

Press release: Red Nose Day marks 10 years of UK aid and Comic Relief partnership

Today (Friday 15 March) Lenny Henry announced during the live Comic Relief celebrations that UK aid will match £2 million of public donations to support mental health programmes across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The news comes as UK aid and Comic Relief mark 10 years of successful partnership, making sure that the generous donations from the great British public to Comic Relief are used to directly support those most in need and continue to achieve the Global Goals.

To date, working in partnership with the British public, UK aid and Comic Relief have helped to improve the lives of more than 7.5 million people across 27 countries in the past decade.

This UK Aid Match funding will support UK aid and Comic Relief projects working with people with mental health conditions across Sub-Saharan Africa, to make sure they have access to the support they need and are empowered to live free from stigma and discrimination.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

For many of the British public their insight and interest into aid has been achieved by Comic Relief's fundraising.

By joining forces Comic Relief, UK aid, and the generous British public have changed the world for the better over the past 10 years by empowering people and their communities in ways that will benefit generations to come.

And this year for every pound the great British public donate to Comic Relief, up to £2 million will be doubled by the UK government, meaning their generosity will go twice as far.

Globally, one in four people will develop a mental health condition in their lifetime, it is one of the leading causes of disability, ill-health and loss of economic output.

In some communities around the world people with mental health conditions still have their human rights violated and do not have access to the right services and care that they need.

Liz Warner, CEO of Comic Relief, said:

Incredible things happen when Comic Relief and UK aid focus their energies together, and the partnership has made huge progress in empowering people and their communities.

Thanks to UK aid matching £2 million of public donations tonight, it's wonderful that together we can continue to make a real difference to the lives of people in Africa

Comic Relief and UK aid have been a leaders in raising the profile of mental health and this continued partnership, through UK Aid Match, will make sure this is no longer a neglected area in international development, putting people with lived experiences of mental health at the heart of that change.

Notes to Editors

- UK aid has a current portfolio of £110.5 million with Comic Relief across 5 matched appeal programmes and the Common Ground Initiative Programme.

Information about UK Aid Match:

- For every £1 given by the public to a UK Aid Match charity appeal, the government adds £1 from the UK's international development budget.
- Over the last five years 42 organisations from across the UK have run UK Aid Match projects in 27 developing countries, helping around 25 million people.
- UK Aid Match gives everyone in the UK a say in how the UK's aid money is spent. It boosts the impact of high quality projects that improve the lives of poor people in developing countries.

Speech: Inclusive Political Participation in Afghanistan

Explanation of Vote by Stephen Hickey, UK Political Coordinator at the UN, following adoption of UNAMA Mandate Renewal

Speech: Inclusive Political Participation in Afghanistan

Thank you Madam President.

The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of this resolution and we recognise the diligent work of the co-penholders, but we also regret that it was not possible to adopt a more comprehensive resolution with a 12 month mandate.

Madam President,

The forthcoming presidential elections means that Afghanistan faces some crucial months ahead. As we have all recognised, it's important that lessons are learned from the earlier parliamentary elections to ensure a transparent, credible and inclusive presidential vote on the 20th of July. To that end, we believe UNAMA has a crucial role to play and it will be important for UNAMA to work closely and urgently with the new election commissioners in identifying priorities and challenges.

Madam President, as progress is made, women's meaningful participation in all levels of decision-making, from the local community to the negotiation table is essential. The sustained and empowered involvement of women makes any peace process more likely to succeed. We reiterate that any political settlement should protect the progress achieved on human rights and gender equality in Afghanistan over the past 18 years.

Madam President, millions of Afghans face extreme difficulties amid a complex humanitarian situation. The UK agrees with the Russian Federation that UNAMA has an important role in leading the international response and we urge UNAMA and the Afghan Government to work together to support the most vulnerable.

Thank you.

News story: Government backed Stalking Protection Bill receives Royal Assent

A new civil order that will help protect victims of stalking has received Royal Assent today, and is included as part of the government's wider commitments to tackle violence against women and girls.

The Stalking Protection Bill will see the introduction of new Stalking Protection Orders – a civil order that police can apply for that will enable them to tackle so called “stranger stalking” sooner and more effectively.

The orders will have the flexibility to impose both restrictions and requirements on perpetrators and will carry a criminal penalty for those that breach them. The police will apply for the order, so the burden of going through the process does not lie with a vulnerable victim.

The Bill was brought forward by Dr Sarah Wollaston MP as a Private Members' Bill that was backed by the government. Baroness Bertin sponsored the Bill during its passage in the Lords.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerabilities Victoria Atkins said:

Stalking is a sinister crime that can leave victims feeling vulnerable and can have terrifying consequences.

The new Stalking Protection Orders will help provide safety and security earlier than ever before for some of those who need it most.

MP Sarah Wollaston said:

I am delighted that the Stalking Protection Bill has received Royal Assent and is now an Act of Parliament. Stalking Protection Orders will soon be available to police so that they can intervene more rapidly to protect victims of this awful crime.

I am grateful to everyone who has helped with advice and support, especially those who have personal experience of stalking, MPs from all parties who have worked with me, and to the Minister Victoria Atkins MP and her team as well as Baroness Bertin for their commitment to making this important change to the law.

Baroness (Gaby) Bertin said:

I am delighted that this important Bill has become law. It will plug a gap in the law which leaves people suffering the unwanted attention of strangers. Stalking protection orders will ensure that victims do not have to wait for prosecution before protection kicks in.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales reports that more than 1 in 5 women and nearly 1 in 10 men aged 16 to 59 have been victims of stalking since the age of 16. In 2017 to 2018 there were 1,616 prosecutions commenced under stalking offences, with 73% related to domestic abuse.

While victims who are suffering from stalking in the context of domestic abuse will benefit from Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and Notices that form part of the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill, the Stalking Protection Orders will be particularly valuable for those being harassed by perpetrators not

previously known to them.

The Stalking Protection Order can apply to any case of stalking, but is designed specifically for occasions where stalking occurs outside of a domestic abuse context and will allow courts to not only ban perpetrators from going to certain locations or contacting victims, but also force them to seek help, such as attending a mental health assessment.

Suzy Bhaker, acting CEO of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust said:

The rapid passage into law of the Stalking Protection Act is welcome. The introduction of Stalking Protection Orders, with criminal sanctions for breaches, will provide a strengthening of the tools to protect all victims of stalking at an early stage.

Support for the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders is one of the many positive measures that the Home Office has committed to as part of its Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. In addition to this, the Home Office has also:

- provided £4.1m to fund the Multi-Agency Stalking Interventions Programme, which aims to improve responses to stalking across the criminal justice system, through robust management of offenders in a multi-agency setting, including police, probation, health, the CPS and victim advocacy services
- provided £50,000 a year for the National Stalking Helpline, which has helped over 30,000 people
- introduced the draft Domestic Abuse Bill which will introduce new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders, to protect victims and survivors from perpetrators of abuse

Press release: PM statement on the New Zealand attack: 15 March 2019

Prime Minister Theresa May's statement on the New Zealand

I have been in contact this morning with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to express the UK's deepest condolences at the horrifying terrorist attack that took place at two mosques in Christchurch.

To target Muslims as they were attending their place of worship is despicable. And our thoughts and prayers are with the people of New Zealand, with the families and friends of those who have died in these attacks and with all those who have been injured. The UK stands ready to support New Zealand however we can.

Through terror attacks that have taken place on UK soil we know only too well the pain that such horrifying attacks can cause. As New Zealand has stood by us so we stand shoulder to shoulder with them, and with Muslims in New Zealand, here in the UK and around the world.

There can be no place in our societies for the vile ideology that drives and incites hatred and fear. Together we will defeat those who seek to destroy our values, our way of life and seek to divide us.