

# News story: HIV diagnoses continue to fall as UK exceeds UNAIDS target

A new [report](#) published by Public Health England (PHE) showed that the UK is one of the first countries to meet the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets, highlighting that prevention efforts are working in the UK. New estimates revealed that in 2017, 92% of people living with HIV in the UK have been diagnosed, 98% of those diagnosed were on treatment, and 97% of those on treatment were virally suppressed.

An estimated total of 102,000 people were living with HIV in the UK in 2017, with 8% (8,200) unaware of their infection. As a result of treatment, 87% of all people living with HIV have an undetectable viral load and are unable to pass on their infection to other people (this is widely known as 'Undetectable equals Untransmissible' or 'U=U').

New HIV diagnoses continued to decline in the UK, falling 17% from 5,280 in 2016 to 4,363 in 2017. The reduction in new diagnoses continues the downward trend in HIV transmission among gay and bisexual men that started in 2012.

The success in the UK can be largely attributed to a combination of HIV prevention efforts that include condom use, increased HIV testing, reductions in time to starting treatment, and potentially the availability of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

More can be done to eliminate HIV in the UK. In 2017, 43% (1,879) of new HIV diagnoses were made at a late stage of HIV infection. While numbers of late HIV diagnoses have declined, there continue to be missed opportunities for early diagnosis that can help people with HIV live a long and healthy life. PHE continues to stress the need for the public to accept the offer of an HIV test when attending a sexual health clinic or another healthcare service.

Professor Noel Gill, Head of STI & HIV Department, at Public Health England, said:

There can be no doubt prevention efforts to end the HIV epidemic in the UK are working. Our efforts must continue apace in order to eliminate HIV. With an estimated 8,000 people still unaware of their infection, it is vital that people seek out an HIV test if they consider themselves at risk, or accept the offer of an HIV test by a healthcare professional, as early diagnosis is key to stopping transmission.

Treatment for HIV is freely available and highly effective, enabling people to live a long, healthy life. There are now a variety of ways people can protect themselves from being infected with or passing on HIV, including the use of condoms, PrEP, regular HIV testing, and prompt initiation of antiretroviral treatment.

Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, said:

Many of us will remember a time when an HIV positive result was effectively a death sentence. Today's report is a poignant and powerful reminder of how far we've come.

Now in the UK, almost everyone with HIV is not only diagnosed and in treatment, but living long, healthy lives – and we're one of just a handful of countries to meet these ambitious UN targets. This didn't seem possible just a few decades ago, but thanks to the efforts of public health bodies, charities and the NHS to encourage early testing and pioneer high-quality treatment, we are pushing ahead in the fight against HIV.

Dr Olwen Williams, President of the British Association of Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH), and Professor Chloe Orkin, Chair of the British HIV Association (BHIVA) welcomed the 2017 figures and commented:

The UK today has one of the best success rates for people taking HIV treatment anywhere in the world – 98% of those diagnosed are on treatment, and 97% can't pass HIV on because the level of the virus in their blood is undetectable. However, it is shocking that 43% of those newly diagnosed were diagnosed late, leaving them at risk of serious ill health, and risking further transmission.

There are still an estimated 8,200 people who don't know their HIV status – a finger prick test could change not only their life, but that of their partners. Yet despite this progress HIV stigma remains, which is why we must reach the wider community with these messages, so that HIV knowledge is based on fact, not fear.

HIV testing and treatment is free and available to all. Tests are available at sexual health services, GPs, healthcare, and community settings nationwide. In many cases, the test involves a finger prick and results are ready within minutes.

Alternatively, a blood sample can be taken in the privacy of your own home, which you can send to a local laboratory and receive test results in a format that best suits your lifestyle.

On 17 November 2018 [National HIV Testing Week](#) began promoting HIV testing to gay and bisexual men and black African men and women. This campaign is run by [HIV Prevention England \(HPE\)](#), which is part of Terrence Higgins Trust and funded by PHE.

## Background

1. More information about how to prevent and get tested for HIV on [NHS.UK](#). The HIV home sampling service offers an alternative to traditional

testing offered by GPs and sexual health clinics. Visit [www.FreeTesting.hiv](http://www.FreeTesting.hiv) to find out more about free HIV home-sampling test kits.

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## **Press release: UKRI launches in Wales**

Harnessing Wales' rich research and innovation heritage is vital to our future global trading success – this will be the clear call from the Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns at the launch of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in Wales today.

The Secretary of State will be joined by UKRI chief executive Professor Sir Mark Walport at the event in Techniquest in Cardiff to introduce the new organisation to Wales, and to underline the UK Government's continued commitment to supporting ground-breaking research and innovation in Wales.

Harnessing the diverse and ambitious research and development landscape in Wales is vital to the success of UKRI. From turning buildings into sustainable power stations and plastic-fuelled cars, to Alzheimer's medication from daffodils and a genetics and genomics centre tackling the UK's health, the breadth and depth of the innovative work in Wales plays a major role in fuelling the success of the UK on the world stage.

The launch event falls in the week leading up to the one year anniversary of the publication of the UK Government's modern Industrial Strategy.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) plays a central role in the strategy, providing a single and stronger voice for UK researchers and innovators, and working closely with partners in academia, with business and with government to surface the most exciting ideas and opportunities, and to take them on the journey from discovery to commercialisation.

### **Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

Right across Wales, UK Government funding in research is yielding incredible results which are helping to build a greater understanding of the world we live in, as well as creating the next game-changing technologies and innovations.

But we all need to do more if we are to support Wales' transformation into a well-spring of innovation that could irrigate the whole of the British economy. This is where UKRI stands ready to support. Wales must now capitalise on this all-new powerhouse backing British innovation, and work together with our universities and with the Welsh Government to drive partnerships between the best minds in research and business, and help to put Wales and the

UK at the forefront of the industries of the future.”

UK Research and Innovation was formed on 1 April 2018 by bringing together seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England. It is the body that will help deliver on the UK Government’s commitment to invest £7 billion in new public funding for science, research and innovation. It will also aim for the goal of research and development investment reaching 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027 – more than ever before.

### **UKRI investment in Wales includes:**

- 264 active research grants with a value of over £187 million
- 351 companies funded, with 261 active grants worth £98 million
- Supporting more than 860 researchers across UKRI

### **Some examples of the exciting innovation taking place in Wales with support from UKRI include:**

#### **Buildings as power stations**

A new Active Building Centre (ABC) at Swansea University aims to remove barriers and accelerate market adoption of new solar-powered building design. The ABC builds on the successes of the SPECIFIC Innovation and Knowledge Centre, also based at Swansea – a ground-breaking project to turn buildings into power stations, bringing significant environmental and economic benefits. The UK Government has invested over £150million in R&D at Swansea University since 2010.

#### **Discovery of gravitational waves opens entirely new areas of science**

In 2016 the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) international science collaboration announced the first-ever direct detection of gravitational waves – the final remaining unconfirmed major component of Einstein’s general theory of relativity. The work was awarded the 2017 Nobel Prize for Physics, with the UK, including Cardiff University, playing a key role in the technological and computing advances that enabled the advance.

This was followed, in October 2017, by the announcement of the detection of a neutron star collision. The aftermath was also observed by space and ground-based telescopes – the first detection of both gravitational waves and electromagnetic radiation.

#### **Behavioural neuroscience improved firefighter decision-making**

A rapid mental checklist has been developed by behavioural neuroscientists to ensure firefighters make the best decisions on the job.

The research at Cardiff University underpinned changes made to the national guidance provided to Incident Commanders in the UK Fire and Rescue Services. The new decision control process has also been incorporated procedures used

when UK emergency services come together to tackle large complex incidents.

Dr Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, now Deputy Assistant Commissioner with London Fire Brigade, began her research whilst working for the South Wales Fire Service in the city. Her study with the School of Psychology showed commanders often rely on intuition under pressure, regardless of whether a situation was complex or routine.

## **Welsh daffodils provide Alzheimer's medication**

A sustainable Alzheimer's medication has been developed from daffodils grown in the Welsh Black Mountains. Agroceutical Products, co-founded by Welsh businessman Kevin Stephens, produces sustainable quantities of naturally derived Galanthamine – an alkaloid (a member of a large group of chemicals that are made by plants and have nitrogen in them) that, when isolated, has been found to effectively treat vascular dementia and Alzheimer's.

It works by inhibiting an enzyme that leads to the cognitive impairment found in Alzheimer's patients. However, natural galanthamine is hard to source due to the difficulties in cultivating flowers that produce enough of the alkaloid. This has led to a worldwide supply that's almost exclusively synthetic – and has associated side effects. Agroceutical Products could have the answer, processing galanthamine from daffodils grown on Kevin's family farm in Glasbury-on-Wye in Powys.

## **Electric car battery life extended by 50%**

Caerphilly-based Deregallera is developing a new hybrid energy storage system to extend the life of an electric vehicle battery by 50%. The project is funded through the Faraday battery challenge, which is part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

## **Sustainable jellyfish collagen plant**

Wales-based marine biotechnologies business Jellagen is to step up sales of its next-generation jellyfish collagen products after attracting £3.8 million from investors.

The company is the first commercial manufacturer of jellyfish collagen for cell culture and medical applications including wound care and regenerative medicine. Set up in 2017 with support from UKRI's Innovate UK, the 7,500 square foot facility serves the research, medical, biotech and pharmaceutical markets.

Collagen is the most abundant protein in the human body and provides structural support for cells in the body's tissues and organs. It has been used in medical device and research applications for many years. It is usually sourced from pigs, cows, rats and horses.

## **Creative Clusters**

A collaboration between government, universities, all major Welsh

broadcasters and more than 60 screen industry businesses will see researchers work on ways to help the already thriving film and television industry in South Wales reach its full potential.

The Creative Industries Clusters Programme, which is part of the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, is an £80 million investment into collaboration between the UK's internationally-renowned creative industries and universities from across the UK.

## **World-leading neuroscience**

Scientists have discovered 50 new gene regions that increase the risk of developing schizophrenia. They have also used state-of-the-art information about brain development to accurately pinpoint new genes and biological pathways implicated in this disorder.

In the largest study of its kind, researchers at UKRI's Medical Research Council Centre for Neuropsychiatric Genetics and Genomics at Cardiff University examined genetic data in 100,000 individuals including 40,000 people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia and found that some of the genes identified as increasing risk for schizophrenia have previously been associated with other neurodevelopmental disorders, including intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorders.

## **Energy Safety Research Institute**

The Energy Safety Research Institute at Swansea will use the university's existing strengths in the energy sector with a unique focus on Safety Research. Supported by UKRI's Research England, the institute will be built on the industry-facing Science and Innovation Campus, and sponsored by the College of Engineering. The nature of its research will draw on long-term strengths in petroleum and chemical processing, in particular computational science (rock fracture modelling and 'fracking') and corrosion.

The centre will bring this together with more recent capabilities, including: marine energy, nuclear, tidal, advanced water treatment ('fracking' post-treatment and separation), materials, crisis management, more novel areas such as Photo Voltaic (PV) and Nanotechnology.

The project will include the design and construction of a new 3500m<sup>2</sup> building. This will be designed to develop the quality and scale of the university's research efforts in this area. The focus on safety will look at developing and expanding existing energy processes, and the safe deployment and integration of new 'green' energy technologies. The combination of research into energy with a focus on safety reflects the university's research strengths, and the significant position of Wales in the UK energy market.

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# Press release: Crack down on suppliers who don't pay on time

- Companies supplying to Government could be prevented from winning government contracts if their suppliers are not paid on time
- The government is levelling the playing field for small businesses bidding for government contracts
- Minister says: "Paying invoices on time is vital for smaller businesses who are the backbone of the UK economy"

A new prompt payment initiative to ensure all Government suppliers and subcontractors benefit from being paid on time, is being announced today.

For the first time, failure of companies to demonstrate prompt payment to their suppliers could result in them being prevented from winning government contracts.

Coming into force in Autumn 2019, this will ensure the government only does business with companies who pay their suppliers on time, many of which are small businesses. The move will promote a healthy and diverse marketplace of companies providing public services.

Cabinet Office Minister, Oliver Dowden said:

Companies providing crucial services to the public sector, like supporting prisons and delivering road infrastructure projects, must be paid on time.

Paying invoices promptly is vital in providing healthy cash flow, particularly for smaller businesses who are the backbone of the UK economy, to help them survive and thrive.

From next year, if government contractors are late with supplier payments, they could stop winning public contracts altogether – until they clean up their act.

Martin McTague, Policy and Advocacy Chairman for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said:

This measure will get the thumbs up from the small business community. This sends a clear message from Government that paying late is not okay.

Cracking down on big businesses supplying to Government, and not paying on time, is a win for small businesses, tax payers, the wider economy and public services. Measures to open up public procurement give tax payers and our public services access to the innovation and value small firms bring, as well as helping our economy. This is a challenge, and there is, of course, more to do, but FSB recognises the policy progress that is being made.

We have been pushing hard for this reform and it is good to know that the Government is listening. We will continue to work with the Government on this and further measures to drive out late payment from Government supply chains once and for all.

James Roberts, Political Director of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said:

Getting involved in public procurement is a tough gig for small firms. In the past, bigger contractors have dragged their feet when paying smaller suppliers, causing them cash flow problems and leaving SMEs hesitant to take the work.

These proposals finally do something about that. Making the process more small business friendly delivers the double whammy of driving down costs and supporting enterprise. Taxpayers should welcome these changes, which will ultimately mean more competition, lower costs and better services.

To demonstrate the government's commitment to helping small businesses and to mark Small Business Saturday, it will also update its supplier complaints service to ensure business voices are heard.

Formerly called Mystery Shopper, the free and anonymous complaints service – now called the Public Procurement Review Service – helps suppliers of all sizes raise complaints and concerns about procurements they're involved in or about the conduct of contracting authorities.

Since 2011, the service has helped speed up payment of over £5.2m stemming from Government contracts.

This follows the government's further measures announced in recent months to level the playing field for small businesses bidding for government contracts. This includes the ambition to pay 90% of government's undisputed invoices within 5 days and requiring suppliers to advertise opportunities worth over £5m on the Contracts Finder website.

Additionally, the Prime Minister has appointed a Small Business Champion minister in each government department to oversee a robust action plan to help us meet our aspiration of spending one pound in three with SMEs by 2022.



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## Press release: 'Pint sized' Scottish satellites launched into orbit

The two 'first of a kind' 5kg satellites which were designed and built by Spire Global are unique due to their function, tiny size, low cost and quick build time.

This style of satellite could revolutionise work in space, which has traditionally been slow and expensive for business and science to access.

Both satellites, which were developed under the European Space Agency's (ESA's) ARTES Pioneer programme (the UK is the largest funder to ARTES), will aim to prove the value of 'nanosats' in weather monitoring, by using them to measure refracted radio signals passing through the Earth's atmosphere.

Graham Turnock, Chief Executive, UK Space Agency said:

These incredibly clever pint-sized satellites built in Glasgow could slash the complexity and cost of access to space, presenting an exciting opportunity for the UK to thrive in the commercial space age.

Through our £4m development funding in ESA's ARTES programme, the government's Industrial Strategy and by working closely with our international partners, we are helping Scottish businesses transform their ideas into commercial realities, resulting in jobs, growth and innovation.

Experts can use the satellite's measurements to glean temperature, pressure and humidity information for weather forecasting and climate change monitoring.

Khalil Kably, Pioneer Programme Manager for the European Space Agency said:

We saw a gap in the market for what we call Space Mission Providers: companies that offer all aspects of a space mission to validate a new technology or service for the benefit of others.

ESA is always looking to champion innovation in the space industry, and the idea of Pioneer is that these Space Mission Providers can help this by being a one-stop-shop for in-orbit demonstration and therefore reduce the barriers and complexity that can stifle new ideas.

Peter Platzer, CEO of Spire Global said:

Spire has been focused on developing unique data sources with high frequency updates for the entire Earth and has over 60 LEMUR-2 class satellites deployed in space with a complementary global ground station network.

Under Pioneer, we can offer our extensive experience in manufacturing and managing small spacecraft like these to those who cannot afford to waste money and time to do it themselves.

This work with ESA helps further support the global development of commercial aerospace's potential to make space access universal.

Today the satellites were launched from Sriharikota, India, but from the 2020s, these home-grown spacecraft could be launched from the proposed spaceport in Sutherland, Scotland.

The UK Space Agency is also supporting a space incubation centre in Glasgow and has provided support over several years to the Scottish Centre of Excellence in Satellite Applications, based at the University of Strathclyde and working across the whole of Scotland.

The Centre's role is to raise awareness of the potential of satellite services and data to be used in new and improved products and services in other "space enabled" markets – including, for example, offshore renewable energy and aquaculture.

The UK Space Agency is driving the growth of the space sector as part of the Government's Industrial Strategy with major initiatives including the £99m National Space Test Facility at Harwell, and the UK continues to be a leading member of ESA, which is independent of the EU.

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## **Press release: CMA proposes major funerals probe after identifying serious concerns**

Today's interim report presents the issues the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has identified since launching a Market Study into the funerals sector 6 months ago.

Its initial work indicates problems with the market that have led to above inflation price rises for well over a decade – both for funeral director services and crematoria services. The scale of these price rises does not

currently appear to be justified by cost increases or quality improvements.

Given the nature and significance of the issues the CMA has identified, it believes the full powers of a Market Investigation – carried out by an independent group of CMA panel members – are required. Issues include that:

- Today, people generally spend between £3,000 and £5,000 organising a funeral, and the price of the essential elements has increased by more than two-thirds in the last 10 years, almost 3 times the rate of inflation. Organising a funeral would now cost those on the lowest incomes nearly 40% of their annual outgoings, more than they spend on food, clothing and energy combined.
- Customers could save over £1,000 by looking at a range of choices in their local area. However, people organising a funeral are usually distressed and often not in a position to do this – making it easier for some funeral directors to charge higher prices. Prices are also often not available online, making it difficult to compare options.
- While some smaller funeral directors have sought to keep their prices low, other providers – the larger chains in particular – have implemented policies of consistently high year-on-year price increases. A number of these have now introduced lower cost funeral options, but this doesn't go far enough to make up for years of above inflation price hikes. The CMA's evidence also indicates most people who organise a funeral remain extremely vulnerable to exploitation and future rises in charges.
- Cremations account for 77% of funerals, yet there are limited choices for most people in their local area and fees charged by crematoria have increased by 84% on average in the past 10 years, more than 3 times the rate of inflation.

Andrea Coscelli, chief executive of the CMA, said:

People mourning the loss of a loved one are extremely vulnerable and at risk of being exploited. We need to make sure that they are protected at such an emotional time, and we're very concerned about the substantial increases in funeral prices over the past decade.

We now feel that the full powers of a market investigation are required to address the issues we have found. We also want to hear from people who have experienced poor practices in the sector, so that we can take any action needed to fix these problems.

The CMA will now be consulting on the potential market investigation

reference and welcomes any views on the issues identified in its report by 4 January 2019.

It would also like to hear from people involved in the industry and others, who may have observed instances of poor quality standards in the back-of-house facilities of funeral directors. Details on how to respond are available on the [funerals market study page](#).

## Notes to editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
2. The average price of the core elements of a funeral is now £4,271 (2018) and the average cremation fee is £737 (2017). Funeral director prices increased by 68% and crematoria fees rose by 84% over the most recent 10-year periods for which we have data. By comparison, inflation (CPI) increased by around 25% over this time.
3. In parallel to the CMA's market study, the Government (HM Treasury) has been [seeking evidence](#) to aid in the design of a more appropriate regulatory framework for the pre-paid funeral plan sector. Because of this, the CMA is not looking at the pre-paid sector.
4. Enquiries should be directed to the [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk), on 020 3738 6460.
5. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on the markets cases.