

# UK Armed Forces Maintaining Critical Defence Activities

While some basic training and exercises were paused as a result of Covid-19, including the NATO exercises 'Cold Response' and 'Defender 2020', the Armed Forces have continued to fulfil non-discretionary activities:

- Deployed roughly 4,000 troops, with a further 16,000 held at high readiness, as part of the Covid Support Force, which has helped with a significant number of tasks in the UK. (More information can be found [here](#).)
- Provided specialist support to the UK's Overseas Territories, including the deployment of RFA ARGUS to the Caribbean.
- Conducted air strikes against Daesh terrorists in Iraq, on April 10 and April 28, in addition to routine armed reconnaissance flights.
- Deployed RAF Typhoons jets to the NATO air policing operation in Lithuania.
- Maintained the 24-7 Continuous At-sea Nuclear Deterrent.
- Patrolled UK and international airspace and waters monitoring Russian military activity.
- Continued critical operations in the Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan and across Africa and Europe, alongside our international partners, NATO and the UN.

Maintaining all these operations requires a level of training to continue, ensuring both personnel and equipment remain ready to be deployed, both for scheduled operations and in case of unexpected tasks needed to guarantee national security.

In order to continue defending the nation over the longer term, the UK Armed Forces must also conduct routine force-generation, and is doing so in line with government guidelines.

This activity includes all types of training, including sea training for HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, the UK's future flagship aircraft carrier; basic and advanced flying training by the RAF; Royal Marine Commando training; Basic Training for Army recruits and Officer Cadet Training at the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst.

Our Armed Forces are rightly classed as 'key workers' because they are tasked with keeping the nation safe. The health of our personnel and their families are also important, so this is being conducted in accordance with official guidance, and full activity will only resume following Government direction.

For the ongoing training, stringent protective measures are in place after specific planning processes and full risk assessments have been conducted, in accordance with Government and health guidance. The training is being configured and scaled in a deliberate and disciplined manner, enabling the military to continue its routine activities safely and while maintaining an

infection rate below the national average.

Examples of steps taken to enable safe training include social distancing during roll calls and physical training, isolating at the beginning of courses and reconfiguring communal spaces such as canteens, sleeping quarters and classrooms.

Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heapey said:

It has been an enormous effort from people across the UK Armed Forces to reconfigure the training activity that simply cannot be stopped without impacting our national security in the months ahead. I am grateful to all of them for their hard work and ensuring essential training continues to happen safely.

There is a great deal of Defence activity that will remain paused, which is entirely right, as we will always ensure the safety of our service personnel, their families and the communities that support them.

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## [Search for new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration begins](#)

News story

The recruitment process for the new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has opened.



The recruitment process for a new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and

Immigration (ICIBI) has been launched.

This is an important role providing independent scrutiny of the Home Office's border and immigration functions, helping to drive improvements so it works as effectively as possible.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I would like to thank David Bolt for his time in office and all the work he has done to monitor and drive efficiency in the immigration systems.

I am certain that the next appointment will continue to constructively challenge and scrutinise the department's immigration functions so that they are as effective and efficient as they can be.

The appointment of the Independent Chief Inspector will be through a full and open competition, and will be run in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

This will involve an advisory assessment panel, with an independent chair, that will review the applications and interview shortlisted candidates. The appointment will also be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny.

Applications for this post will be open until 11:00pm on 4 June. You can find out how to apply on the [HM Government Public Appointments website](#)

The government has adapted the recruitment process around the UK's coronavirus restrictions while ensuring a fair and open competition. This includes planning for remote interviews.

David Bolt has been the Independent Chief Inspector since May 2015 and will remain in post until October 2020.

Find out more about the [Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#).

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## [Domestic abuse charities can apply for vital funds](#)

- Charities can bid for a share of £10 million funding to support victims

of domestic abuse

- The money will be used to support additional refuge bed spaces and specialist support
- A further £6 million will also be given to homelessness charities to support their work during this time

Details on how domestic abuse charities can access the vital funds they need to support vulnerable groups over the coming months have today (7 May 2020) been set out by Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick.

Last week, it was confirmed that there would be an additional £10 million for domestic abuse accommodation services over the coming months.

This is part of a [£76 million package of government support](#) for the most vulnerable in society, including those affected by domestic abuse.

This funding will support domestic abuse safe accommodation services who not only provide beds, but also offer the critical help victims and their children need.

The support can be used to ensure existing services remain open as well as to create additional capacity and support during these unprecedented times.

The [fund will be open for domestic abuse charities in England](#), including refuges, to bid for a share. Charities providing Domestic Abuse Safe accommodation (including refuges) in England can apply for this funding.

In order to ensure the funding can be shared as quickly as possible, the bidding process has been streamlined meaning people can access the help they need as soon as possible.

Further information on funding streams for charities providing other domestic abuse services will be made available in due course.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

Domestic abuse leaves vulnerable people, including children, living in fear in the very place where they should feel most safe and secure – inside their own home.

Protecting victims is an absolute priority and the funding charities can now apply for from today will help them meeting the challenges and support those that need it the most.

As well as this emergency funding, the government has also set out plans to support survivors of domestic abuse in the long-term by giving them better access to local housing services.

Government will bring forward legislation to give domestic abuse victims 'priority need' access to settled housing, ensuring they can find a home which is safe, secure and away from the threat of abuse.

Sandra Horley, CBE, chief executive of Refuge says:

Refuge welcomes the government's promise of extra funding for domestic abuse services. Over the last few weeks, calls to Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline have risen by around 50%, showing the sheer numbers of women needing support.

This extra funding will help ensure those providing specialist domestic abuse services can give abused women and children life-saving refuge accommodation. No woman or child seeking sanctuary and support should ever be turned away.

Linked to this, an additional £6 million will be made available for frontline homeless charities. This funding will be shared amongst organisations who are on frontline, keeping vulnerable people without a home safe and giving them the help they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This follows the [appointment of Dame Louise Casey](#) to spearhead a new government taskforce on the response to rough sleeping during the coronavirus pandemic.

The taskforce will work hand-in-hand with councils and agencies across the country on plans to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over – ensuring as few people as possible return to life on the streets.

In addition to the £10 million for accommodation services, the government is also providing further support to protect the most vulnerable. This includes:

- The Department for Education will provide £26.4 million to support vulnerable children, including support for families of disabled children and working to safeguard vulnerable children including care leavers and children in the early years. This funding applies to England, except for funding for Childline, which will apply to the UK.
- The Ministry of Justice will provide £25 million to help victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in the community access support services during the coronavirus outbreak, and a further £3 million per annum investment in Independent Sexual Violence Advisers until 2022. This funding applies to England and Wales.
- The Home Office will be providing £3.8 million for community-based domestic abuse services and modern slavery services, and for added support for modern slavery charities who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. The Home Office will be providing £7.8 million in emergency support for charities helping vulnerable children who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. This includes children at risk of sexual abuse and criminal exploitation. This funding applies to England and Wales.

Nicki Norman Women's Aid Acting CEO said:

The government's announcement of emergency funding for specialist refuges and safe accommodation services is very welcome. A recent Women's Aid Survivor Survey found it is significantly harder for survivors to leave the abuser and seek specialist help. Over three-quarters of survivors responding said Covid-19 has made it harder for them to leave.

Refuges are working around the clock to support women and children who are no longer safe at home. However, these life-saving services are facing the additional challenges of staff shortages, lost income and managing self-isolation in communal buildings.

We are pleased that domestic abuse charities can bid directly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the urgently needed emergency cash. We hope all departments will now work in partnership with the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector to ensure funding is fair, flexible and reaches the frontline effectively.

It is also critical that funding for services led 'by and for' BME women, Deaf and disabled women and LGBT survivors is ring-fenced. These highly specialist services are vital for meeting survivors' needs but are often marginalized within current funding systems.

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## [Helen Chamberlain appointed as interim chair of the Independent Family Returns Panel](#)

News story

Home Secretary Priti Patel has agreed the appointment of Helen Chamberlain as interim chair of the Independent Family Returns Panel (IFRP).



The IFRP is an expert committee, sponsored by the Home Office, that provides independent advice to the department on how best to safeguard children's welfare during a family's enforced return.

Helen Chamberlain has been a member of the IFRP since August 2018. Her previous roles have included Chief Superintendent and Head of Public Protection at Nottinghamshire Police.

Interim chair of the IFRP Helen Chamberlain said:

I'm delighted and honoured to have been appointed as interim chair of the Independent Family Returns Panel.

We have an important role to play in ensuring the welfare needs of children are met when families are returned to their home country.

This interim appointment follows the expiry of Paul Greenhalgh's three year tenure as chair of the IFRP, on 1 May 2020.

The recruitment process to find a permanent replacement has already begun and will be conducted in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

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## [Veterans UK celebrates the 75th anniversary of VE Day](#)

News story

This Friday the nation will join together to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe.



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## VE 75 Celebrations

The special day will evoke memories of the jubilant scenes on the streets as Britons cast off the shackles of war – but the service and sacrifice of the WW2 generation will not be forgotten.

At 11am there will be a national two-minute silence, which will also honour those so devastatingly affected by the coronavirus crisis, and DBS staff are invited to participate from their homes. There is no right or wrong way to take part – some may wish to stand at their windows, step outside while remaining socially distanced, watch the broadcast on TV or simply sit in quiet reflection.

Whilst the UK is unable to celebrate this day as originally planned, it is important that we do everything we can to virtually mark the 75th Anniversary of VE Day on Friday 8 May. You can tune into TV coverage on the day to pay tribute and respect to the Second World War Generation. There will be various dedicated shows across radio stations and TV channels.

[Timeline of events](#)

VE day celebrations. Crown copyright. All rights reserved

## What's on...

Just because we can't all be together right now, doesn't mean we can't all be involved. There is something for everyone to try whilst you're at home...

Looking for some home-schooling inspiration? [Look no further...with teaching remembrance with the British Legion](#)

Have your VE Day plans been cancelled? [Not to worry...](#)

Join the RBL for a [VE Day Singalong](#)

Why not get involved on Twitter with the hashtag #ThisIsYourVictory to share with us what you're doing to spend VE Day at home.

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