

[New mental fitness tool launched to help military enhance mental wellbeing](#)

[HeadFIT](#), designed specifically for the Defence community, provides 24/7 access to self-help tools that can enhance mood, drive and confidence, and help Defence people manage the stresses of everyday life.

The platform includes tools such as breathing exercises, body posture and relaxation techniques that have been designed for all defence personnel, whether they are new recruits, long-serving personnel, veterans, civilian staff or those in uniform. The techniques are designed so they can be easily integrated into their everyday lives.

HeadFIT has been developed in partnership with The Royal Foundation's Heads Together campaign, the Ministry of Defence, Kings College London, with clinical advice from Dr Vanessa Moulton, and has been spearheaded by The Duke of Sussex.

The Duke said:

HeadFIT has been almost three years in the making, and I am extremely grateful for everyone who has been on this journey with us. Everyone who has worked on it, to create what we have today, should be incredibly proud and excited for the impact it will have.

I've long believed the military community should lead the way for the rest of society. For too long we have been waiting for problems to arise and then reacting to them. HeadFIT is a proactive approach to mental fitness, focusing on our own potential to increase our performance, using proven methods in sport science.

This is about optimisation of self. This is about being the best you can be. This is about gaining an advantage, whether facing an opponent or overcoming a challenging situation. This is about building resilience that will match that of most world class athletes and prepare you for every day stress. To be HeadFIT, is to be at your peak performance.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

We train our armed forces to be both physically fit and mentally fit. And right now mental resilience has never been more important as our Defence community works tirelessly to support the UK's public services during the coronavirus pandemic.

HeadFIT will provide our people – serving and civilian – with the tools they need to maintain mental fitness throughout their career

and afterwards. By launching the site ahead of schedule, we are providing them with the support they deserve in these exceptional times.

Developed in partnership with Heads Together, HeadFIT has been designed with input from Defence personnel at every step.

HeadFIT's activities help its users take a proactive approach to their own mental wellbeing reflecting the way our armed forces are trained to maintain their physical fitness. The wide range of tools on offer can be included in day-to-day routines, creating positive mental health habits.

Each of the single Services and Civil Service have programmes and initiatives to support their mental health and fitness, HeadFIT is designed to support the messages in these existing programmes.

HeadFIT is available to everyone as an open source website but Defence staff in high-security environments can often struggle to see public websites so HeadFIT has also been made accessible on Ministry of Defence technology such as Defence Connect and DefNet.

Originally scheduled to launch in June, the platform is currently under evaluation by King's College London. The official launch has been brought forward to help Defence staff adapt to new challenges and changed working environments and the site will continue to be evaluated and adapted based on the feedback it receives.

Helen Helliwell Director Armed Forces People Policy and Defence Mental Health Champion says:

I am delighted to have worked in partnership with Heads Together on this project. HeadFit complements the single Service initiatives out there but given its accessibility the platform can also benefit the wider Defence community, including Defence civilians, veterans and family members. This absolutely plays in to our Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and it's aim to promote good mental health.

Background

- to find out more about how HeadFIT can help improve mental fitness, visit the [HeadFIT website](#)
- Heads Together is a campaign seeking to change the national conversation on mental health. Championed by The Duke of Sussex and Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Heads Together continues to be managed by The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (formally The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and The Duke and Duchess of Sussex)
- HeadFIT is the result of the partnership that was first announced by The Duke of Sussex, in October 2017, when an agreement to kick start this

- work was signed by The Royal Foundation and Ministry of Defence
- Kings College London are monitoring the website to track usage and monitor impact, in order to continually assess its effectiveness and maximise the resources
 - the tools on the site have been clinically assessed by Dr Vanessa Moulton alongside the Ministry of Defence's occupational health and welfare team.

More flights for Brits stranded across South America

Press release

The Government has announced more charter flights from Argentina, Colombia and Honduras to bring home over 900 British nationals to the United Kingdom.



The Government has announced four new special charter flights from Argentina, Colombia and Honduras to bring home over 900 British nationals to the United Kingdom.

Foreign Office Minister for the Americas, Wendy Morton said:

These special charter flights will provide a lifeline to hundreds of British travellers who have been stranded in South America.

We have already brought home over 1,200 British travellers from the region on charter flights and these will return over 900 more.

The details of the charter flights are as follows:

- Friday 1 May: Bogota, Colombia – San Pedro Sula, Honduras – London Heathrow
- Monday 4 May: Bogota, Colombia – Cartagena, Colombia – London Heathrow

- Thursday 7 May: Buenos Aires, Argentina – London Gatwick
- Tuesday 12 May: Buenos Aires, Argentina – London Heathrow

Additional special charter flights from Roatan and Utila in Honduras have also been arranged to enable British travellers to reach San Pedro Sula, in time for the connecting flight to London.

British travellers stranded in Colombia and Honduras who wish to return home can book a place on these flights through a dedicated booking portal from today (Sunday 26 April). The booking portal for British travellers in Argentina will open in the coming days. Priority is initially being given to vulnerable passengers including those over 70 and others who have medical requirements.

These UK Government chartered flights follow flights from Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, meaning we will have brought back over 2100 British travellers from South America and helped hundreds more return through commercial routes.

These flights form part of the £75m partnership between government and airlines to bring home British travellers stranded abroad due to the coronavirus pandemic, as announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March 2020.

ENDS

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[Environment Secretary's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 26 April 2020](#)

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference. I'm pleased to be joined today by Stephen Powis, the National Medical Director of NHS England.

Before I update you on the latest developments in the food supply chain, let me first give you an update on the latest data from the COBR coronavirus data file. Through the government's ongoing monitoring and testing programme, as of today:

- 669,850 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 29,058 tests carried out yesterday;
- 152,840 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 4,463 cases since yesterday;
- 15,953 people are currently in hospital with the coronavirus in the UK, down from 16,411 on 25 April.

And sadly, of those hospitalised with the virus, 20,732 have now died. That is an increase of 413 fatalities since yesterday.

We express our deepest condolences to the families and friends of these victims.

At the beginning of the outbreak of this virus we saw significant problems in panic buying. That episode quickly subsided and food availability now is back to normal levels and has been for several weeks. All supermarkets have introduced social distancing measures to protect both their staff and their customers and it is essential that shoppers respect these measures.

The food supply chain has also seen a significant reduction in staff absence over recent weeks. As staff who had been self-isolating through suspected coronavirus symptoms have returned to work. So absence levels are down from a peak of typically 20% in food businesses three weeks ago to less than 10% at the end of last week and in some cases individual companies reporting absences as low as 6%.

We have put in place measures to support the clinically vulnerable. So far 500,000 food parcels have been delivered to the shielded group, that is those who cannot leave home at all due to a clinical condition that they have. In addition, the major supermarkets have agreed to prioritise delivery slots for those in this shielded group. So far over 300,000 such deliveries have been made, enabling people to shop normally and choose the goods that they want to buy.

We recognise that there are others who are not clinically vulnerable and therefore are not in that shielded group but who may also be in need of help. Perhaps through having a disability or another type of medical condition, or indeed, being unable to draw on family and neighbours to help them. We have been working with local authorities to ensure that those people can be allocated a volunteer shopper to help them get their food needs. Charities such as Age UK and others can now also make also direct referrals on the Good Samaritan App to locate volunteers for those in need.

Many supermarkets have taken steps to increase the number of delivery slots that they have. At the beginning of this virus outbreak there were typically 2.1 million delivery slots in the entire supermarket chain. That has now increased to 2.6 million, and over the next couple of weeks we anticipate that that will grow further to 2.9 million. So supermarkets have taken steps to increase their capacity but while this capacity has expanded, it will still not be enough to meet all of the demand that is out there.

Some supermarkets have already chosen to prioritise some vulnerable customers with a proportion of the delivers slots that they have and others have offered to work with us and also local authorities to help establish a referral system so that when somebody is in desperate need, a local authority is able to make a referral to make sure that they can get a priority slot.

As we look forward more generally towards the next stage in our battle against this virus, there are encouraging signs of progress, but before we consider it safe to adjust any of the current social distancing measures, we must be satisfied that we have met the five tests set out last week by the First Secretary.

Those tests mean that the NHS can continue to cope;

- that the daily death rate falls sustainably and consistently;
- that the rate of infection is decreasing; and operational challenges have been met;
- and, most important of all, that there is no risk of a second peak.

For now, the most important thing we can all do to stop the spread of the coronavirus is to stay at home, to protect the NHS and save lives.

I want to pay tribute to all those who are working throughout the food supply chain from farmers, manufacturers and retailers. The response of this industry to ensure that we have the food that we need has been truly phenomenal.

Thank you.

[UK firm pioneers technology to help communication in hospitals](#)

A new and innovative UK business has developed a collection of digital flashcards to address the problems healthcare workers wearing Personal Protective Equipment were having in transferring vital information to deaf, blind and critically ill coronavirus patients.

CARDMEDIC, founded by NHS anaesthetist Dr Rachael Grimaldi while on maternity leave, launched at the beginning of April and is already available in 10 languages. Dr Grimaldi was inspired by a news article about a COVID-19 patient who was admitted to intensive care and became worried when he couldn't understand what his healthcare providers were saying through their face masks, visors and hoods.

The communication aids can be used in electronic format on the patient's or hospital's phone, tablet, smart device or desktop. As well as the visual aspects helping to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing patients,

CARDMEDIC also includes a “read aloud” option for patients who are either too unwell or unable to read, or those partially sighted or blind.

The communication flashcards are free to download on CARDMEDIC’s website, which has seen more than 7,800 users in 49 countries across 6 continents since its launch on 1 April 2020. Going from concept to launch in just 72 hours, CARDMEDIC is now being used by NHS Trusts all over the UK and frontline hospital staff across Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and the United States.

Dr Rachael Grimaldi at CARDMEDIC said:

Unable to be patient-facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was desperate to do something to help while on maternity leave. What started out as me wondering if healthcare staff could use a pen and paper to communicate with patients, within 72 hours, turned into an online A-Z index of digital flashcards.

Initially, I thought I would share the site with colleagues at Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust, and it would hopefully help make a difference to a few patients. I never envisaged it would have grown so rapidly and at such pace. I am overwhelmed by the generosity in time and expertise from so many organisations, colleagues, friends and family.

Our trade advisor from the Department for International Trade has been fantastic and introduced me to a wide range of business contacts which has helped enormously.

The Department for International Trade has supported CARDMEDIC since its launch date by connecting Dr Grimaldi with local businesses in Brighton including digital consultancy Grow Global which provided a free website review. CARDMEDIC’s dedicated trade advisor also provided the business with advice to apply for the Innovate UK competition to receive funding.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

CARDMEDIC is one of the many businesses working hard to support our NHS at a crucial time, and I am proud to see them already making a global impact and helping save lives”.

This is a truly innovative product that could change the future of the healthcare industry and be widely applied across the world long after the pandemic.

CARDMEDIC is now set to provide its flashcards in 30 different languages in the coming weeks, and is currently working with a hospital in Australia to translate them into African, Asian and European dialects.

The business is also developing an app which will include illustrations and videos for British Sign Language, as well as creating downloadable PDF versions for healthcare professionals to print, laminate, write on, wipe off and reuse.

Notes to Editors

If you would like to learn more about CARDMEDIC or how you can support them, please contact info@cardmedic.com.

[UK announces 5 more flights from Bangladesh to bring home over a thousand Brits](#)

Press release

An additional 5 charter flights will bring home more than 1,250 British travellers to the UK from Bangladesh.



Details of the flights are as follows:

- 29 April: Dhaka-London
- 1 May: Dhaka-London
- 3 May: Dhaka-London
- 5 May: Dhaka-London
- 7 May: Dhaka-London

This brings the total number of special charter flights organised by the UK Government from Bangladesh to nine. Once completed, they will have brought back more than 2,100 British travellers in total.

Four in-country connecting flights between Sylhet and Dhaka are also taking place. These will run on 29 April and 1, 5, and 7 May.

Given the number of people who have already registered for a flight, the majority of seats are likely to be allocated to people who are already on waitlists, having registered via the CTM website.

To register interest in a future flight, and for more information, British travellers should visit the [travel advice pages for Bangladesh](#).

One of the outbound planes from the UK will carry United Nations staff and medical professionals who are deploying to support the COVID-19 response in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Foreign Office Minister of State, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

This weekend, a total of 850 British travellers are due to return to the UK from Bangladesh on the first phase of our special chartered flights. I'm pleased we have now announced five additional flights which will enable over a thousand more Brits to come back home.

Our teams in Bangladesh and the UK continue to work around the clock to support British nationals during this difficult time and get them home safely.

Since the coronavirus outbreak began, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has worked consistently with governments, air carriers and travel companies to minimise disruption and help British travellers return home safely – supported with £75 million for special charter flights to priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable people.

Notes to editors:

- Tickets will cost £600
- Demand for flights has been high and seats are likely to be allocated to those on existing waitlists, having previously registered via the Government's online booking portal – CTM
- Details of the previously announced Government charter flights from Bangladesh to the UK are on [Gov.uk](#)
- Guidance on how to book onto a government charter flight back to the UK can be found on our YouTube channel

[How to book a government charter flight back to the UK](#)

Further information

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