

HIV in the UK: towards zero HIV transmissions by 2030

The [new report](#) shows that thanks to increases in HIV testing, fewer people remain unaware of their HIV status.

The drop in HIV transmission has been especially large among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men from an estimated 2,800 transmissions in 2012 to 800 in 2018, a 71.4% fall. The number of gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men living undiagnosed with HIV has halved since 2014 from an estimated 7,000 to 3,600 in 2018.

The scale-up of combination prevention (which includes the use of condoms, HIV testing in a wide range of settings, starting antiretroviral therapy (ART) as soon as possible if positive, and the availability of Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for those who are negative) across the UK is working.

The goal of eliminating HIV transmission by 2030 depends upon sustaining prevention efforts and further expanding them to reach all at risk.

HIV testing has greatly increased over the past decade. In 2018, however, an estimated 7,500 people were living with HIV and were unaware of this, and 2 in 5 of those diagnosed in 2018 were diagnosed at a late stage. Late stage infections have more than a ten-fold increased risk of death in the year following diagnosis compared to those who are diagnosed early and begin treatment immediately. If you are living with HIV or you are at high risk of acquiring HIV, then knowing your HIV status is vital.

Dr Noel Gill, Head of STIs and HIV at Public Health England, said:

We are well on our way to reaching the goal of eliminating HIV transmission by 2030, with the rapid fall in HIV transmission continuing in 2018, and nearly all of those diagnosed receiving treatment that prevents onward transmission.

Testing is a key part of the UK's success, if you have HIV you can benefit from life-saving treatments that also prevent further transmission of the virus. Certain groups of people are at higher HIV risk and are advised to have regular tests, including men and women who have had unprotected sex with new or casual partners from countries where HIV is common, who should test every year, and men who have sex with men.

The UK is one of the few countries in the world to have reached and exceeded all UNAIDS 90:90:90 targets. Of the 103,800 people living with HIV in the UK in 2018, 93% were diagnosed, 97% of people diagnosed were receiving treatment and 97% of people receiving treatment were virally suppressed.

Matt Hancock, Health Secretary, said:

I feel very strongly that we must end HIV transmission. HIV has brought untold hurt and suffering to so many, so it is encouraging to see transmissions continue to fall across the UK. We are well on our way towards our ambition of zero HIV transmissions by 2030, and we should be rightly proud of the incredible progress we have already made.

My unwavering commitment to prevention, and public health campaigns, have tackled the unjust stigma around HIV and has led to more people getting tested and benefitting from life-saving treatment.

Dame Inga Beale, Chair of the HIV Commission, said:

The latest HIV statistics show real progress is being made in the fight against HIV, but also highlight the significant challenges that remain if we're to achieve the ambitious goal of ending transmissions by 2030.

To make good on that commitment we must look at what's working well and how these successes can be further capitalised on, as well as thoroughly investigating how to tackle persistently high rates of late diagnosis and ensure the decline in new diagnoses is felt across all groups impacted by the epidemic. Progress that leaves some people behind is not progress at all.

Dr Michael Brady, National Adviser for LGBT Health to the NHS, said:

Thanks to excellent NHS care, people living with HIV now get immediate access to highly effective treatments, meaning that they can expect to live long and healthy lives and be confident they won't pass the virus to their partners.

The NHS is determined to carry on the significant progress towards eliminating HIV and achieving zero new transmissions by 2030, as part of our Long Term Plan to improve the prevention of avoidable illnesses and tackle health inequalities.

The most common way of getting HIV in the UK is through unprotected sexual contact with a person unaware of their HIV infection. You can protect yourself from HIV through consistent and correct condom use with new and casual partners, through using PrEP, or if your partner is living with HIV, through knowing they are on treatment and are undetectable. Condom use will also stop you getting or transmitting other STIs.

Getting tested for HIV has never been easier, with free tests available through sexual health clinics, GP surgeries, as well as through a self-sampling service or by using a self-testing kit.

1. The terms transmission and diagnoses are not the same, transmission refers to those newly acquiring HIV. New diagnoses in any given timeframe do not equate to the number of new transmissions in that period. HIV can be asymptomatic for many years, so there is typically a delay between transmission and diagnosis. New diagnoses therefore usually include both individuals who have recently acquired HIV and individuals with a longstanding infection.
2. You can find out more information about how to prevent and get tested for HIV on the NHS website. HIV home sampling services offer an alternative to traditional testing offered by GPs and sexual health clinics. [FreeTesting.hiv](https://www.nhs.uk/free-testing-hiv) gives more information about free HIV home-sampling test kits.
3. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 90-90-90 targets aim to eliminate AIDS as a public health problem by 2030 by ensuring 90% of people living with HIV are diagnosed, 90% of people diagnosed are receiving anti-retroviral therapy and 90% of people on treatment are virally suppressed and unable to pass on the infection.
4. People with HIV who have been on treatment and show undetectable levels of the virus for at least six months are unable to pass HIV on. The slogan Undetectable = Untransmissible or (U=U) has been widely used and is endorsed by PHE.
5. PHE is supporting NHS England in delivering the 3-year PrEP Impact Trial, which began in October 2017. The PrEP Impact Trial in England aims to recruit 26,000 participants across 150 specialist SHS over three years, and is open to all clinic attendees clinically assessed to be at high risk of HIV acquisition. Trial results will address outstanding questions regarding PrEP eligibility, uptake and duration of use, and impact on HIV and other STIs.

[Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Mali – February 2020](#)



Mr Guy Warrington has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Mali in succession to Ms Cat Evans. Mr Warrington will take up his appointment in February 2020.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Guy Warrington

Married to: Karen Marie Malia

2016 to 2019 Freetown, British High Commissioner
2013 to 2016 UKTI (UK Trade and Investment), Director, English Regions
2008 to 2012 United Arab Emirates, Her Majesty's Consul General Dubai
2005 to 2008 Seoul, Minister Counsellor, Deputy Head of Mission
2001 to 2004 FC0, Deputy Head, Drugs & International Crime Department
1997 to 2001 Geneva, UK Missions to the United Nations, Head of Specialised Agencies Section
1995 to 1997 FC0, Head of Humanitarian & War Crimes Section, United Nations Department
1993 to 1995 FC0, Head of Levant Section, Near East & North Africa Department
1992 to 1993 New York, UK Mission to the United Nations, Second Secretary
1988 to 1992 Singapore, Second Secretary, Economics and Information
1986 to 1988 FC0, Desk Officer, Central America, Mexico & Central America Department
1986 Joined FC0

Further information

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UK Youth Mobility Scheme 2020 for Hong Kong SAR passport holders

The ballot for the Youth Mobility Scheme 2020 for Hong Kong SAR passport holders will be opened in February 2020. Since July 2019 the selection criteria has changed to a lottery based system managed by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). There will no longer be the requirement to provide a Certificate of Sponsorship previously issued by the Hong Kong authorities.

There are 1000 places in total available to HKSAR passport holders in 2020. This will be split into two ballots, one in February and one in July, A total of 800 applicants will be selected for the first ballot in February 2020. The second ballot in July 2020 will be opened for the remainder of places. If your application is successful you will be able to live, work and study in the UK for up to 2 years.

How to apply

If you would like to apply for the scheme you should send one email (only) to: HongKongYMS2020.BallotRequest@fco.gov.uk between Monday 3 February 2020, 12:00 pm (Hong Kong time) to Wednesday 5 February 2020 12:00 pm (Hong Kong time). The email header or subject line **must** contain your name, date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) and passport number as shown in your passport. This must be written in English only. For example: WONG Janet – 31/01/1995 – Passport 123456789. In the main text of your email you should include the following and must be written in English only:

- Name;
- Date of birth;
- Passport Number;
- Mobile phone number

The email account will be open for 48 hours only and all emails received within this timeframe will be sent an automated reply confirming receipt.

When the email account has closed, the 800 applicants will be chosen at random by UKVI. A second email will be sent to you no later than Wednesday 12 February 2020 if you have been chosen to apply. This email will confirm acceptance and further instructions on how to make an application and appointment, along with documentary evidence required to apply for your entry clearance.

Please note successful applicants must prepare on-line applications and on-line credit card payments no later than 30 March 2020. Failure to submit your payment on-line by this date will automatically remove your name from the list and your allocation will be retracted. After you have paid on-line you have 90 days to submit your paperwork for consideration.

If you are a HKSAR passport holder living overseas you can also apply

following the instructions above, and if you are chosen to apply you will be able to do so in your country/territory of residence. Applications cannot be submitted for the Youth Mobility Scheme in the UK. An email will be sent to unsuccessful customers on Friday 14 February 2020 to inform them they have not been chosen and that no further action is required.

Further information

British National (Overseas) passport holders are already eligible to apply for a visa under the Youth Mobility Scheme to the UK and are not subject to any quota or sponsorship requirements.

Clock is ticking for waste criminals as new taskforce launched

A new taskforce dedicated to tackling serious and organised waste crime, such as dumping hazardous materials on private land and falsely labelling waste so it can be exported abroad to unsuspecting countries, has been launched today (16 January 2019).

The Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) will for the first time bring together law enforcement agencies, environmental regulators, HMRC and the National Crime Agency in the war against waste crime.

Serious and organised waste crime is estimated to cost the UK economy at least £600 million a year and a 2018 Home Office review found that perpetrators are often involved in other serious criminal activity, including large scale fraud and in some cases modern slavery.

To tackle the growing trend in criminal waste networks, the new unit will conduct site inspections, make arrests and prosecutions and, upon conviction, push for heavy fines and custodial sentences.

By working together in this way, joint Unit partners can more easily share their intelligence and resources to take swifter action when investigating criminal waste operations and other connected illegal activities, such as money laundering and human trafficking.

The new unit bolsters the Environment Agency's (EA) existing efforts to tackle waste crime. Last year, the Agency's dedicated team stopped illegal waste activity at 912 sites – 12 per cent more than the previous year. As a result of prosecutions taken by the EA, businesses and individuals were fined almost £2.8 million for environmental offences in 2018.

Toby Willison, Chair of the JUWC Board, said:

The war against waste crime just took a giant step forward. The launch of this new unit means we now have a full complement of partners across law enforcement as well as our counterparts in Scotland and Wales to bring down waste criminals for good.

We will target serious and organised criminals across the country as they try to illegally exploit the waste industry and the environment. These criminal gangs need to know that we have them in our sights.

The Joint Unit for Waste Crime is one of a number of initiatives in the government's landmark Resources and Waste Strategy, which is focused on tackling waste crime and driving up levels of performance in the industry.

Welcoming the new Unit, Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

Waste crime is a scourge on our environment and this new Joint Unit for Waste Crime will crack down on the criminals responsible.

Criminals are shifting their focus to waste crime as they expand their illegal activities and it's vital that we take action. The Joint Unit will shut down illegal waste sites, catch criminals before they can do further harm to our environment and local communities, and make them pay for the damage they have done through custodial sentences and the payment of compensation.

Since 2015, six legislative changes have been made to enable the EA to take tougher action against waste criminals. This includes the Agency having the power to restrict access to problem waste sites by locking gates and barring access. Environment Agency waste crime budgets have also risen by £60 million for 2014-22.

Further quotes from JUWC partners

Steve Bennett, Deputy Director of Tasking and Coordination at the [National Crime Agency](#) (NCA), said:

The NCA welcomes the establishment of the Joint Unit for Waste Crime.

As partners in a whole system response to organised crime, we are committed to supporting its efforts in bringing criminals to justice and limiting environmental, community and commercial impact in order to protect the economy and the public.

Simon Walker, from [HMRC's](#) Fraud Investigation Service, said:

We are proud to be part of the JUWC. Waste crime is a blight on our society, with those responsible often involved in a raft of other crimes including large scale fraud that rob our vital public services of much-needed funds.

This new unit will allow us to share resources, expertise and intelligence and take the fight to these criminals, protecting our communities and creating a level playing field for honest businesses.

Martin Cox, Head of Service for Regulation at [Natural Resources Wales](#), said:

We are really pleased to be part of this initiative. Organised waste crime operates across political boundaries and is damaging to our communities, our environment and our economy.

It's essential that as the responsible agencies across the UK, we work together to address this threat.

Jennifer Shearer, Head of Enforcement at the [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#) (SEPA), said:

SEPA's Regulatory Strategy makes it clear that 'compliance is non-negotiable', and being a partner on the Joint Unit for Waste Crime is a clear step forward in ensuring that responsible agencies work together to disrupt and prevent waste criminals from operating.

Organised waste crime operates across geographical boundaries and has a serious and detrimental impact on our environment, communities and compliant businesses. Working together in this way allows us to tackle this criminality swiftly and effectively.

Steve Thomas, Detective Superintendent at [North Yorkshire Police](#), said:

The Joint Unit for Waste Crime will provide a valuable link for police forces who are tackling organised waste crime and those who use waste management as an illegal enterprise or as a front for money laundering.

I look forward to seeing the development of our relationship with Joint Unit partners in a bid to disrupt and dismantle these criminal organisations and their harmful activities.

Further information

- the creation of the JUWC was a recommendation in the [Independent review into serious and organised crime in the waste sector](#), which was published in November 2018. In the report, the Home Office defines serious and organised crime as 'individuals planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/ or as part of transnational networks'. Their main categories of serious offences are: child sexual exploitation and abuse, illegal drugs, illegal firearms, fraud, money laundering and other economic crime, bribery and corruption, organised immigration crime, modern slavery, human trafficking and cybercrime. Serious and organised waste crime results from the deliberate colonisation by existing criminal groups of otherwise legitimate waste and recycling markets. These groups bring with them a host of additional criminality beyond the crime of illegally handling waste, much of it included under the Home Office definition. They engage in large-scale fraud, threaten and intimidate legitimate competitors, disregard environmental and safety regulations, and feed an illegal economy that draws on modern slavery in some cases
- estimated costs of waste crime are cited from the [Independent review into serious and organised crime in the waste sector](#) and the '[Rethinking Waste Crime](#)' report in 2017, commissioned by the Environmental Services Association
- the JUWC will include law enforcement agencies from across the UK, including the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the police, HMRC and the National Crime Agency

[Councils urged to prioritise adoption](#)

Councils are being urged to prioritise adoption and ensure adoptive parents are not wrongly turned away to allow more vulnerable young people find a stable, loving home.

Gavin Williamson has called on councils not to shy away from putting children forward for adoption, and has asked them to review their practices following a drop in the number of assessments recommending adoption as the best option

for a vulnerable child.

Underlining the government's manifesto commitment to prioritise adoption, the Department for Education has also published new advice for councils today. This makes clear that age, income, sexual orientation and marital status should not be used as reasons to turn away prospective adopters.

Instead, councils are being urged to prioritise adopters' ability to provide a stable, loving home and whether they would provide the best environment for a young person to grow up and flourish in.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Adoption can transform the lives of children waiting in care for a permanent, loving home. I applaud the hard work and commitment of the social workers who dedicate themselves to giving children the kind of home environment that many of us take for granted and urge them not to shy away from putting children forward for adoption.

As long as adoptive parents can offer love, care and the stable home every child in care deserves, I want them to be considered. This government will continue building on the increased support we are giving new adoptive families by making it clear to every council that if they think it is in the best interest of the child, I will back them 100 per cent in recommending adoption.

In a [letter](#) (PDF, 198KB, 5 pages) sent by Children and Families Minister Michelle Donelan to every Director of Children's Services in the country, the government has backed councils to prioritise adoption, and challenged the myths that exist around who can or cannot adopt a child. The letter comes amid concerns that prospective adoptive parents are being turned away despite the law being clear they are eligible.

Children and Families Minister Michelle Donelan said:

Since becoming Minister, I have been struck by the incredible work that social care professionals do to protect and support children in care – but too many children are still waiting for a home to give them the stability they desperately need and together we must do more.

There are a number of misconceptions about who can and cannot adopt that I worry are putting off potential adoptive parents. Neither age, ethnicity nor sexual orientation should be a barrier to adopting; what matters is the love and protection a parent can provide. That is why I have written to councils asking them to make sure they are following the law correctly so that no-one is wrongly excluded.

The updated advice follows a multi-million pound [investment](#) in an additional year of the government's landmark Adoption Support Fund – making clear the government's continued commitment to get more children out of the care system and into permanent homes.

Alongside this increased funding, more than £1 million will also be provided for Regional Adoption Agencies, working with voluntary organisations around the country, to run recruitment campaigns in 2020 aimed at finding adoptive families for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children.

The latest data shows that of the 2,700 children waiting for adoption, almost 40 per cent have waited over 18 months – of these, 24 per cent were from BAME backgrounds.

The regional recruitment drives will have a particular focus on finding families for these children, as well as groups that the system has not previously prioritised, including siblings and older children, helping make sure there are enough adopters around the country and helping reverse the trend in data swiftly.

Andrew Christie, Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, said:

I welcome the new government's commitment to adoption. The Adoption and Special Leadership Board is determined to improve all aspects of the adoption journey. We want to see higher quality decision making and adoption pursued whenever it is in a child's best interests, a system where children are matched with adoptive parents without undue delay and adoptive families receiving better support. The development of Regional Adoption Agencies offers a new opportunity to transform adoption services, drawing on the best of both the statutory and voluntary sectors. We will support and challenge them to focus relentlessly on improving front line practice to deliver excellence everywhere.

Sue Armstrong-Brown, Chief Executive of Adoption UK, said:

Adoption is a critical route out of care for children who can't return to their birth families and I welcome the government's renewed commitment to ensuring the adoption sector is fit for purpose. This means investing to value adopters and the love and stability they provide for the most complex and vulnerable children in society. Adoption changes lives and adoptive families deserve lifelong support. Adoption UK stands ready to work with RAAs and the government to help ensure that adoptive families thrive.

Maggie Jones, Chief Executive of the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA), said:

This is excellent, early evidence of the new government's manifesto commitment to adoption. We wholly support the Secretary of State in urging adopters to come forward from all communities and are ready to offer them a warm welcome. VAAs are working in close partnership with RAAs and local government to find forever homes for the many children in the care system who deserve the love, care and stability of an adoptive family, and to provide support though the lifetime journey of adoption.