

Statement on Defence Secretary's call with Russian Defence Minister

Press release

Statement on Defence Secretary Ben Wallace's call with the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu.



At the request of the Russian Ministry of Defence, the Secretary of State for Defence spoke with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, this afternoon. Minister Shoigu alleged that Ukraine was planning actions facilitated by Western countries, including the UK, to escalate the conflict in Ukraine.

The Defence Secretary refuted these claims and cautioned that such allegations should not be used as a pretext for greater escalation.

The Defence Secretary also reiterated UK and wider international support for Ukraine and desire to de-escalate this conflict. It is for Ukraine and Russia to seek resolution to the war and the UK stands ready to assist.

The Secretary of State observed that both Ministers were professional and respectful on the call.

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New vaccine marketing campaign urges millions to boost their immunity this

winter

A new country-wide marketing campaign urging millions of eligible people to get their flu and COVID-19 booster vaccines to top up their immunity will launch on Monday (24 October), as almost 10 million people in England have already received their boosters.

Adverts will air across television, radio, social and digital media, stressing the importance of people getting both vaccines to increase their protection this winter.

Targeted communications for individuals with long term health conditions, pregnant women and ethnic minority communities, with a particular focus on those with low vaccine confidence, will also appear, and will include examples of where vaccine uptake rates have been low in the past.

More than 10 million people are expected to have received their COVID-19 autumn booster in England by Monday, with 49.5% of those 65 and over getting their flu jab, helping protect against serious illness throughout the winter.

Latest COVID-19 data has shown continued high rates of cases and hospitalisations in recent weeks.

Cases of flu have climbed quickly in the past week, indicating that the season has started earlier than normal. This is leading to increased pressure on emergency departments, with rates of hospitalisations and ICU admissions rising fastest in children under 5.

Deputy Prime Minister and Health and Social Care Secretary, Thérèse Coffey received her autumn booster this week and urges those eligible to take up the offer as soon as possible, saying:

Our COVID autumn booster and flu vaccination programmes are in full swing. Vaccines are our best line of defence against both viruses and will help keep people out of hospital this winter.

While we have made great progress with almost 10 million people already boosted, including me, we are actively encouraging, through our new marketing campaign, everybody eligible to come forward for both jabs as soon as possible.

Vaccination for flu is currently behind last season for pre-schoolers (12.1% in all 2 year olds and 12.8% in all 3 year olds), pregnant women (12.4%) and under 65s in a clinical risk group (18.2%).

Vaccines are the best defence against both viruses and will help reduce the amount of people requiring hospital treatment, reducing pressure on the NHS.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Dr Thomas Waite said:

The restrictions we had in place to curb the spread of COVID and protect the NHS last year also prevented the flu virus from spreading as we would normally expect to see, so levels of immunity in the population are likely quite low.

Flu has started circulating at low levels, mainly in children and younger people at the moment. As winter approaches, we can expect flu and COVID cases to rise in all age groups. Getting vaccinated against both viruses is the most important thing you can do to reduce your chances of getting seriously ill. If eligible please come forward for your jabs as soon as you can – it is important to be protected before any winter surges begin.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Director of Immunisations at UK Health Security Agency, said:

“The latest data follows the pattern we predicted, and a difficult winter is expected.

This year we want people to think about COVID-19 and flu as equally important – and both vaccines will provide a ‘boost’ this winter. COVID-19 vaccine protection decreases over time and topping up immunity will help to provide better protection against new variants.

So far, we have seen millions of people getting their vaccines, particularly older age groups who remain at risk of severe illness and deaths from both diseases. Having both vaccines will help to protect you and to protect the health service so we can continue to treat patients with other conditions.

I urge everyone who is eligible to book your vaccine as soon as you can and not to delay – you could be in contact with flu or COVID-19 tomorrow.

NHS director for vaccinations and screening, Steve Russell said:

Thanks to the efforts of staff, the NHS autumn booster programme has vaccinated twice as many people as it had at this stage last year with almost 10 million people getting their COVID-19 boosters already.

We are seeing evidence of increasing levels of COVID and flu infections in the community and care homes, and so ahead of what will be a very challenging winter, it is vital that everyone eligible gets protected; it has never been easier to get your vaccines, so book in without delay.

Building on the success of the 2021 to 2022 COVID-19 vaccination campaign,

this year's campaign will stress that the protection provided by vaccines wanes over time, so everyone eligible should boost their immunity by getting both vaccines ahead of a difficult winter.

The adverts use blue (flu) and yellow (COVID-19) halos to represent the protection both vaccines provide. They will run on TV, video on demand, radio, social and digital channels. Highly targeted, eye-catching information on digital channels will help to reiterate the importance of boosting your immunity ahead of a difficult winter by booking jabs early.

The NHS Winter Vaccines chatbot will return, helping to guide those who are searching online for the right information. This instant online conversation tool was first developed to support last winter's campaign and answers frequently asked questions with trusted NHS information in a single place.

Multicultural community activity will see teams of campaign ambassadors engage with a range of different ethnic groups who tend to be more vaccine hesitant. This will take place across the country in high footfall places of worship and nearby community settings. Dedicated radio adverts and unique social media material will reinforce key messages.

Around 33 million people are eligible for the flu vaccine and 26 million people are eligible for the COVID-19 booster.

[Sir Chris Whitty among senior figures appointed to Active Travel England advisory panel](#)

England's Chief Medical Officer, Sir Chris Whitty, is one of 4 senior figures to become part of a new advisory panel, Active Travel England, today (22 October 2022).

Working alongside West Midlands' Mayor, Andy Street, Chair of the Office of Rail and Road, Declan Collier and Arup's Global Transport Leader, Isabel Dedring, Whitty will support Active Travel England's aim to make walking, wheeling and cycling the first choice for everyday trips.

National Active Travel Commissioner, Chris Boardman, said:

Active travel is a key part of achieving so many of the government's top priorities, so we want to link up with those agendas from the very start. Providing low-cost, healthy travel options to get to schools, shops and workplaces will revitalise high streets across the country and help us decarbonise at the same

time. Active Travel England was created to deliver healthy, sustainable transport growth, and I'm delighted we now have such incredible experts to help us get the job done.

Active Travel Minister, Baroness Vere, added:

This new advisory panel will be key to supporting the government's ambition to get more people walking, wheeling and cycling by transforming active travel infrastructure across the country.

Better infrastructure will not only improve connections to employment, education and local services but improve our mental and physical wellbeing and help to level up the country. I look forward to working with Sir Chris, Andy, Declan and Isabel to achieve this.

The advisory panel will meet quarterly with a mix of online and in-person meetings. The appointments have been made on a voluntary basis, with expenses paid where applicable. The first meeting will take place in late October.

England's Chief Medical Officer, Sir Chris Whitty, said:

Exercise improves health and Active Travel England's mission is shared by the health service. We all want to see more people incorporating active travel into their day as a way to keep mentally and physically fit.

Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, added:

Active Travel England will be best placed to succeed as a delivery agency if it closely collaborates with local Mayors as well as both Combined and Local Authorities. That's why I'm looking forward to helping ensure that ATE can make a real and rapid difference across England. Enabling more local trips to be taken on foot or on wheels can improve the journey experience, encourage a healthier lifestyle and help us to tackle the climate emergency. Increasing walking and cycling uptake is central to our vision to establish a truly integrated transport network here in the West Midlands and can support local economic growth by breathing new life into our high streets.

Arup's Global Transport Leader and former Deputy Mayor of London, Isabel Dedring, said:

Delivering a step change in active travel requires focus and determination, but it also requires attention to detail, meaningful engagement with communities and their real needs, and integration

with the wider transport network. The UK is seen as a leader in many aspects of progressive transport policy and has a fantastic chance through Active Travel England to retain its position as a leader in this rapidly developing area.

Chair of the Office of Rail and Road, Declan Collier, said:

Making local trips, either on foot or on two wheels, is a great way to boost physical health and also mental wellbeing. For those wanting to do their walking or cycling further afield, England's rail and road networks will get you there. I look forward to getting started and working together with the other panel members to bring about positive change in people's lives.

Isabel Dedring

Isabel Dedring is Global Transport Leader for Arup, a leading engineering consulting firm working across the built environment. She works with cities and governments around the world in developing transport infrastructure projects and policies.

Before Arup, Isabel was Deputy Mayor for Transport and Deputy Chair of Transport for London, where she was responsible for designing and delivering a range of progressive transport policies and projects. This included driving the transition to zero-emission black cabs, the decarbonisation of the city's bus fleet, London's £1 billion cycling investment programme, and TfL's wider £4 billion roads investment strategy and delivery programme.

Before her time at City Hall, Isabel was Chief of Staff and Policy Director at Transport for London. With a background in management consulting, Isabel is a qualified US lawyer and a Fellow of the Institute of Civil Engineers.

Sir Chris Whitty

Professor Chris Whitty is the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England, chief medical adviser to the UK Government and head of the public health profession in government. He is a practicing NHS doctor and epidemiologist. The CMOs of the 4 nations publish guidelines on the case for exercise to improve health, building it into daily routines.

Declan Collier

Declan Collier is the Chair of the Office of Rail and Road. Previously, Declan was CEO of London City Airport, a role he held since 2012, and before that, he was CEO of Dublin Airports Authority for 7 years. He is currently a non-executive board member of The Royal Schiphol Group and TCR International NV. He has broad experience in transport and business and has served as

President of the World Association of Airports, Airports Council International (ACI), Deputy Chair of the Airport Operators Association (UK), Director of London First Allied Irish Banks Ltd and the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Andy Street

Andy Street was elected as Mayor of the West Midlands in 2017. He grew up in Birmingham. Andy started his career at John Lewis, where he was a graduate trainee. He became Managing Director of John Lewis in 2007 and stayed with the company until 2016. Andy has worked with the local and national government in economic development roles. He was chair of the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership between 2011 and 2016. He has also been the lead non-executive director for the Department for Communities and Local Government as well as a member of the Prime Minister's Business Advisory Group.

Infected blood £100,000 interim compensation payments to be made this month

Thousands of victims of the historic infected blood scandal, which occurred in the 70's and 80's, are being contacted this week to confirm that interim compensation payments will be made by the end of October.

The payments deliver the government's commitment to meet, in full, the recommendations set out by infected blood inquiry chairman Sir Brian Langstaff in his interim report.

Infected individuals and bereaved partners who are registered with any of the four UK infected blood support schemes will receive letters this week confirming the £100,000 alongside details of how the money will be paid.

This follows confirmation that payments will not be subject to any tax or national insurance deductions. Neither will they affect any financial benefits support an individual is receiving.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

I know from my own discussions with constituents who are victims of the infected blood scandal just how traumatic their heart-breaking experiences have been and I was proud to campaign as an MP on their behalf and continue that work as a government minister.

No level of compensation will ever make up for the appalling treatment and circumstances that those affected by this scandal and their families have had to endure, but I hope that these interim payments go some way to demonstrate that we are, and always will be, on their side.

Minister of State for Health, Will Quince, said:

The infected blood tragedy should never have happened. That's why we've accepted Sir Brian Langstaff's interim recommendations in full to help right this historic wrong for the thousands of people infected and bereaved partners left behind.

It's right these interim compensation payments are being made as quickly as possible and I want to thank NHSBSA and the other UK scheme administrators for their relentless work on this. We're continuing to listen and will be looking closely at any further recommendations as the Inquiry concludes.

The interim compensation payments will build on the support to those affected by the scandal already provided by the four UK infected blood support schemes.

The Government will respond to any further recommendations made by the Infected Blood Inquiry and its Chair Sir Brian Langstaff when the Inquiry concludes next year.

These interim compensation payments are expected to reach c.£400 million for the whole UK, with agreement also reached for payments to be made through schemes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as those in England.

Further information:

The Government announced the plans for interim compensation payments in August:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/infected-blood-victims-to-receive-100000-interim-compensation-payment>

New wave of bombardment is an attack on Ukrainian civilians' way of life: UK statement at the Security Council

Thank you President. Thank you again to Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for

your briefing.

And thank you to Resident Coordinator Brown for your invaluable update on the situation on the ground and the work the UN is doing in the toughest of circumstances.

So far, this war has killed, maimed and psychologically damaged thousands of people. Millions have been forced to flee. Ukrainian towns and cities have been reduced to rubble, with evidence of atrocities left behind in the ruins. We have heard unbearable stories of sexual violence.

And the real objectives of the invasion have been exposed by Russia's attempts to suppress Ukrainian national identity and culture and illegally annex Ukrainian land; an act widely condemned by the UN membership last week.

Unfortunately, an already appalling situation appears to be getting worse.

Under the command of Colonel General Sergei Surovikin, a man infamous for brutalities against civilians in Syria, we have seen a renewed campaign of drone and missile strikes across Ukraine.

Heavily populated areas have been hit, as well as playgrounds, traffic in rush hour, and apartment buildings nowhere near frontlines or military installations. A new wave of bombardment has deliberately targeted critical national infrastructure, leaving some thirty per cent of Ukraine's power stations damaged or destroyed. These are attacks on Ukrainian civilians' way of life. And they are a clear breach of international humanitarian law.

They are egregious in their own right, but even worse as winter approaches. Russian attacks mean Ukrainians are losing the ability to heat their homes and cook their food.

The intent behind these attacks is clear. Russia is seeking to subjugate Ukraine by terrorising civilians. And it is doing so using weaponry obtained from Iran in violation of Security Council resolution 2231.

Now Russia is trying to distract us with attacks on the UN's integrity and on its mandate to investigate. But resolution 2231 is clear. It asks the Secretary-General to report to the Council on its implementation and there is extensive precedent for site visits.

Of course the key issue is that, wherever these drones come from, their use against civilians is barbaric.

President, Russia's actions are illegal and immoral, and they must come to an end.

So once again, we call on Russia to stop its disinformation and misdirection and its accusations that the West is somehow responsible for its atrocities.

We call on Russia to heed the calls of the international community, respect its obligations under international law and stop attacks on civilians, energy infrastructure, hospitals and health facilities. And we call on Russia yet

again to end this war and return to the path of dialogue it abandoned in February.

Finally President,

We recognise as others have the wider negative impact of Russia's war.

The positive impact of the Black Sea Grain Initiative on global grain prices is clear and we have heard more about that today. We welcome and encourage efforts by the Secretary-General to ensure the continuation of the agreement. You have the UK's full support.