

Combating trafficking in human beings: UK statement

Thank you, Special Representative Richie, for preparing this report.

Human trafficking affects every country in the world, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims. We must work together to stop this appalling trade in men, women and children, and stop traffickers acting with impunity.

We welcome the emphasis your Office has placed on improving prosecution rates in human trafficking cases. Earlier this year the UK recorded an annual increase of more than 50% in modern slavery offenses as more victims came forward.

But even though we are seeing an increase in the number of prosecutions brought and convictions secured, we acknowledge there is more to do. So we look forward to receiving your upcoming comprehensive account of the findings of the prosecution-focussed Alliance conference that will share effective ways in which we can ensure the prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators of human trafficking, so that their victims receive the justice they deserve.

We agree with your assessment that supported victims lead to stronger cases, and we were particularly struck by the survivor testimonies given at the Alliance conference earlier this year, which reminded us all of the courage shown by those who come forward and how important it is to protect these voices. In future, we look forward to receiving your guidance on the establishment of child trafficking focal points; as well as an overview of gender-sensitive approaches, so we may better address victims' specific protection needs.

We support your Office's work to eradicate trafficking from supply chains, to ensure that we all stop paying – inadvertently and unwittingly – for trafficking. We were pleased to have provided some funding to your Office last year to compile a compendium of ethical sourcing; as well as to develop model guidelines on measures to prevent trafficking for labour exploitation in supply chains.

Earlier this year, the UK became the first country to publish a government modern slavery statement, setting out how the UK Government is tackling modern slavery in its supply chains across £50 billion of annual spending. Individual ministerial departments will publish their modern slavery statements next year.

We recognise the increasingly influential role technology is playing in facilitating, but also in preventing, human trafficking; and we welcome your Office's commitment to this agenda and the upcoming guidance for governments to tackle misuse of technology. We are pleased to be able to support your

Office's new project on enhancing the response to the threat of technology-facilitated trafficking.

We echo your call to participating States to show the political will to address comprehensively this important issue. We hope that those OSCE participating States who have not yet done so will sign up to the Modern Slavery Call to Action, which sets out the practical steps that countries need to take to respond effectively to modern slavery, and demonstrates our collective intent that we will not tolerate this in our societies.

We are pleased to take part in your Office's follow-up survey to obtain updated information on implementation by the States of the existing, impressive body of OSCE anti-trafficking commitments. We support this stocktaking approach, which will be particularly useful in identifying areas requiring more intense focus from States and spotting particular trends or challenges in the OSCE region. We hope this work, and the expertise of your Office, will guide thinking on possible new Ministerial Council decisions, focusing on where the gaps in our existing commitments are, and where the OSCE has a clear role to play.

Once again can I offer my appreciation for the work you and your team have done over the past year. We look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue in 2021 and beyond.

Thank you.

[Coronavirus update on areas in local COVID alert levels](#)

Thank you very much Mr Speaker. And Mr Speaker, with permission, I'd like to make a statement on coronavirus.

The threat remains grave and serious.

In Europe, positive cases are up 40% from one week ago. And in Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, they have doubled in the last fortnight.

And here, we sadly saw the highest figure for daily deaths since early June.

Mr Speaker, let us be under no illusions about the danger posed by this virus. Coronavirus is deadly. And it is now spreading exponentially in the UK.

We must act to prevent more hospitalisations, more deaths and more economic damage. Because we know from recent history that this virus keeps growing, unless we act, together, to get it under control.

Local action strategy

Our strategy is to suppress the virus, supporting the economy, education and the NHS and local action is at the centre of our response.

This virus is not evenly spread, and the situation is particularly severe in some parts of the country.

Through the JBC and through NHS Test and Trace, we have built up a detailed picture of where, and how, this virus is spreading.

This week's NHS Test and Trace statistics show that testing capacity is up, testing turnaround times are down, and the distance travelled for tests is down too.

And thanks to this capacity and analysis, we have been able to take a more targeted approach, keeping a close eye on the situation in local areas.

Bearing down hard through restrictions on a local level, where they are necessary.

I know that these restrictions are difficult for people. I hate the fact that we have to bring them in. But it is essential that we do bring them in.

Both to keep people safe, and to prevent greater economic damage in the future. But when a virus is moving fast, we cannot stay still. And if we act collectively, we know we can control the virus, because we have done it before.

I believe in the people of this country. And I believe – in fact, I know – that the people of this country want to control this virus, to protect their loved ones, their lives and their livelihoods. And I believe from the bottom of my heart that acting together, we can.

We must take firm and balanced decisions to keep this virus under control. This is the only way to protect lives and livelihoods.

We must act now. Delayed action means more deaths from COVID.

It means more non-COVID deaths. And means more economic pain later. Because this virus comes down slower than it goes up. So we should stop it going up in the first place.

Unless we suppress the virus, we cannot return to the economy we had. Unless we suppress the virus, we cannot keep non-COVID services going.

And unless we suppress the virus, we cannot keep the elderly and the vulnerable safe and secure.

Mr Speaker, I didn't come into politics to put restrictions on how people live their lives. I want people to have as much freedom as possible, subject to not harming others.

But the nature of this virus means that anyone of us can inadvertently pass it on without even knowing.

That is the liberal case for action. And I believe that the British people get that.

But I want that action to be as targeted as feasible. Local action is one of the best weapons we have.

Mr Speaker, we have seen how local action can flatten the curve, for example in Leicester and Bolton.

Local COVID alert levels

This is the principle that sits behind our new, simpler system of local COVID alert levels. I am pleased that the House approved these measures earlier this week.

Yesterday, I chaired a meeting of the Local Action Committee Gold Command.

This brings together the best data, and the best clinical and public health expertise, to look at how the virus is spreading.

Local COVID alert level very high: discussions

Turning first to the parts of the country where the prevalence of the virus is highest. Discussions are ongoing with local leaders, on moving from high to very high.

These are areas where transmission rates are rising at the sharpest rate. And where we see a very real risk to the local NHS.

The Liverpool City Region moved into the very high level yesterday, and I want to thank the local leadership for their public service, and cross-party teamwork in the face of this virus.

We have developed a substantial package of support for areas that enter this third tier.

This includes more support for local test and trace, more funding for local enforcement and the Job Support Scheme alongside the offer of help from the armed services.

And in other areas currently in the second tier, where discussions are ongoing, no further decisions have yet been made, but we need to make rapid progress.

London

Mr Speaker, turning to other areas of the country currently in the medium level, where rates are rising fast.

First, in London, infection rates are on a steep upward path, with the number of cases doubling every 10 days.

The 7-day average case rate today stands at 97, rising sharply.

We know from the first peak that the infection can spread fast and put huge pressures on the NHS. So we must act now, to prevent the need for tougher measures later on.

So, working with the Mayor, cross-party council leadership, local public health officials and the national team.

We have together agreed that London needs to move to local COVID alert level high.

I want to take a moment to thank all involved for their exemplary hard work. The collegiate nature of decision making, the collaborative approach.

And the constructive work, all focused on the public health and economic wellbeing of our citizens. And to Londoners, and all who work in our great capital.

I want to say thank you, for what you have done to suppress this virus once.

We now all need to play our part in getting under control once again.

I know the sacrifices this means. But I know, if we work together, then we can defeat this.

Working with local leaders in Essex and Elmbridge, we are also moving them to the high local alert level.

And I want to pay tribute to the leadership of Essex County Council and in Elmbridge, who are working so hard to suppress the virus.

Mr Speaker, infection rates are also rising sharply in Barrow-in-Furness, York, North East Derbyshire, Erewash and Chesterfield.

In all of these places, cases are doubling in less than a fortnight.

For all of the areas entering the high alert level, the change will come into effect one minute past midnight on Saturday morning.

And this includes Barrow-in-Funess, York, North East Derbyshire, Erewash and Chesterfield too.

The central change is that people cannot now meet other households socially indoors. This applies in any setting, at home, or in a restaurant, or in any other venue.

The rule of 6 still applies in any outdoor setting.

And although you may continue to travel to open venues, you should reduce the number of journeys where possible.

I know that these measures are not easy. But I also know that they are vital.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, responding to this unprecedented pandemic requires difficult choices. Some of the most difficult choices any government has had to make in peacetime.

We make these decisions with a heavy heart. With the sole aim of steering our nation through troubled waters.

Things will get worse before they get better. But I know that there are brighter skies and calmer seas ahead. That the ingenuity of science will find a way through.

Until then, we must come together. Because we all have a part to play to defeat this dreadful disease.

And I commend this statement to the House.

[NHS Test and Trace statistics for 1 October to 7 October](#)

The number of people testing positive during the first week of October increased by more than 35,000 compared with the previous week, with the number of tests processed during the week increasing by more than 65,000 to 1,671,766 (pillars 1 and 2), latest figures show.

Testing capacity (pillars 1 and 2) for the 19th week of operation increased by nearly 10% from the previous week and with more than 500 testing sites now open across the UK, the median distance being travelled for in-person tests has dropped for the third consecutive week, now down to just 3.3 miles.

NHS Test and Trace continued to reach the vast majority of positive cases and their contacts, with a total of 901,151 people having been reached by the service since it was started. The first week of October saw the service successfully reach 76.8% of people who tested positive and 76.9% of contacts where communications details were provided. Since NHS Test and Trace launched, 84% of all contacts where communication details were given have been reached and told to self-isolate.

The [weekly statistics from the 19th week of NHS Test and Trace](#) show in the most recent week of operations (1 to 7 October):

- a total of 1,671,766 tests were processed (pillars 1 and 2), a 10% increase from the previous week

- 76.8% of people who tested positive and were transferred to the contact tracing system were reached and asked to provide information about their contacts, compared with 74.9% the previous week
- 76.9% of contacts where communication details were given were reached and told to self-isolate, compared with 82.8% the previous week
- 67.9% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 65.4% the previous week
- 32.6% of in-person test results were received within 24 hours after the test was taken, compared with 27.4% the previous week

As of today, 100 Local Tracing Partnerships are now in operation, as part of ongoing collaboration between national and local teams to ensure that people who test positive, and their contacts, are successfully reached by contact tracers. The model means local authorities can use their expertise and resources to increase the proportion of people reached by NHS Test and Trace. Local authorities will work with local contact tracing teams to obtain details of recent close contacts, explain the importance of self-isolation for those who test positive and other members of their household, and help ensure they have access to appropriate support.

The [NHS COVID-19 app](#) has now been downloaded more than 16,500,000 times, with more than 640,000 QR posters downloaded. New updates to the app this week include the addition of Polish and Somali, bringing the total number of languages the app is now available in to 12.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

The country is working together at unprecedented pace and scale to increase capacity and make sure everyone who should have a test can get one.

Since the service launched, NHS Test and Trace has now reached over 900,000 people, and 8.3 million people have been tested at least once. This is a fantastic achievement by everyone involved in the system, of which they should be rightly proud.

Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection Baroness Dido Harding said:

Local authorities play a hugely important role in delivering test and trace services and supporting their communities through outbreaks. Across the UK, we are working together to ensure excellent and timely local delivery of testing and contact tracing, alongside a robust national network.

We're continuing to drive forward local contact tracing as part of our commitment to being locally led, with more than 100 Local Tracing Partnerships now operating, and more to come. Local public health teams are vital to our work, using their knowledge of their local areas to support communities.

I want to thank staff across the whole NHS Test and Trace programme for all of their efforts. From the staff who help people receive tests at one of our 500 test sites, to the lab technicians processing those tests, to the local contact tracers who support and advise those who receive a positive test and their contacts. We've always said that we do not operate alone, and the integrated, localised approach that we continue to develop with local authorities means that we can reach more people in their communities, making us even more effective in tackling the virus.

Professor Isabel Oliver, National Infection Service Director at Public Health England, said:

In the past week, NHS Test and Trace has seen a 155% increase in total number of cases and a 127% increase in number of contacts. It's critical that contact tracing continues to reach as many people as possible and we're incredibly grateful to everyone involved in the national and local teams across the country.

This fast growing number of local tracing partnerships will give us better insights on where transmission of infection is occurring. It will also help us ensure we contact as many people as possible, as quickly as possible. Beating COVID-19 involves everyone working together and we hope in future many more local authorities will join this vital work.

GIAA Tailored Review seals its essential role across Government

News story

HM Treasury published its Tailored Review of the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA), concluding the Agency plays a 'highly significant' role.

Tailored Review:
Government Internal Audit Agency

HM Treasury, as the GIAA's sponsoring government department, conducted a [Tailored Review of the Agency](#) over several months, with input from a wide range of customers and external stakeholders.

Tailored Reviews are detailed evaluations of public bodies that are commissioned by the Cabinet Office, usually once every five years, to ensure that those organisations are fit for purpose, set up correctly, well governed, and that they observe high standards of transparency and efficiency. As the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) was established in 2015, this was the Agency's first Tailored Review.

Some of the Review's conclusions include:

- the findings have reinforced the ongoing need for the GIAA
- due to the nature of the work and the need for the GIAA to be able to operate without fear or favour, it is paramount that it remains at arm's length from central government
- the work of the GIAA is underpinned by exemplary governance arrangements that surpass the Cabinet Office recommended models and common practice across other arm's length bodies (ALBs)
- GIAA ensures value for money by providing a shared centre for excellence that removes the need to replicate internal audit services for individual government departments
- the review highlights opportunities where GIAA can continue to work with HM Treasury, as its sponsoring department, towards independent full cost recovery of its direct services in the future
- the GIAA continues to influence policies and address cross government risks with an authoritative voice
- the GIAA delivers substantial work focused on improving the delivery of services and functions across government. It works effectively across boundaries and locations with multiple stakeholders.

The report also makes a number of recommendations to enable the GIAA to:

“further strengthen its operation and impact”,

which the Agency is already addressing through its Corporate Plan and priorities, updated in response to COVID-19.

As with most government bodies, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all areas of the GIAA's business. The [Tailored Review](#) reflects

those challenges with the inclusion of a COVID-19 supplement outlining the GIAA's COVID-19 response, particularly in relation to how the Agency is continuing to provide crucial support and services to its customers.

This has included:

- quickly re-developing work plans to support customers in managing the risks associated with COVID-19
- providing support to chairs of Audit and Risk Assurance Committees to help them consider the questions to be asked in relation to their role as assurance providers to their Accounting Officer
- sharing professional auditing guidance and best practice in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic for internal and external use.

Elizabeth Honer, the Government Internal Audit Agency's Chief Executive, said:

"Our mission is to provide objective insight so that central government can achieve better outcomes and value for money for the public. I am therefore delighted that we have received such a positive Review which reaffirms the strategic direction we are taking."

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[Public asked not to gather at the Cenotaph for Remembrance Sunday due to coronavirus](#)

- Government has provided advice to Local Authorities in England for events at community war memorials
- Culture Secretary urges public to pay tribute at home to protect veteran community
- Service will take place behind closed doors and broadcast to the nation on BBC One

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has asked members of the public to mark this year's Remembrance Sunday service on Sunday 8 November at home rather than head to the Cenotaph due to the ongoing global coronavirus pandemic.

Around 10,000 people usually gather at the Cenotaph each year for the National Service of Remembrance and the two minute silence at 11 AM. This year, for the first time in history, the event will be closed to members of the public in line with the latest expert medical and scientific advice.

The service is expected to go ahead with representatives of the Royal Family, the Government and the Armed Forces, and a small representation from the Commonwealth, other countries and territories, all laying wreaths at the Cenotaph. The annual march past the Cenotaph will not take place, but some veterans will be invited to attend the service which will be made covid-secure by minimising attendance and ensuring strict social distancing measures are in place.

The public are urged to remember all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice by coming together for a national moment of silence at 11am as the service is broadcast nationwide on BBC One.

The government has also today provided advice for councils in England on how to ensure that those hosting local Remembrance events can do so safely. Measures include reducing numbers, focusing attendance on those wishing to lay wreaths, and observing social distancing at all times.

All gatherings involving more than 6 people will need to be organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body. Organisers will also be required to carry out a risk assessment to limit the risk of transmission of the virus.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

This Remembrance Sunday has a particular significance as it marks one hundred years since the Cenotaph was installed. Whilst we will mark this occasion properly, it is with a heavy heart that I must ask people not to attend the ceremony at the Cenotaph this year in order to keep veterans and the public safe. We will ensure our plans for the day are a fitting tribute to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and that our veterans are at the heart of the service – with the nation able to watch safely from home.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We will not let these difficult times stop us from properly commemorating the sacrifices of those who protected this country in our darkest hour, and those who are serving in our Armed Forces today.

That's why we have published advice for councils, so that local Remembrance Day events can take place safely and communities are able to honour our brave service men and women. We are safer because of the sacrifices they have made and the battles they have fought.

Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace said:

I am as disappointed as the rest of the armed forces community that our usual arrangements for Remembrance Sunday cannot go ahead as normal. However, like the successful VE and VJ Day commemorations, the Armed Forces will join with The Royal British Legion to lead the nation once again in showing our respects to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Bob Gamble OBE, Assistant Director for Commemorative Events for The Royal British Legion said:

The decision not to proceed with the annual March Past the Cenotaph has been taken by the Government based on expert advice to protect the health and well-being of all those would have been travelling to and participating in the event. Whilst it is deeply disappointing that the march will not be taking place this year, we can all still play a part in ensuring we mark the occasion appropriately and pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces on Remembrance Sunday. We are encouraging people across the country to participate in their own personal moment of Remembrance whether that be watching the Service on television or pausing for the Two Minute Silence.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

Remembrance Sunday holds a special place in our national life and I know that many people will be disappointed that they won't be able to attend this year.

But the key part of Remembrance is taking a moment to recognise those who have given their lives protecting this country. I hope that everyone will still be able to reflect on this sacrifice this year, despite the different arrangements.

This year also marks the centenary of the unveiling of the permanent Cenotaph by King George V on Armistice Day 1920 and of the interment of the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey.

Meaning 'empty tomb', the Cenotaph symbolises the unprecedented losses of the First World War and is dedicated to 'The Glorious Dead'. The Cenotaph was designed by Edwin Lutyens and was initially erected as a temporary structure for Peace Day in July 1919. The structure was so popular a permanent version was commissioned. Since then, the Cenotaph has become the focal point of national commemoration. Details of plans to mark this moment will be

announced in due course.

The Unknown Warrior was an idea conceived by a Chaplain on the front, the Rev David Railton, after seeing a grave with a rough cross on which were pencilled the words "An Unknown British Soldier". He suggested that an unidentified Soldier from the battlefields of Europe be selected at random and transported to England and be buried amongst the Kings and Queens of Westminster Abbey. King George V led the procession and Gun Carriage that carried the coffin of the Unknown Warrior and was Chief Mourner for the service at Westminster Abbey that followed the unveiling of the permanent Cenotaph on Whitehall.