

# Clare Chapman appointed Chair of Acas

Business Secretary Alok Sharma has announced the appointment of Clare Chapman as the new Chair of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) Council.

She formerly served as Group People Director at BT Group and prior to that, Director General of Workforce at the Department of Health.

Clare will take up her new role on 27 July, replacing Sir Brendan Barber, who served two terms as Acas Chair. Sir Brendan has been in the post since 2014.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Clare has a long track record of managing relationships between employers, workers and their trade unions, in both the private and the public sectors.

Clare's experience will be vital as Acas continues to support both employees and employers through this difficult period and beyond.

I also want to extend my thanks to Sir Brendan Barber for his hard work and dedicated leadership of Acas over the last six years.

Clare Chapman said:

I am delighted to be taking on this role. Given the uncertainty created by the Covid-19 crisis, Acas is proving its strength not just in dispute resolution but its role in helping employees and employers face the extraordinary workplace challenges that are still unfamiliar and evolving.

The appointment was made in line with the governance code for public appointments.

## **Notes to editors**

### **Clare Chapman biography**

Clare currently serves on the Board of the Weir Group Plc, G4S Plc and Heidrick and Struggles Inc. She has also been a Low Pay Commissioner since 2015 and is co-chair of The Purposeful Company with Will Hutton.

Prior to that Clare was the Group People Director of BT Group and Tesco Plc and Vice President of Human Resources for PepsiCo's operations in continental Europe. She also was the Director General of Workforce at the Department of Health where she was responsible to more than 2.2 million health and social care employees in England. Clare has also worked for Quaker Oats in the USA.

In her time at Tesco, the company partnered with The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) to establish a strong framework for progressive employee relations.

At the Department of Health, Clare was responsible for creating the Social Partnership Forum in Health, bringing Ministers, health service organisations and union leaders together to shape large scale operational change, prior to its implementation within the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS Constitution, still in use today, was developed during this time and was significantly shaped by the Forum.

Clare is a Trustee of the Reconciling Leaders Network, a registered charity established by the Archbishop of Canterbury to equip a generation to live out their calling as peacemakers and reconcilers for a just and flourishing society.

### **Acas and the role of the Acas Council**

Acas is an independent non-departmental public body (NDPB) and the Acas Council was established by statute to safeguard its independence. The Council consists of a Chair and eleven members who represent employer, worker or independent interests; all are appointed by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

Acas aims to make working life better for everyone in Britain. It advises millions of people every year on how to resolve issues at work, through its website ([www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)), through its Helpline, and through workplace training. When things go wrong at work, Acas offers conciliation, both to individuals and to groups represented by trade unions.

### **Links to government**

Acas is independent of ministers, but is one of BEIS' key partners. Acas' services contribute to delivering a competitive, efficient and effective labour market which supports economic growth and employment.

---

## **[Foreign Office statement on Hong Kong](#)**

News story

Foreign Office statement in response to the report published today (15 May) by the Hong Kong Independent Police Complaints Council into unrest since June 2019



A Foreign Office spokesperson said:

Addressing police accountability remains essential for rebuilding trust in Hong Kong. We will consider the conclusions of this report carefully.

As we have consistently stated, we urge the authorities to facilitate a robust, independent inquiry.

## Media Enquiries

For Journalists

Email

newsdesk@fco.gov.uk

Published 15 May 2020

---

## [New taskforce developing plan to reopen places of worship](#)

Faith leaders and government have agreed to develop a plan to enable the phased and safe reopening of places of worship when the evidence shows it is the right time to do so, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick confirmed today (15 May 2020).

This follows the first virtual meeting of the new Places of Worship Taskforce which includes leaders and representatives from all the major faiths.

Earlier this week the government set out its ambition to reopen places of worship in step 3 of its plan to lift restrictions, which is expected to be no earlier than 4 July subject to further scientific advice.

In recognition of how difficult it has been for people of faith to not be able to practice their religion with their community, members agreed to work together to consider whether some forms of worship, such as individual prayer, might be permitted in places of worship before they fully reopen in step 3, where appropriate and safe to do so in line with social distancing guidelines.

Members of the taskforce also agreed to consult their faith communities on the measures being considered and to support ongoing engagement with their communities on this important work as it develops. The Communities Secretary also confirmed today that Faith Action will receive £125,000 to consult and engage with different community groups and places of worship up and down the country to ensure their views are represented at the Taskforce's meetings.

The Communities Secretary was clear places of worship will only be opened when the government is confident that people can use these spaces safely and will not put themselves or others at risk.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

During this pandemic, significant spiritual moments such as Easter, Passover, Ramadan and Vaisakhi when families, friends and congregations traditionally gather together, have been celebrated at home.

I realise how challenging being separated from their communities has been for people of faith. That's why I have convened the Places of Worship Taskforce to establish how religious practices can safely resume outside the home as soon as possible.

Today's first meeting of the Taskforce was very productive. We will now work together with all faith communities to understand how we can open places of worship as a priority, while continuing to prioritise safety. I look forward to working with the Taskforce over the coming weeks to reach a solution.

Faith Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

Places of worship serve such an important role in supporting and providing spiritual leadership for this country's diverse communities and in bringing communities and the generations together, but this also makes them places that are currently particularly vulnerable to the spread of the pandemic.

We realise that practical issues such as the size of both physical buildings and congregations are significant but we are determined to find a way to safely reopen places of worship as soon as possible, ensuring that people are not put at undue risk.

The Taskforce will jointly produce guidance with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which supports places of worship across England to reopen safely.

For the time-being, churches and places of worship must remain closed as set out in law. However, funerals are still able to go ahead in places of worship and in crematoria where possible to do so safely.

Members of the Taskforce that met today include:

- The Archbishop of Canterbury
- Cardinal Vincent Nichols,
- Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis
- Imam Asim Yusef, Board of British Scholars and Imams
- Rajnish Kashyap, Hindu Council UK
- Jasvir Singh, City Sikhs
- Daniel Singleton, Faith Action

Other faith representatives and government officials may be invited to attend future meetings depending on the Taskforce's priorities.

No place of worship will be able to reopen before a final decision by the government and the accompanying change to the legal position in the published regulations. Faith organisations will be able to reopen at a slower pace if they wish.

The Minister for Faith has held a series of roundtables and one on one meetings with faith and community leaders over the last few weeks and will continue to do so in the weeks ahead.

The funding for Faith Action has been awarded from the £360 million pot of funding recently announced by Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to provide targeted support to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. As made clear at the time, this funding was not allocated via an open bid but awarded in line with agreed departmental priorities.

---

## [Adapting Security Council working methods to be innovative and agile](#)

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you also to our briefers this morning. I would like to thank you, Mr President, and Estonia and St Vincent and the Grenadines for arranging this meeting and for bearing the concept note that will inform our discussions.

Mr President, as others have said, COVID-19 has presented an unprecedented challenge to this Council over the last two months or so. Most importantly,

the spread of this disease has had significant implications for international peace and security that the Council needs to address. But it's also presented major challenges for the Council's working methods. And in my intervention today, I will consider how the Council has adapted to these challenges before moving on to more general points.

So firstly, on COVID, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of China, the Dominican Republic and Estonia. Under their presidencies in March, April and May, the Council has been able to move to a position where open videoconferences of the Council cannot be broadcast live on UNTV. And we are able to adopt resolutions and PRSTs through written procedure. We should not understate the work that has been required to achieve this outcome, including from the Secretariat. The move to broadcasting Council videoconferences in full was a particularly important step for the transparency of the Council's work.

But the UK regrets that the Council working methods have not been able to respond in a more agile and effective way to this crisis. I recall in this context Article 28 of the Charter, which requires the Council to be organised in a way that enables it to function continuously. Due to a lack of Council consensus, neither the Council nor its subsidiary bodies have held formal meetings since the 12th of March. There are therefore no verbatim transcripts of our meetings. Our technical platform has not been able to accommodate simultaneous interpretation or open debates and continues to suffer from occasional technical glitches. Meetings are conducted without the benefit of the established framework of the provisional rules of procedure and the mechanisms for resolution of disagreements that they provide. We all hope that we can return to the chamber soon, but as long as we are confronted with these extraordinary circumstances, we need to continue to pursue opportunities for improving our working methods. When we do return to the normal, we need to consider how we can put contingency plans in place to ensure that we are able to respond more quickly and effectively to any future crises. Last week's Arria on the anniversary of Victory in Europe Day showed us what can be done with quite some style.

Mr President, I would like to turn to the potential tension between transparency and effectiveness that is highlighted in the concept note. One significant challenge in this regard is maintaining an appropriate balance between open and closed meetings. Achieving the right balance requires Council members to approach the monthly programme of work with an open mind. It is too easy to fall into the trap of following the same format each time an issue appears on our agenda. One option that I would like to highlight is the private meeting; the opportunity for UN member states to participate provides an element of transparency, but the closed nature of the meeting removes the temptation to address the media rather than Council colleagues.

But, Mr President, the assumption that closed meetings are more effective does not always hold true. To be effective, Council members need to enter these meetings with a willingness to engage in a discussion and consider action. Regrettably, we still see too many examples of Council members reading up prepared statements or refusing to engage in a serious discussion of outcomes or next steps.

My final point on transparency relates to civil society. The UK believes that engaging with a diverse set of briefings is an important element of transparency, and we will continue to promote civil society participation in Council activity. But as highlighted in the Arrria that the UK and the Dominican Republic held in February, the Council needs to do better at handling the risk of reprisals to our briefers. We look forward to continuing discussions with Council colleagues on this important issue.

Turning to efficiency, there has been some progress in bearing down on speaking times to the Council, but the Council still spends too much time in lengthy meetings that address the conflicts of yesterday rather than shouldering its responsibilities to address today's conflicts and prevent future conflicts. We support informal horizon scanning briefings by the Secretariat and the development of sofa talks to address this challenge. It's important that we use these opportunities effectively, and as Professor Luck has said, implement agreed working method reforms were widely.

But informal discussions are no substitute for Council meetings, not least for reasons of transparency. We must therefore continue to subject the Council's programme of work to critical analysis and be prepared to bring new issues to the Council. The current crisis means that the Council's work on prevention is more important than ever, and I was pleased to hear Ms. Landren's point on systemic threats. We have to look beyond the immediate geographic nature of the challenge to the wider challenges like climate that threaten us more globally.

The UK is also prioritised reducing the length and the pace of Council products over the recent years. We've had some success, especially with reducing the length of peacekeeping mandates. But there is more work to be done and the UK will maintain our focus on this.

In conclusion, Mr President, the Council's working methods have perhaps never been under greater scrutiny. While we have made significant progress since March, our ambition should be for the Council to be a leader in innovation and agility. And we must remember fundamental reason for this Council's existence and ensure all we do best serves that purpose. I look forward to continuing discussions on how we can rise to that challenge.

Thank you, Mr President.

---

## **Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 15 May 2020**

[Coronavirus press conference \(15 May 2020\)](#)

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for the daily coronavirus briefing.

I'm joined by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Jenny Harries and by NHS England's Medical Director for Primary Care Dr Nikki Kanani.

I want to take this chance to update you on the latest coronavirus data. 2,353,078 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 133,784 tests yesterday. 236,711 people have tested positive for the virus, an increase of 3,560 since yesterday. 10,024 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus. This is a 13% fall from the same time last week.

And very sadly of those who tested positive, across all settings, 33,998 people have now died. That's an increase of 384 since yesterday. And we mourn each one. The number of deaths is falling each day, in all settings thankfully, and we are past the peak of this virus.

I want to take a moment to remind everyone about our plans for this second phase. We have set up the new COVID Alert Level System. That's the five levels of threat – based on the R value and the number of new cases. The alert level in turn guides the social distancing rules, which are vital in our efforts to control the virus.

A higher alert level means stricter rules. Throughout the lockdown, we have been at Level 4 which means that Covid-19 is in general circulation and transmission is high or rising exponentially.

But, thanks to your shared sacrifice, we've brought R down. Cautiously, carefully and responsibly, we are now in a position to start moving to Level 3.

We've set out the first of the three steps that we'll take to carefully to modify the social distancing rules and start to restore freedom to this country all the while avoiding a disastrous second peak that could overwhelm the NHS.

At each step, we will closely monitor the impact on R, on the number of new infections, and on of course all available data. And we'll only move to the next step when we judge it is safe to do so.

In the first step, as of this week if you work but can't work from home, you should speak to your employer about going back in. People can now spend time outdoors and exercise as often as you like and you can meet one other person from outside your household in an outdoor, public place. But please keep 2 metres apart.

This weekend, with the good weather and the new rules, I hope people can enjoy being outside but please stick with the rules, keep an eye on your family and don't take risks.

We've also updated what we're asking to people to do, which is to Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save Lives.

For the vast majority of people, staying alert still means staying at home as much as is possible. Working from home when you can, limiting contact with people, keeping your distance if you go out: 2 metres wherever possible. washing your hands regularly. This is still the single most effective thing that you can do to keep yourself safe and of course, self-isolating if you or anyone in your household has coronavirus symptoms.

By staying alert and following the rules, you can play a part in the national effort getting the R down and keeping R down controlling the virus so that we can save lives, rebuild livelihoods and start to recover our freedom.