA are in constant close collaboration with colleagues around the world to identify and assess variants as soon as they emerge. This is the most significant variant we have encountered to date and urgent research is underway to learn more about its transmissibility, severity and vaccine-susceptibility. The results of these investigations will determine what public health actions may limit the impact of B.1.1.529

This is a clear reminder to everyone that this pandemic is not over, and we all have a responsibility to do what we can to limit transmission and reduce the infection rate and prevent the emergence of new variants. This means coming forward for vaccination as soon as possible and following public health advice. Wear a face covering in crowded places where it's difficult to avoid coming into close contact with others, try to meet people in well-ventilated areas and seek a test immediately if you have symptoms.

The first genomes of this variant were uploaded to the international GISAID database on 22 November. Genomes have now been uploaded from South Africa, Botswana and Hong Kong but the extent of spread is not yet determined.

The government has been clear it will take decisive action if necessary to contain the virus and has taken the decision to add these destinations to the red list.

We continue to work with the hospitality sector to ensure it is ready to meet any increased demand – with hundreds of rooms on standby which can be made available to book as needed.

British nationals in these countries should check Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) travel advice and follow local guidance. The FCDO will continue to offer tailored consular assistance to British nationals in country in need of support overseas on a 24/7 basis.

The UKHSA produces risk assessments of the spread of Variants of Concern or Variants under Investigation internationally. These risk assessments cover a range of factors for each country including assessment of surveillance and sequencing capability, available surveillance and genome sequencing data, evidence of in-country community transmission of COVID-19 variants, evidence of exportation of new variants to the UK or other countries and travel connectivity with the UK.

Background

- British and Irish citizens, or those with residence rights, arriving to England from countries on the red list must book a managed quarantine hotel in advance. The quarantine package will include a managed quarantine hotel, quarantine transport and a travel test package for COVID-19 tests on day 2 and day 8 of quarantine. [More detail here](#)
- Further information on international travel requirements can be found elsewhere on GOV.UK, including advice on transiting through red list countries.
- Arrivals to the UK will need to meet the UK's health and border requirements and comply with the relevant quarantine restrictions if coming from a red country or if not fully vaccinated. If you do not have the correct documentation ready to meet UK health and border requirements, you may delay yourself and others, be denied boarding, or face a fine.
- Passengers arriving after 4am Sunday 28 November will be required to book a MQS quarantine hotel. Bookings will open from midday Friday 26 November.