

# DCMS Secretary of State's oral statement on Ukraine

Mr Speaker,

We have entered the 8th day of Ukraine's fight for survival, and in the week since Vladimir Putin launched his unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack on a free and peaceful neighbour.

The UK has led a united Western response to his brutality.

We are working with allies around the world on multiple fronts, to ensure the Russian dictator feels the full cost of his invasion.

On the military front, we've provided Ukraine with the weaponry to inflict significant losses on the invading Russian forces. On the economic front, we've worked with international partners to cripple the Russian economy.

But as history has shown us, there are other powerful ways of isolating rogue regimes. Culture and sport can be equally as effective as economic sanctions if used in the right way.

And so in the last week I've been working to mobilise the full might of the UK's soft power against the Russian state, and applying pressure – both publicly and privately – across the sectors, to use every lever at their disposal to entrench Putin's position as an international pariah.

Culture is the third front in the Ukrainian war.

Earlier this week I brought together governing bodies from across sport, and I made the UK's position clear: Russia should be stripped of hosting international sporting events, and Russian teams should not be allowed to compete abroad.

Across sport, across the arts and entertainment, we're ostracising Putin on the global stage. The upcoming Champions League Final and Formula 1 Grand Prix will no longer be held in Russia. Likewise, Russia has been banned by UEFA, by FIFA, by World Rugby, by the International Tennis Federation, and the International Olympic Committee.

Venues across the country have cancelled upcoming performances by the Bolshoi and Siberian Ballets.

Disney and Warner have pulled their films from Russia. Netflix has stopped its projects there; BBC Studios and ITV Studios have stopped trading with Russia too. And Russia has been banned from taking part in the Eurovision Song Contest.

Mr Speaker, Putin is now suffering a sporting and cultural Siberia of his own making, and it will be causing the Russian leader real pain.

Ask Ukrainian tennis player Sergiy Stakhovsky, who gave a very moving interview on the radio earlier this week. A few weeks ago, he was playing at the Australian Open. Now he's back in Ukraine, preparing to fight for his country's survival. He said that Putin loves nothing better than watching Russia's sports teams glory on the world stage, his athletes draped in the Russian flag.

Putin needs the kudos of these global events to conceal his illegitimacy and the hideous acts he is perpetrating in Ukraine. The Russian despot is desperately trying to hide the grim extent of his invasion from his own people.

It's why I strongly support, and continue to encourage, the kind of emotional displays of solidarity we've seen across sporting events in the last week, including the Carabao Cup Final and the Six Nations.

Lights and symbols cannot stop bullets and bombs, but when Russians see their favourite footballers wearing shirts emblazoned with the bright blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag, it helps open their eyes to the cold reality of Putin's actions.

Likewise, every time an international organisation or figure publicly stands up against what he is doing in Ukraine, they chip away at Putin's wall of lies.

So I thank and applaud all those – in this country and internationally – that have done so, and I continue to push for organisations to exile Putin's Russia from their ranks.

It's why I've called on UNESCO to bar Russia from hosting its annual World Heritage conference in June. It's absolutely inconceivable that this event could go ahead in Putin's country, as he fires missiles at innocent civilians in neighbouring Ukraine. If it does go ahead, the UK will not be attending.

And it's why I urged the International Paralympic Committee yesterday to urgently rethink its decision to allow athletes from Russia and Belarus to compete.

Mr Speaker, this pressure works.

The IPC's decision was the wrong call, and I welcome the fact that overnight they have listened, and reversed that decision this morning, and I wish our athletes the best of luck in Beijing over the coming days.

Later today, I'll be hosting a summit with countries from all over the globe to discuss how we can continue to use the power of sport to isolate Putin at home and abroad.

We have to keep ratcheting up the pressure. Putin must fail.

In my department, we've also been working tirelessly to use the power of tech and the media against the Russian dictator and to shut down and counter his propaganda and lies. They are key weapons in Putin's arsenal.

And so the department's Counter Disinformation Unit has been working to identify and remove Russian disinformation online.

Alongside the U.S. and others, we've also been working closely with platforms to take pre-emptive action against Putin, and to demonstrate the consequences of his brutality in real-time to the Russian people. Apple has paused all product sales in Russia. Google has added new safeguarding features to Google Maps and Search. Whatsapp is hosting a helpline for Ukraine's State Emergency Service that sends people information and critical news about the local situation.

While Big Tech has stepped up in a really positive way, we're also encouraging and supporting platforms to go even further to tackle certain challenges, including disinformation, service disruptions, and the humanitarian crisis triggered by the conflict.

In this digital age, the Ukrainian war is being fought on the ground and online.

And so we need to use tech wherever we can as a force for good, to counter Putin's aggression, to expose his weaknesses and to bolster the people fighting for their survival in Ukraine.

Mr Speaker, from the moment Putin began his invasion, I was also very clear that he must not be allowed to exploit our open and free media to spread poisonous propaganda into British homes.

RT's own Editor-in-Chief called the network an "information weapon" of the Russian state, and that's why I wrote to Ofcom last week, urging them to examine any potential breaches of the broadcasting code. Ofcom has since opened 27 investigations into RT, and are now reviewing whether to revoke RT's licence entirely.

In the meantime, those investigations have been taken over by events and I was very glad to see yesterday that the channel is now officially off-air on British televisions, after it was shut down on Sky, Freeview and Freesat.

In the meantime, I have written to Meta and TikTok, asking them to do everything they can to prevent access to RT in the UK, as they have done in Europe, and I'm glad that YouTube has already answered this call and done so.

Mr Speaker, we're on the side of free media.

That's why it was brilliant to see that the audience for the BBC's Russian language news website has gone up from 3.1 million to 10.7 million in the last week. Despite his best efforts to censor reporting in Russia, Putin's own citizens are turning to factual, independent information in their millions.

And at this point, I'd just like her to offer my heartfelt thanks and admiration to all those journalists, working for the BBC, ITV and other news outlets, who are risking their lives to bring us unbiased and accurate news from a live war zone.

Mr Speaker, we will keep ratcheting up the pressure on Putin. I will use all the levers in my department to ensure he is fully ostracised from the international community.

I commend this statement to the House.

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## [Transformation update: two years till the new patents service](#)

It's 2022 and we're now a little over two years away from launching our new patents service, with trade marks following in 2025 and designs in 2026. The first step of our transformation is to build the core services that will be used across patents, trade marks and designs. Over the last few months we've been working on the first two of these, Manage IP and Secure IP.

### **Manage IP**

Manage IP will allow you to view and manage all of your IP through a customer account. We've been building and testing early designs of some of the most challenging parts of the service. So far we've made early designs for:

- the 'dashboard' of services that you can access from your account
- the initial registration process and linking IP rights to your account
- the 'change of owner' process, where you can transfer ownership of IP rights to other accounts

To find out more about the customer accounts, and see video demos of what we've been working on, take a look at the [Manage IP Project blog](#) from Chris Mitchell – Project Lead.

### **Secure IP**

Secure IP is where you can do everything involved in securing your IP rights, from application through to grant or registration. We completed our initial research in December and will start building early designs of the service in the coming weeks. We expect our Secure IP service to give you the following benefits:

1. **The same experience across all rights** – want to align the application process across patents, trade marks and designs as much as possible
2. **Providing the services you need** – some customers have to shoehorn our services to meet their needs. In future, we want to offer a wider range of services which offer more flexibility. If you only want to, for example, apply for a filing date, there should be a service specifically designed for

that.

3. **More effective services** – we want to help customers submit better quality applications to reduce errors and increase efficiency. We could do this through:

- validation rules – checks built into forms to reduce errors
- consistent high quality formats for supporting documentation
- re-use business data from elsewhere (eg Companies House)
- ensure image files are searchable
- artificial intelligence to help customers with applications

4. **Guidance and communication** – our customers don't always apply for the correct IP rights, because our guidance isn't clear enough. To address this we will explore:

- reviewing guidance to ensure it's clear and easy to find
- building guidance into the application process
- look at alternative guidance methods – videos, live chat etc
- real-time notifications and status updates

5. **Access IPO services your way** – look to develop a tool that allows attorneys to access IPO services through the IP software they already use.

## What's next?

Over the next few months we'll:

- **Manage IP** – we'll build an early design for how you will share access to your IP rights with others and how you will change your account details
- **Secure IP** – we'll start building our early designs of the service, covering the key points described above
- **Research IP** – we'll begin investigating the tools you need to search, research and analyse UK IP

## How you can help

It's vitally important that you shape these services, not us. We urgently need you to take part in our user research to give us feedback on what we're building and shape its direction. We only need 90 mins of your time. You can sign up to take part by [emailing `usertesting@ipo.gov.uk`](mailto:emailing_usertesting@ipo.gov.uk).

Alternatively, if you just want to be kept up to date, sign up for our transformation updates by [emailing `transformation@ipo.gov.uk`](mailto:emailing_transformation@ipo.gov.uk).

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# Norovirus outbreaks increasing in England

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is reminding the public of simple actions that they can take to reduce the spread of norovirus. The advice comes after routine surveillance in England shows that the number of outbreaks caused by the vomiting bug has increased in recent weeks (4-week period from end January to February), initially in educational settings and now in care home settings.

Norovirus is highly infectious and causes vomiting and diarrhoea but usually passes in a couple of days. It is easily transmitted through contact with infected individuals or contaminated surfaces.

The increase in reported outbreaks was initially in educational settings, particularly in nursery and childcare facilities, with 48% more incidents reported to UKHSA than would be expected.

Reports of norovirus outbreaks in care home settings to UKHSA have also increased in recent weeks in 2022 – with a rise from 24 reported in week 6 (week commencing 7 February), to 40 reported in week 7 (week commencing 14 February).

While outbreaks reported in care home settings overall remain below pre-pandemic expected levels, it is likely they will continue to increase in the coming weeks and a rise in norovirus outbreaks in care home settings often precedes an increase in outbreaks in hospital settings. Therefore, it is important to take steps to limit the spread of norovirus.

Professor Saheer Gharbia, Gastrointestinal Pathogens and Food Safety Directorate, UKHSA, said:

Norovirus, commonly known as the winter vomiting bug, has been at lower levels than normal throughout the pandemic but as people have begun to mix more, the numbers of outbreaks have started to increase again.

Symptoms include sudden onset of nausea, projectile vomiting and diarrhoea but can also include a high temperature, abdominal pain and aching limbs. Stay at home if you are experiencing norovirus symptoms and do not return to work or send children to school or nursery until 48 hours after symptoms have cleared.

Please avoid visiting elderly relatives if you are unwell – particularly if they are in a care home or hospital. As with COVID-19 and other infectious illnesses, hand washing is really important to help stop the spread of this bug, but remember, unlike for COVID-19 alcohol gels do not kill off norovirus so soap and water is best.

## How to reduce the spread of norovirus

1. Stay at home if you are experiencing norovirus symptoms. Do not return to work or send children to school until 48 hours after symptoms have cleared. Also avoid visiting elderly or poorly relatives, particularly if they are in hospital or a care home.
2. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water. Alcohol hand gels don't kill norovirus.
3. When an infected person vomits, the droplets contaminate the surrounding surfaces. A bleach-based household cleaner or a combination of bleach and hot water should be used to disinfect potentially contaminated household surfaces and commonly used objects such as toilets, taps, telephones, door handles and kitchen surfaces.
4. If you are ill, avoid cooking and helping prepare meals for others until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped, as norovirus can be spread through food contaminated by the virus when food is handled by symptomatic people or infected individuals.
5. Wash any contaminated clothing or bedding using detergent and at 60°C and, if possible, wear disposable gloves to handle contaminated items.

Norovirus activity has risen as people have begun to mix more – it is possible that unusual or out-of-season increases could be seen in the coming months.

UKHSA's National Norovirus Surveillance Team will continue to closely monitor all available surveillance data to ensure early detection of any unusual norovirus activity and outbreaks.

You can view the [National Norovirus and Rotavirus Bulletin here](#).

Those showing symptoms should avoid visiting their GP, but if they are concerned should contact NHS 111 or talk to their GP by phone.

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## [Improving attendance: good practice](#)

# for schools and multi-academy trusts

## **Training sessions for new attendance guidance**

Adam Luke, Department for Education (DfE) School Attendance Policy lead, outlines what the new attendance guidance means for schools and academy trusts.

### [What the new attendance guidance means for schools and academy trusts](#)

Jayne Lowe, DfE Attendance Adviser, sets out what makes an effective school-level attendance policy.

### [Setting up an effective school attendance policy](#)

Star Academies share how they ensure the attendance register is completed consistently across their schools. Their presentation also covers the trust's day-to-day processes to monitor, follow up and improve attendance.

### [Attendance coding practice and day-to-day processes](#)

Sapientia Education Trust share how they work with families, local authorities and other partners effectively to maximise attendance.

### [Working with families, local authorities and other partners effectively to maximise attendance](#)

Diverse Academies share how they use governance to support better attendance across their trust and academies.

### [Effective governance to support better attendance](#)

Star Academies share how they analyse absence and attendance data to target and monitor improvement efforts. This presentation also includes a demonstration of the daily attendance reports that all schools can register for and access for free.

### [School attendance guidance training webinar – analysing absence and attendance data](#)

## **Whole trust and school approaches to improving attendance webinars**

### **Primary**

Aaron Wright, Executive Headteacher, and Luke Renwick, Headteacher, of Brook House Primary School, share how they have created a culture of excellent attendance through a pastoral approach that has significantly reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

## [A pastoral approach – Brook House Primary School](#)

Kelly Moore, Principal at Ormiston Meadows Academy, shares the strategies they have implemented with various cohorts of pupils to significantly reduce persistent absence across the school.

## [Reducing persistent absence – Ormiston Meadows Academy](#)

### **Secondary**

Michael Robson, Executive Principal of North Shore Academy, shares their approach for managing and improving attendance in schools in the Northern Education Trust, including work they did during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## [Managing and improving attendance in a multi-academy trust – Northern Education Trust](#)

Jamie Stubbs, Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for inclusion, safeguarding and attendance at St Thomas More Catholic Academy, shares how they have managed to improve attendance levels to above national averages.

## [Improving attendance to above national averages – St Thomas More Catholic Academy](#)

Diane Henson, Headteacher at Wheelers Lane Technology College, shares the strategies they've successfully implemented to improve attendance for pupils at their secondary boys' school.

## [Successful attendance implementation – Wheelers Lane Technology College](#)

Sue Huntley, Deputy Principal of Studio West, shares how they use their curriculum and other strategies to improve attendance in their 11 to 19 studio school.

## [Improving attendance in a studio school – Studio West](#)

### **Special and alternative provision (AP)**

Wayne Askham, Head of the Abbey School, shares how they use their curriculum, incentives and rewards, and other strategies to improve attendance in their 5 to 19 special school.

## [Using curriculum, incentives and rewards – Abbey School](#)

Matthew Rooney, Principal of St Giles School, shares the actions they have taken to reduce the attendance gap between their 3 to 18 special school and other mainstream settings nationally.

## [Closing the attendance gap – St Giles School](#)

Bromley Trust Academy Alternative Provision share the actions they take at trust, school and pupil level to raise attendance significantly above national AP averages.

[Raising AP attendance averages – Bromley Trust Academy](#)

## Trust

Michelle O'Dell shares an insight into her role as Attendance Intervention Manager for John Taylor Multi Academy Trust. This includes strategies for monitoring and improving attendance across all the schools in the trust.

[Using an Attendance Intervention Manager to improve rates – John Taylor Multi-Academy Trust](#)

## Ofsted

Susan Morris-King, one of His Majesty's Inspectors and Ofsted's National Lead for behaviour and attendance, reports on the main findings of Ofsted's '[Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence](#)' report.

[Ofsted findings on securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence](#)

Schools have shared their techniques for:

Guidance is available on:

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## [40th Universal Periodic Review of human rights: UK closing statement](#)

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique peer review mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council that scrutinises the human rights record of every UN Member State once every 5 years. This session, the last of the current UPR cycle, reviewed 12 States: Togo, Syria, Iceland, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Lithuania, Uganda, Timor-Leste, Moldova, South Sudan, Haiti and Sudan.

As the world emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, it brings with it 160 million children in child labour: an increase of over 8 million in the last four years. This is a clear demonstration of why we, and our partners around the world, must continue doing all we can to eradicate the heinous crimes of modern slavery as agreed through Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, by taking immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

In this final session of the third cycle we have encouraged implementation of National Action Plans including improving protection for victims; establishing and implementing guidelines for first responders; criminalising child, early and forced marriages; and increasing training for police, prosecutors and judges to identify and prosecute modern slavery abuses.

This session we continued to advocate strengthening the quality, independence and diversity of Treaty Body membership. These expert bodies are a central part of the UN human rights system, charged with monitoring the implementation of human rights conventions in states which have signed up to them.

I remain appalled by the Assad government's treatment of its people. Women and girls suffer disproportionately, caught between the conflict, the ensuing economic crisis, and sexual and gender-based violence. I strongly condemn the regime's attacks on civilians and infrastructure and I call on Syria to: immediately end the systemic practice of enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrests, detention and torture; end all attacks on civilians and facilitate unconstrained access for humanitarian actors and independent international human rights monitors; and prohibit and criminalise the use and recruitment of child soldiers in armed conflict.

I welcome the arrival of the OHCHR and other UN actors in Venezuela. I am deeply concerned by their reports including on the use of the justice system to undermine democracy and urge Venezuela to allow unhindered humanitarian access. I recommend Venezuela: take urgent steps to end forced labour, sexual exploitation and human trafficking in the Arco Minero del Orinoco; ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights for all; and respect political parties' independence, lift arbitrary disqualifications of dissident leaders and cease to override Venezuelans' will through court decisions.

In Zimbabwe, I acknowledge the repeal of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act and welcome the launch of Zimbabwe's national disability policy. However, I am concerned by restrictions on freedom of assembly, the harassment of journalists, opposition and civil society, and constitutional amendments which risk reducing judicial independence. I call on Zimbabwe to increase access to basic documentation, tackle gender-based violence and hold accountable those individuals responsible for human rights violations. I recommend that Zimbabwe fully implement the Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry Report and 2018 Election Observer Report recommendations, and align the Marriages Act with the constitution to criminalise child, early and forced marriage.

While I welcome the progress that has been made by South Sudan since 2015, including through the 2018 Revitalised Peace Agreement, the human rights situation on the ground remains deeply worrying. Violations and abuses, including sexual violence, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, and attacks on freedom of expression continue with apparent impunity. Civilians, civil society and humanitarian workers, including journalists, must be protected. Violations against children, including their recruitment as child soldiers, must end. We hope to see continued cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, with the support of both the international community and South Sudan, to allow it to continue its vital work.

The UK has consistently and strongly condemned the 25 October 2021 military coup in Sudan, as well as the subsequent arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians, and violence against protestors. I do so once again. The Sudanese military must fully respect and protect all human rights and to deliver

justice and accountability for all human rights violations and abuses. Civic space must be immediately reopened and fully protected. The rights to freedom of expression and assembly of all people in Sudan, including civil society actors, human rights defenders and journalists, must be defended. And the UN-facilitated process that seeks to lead to the restoration of Sudan's civilian-led government, must be engaged with fully and in good faith by all parties.

As a strong supporter of the UPR mechanism, I am proud that the UK has participated actively in every State review since the beginning of the first cycle, delivering a clear statement on how we see the human rights situation in every State under review, without fear or favour.

During the third cycle of the UPR, I am proud that the UK proposed a total of more than 500 recommendations, and sent more than 600 advance questions to States. I note that the UK is one of a few States that routinely sends advance questions, and we hope others will note the value of this practice, and take a similar approach in future.

With the end of the third cycle, the UK looks forward to continuing its active participation in the UPR process. We will be one of the first States to come under Review at the beginning of the fourth cycle, and we will approach our Review in the same spirit we would wish all States to exemplify