

UK Government announces preparations to ensure availability of abortion services in Northern Ireland

Press release

Government is to prepare work on further regulations to ensure abortion services are made available.



- The UK Government is preparing regulations to take the necessary powers to directly commission abortion services in Northern Ireland if urgent progress is not made.
- Team of experts brought in to the Northern Ireland Office to monitor progress and assist the NI Department of Health.
- Northern Ireland Secretary, Brandon Lewis – “women and girls must have access to safe, high-quality abortion care in Northern Ireland as they do everywhere else in the UK.”

The UK Government has announced today (Thursday 24 March) its intention to prepare work on further regulations to ensure abortion services are available in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, has today set out the legislative options being explored by the UK Government, in a [Written Ministerial Statement](#).

The announcement comes as it becomes increasingly clear that the Northern Ireland Department for Health will miss the deadline of the end of March to ensure abortion services in Northern Ireland are commissioned in full.

The regulations being planned, if they must be enacted, would place a further

duty on the Department of Health to make abortion services available as soon as is reasonably practicable, and remove the need for Executive Committee approval before services can be commissioned.

The Secretary of State will have the powers to intervene directly following the Assembly elections in May, if sufficient progress has still not been made.

The Secretary of State is also immediately setting up a small team in the Northern Ireland Office with relevant health experience to work directly with the NI Department of Health on this issue.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:

“I firmly believe women and girls must have access to safe, high-quality abortion care in Northern Ireland. It is unacceptable that access to basic abortion healthcare is not available as it is across the rest of the UK.

“It has become increasingly clear the Northern Ireland Department of Health will fail to commission abortion services in full by the deadline I set out last year despite being given every opportunity to do so.

“I am determined to do everything I can to ensure full services are delivered.”

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[Kavita Puri has been reappointed to the board of the Victoria & Albert Museum](#)

News story

The Prime Minister has reappointed Kavita Puri as a Trustee of the Victoria & Albert Museum for a four year term from 2 July 2022 to 1 July 2026.



Kavita Puri is an award-winning journalist, executive producer and broadcaster. She presents documentaries on BBC Radio 4 and the BBC World Service including *The Inquiry*. She devised, wrote and presented the landmark series, *Partition Voices*, on Radio 4 marking the 70th anniversary of the Partition of India. It was awarded The Royal Historical Society's Best Radio and Podcast prize and its overall Public History Prize. A legacy project, the testimonies are archived with the British Library. *Partition Voices: Untold British Stories*, was published in 2019 and is currently being adapted for the stage.

Kavita is also the creator, writer and presenter of Radio 4's *Three Pounds in My Pocket*, the first social history of South Asians in post-war Britain. It is currently on its fifth series. As the editor of *Our World* she commissioned and executive produced foreign documentaries which won awards from the Royal Television Society, the Foreign Press Association and the Association of International Broadcasters. She was named Journalist of the Year at the Asian Media Awards. She is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and was on the advisory committee of the Edinburgh International Television Festival. Kavita spent her early career at *Newsnight* where she also oversaw General Election coverage and led on large special events. She studied Law at Cambridge University.

Trustees of the Victoria & Albert Museum are not remunerated. This reappointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Kavita Puri has declared no activity.

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Quin opens first defence science and technology hub in the North East

Today, Defence Procurement Minister Jeremy Quin opened the hub at a formal ceremony in Newcastle, alongside Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Dame Angela McLean DBE and Dstl's recently appointed chief executive Paul Hollinshead.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

It's vital that Defence is open, outgoing and engaged, tapping into the best ideas across the UK.

The Dstl science and technology hub in Newcastle will help spread Dstl's geographic reach and harness the brilliant minds of the scientists, engineers and academics to develop cutting edge data science and artificial intelligence to support our national security.

In response to the increased emphasis on science and technology in the UK and our drive for diversity and the recruitment of core skills, [Dstl](#) is investigating opportunities for science and technology hubs around the UK to access new suppliers, including industry, small and medium-sized enterprises and academia, and alternative recruitment opportunities.

The small Dstl team will carry out AI and data science related research to help defence, turn data into information advantage, and to accelerate the responsible and ethical adoption of AI across defence.

[Dstl Newcastle](#) aims to achieve full operating capability by spring 2023.

[Recruitment](#) is ongoing in parallel with the opening event. Dstl expects to have approximately 15 employees based at the site by April next year.

Dr Paul Hollinshead MBA OBE said:

This is a really exciting time for Dstl and our drive to support UK science and technology. The hub already has seven members of staff working at The Catalyst building, and we look forward to harnessing further talent from across the region to deliver the best scientific advice and solutions to the MOD and the country.

Locally-based innovation organisations, such as the [National Innovation Centre for Data](#) and the [Defence and Security Accelerator \(DASA\)](#), will support Dstl's objectives by enhancing its understanding of the opportunities offered by innovation in data both in the North East and across the country.

Dstl's science and technology hub programme aligns with the Government's Levelling Up agenda with Dstl Newcastle cited in the recently published [White Paper](#).

One month of President Putin's war of choice against Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE, 24 March 2022

Thank you Mr Chair.

I am grateful to Ambassador Çevik for briefing the Permanent Council this morning. I would ask him to pass on the United Kingdom's heartfelt thanks to all his staff – both international and Ukrainian Mission Members – for everything they have done and continue to do for us. The experience, the expertise and the contacts built up by the Special Monitoring Mission over the last eight years remain invaluable. I would also like to take this opportunity to offer my personal condolences and those of my delegation for the death of Maryna Fenina – she, together with all Ukrainian victims of Russian aggression, remains in our thoughts.

Mr Chair, today we mark one month of President Putin's war of choice against Ukraine.

One month ago in the early hours of Thursday the 24th February, the world woke up to bombs falling on Ukrainian cities and the news that Russia had launched a premeditated, unprovoked and entirely unjustified invasion of its sovereign, democratic neighbour. That same day [my Foreign Minister joined dozens of others in this very council](#), condemning Russia's violation of the most basic principles of the UN Charter and international law, as well as their flagrant disregard for OSCE principles and commitments.

The Russian government claimed to be acting in pursuit of peace. In reality, they started a war of aggression.

Sadly, in the days that followed, Russia's disregard for international humanitarian law and their willingness to indiscriminately attack civilian areas became crystal clear. Civilian casualties grew rapidly as reports came in of the Russian military bombing apartment blocks, schools and hospitals in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Mariupol and many other places.

The Russian government claimed falsely to be acting to protect people in Donetsk and Luhansk regions – instead they unleashed hell on the people of Mariupol and on towns and cities throughout Ukraine.

In an effort to stop the bloodshed, on the 27th February 45 OSCE

participating States, including the UK and OSCE chair Poland, called on the Russian government to implement a humanitarian ceasefire. Shamefully, not only was that call ignored, but evidence emerged of Russia targeting agreed evacuation corridors – attacking civilians at their most vulnerable as they attempted to flee for safety.

The Russian government claimed to be respecting international humanitarian law – instead they committed atrocities against civilians.

As Russia's war of aggression dragged on, we saw yet further evidence of Russia's irresponsibility and their willingness to endanger not only Ukrainians but people all across Europe. Russia occupied the Chernobyl nuclear power plant – interfering with the vital work of Ukrainian staff keeping the site safe and preventing them from being relieved by their co-workers for days. The Russian government became the first State to attack a functioning nuclear power plant when they shelled Europe's largest nuclear power station in Zaporizhia.

Mr Chair, sadly these are just some of the many heinous acts perpetrated by the Russian government that we have been forced to confront in the last month. There were many others I could have named.

The Russian delegation can continue to attempt to distract and deflect us from their government's actions. But this is futile. No one believes them.

Instead, our colleagues should consider what it is they are defending and advise their government in Moscow that it will never succeed – neither in President Putin's senseless war, nor in its attempts to spread disinformation about that war.

So, Mr Chair, what should the Russian government do? No, what must the Russian government do?

They must respect international humanitarian law:

- Civilians must be allowed to evacuate in the direction of their choosing – not be forcibly deported to Russia as shockingly is now being reported.
- International organisations, including the OSCE, must be granted safe passage throughout Ukraine. Russia must allow the delivery of humanitarian aid.
- Russia must stop targeting civilians and civilian areas – international humanitarian law is unbending and indisputable in this area.

Mr Chair, the above steps from Russia are urgently needed for humanitarian reasons, but they would no longer be necessary if Russia simply immediately ended this senseless war. This is a war that the Russian government chose to

start, in violation of international law, they can and must respect international law and end it.

Finally, Mr Chair, Russia must return to respect for the OSCE principles and commitments that keep us all safe. They must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their neighbour Ukraine. They must withdraw all their troops and return all Ukrainian territory to the rightful control of the Ukrainian government, including Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

The Russian government has made itself an international pariah through its own actions – the longer they persist in this war of choice, the longer they will remain a pariah.

Thank you Mr Chair and I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

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