

Press release: Blue UK passport to return after EU exit

After Brexit, the UK travel document will no longer be required to conform to EU standards. So in a move to symbolise our national identity, the cover will be changing from the standard EU burgundy colour to a blue and gold design.

The new, unique blue passport will be one of the most secure travel documents in the world, with a raft of new and updated security features and technologies to protect against fraud and forgery. For example, the current paper-based picture page will be replaced with a new, super-strength plastic polycarbonate material that will be more difficult to alter.

Immigration Minister Brandon Lewis said:

Leaving the EU gives us a unique opportunity to restore our national identity and forge a new path for ourselves in the world.

That is why I am delighted to announce that the British passport will be returning to the iconic blue and gold design after we have left the European Union in 2019.

It will also be one of the most secure travel documents in the world, with a raft of new security measures to protect against fraud and forgery.

To save the taxpayer money, the newly designed passports will be introduced in a phased approach.

After the UK leaves the EU, burgundy passports will continue to be issued but with no reference to the European Union.

New blue and gold passports will be issued from October 2019, when the new passport contract begins, to those renewing or applying for a new passport.

There is no need for British passport holders to do anything ahead of their current passport renewal date.

The blue cover is a return to the original appearance of the British passport, with the colour first used in 1921. It remained the colour of choice until the UK joined the EU and the burgundy common format colour was agreed and adopted.

More details about the new passport will be announced when a supplier is appointed in spring next year.

[Press release: Shingles vaccine programme reduces cases and chronic complications](#)

First evidence of the shingles vaccine programme shows a substantial reduction in cases and long-term complications.

A new study in the [Lancet Journal of Public Health](#) shows a substantial decrease in shingles cases and associated complications in the first 3 years since the introduction of the shingles vaccination programme by Public Health England (PHE).

Despite these very positive results, uptake of the vaccine has declined, with a 13% decline in people aged 70 since the start of the programme and an 8.4% decline in people aged 78 years since 2014.

PHE is urging adults aged 70 and 78 to protect themselves by taking up the offer for vaccination from their GP or booking an appointment if they missed out. Shingles is a painful condition and can be especially debilitating for older people.

The new analysis of the shingles vaccine programme, which was introduced in England in September 2013, estimated that the vaccine was 62% effective against shingles and between 70 to 88% effective against post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), or long term pain, which is one of the main complications associated with shingles.

The study estimated that GP visits for shingles and PHN reduced by 35% and 50% respectively, in those aged 70 during 2013 to 2016.

An estimated 17,000 GP visits for shingles were avoided amongst the 5.5 million individuals who were given the vaccination in the first 3 years of the programme across England.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisations at PHE, said:

I encourage all those who are 70 and 78 to make an appointment with their GP practice to get the shingles vaccine, as well as those under 80 who previously missed out. It's the best way to avoid this very nasty disease and the long-term complications that can develop from having it.

Our population is aging and the risk from getting shingles and complications is higher as you get older. Immunisation is the best way to protect yourself from this painful, sometimes debilitating

condition. Taking up the vaccine is an important part of staying healthy as you age.

Shingles is characterised by a skin rash on one side of the body resulting from reactivation of chicken pox virus that has been lying dormant in the body. It can last on average for 2 to 4 weeks and be significantly debilitating, causing loss of sleep and interference with day-to-day activities. Symptoms can include sharp stabbing pain and burning of the skin in the affected area, feeling unwell, a bad headache and a fever.

Over 50,000 cases of shingles occur in people aged 70 years and over each year in England and Wales, with approximately 50 cases being fatal.

The likelihood of getting shingles increases with age and adults aged 70 and above are more at risk of developing serious complications from it, such as PHN, a severe nerve pain that lasts for several months or more after the rash has gone.

Though many recover from PHN, symptoms can last for years or can become permanent. It is therefore vital for every individual eligible to get their vaccine.

In England, the shingles vaccination programme now targets adults aged 70 and 78 with a catch up programme for those aged 71 to 79.

PHE is encouraging healthcare professionals and the public to be aware of the complications surrounding shingles and to encourage those within the eligible groups to get vaccinated.

1. Those who are eligible for the free shingles vaccine include people in their 70s who were born after 1 September 1942 and people aged 79 years.
 2. To get your vaccine, contact your GP or pharmacist for more information. If you are within the eligible group, your doctor will recommend the shingles vaccine during general GP visits or your annual flu appointment. Further details on the [shingles vaccination programme](#) are available on NHS Choices.
 3. PHE's [shingles eligibility calculator](#) can help determine whether or not you are eligible for the vaccine.
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Press release: Government proposals on puppy welfare

Plans under consideration include:

- Ensuring that licensed dog breeders must show puppies alongside their mother before a sale is made.
- Tightening regulations so that puppy sales are completed in the presence of the new owner – preventing online sales where prospective buyers have not seen the animal first.
- Insisting licensed dog breeders can only sell puppies they have bred themselves.
- Regulating adverts, including on the internet, by ensuring licensed sellers of all pets, including puppies, include the seller's licence number, country of origin and country of residence of the pet in any advert for sale.

Legislation introducing these proposals could be brought forward early in the New Year.

Measures to tackle unethical and cruel puppy smuggling across borders will also be explored. And plans will also address the breeding of dogs with harmful genetic disorders.

These proposed reforms will apply tighter requirements to more breeders and sellers and will tackle the sale of weak underage puppies, the breeding of unhealthy dogs and dogs with severe genetic disorders, requiring much veterinary treatment and causing much angst, cost and upset to the new owners.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Any unscrupulous mistreatment of animals is disturbing – so in our drive to achieve the highest animal welfare standards in the world, we continually look at what more can be done. The arrival of a happy, healthy puppy, as I know myself, is a memorable time for a family – but it's absolutely right we do everything we can to eradicate animal cruelty from our society. The proposals my government is developing will be an important step forward.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

At this time of year it is all too easy to be moved by images online or adverts in the local press advertising new born puppies looking for a home for Christmas. But what we don't see is all too often a sad history of mistreatment and malpractice. That is why we are looking at how we can go further to crack down on unscrupulous

breeders so pet owners will have no doubt their new dogs have had the right start in life.

This is one part of our efforts to ensure we have the highest animal welfare standards in the world. We have also ensured CCTV cameras will be mandatory in all slaughterhouses and will increase prison sentences from six months to five years for animal abusers.

In addition, the Government can today confirm it will take forward proposals put out for consultation earlier in the year to improve how the pets are bred and sold. This included a ban on the sale of puppies and kittens under the age of eight weeks, which will now extend to include rabbits, as well as compulsory licensing for anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs.

[Speech: “United Kingdom set out three steps which, if taken, would improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions”](#)

Thank you Mr President, and thank you for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank Madam Keita for her briefing.

United Nations peacekeeping operations play a critical role in containing and reducing conflict, often in the most challenging circumstances, such as in Mali and South Sudan. There are many examples of the effectiveness of these missions. There are also, unfortunately, examples of the sacrifices that individual peacekeepers make, as we were reminded by the outrageous attack that killed 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers earlier this month.

Today we have been briefed on the persistent gaps that remain in peacekeeping operations. We do not always have the right capabilities, equipment and trained personnel to deploy and deliver the demanding mandates that this Council sets.

We must do more to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UN peacekeeping. This will enable us to better manage the conflicts where peacekeepers are deployed and better protect civilians caught up in conflict as well as the peacekeepers that take up this crucial role.

To achieve this we must invest in the UN’s force generation process. There have been significant improvements to this process, but more needs to be

done.

When this Council last discussed force generation, the United Kingdom set out three steps which, if taken, would improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions: deployment innovation, improved mission performance, and better long-term planning and strategic force generation.

Today, I want to update the Council on the UK's actions to support these three areas.

Last year we trained more than 11,000 troops from some 30 countries to prepare them for deployments to UN missions, including UNMISS, MONUSCO, MINUSCA and AMISOM.

Support has ranged from instructor and leadership training through to assistance with the planning, conduct and delivery of national pre-deployment training for Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries.

In addition, we continue to support mandatory e-learning pre-deployment training for all troops to prepare them to respond to and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Women Peace and Security Chiefs of Defence Network which we launched alongside Canada and Bangladesh in November is a critical tool to strengthen training and capacity building on gender throughout peacekeeping and at all levels.

We have also provided over \$800,000 in extra budgetary funding to the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support.

The UK now has over 700 personnel deployed on 8 UN missions operating in 7 countries. These include 380 troops in South Sudan, 40 in Somalia, and 280 in Cyprus.

And we have embraced "smart pledging" which was raised by my Minister of State for Defence at the Vancouver Defence Ministerial. This innovation will enable us to better meet our obligations through a coordinated response with partners. For example, through our deployment to UNMISS, we are working with Vietnam, the USA and Australia, to provide a field hospital in Bentiu, South Sudan, which ensures the provision of medical care for peacekeepers.

But coordination needs to go further.

Firstly, we must collect performance data and use this to better understand and focus our limited resources to where training and capacity building are most needed. We must coordinate our collective efforts more. Cooperation should be expanded to cover leadership, gender integration, protection and victims' support.

Secondly, we must see more partnerships and more smart pledges. We need to develop mechanisms that match those that can provide equipment and technology, specialist skills and personnel, or logistical support. Smart pledges will help plug the persistent gaps.

Finally, we must consider the non-military components of peacekeeping. We must support capacity-building work carried out by Individual Police Officers and Specialised Police Teams. This supports recovery and creates long-term stability. And we must consider how we can generate the civilian component so that missions do not just keep the peace, but build and sustain it as well. Wider work on management reform has a role to play. Crucial civilian posts must not remain unfilled.

We all recognise the positive impact peacekeepers have worldwide. We ask them to take on enormous challenges to protect the most vulnerable. We must do our utmost to improve the systems that support them. We owe this to the brave women and men who serve under the blue banner.

Thank you Mr President.

Speech: “Instability in Afghanistan inflicts tremendous suffering on the Afghan people. The international community can help to change this”

Thank you Mr President.

And I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and Special Representative Yamamoto for the latest report on the situation in Afghanistan. And of course to all our briefers.

As the Secretary-General’s latest report acknowledges, Afghanistan continues to face many challenges to its peace and stability.

However it is important to recognise the significant progress that has been made. 6.4 million children now attend school, the country has a democratic government, and Afghan Security forces are fighting to protect their fellow citizens.

We remain committed to supporting the Afghanistan people on their path towards peace and prosperity bilaterally and through the United Nations. The UK is spending up to \$1 billion by 2020 to support the Afghan Government’s work to improve security, quality of life, and access to education.

Mr President, I will take this opportunity to focus on three important elements of peace building in Afghanistan: the holding of timely elections, the Afghan led peace process, and the protection of human rights.

Firstly credible, inclusive and timely elections are essential for long-term

stability. We remain committed, with the international community, to supporting the Afghan government's delivery of parliamentary and district elections in 2018. We call upon the government and the electoral management bodies to deliver the elections the Afghan people deserve.

Mr President there is no purely military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. The only viable option for achieving lasting peace and stability is an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. The Taliban must choose to engage with this.

We welcome the actions taken by the United Nations, including by the Secretary General and Special Representative, to act on the recommendations in the strategic review of the UN Mission in Afghanistan. This recognised the importance of placing peace efforts at the forefront of the UN's work.

The Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation will convene its second meeting in early February, and we call on all parties to engage constructively with the Afghan Government through this process to give Afghanistan the best hope of achieving peace.

It is also encouraging that human rights remain an essential part of UNAMA's mandate and I thank SRSY Yamamoto for highlighting the UN's work to support the meaningful participation of women in the upcoming elections.

In that regard, I would like to thank Ms Wazhma Frogh for her compelling briefing, and pay tribute to her many years of tireless activism in support of women's rights in Afghanistan. Her invitation to brief the Security Council today demonstrates the importance we place on these issues.

The UK is supporting Afghanistan to prevent violence against women and girls, improve girls' education and ensure women's full participation in political and economic life. We are also mentoring the trainers of future female leaders at the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy.

The Council's adoption of Resolution 2344 ensures Women Peace and Security considerations remain at the heart of the UN's work in Afghanistan. And we welcome the Afghan Government's work so far on its National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security and urge them to ensure its full implementation.

With Afghanistan's recent election to the Human Rights Council, on which we congratulate them again, we look forward to working with them to promote and protect human rights around the world, including through the fulfilment of their own international human rights commitments.

Looking ahead to next month, we fully support Kazakhstan's decision to prioritise Afghanistan and central Asia during its Presidency of the Council. We look forward to working with Kazakhstan, Council Members and regional and international partners, to support the efforts of President Ghani and his government to build peace and security with a particular focus on regional connectivity and sustaining peace.

Instability in Afghanistan inflicts tremendous suffering on the Afghan people. The international community can help to change this. If we work

together, the people and Government of Afghanistan can build the harmony and prosperity which have been inaccessible for so many decades.

Thank you Mr President.