

G7 presidency statement – patient safety: from vision to reality

On Monday 22 November, the UK under its G7 Presidency convened a meeting on 'Patient safety: from vision to reality', co-sponsored with the World Health Organization (WHO). Patient safety is a critical global public health issue and is essential if health systems are to advance and achieve universal health coverage (UHC). This event provided an important opportunity to demonstrate the continued importance of patient safety as an urgent global endeavour, facilitate international collaboration, and support strategic initiatives designed to eliminate avoidable harm in healthcare globally.

Since 2016, the UK has worked closely with international partners, including in the G7, to raise the profile of patient safety issues and work together to drive solutions. This engagement led to the establishment of the annual Global Ministerial Summit on Patient Safety and adoption by the 72nd World Health Assembly (2019) of a UK co-led Resolution on 'Global Action on Patient Safety' (creating an annual World Patient Safety Day on 17 September) and WHO's 'Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021 to 2030' by the 74th World Health Assembly (2021).

The event on 22 November brought together G7 countries, UK devolved administrations, system partners and patient advocates to share learning and reaffirm the importance of this critical issue. With the unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, patient safety has become an even more crucial area for international cooperation, and the event underlined the importance of countries continuing to work together to maintain momentum on improving patient safety worldwide.

The event was chaired by Dr Aidan Fowler, National Director of Patient Safety for NHS England and NHS Improvement, and was very well attended by global experts. The importance of continued international work to improve patient safety was underlined in the keynote speeches from Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO, as well as Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and Jeremy Hunt, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee.

The event also provided an important opportunity for sharing learning from around the world; and highlighted the need for and value of continued collaboration between countries on health issues. Interventions from G7 countries and UK devolved administrations provided important insights into how different countries are tackling this shared aim of eliminating avoidable harm in healthcare. It was clear that although health systems differ from country to country, many threats to patient safety have similar causes and similar solutions.

The UK looks forward to continuing to engage with international partners, including the G7, for example through the next Global Ministerial Summit on Patient Safety which will be hosted by Switzerland.