

UK-backed Anti-Human Trafficking Child Protection Unit opened at the Kenyan Coast

A UK-built and supported unit in Mombasa will help protect more vulnerable children from sexual predators and traffickers operating along the Kenyan Coast.

Officially opened by the British High Commissioner to Kenya Jane Marriott and the Director of Criminal Investigations (DCI) Mr George Kinoti, the Anti-Human Trafficking Child Protection Unit (AHTCPU) in Mombasa will deal specifically with the threat of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) and Child Trafficking suspected to be taking place on the Kenyan coast.

A 2018 report by the International Child Protection Conference revealed that CSEA cases have been increasing at an alarming rate in Kenya. This new unit will enable the National Police Service of Kenya to respond to more suspected cases in remote coastal areas using three UK-donated 4x4 vehicles including the first mobile laboratory of its kind in Kenya. The mobile laboratory will allow police to conduct victim interviews and examinations.

British High Commissioner to Kenya Jane Marriott said:

The Anti-Human Trafficking Child Protection Units are just the start in the fight against Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Kenya. The UK, along with the National Police Service of Kenya, and key international agencies such as the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, Interpol and UNICEF, is proud to have provided support, funding and mentoring to tackle this serious problem head on with our Kenyan partners.

A spokesperson for the UK's National Crime Agency said:

We are immensely proud to have helped with the creation of this unit. International cooperation protects children and reduces offenders' opportunities. The work also has direct benefits for the UK because indecent images of children produced in Kenya are viewed and shared all over the world and there have been cases of UK nationals going to Kenya to abuse vulnerable children.

The UK's National Crime Agency (NCA), with the support of the UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund and Home Office, has been working in partnership with the National Police Service of Kenya on developing an operational Child Protection Unit in Nairobi since 2016. The first of its kind in Africa, the Nairobi unit is supporting victims of sexual abuse and exploitation

throughout Kenya. In 2019, the Nairobi unit dealt with 52 cases, made 16 arrests and safeguarded 72 children, with 32 of the 72 children rescued, victims of trafficking from bordering countries including Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania.

This new Mombasa Child Protection Unit will build on the important work done by the Nairobi Unit. In addition to providing support for the building of the unit and donation of vehicles, the UK has provided vital training and mentorship to more than 30 personnel who operate out of the Nairobi and Mombasa units. In recognition of the UK support, the National Police Service of Kenya has boosted the number of personnel tackling CSEA and Child Trafficking in the units from 12 in 2016 to 33 personnel in 2020. Overseen by Superintendent Mueni Mutisya, the units employ 12 female personnel including two Chief Inspectors and two Inspectors.

If anybody has information about suspected Child Abuse/Trafficking or suspects please call the Kenya Child Helpline number, which is 116, and support should come your way.

Prime Minister confirms ministerial leads for UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

The Prime Minister was today pleased to confirm the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, as the co-chair of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee. He also confirmed Paymaster General Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP as the alternate co-chair.

The Joint Committee will oversee implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement. Further details will be set out in due course.

Africa Minister champions UK leadership to help educate girls and end preventable deaths

Joint FCO and DFID Minister for Africa James Duddridge meets Sahel leaders

and international partners, championing the UK's leading role in ensuring girls can go to school and ending preventable deaths.

Minister for Africa James Duddridge has visited Mauritania for the first time since taking up his role. He attended the first General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance and the sixth Summit of the Leaders of the G5 (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). The visit highlighted how the UK is supporting countries in the Sahel to improve girls' education, through enabling those affected by conflict to go to school, and helping to end preventable deaths.

Studies show that of children who live in countries affected by conflict and humanitarian crises, 1 in 4 are not in school, with girls more than twice as likely to be out of education. Sahel countries make up one of the world's poorest regions with high rates of child marriage restricting girls' education and economic empowerment. It also has some of the highest maternal mortality rates globally.

The Minister met global leaders in Nouakchott, the country's capital, including Heads of State from the Sahel and major international partners, to discuss how the UK can support the fragile region in key sectors such as health and education, and help to build peace and security for millions.

Following his visit, the Minister for Africa James Duddridge said:

"Increasing conflict in the Sahel has disrupted access to vital basic services for some of the world's poorest communities. We are committed to work with Sahel leaders and the international community to change this and are boosting our efforts in the region.

"To make our world safer, healthier, more stable and more prosperous, we need girls to go to school, stay in school and have a quality education.

"Through UK aid, we are educating children living in conflict zones, like those in the Sahel, to help transform the world of tomorrow and ensure future generations thrive."

During his visit he met with the Mauritanian Minister for Education and National Education Reform, Adama Bocar Soko. He welcomed the Mauritanian government's focus on education and discussed how the UK can help improve education systems in the Sahel and break down barriers to girls attending school.

He also used meetings to press for more international focus on ending preventable deaths of mothers, new-borns and children in the region by 2030. UK aid is helping to build reliable healthcare systems, providing vaccinations for preventable diseases, supporting mothers and children affected by malnutrition, and delivering family planning and reproductive health services around the world.

The Minister went to see a project, backed by UK aid's Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) programme, which is delivering sexual and reproductive health advice and services for marginalised communities in Mauritania. The UK is working with the country's Government to improve healthcare, address

gender-based violence and end harmful practices.

At the Assembly, he met Axel Van Trotsenburg, World Bank Managing Director of Operations, and talked about how the UK and World Bank can help the Sahel to cope with climate change and extreme weather. He discussed the UK's security support to the region with the Malian Defence Minister Ibrahima Dembélé.

Northern franchise enters new future

- government operator takes over running of services on Northern network
- Northern leaders from Manchester, Liverpool, Tees Valley and Yorkshire will join panel to advise new operator on priorities for new Northern franchise
- operator will work with local leaders, industry and passenger representatives to deliver a plan for improvements after first 100 days

The government has taken over the running of services across the Northern network today (1 March 2020), marking a new start for the future of the franchise.

Demonstrating the government's commitment to rebuild passenger confidence and put their priorities first, the government operator has launched a [new panel to provide ongoing advice on how services will be run](#). Political leaders including Andy Burnham from Manchester and Judith Blake from Leeds will be joined by regional leaders, passenger representatives and industry leaders on the panel, which will be led by Richard George, the chairman of the operator.

The government has also announced that overcrowding on Northern's network will be a priority focus for improvement, with new technology being trialled to identify crowding pinch points. Work is underway to extend platforms at 30 stations across the network to allow for longer trains and improve journeys for passengers.

Capacity will be further boosted with the roll-out of more electric trains across the network next year, in addition to the extra capacity already being delivered by the new fleet. A major deep cleaning program has also commenced today, along with an overhaul of on-board cleanliness, to make sure carriages meet the high standards passengers deserve.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

This is new era for rail in the North, but there will be no quick fix for the network as we build solutions for the future.

Today marks the beginning of rebuilding of trust in these services, and voices from the region will be essential as we work together to

understand and deliver the improvements passengers need.

Our aim is to give the North of England more powers over their railways, restoring the confidence of passengers and delivering a network they can truly rely on.

Chairman of the government's operator, Richard George said:

The panel announced today will play a crucial strategic role as we look to transform services across Northern's network, putting the needs of passengers first.

By collaborating with local leaders, we're taking a step towards reconnecting the railways with the people of the North. We need to improve performance and also provide passengers and their elected representatives with the confidence that their concerns are being addressed.

The Transport Secretary has tasked the operator with delivering a new vision for the North's railways, restoring confidence for passengers and delivering tangible improvements, but has made clear that the complexity of the challenge means transformation will not take place overnight.

The leadership of the government operator will be using the first 100 days running services to prepare an ambitious plan, consulting with passengers and leaders across the North to understand their priorities, and leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to improve the service for passengers.

[Health Secretary sets out government "battle plan" for COVID-19](#)

- Every government department to have a designated Ministerial virus lead to help oversee Government response to the global threat of COVID-19
- Cross-government 'war room' of communications experts and scientists also set up ahead of public information blitz in coming weeks
- Further COBRs planned this week, with Ministerial COBR meetings upgraded to be held more frequently, if required

All four parts of the UK will work together against the potential of a COVID-19 epidemic in the UK, under the government's new approach to pandemic preparation.

Every department will have a designated Ministerial virus lead to help

oversee the cross-government response to the outbreak, with the Government increasing the number of COBRs meetings.

The Prime Minister will chair a meeting of COBR on Monday as part of this coordinated response, and has today received a situation briefing by the Chief Medical Officer and the Secretary of State from the Department of Health and Social Care.

Other Government departments will increase their preparations as part of the comprehensive approach to Coronavirus, which has been led so far by DHSC working with NHS England and Public Health England.

Leading scientific experts and senior civil servants will also increase the number of high-level meetings to support Ministers in their preparations.

The move comes as government prepares to jointly publish an updated action plan on the response of the health care system and the public to COVID-19 together with the Governments in the devolved nations. The document, expected to be published later this week, will outline the steps government will take to manage COVID-19 if there is a sustained UK epidemic.

The plan will be based on the government's existing contingency plans for responding to a pandemic flu outbreak, but has been adapted to take account of the differences between COVID-19 and pandemic influenza – ensuring government has been able to quickly develop an effective response while leaving further room to adapt the plan over time.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

We must prepare for Coronavirus and listen to the advice of the Chief Medical Officer – especially about the importance of washing our hands with soap. We should be doing that for 20 seconds, and more often than we would normally think was necessary. This will make a real difference in stopping this virus spread.

Coronavirus may very well be a challenge in the weeks and months ahead. But I have no doubt that with the help of the NHS and its incomparable staff this country will get through it – and beat it.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The UK is a world leader in preparing for and managing disease outbreaks and I have every confidence in our nation's ability to respond to the threat of COVID-19.

Public safety is our top priority. Our battleplan will ensure that as this escalates, every part of government is working together to share the responsibility of tackling the health, economic, and social impacts of COVID-19.

The government and the NHS are working 24/7 to fight this virus, but cannot do this alone. Every single person has a role to play in helping to manage the spread of the virus – whether that's washing your hands more often, catching your sneezes, and following clinical advice by calling NHS 111 not going to A&E if you develop symptoms.

While we are currently in the 'containment' phase where isolated cases are transferred to hospital and detailed contact tracing is carried out, the next phase could see broader measures introduced to keep the public safe and relieve the pressure on the NHS.

These could include looking at emergency registration of health professionals who have retired, the introduction of emergency indemnity coverage for health care workers to provide care or diagnostic services and relaxation of rules around staff to pupil ratios in education and childcare settings.

More widely, government is considering whether to encourage more home working and discourage unnecessary travel as part of a 'social distancing' strategy that would delay the peak of the outbreak until later in the year, potentially helping combat the virus in warmer weather conditions.

The Prime Minister has also ordered a war room to be convened in the Cabinet Office, featuring a cross-Whitehall team of communications experts to roll out the public information campaign and respond quickly to cross-department issues.

The campaign will launch this week, and will feature posters and social media adverts to reinforce the importance of hand-washing, for 20 seconds or more with water and soap, to prevent the spread of the virus. NHS, Public Health England and Local Authority Public Health teams up and down the country are working tirelessly to support everyone in need of advice, testing or treatment.

The new measures, which have been ordered by Downing Street and the Health Secretary as part of the battleplan, are:

- Coronavirus to be a standing item on the weekly Cabinet agenda, with the PM continuing to oversee the Government approach;
- All DHSC ministers will be involved in the efforts to tackle COVID-19;
- Regular press briefings led by the Secretary of State and Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty; and
- All departments to designate a Junior Minister to be responsible for their department's COVID-19 action, for instance on schools or businesses.

Since January, public health teams and world leading scientists have been working round the clock on the COVID-19 response, and government has been working with partners across the country to provide tailored advice to the public, travelers coming into the country and those most at risk from COVID-19.

Public Health England have already concluded over 10,000 tests so far, and all but 23 have been negative. Latest figures are [published daily](#) at 2pm.

Expert teams are actively tracing those who have come into contact with a suspected case.

Unless an individual has been contacted already or has travelled to an affected area, they should be reassured it is not necessary for them to take any further action.