

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Supporting the reopening of outdoor hospitality

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## UN Human Rights Council 46: UK statement on freedom of religion and belief

Thank you, Madam President,

We remain deeply concerned about the scale of abuses and violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief: no one should suffer because of their conscience.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his work over the past five years, and look forward to engaging with him on his report on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, as well as on Christian persecution and other forms of discrimination.

The United Kingdom is home to many thriving religions and beliefs. We reject all forms of intolerance and hate. Internationally, we are concerned by the societal impacts of the pandemic including rising hate speech, misinformation and conspiracy theories which target minority faith communities in different countries.

We are also concerned about actions of governments such as Sri Lanka, where the government's mandatory cremation policy for those deceased due to Covid-19 has impacted Muslim and Christian minorities in particular. We hope this practice will soon cease and we are ready to provide technical support and evidence to counter misinformation.

This year, we will continue to assess the pandemic's impact on human rights.

What steps can we, the international community, take to ensure it does not fuel further global intolerance towards religious and belief minorities?

Thank you.

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## [NHS launches 'Op Courage' veterans' mental health service](#)

Doctors, nurses and other NHS staff will work with military charities to provide therapy, rehab services and, in extreme cases, inpatient care to hundreds of former soldiers, sailors and RAF personnel each year.

Those needing urgent help will receive a same day referral.

The “high intensity” treatment has already been trialled in some areas and will be rolled out across the country by next month as part of Op Courage, which brings together specialist services for veterans.

Involving charities will help NHS staff to understand the experiences and issues faced by those who have risked their lives for their country and may have lost comrades or been injured themselves.

It also helps to integrate veterans with mental ill health back in to everyday life.

Speaking at the annual Kings' Centre for Military Health Research Veterans' mental health conference at King's College London, NHS England chief executive Sir Simon Stevens said:

We owe a special debt of gratitude to those who risk all for their country and the NHS is determined to do its part in honouring that.

Anyone can be affected by mental ill health but armed forces veterans may have seen and experienced things that few others – thankfully – will.

That can create a special set of challenges which working with military charities helps to overcome and that is what is at the heart of Op Courage – ensuring that the NHS is a National Hero Service.

Over the last two years the health service has expanded mental health services as part of the NHS Long Term Plan.

More than 13,000 former troops have benefited from specialist care for lower level problems such as anxiety and depression.

Almost 2,000 more have received help for more complex problems such as Post-

Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The new service, which is expected to treat around 500 people a year, will focus on those in crisis, at risk of self-harm or suicide, or suffering other problems such as homelessness and addiction.

It is being rolled out after trials involving almost 200 former servicemen and women.

Veterans will be able to access any of the three tiers of treatment from a single Op Courage service in each of the seven NHS regions.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Johnny Mercer, said:

One of the biggest challenges we face with veterans mental healthcare in this country is making sure those who need help know where to turn.

Op Courage, a collaborative piece of work between NHS England and the Office for Veterans Affairs, will provide a clear single route for accessing specialist care.

Looking after our veterans is a national responsibility in which we all have a role to play. We all have a duty to ensure Op Courage is known about and understood up and down this country. Help is available; you can get better. Speak up. Have courage.

Op Courage is part of a nine-point NHS plan to support the Armed Forces.

Other commitments laid out in the plan include ensuring access to quality secondary care, reducing healthcare inequalities, helping with the transition to civilian life and increased support for vets' families, children and carers.

NHS England Director of Health and Justice and Armed Forces, Kate Davies CBE, said:

This is a significant step forward in our work to help the veterans most in need who may have historically slipped through the net and we are excited to outline these nine commitments as part of the NHS Long Term Plan to improve veteran healthcare.

Op Courage is a great initiative that we have developed in collaboration with veterans to bring three mental health services under one umbrella to make it easier to access for the 2.4 million vets around England who may need it.

There are around 2.4 million veterans living in the UK and around one in 20 will suffer from PTSD. A smaller number will have severe and complex mental health needs.

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## **UN Human Rights Council 46: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders**

Thank you, Madam President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the Special Rapporteur's report.

Human Rights Defenders play an essential role in promoting the rights of their fellow citizens and make a huge contribution to furthering the development of their countries.

The UK agrees that there is, no more direct an attack on civil society space than the killing of Human Rights Defenders.

We all need to play a role in protecting Human Rights Defenders, both in our own countries and globally, so they can continue to speak out without fear of being attacked or killed.

In July 2019, the UK published 'UK support for Human Rights Defenders' in all six UN languages.

That document sets out the importance of human rights defenders to the UK and what the UK government can and will do to support them.

We will continue to support Human Rights Defenders through our bilateral engagement around the world, and through multilateral organisations.

Our diplomatic network will continue monitoring cases, observing trials, and raising issues with other governments.

Special Rapporteur, what are the most important steps we as States must take to ensure the safety and the freedom of Human Rights Defenders to speak out?

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## **CNC #ChooseToChallenge in support of International Women's Day**

IWD has been held annually on 8 March since 1911 and celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women across the globe.

The theme for 2021 IWD is #ChooseToChallenge and asks people to raise their hand and make a pledge to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality and help create an inclusive world.

In the CNC, inclusivity is one of our core Constabulary values and we wanted to mark IWD by asking our officers and staff from around the country to #ChooseToChallenge. Images and pledges were soon arriving and we will be publishing them across the CNCs social media accounts today as part of #ChooseToChallenge.

We'll also be featuring the first female officer to join the CNC (then UKAEAC) in 1976, Jean Crolla. Jean became one of the first female firearms officers in the UK and served at three sites before retiring as a sergeant in 2004. On IWD, we honour Jean and her fellow female firearms officers who inspired and led the way for many to follow.

Chief Constable Simon Chesterman said: "At the CNC, inclusivity, equality and fairness is at the heart of everything we do and I am so proud to be taking part in IWD and choosing to challenge inequality.

"As an armed police force, our number of female Authorised Firearms Officers is 11%, higher than the national average of 6.8%. In comparison, of our 319 police staff, 206 are women – nearly 65% – and we are committed to attracting more women to join us as armed police officers as well as in police staff roles.

"As part of IWD 2021 we have heard from officers and staff across the Constabulary, based around the country, about how they want to help make gender equality a reality for us all and I hope the actions of everyone #ChoosingToChallenge will make a real impact."

Meet more of our officers and staff celebrating international women's day on our accounts on @NuclearPolice on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#)