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G7 leaders warn Putin over use of nuclear weapons; Zelenskiy calls for international mission along Belarus border – as it happened

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[GCHQ](#)

No signs Russia is preparing to use nuclear weapon, says GCHQ boss

UK spy chief says Kremlin does not appear to be engaged in preliminary steps despite Putin's threats

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GCHQ head says he would hope to see 'indicators' if Russia takes nuclear route – video

[Dan Sabbagh](#) *Defence and security editor*

Tue 11 Oct 2022 04.59 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 05.37 EDT

The head of GCHQ has said the UK spy agency has not seen any indicators that Russia is preparing to use a tactical nuclear weapon in or around Ukraine despite recent bellicose statements from [Vladimir Putin](#).

Jeremy Fleming, speaking on Tuesday morning, said it was one of GCHQ's tasks to monitor whether the Kremlin was taking any of the preliminary steps needed before a tactical weapon was being made ready.

“The way in which the Russian military machine and President Putin are conducting this war, they are staying within the doctrine that we understand for their use, including for nuclear weapons,” Fleming said.

But he added that there was no sign that Russia was engaged in any technical preparatory steps: “I would hope that we would see indicators if they started to go down that path,” the spy chief said in a BBC interview.

So-called tactical nuclear weapons – which can have a destructive power about six times greater than the Hiroshima bomb – are assembled by pairing

a nuclear warhead with a conventional missile with a shorter-range.

They are different from the long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are controlled by Russia, the US and other nuclear powers and can be deployed rapidly for the purpose of striking against each other in an uncontrolled war.

Experts say it takes time to move such warheads out of storage and it should be possible for a spy agency such as GCHQ or its US counterpart, the NSA, to monitor such movements.

“It’s a visible process,” said Pavel Podvig, a Russian nuclear expert and senior research fellow at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research. “If it’s really rushed you are talking about hours. It will be visible and be made visible.”

Last month Putin said he would use “all available means” to defend Russian territory, including parts of [Ukraine](#) that he had unilaterally sought to annex – and argued the atomic bombs dropped in 1945 by the US “created a precedent”.

That prompted the US president, Joe Biden, to warn last week that the world [was closer to Armageddon](#) than at any time since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 – although aides said subsequently his comments were [not based on fresh intelligence or information](#).

Fleming’s remarks preceded a speech he is due to give on Tuesday afternoon, in which he will accuse Putin of making strategic errors in his pursuit of the war in Ukraine, partly because there are so few restraints on his leadership.

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Putin: 'If attacks against Russia continue, the response will be harsh' – video

Russian soldiers are running out of supplies and munitions and initial gains made by Moscow [are being reversed](#), Fleming [is expected to add in the rare public address](#).

“Far from the inevitable Russian military victory that their propaganda machine spouted, it is clear that Ukraine’s courageous action on the battlefield and in cyberspace is turning the tide,” Fleming will say.

Focusing on the Russian president directly, Fleming is expected to say that “with little effective internal challenge, his decision-making has proved flawed” and that he has engaged in “a high-stakes strategy that is leading to strategic errors in judgment”.

On Monday, Moscow launched a wave of missile strikes aimed at Kyiv and other urban centres, [killing at least 11 people](#), which Putin said was in response to the weekend [bombing of the bridge](#) connecting occupied Crimea to Russia.

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[Economic policy](#)

Unfunded tax cuts mean UK ‘will need £60bn spending cuts’

IFS says Kwasi Kwarteng’s mini-budget will leave ministers making serious reductions in public services



The British chancellor of the exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

[Phillip Inman](#)
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Mon 10 Oct 2022 19.01 EDTLast modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 04.15 EDT

Kwasi Kwarteng will need to find £60bn of savings by 2026 to fill the gap left by unfunded tax cuts and the costs of extra borrowing triggered by a panicked reaction on international money markets to the chancellor’s “mini-budget”, according to the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#).

The UK will also struggle to hit the chancellor's 2.5% growth target, with economic forecasts by the investment bank Citigroup that the IFS uses to underpin its analysis showing the UK will struggle to grow at more than 0.8% on average over the next five years.

That sluggish growth rate, thanks to a toxic cocktail of a slowing global economy, the UK's weakened trade balance after Brexit and the fallout from the mini-budget, would be slightly less than half the growth rate forecast by the [Office for Budget Responsibility](#) in March.

UK growth

The £45bn cost of the mini-budget will wipe out any financial space left to the chancellor by his predecessor, swelling Britain's debt as a share of national income for at least the next five years.

The IFS director, Paul Johnson, said that while it was "technically possible" for Kwarteng to balance the books via spending cuts, he warned public sector spending had already suffered a huge hit over the last decade and that there was "not much fat left to cut".

In 2026 the government is likely to still be borrowing £100bn a year when previous forecasts showed it falling to nearer £30bn, the IFS said.

A proportion of the rise in borrowing is accounted for by the energy price cap that ministers agreed to [maintain the average household bill at £2,500 a year](#).

The IFS said the cost of the package was likely to be lower than the £150bn expected by the Treasury at about £114bn, though it would still add to the avalanche of unfunded proposals put forward to boost growth.

[UK government spending](#)

Kwarteng and Liz Truss have argued that their policies of tax cuts and deregulation will improve the business environment and boost profits, lifting tax revenues to pay for state services.

However, the IFS said government plans to inject vigour into the UK economy over the next five years to pay for a boost in spending were likely to have only a limited effect, leaving ministers to make hefty reductions in public services and to keep a tight rein on welfare benefits.

The chancellor has announced a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax from next April and a reduction in national insurance contributions by 1.25%. In addition he plans to freeze corporation tax at 19%, costing an estimated £19bn compared with the previous plan to raise the rate to 25%.

Johnson said all the options open to Kwarteng were unpalatable as they either increased the public deficit, or to avoid this, involved swingeing cuts to public spending or broke manifesto commitments.

[UK spending on debt interest](#)

In one scenario, he said Kwarteng could retain his tax cuts if he indexed working age benefits to earnings and not inflation, reducing the uplift to about 5% from 10%, to save £13bn. A reduction in public investment by a third to 2% would save £14bn, while a return of austerity across most Whitehall departments – excluding health and defence – could save £35bn.

Johnson said the scenario also only protected the NHS and defence budgets from inflation when the health sector was likely to need even more cash to cope with higher demand and the prime minister wanted to increase defence spending from 2% of GDP to 3%.

“Uncertainties about the path of the economy over the next few years make public finance forecasts very difficult indeed. We project borrowing of £100bn a year in the medium term – but that could be wrong by tens of billions in either direction,” he said.

“A credible fiscal plan will recognise that uncertainty, but cannot ignore the fact that, on a reasonable central forecast, debt is forecast to continue rising in the medium term,” he added.

Local authority bosses reacted angrily to the prospect of further cuts to council budgets.

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The Tory councillor James Jamieson, the chair of the Local Government Association, said councils had implemented £15bn worth of cuts between 2010 and 2020.

“Given the funding gaps they are seeing, councils will have no choice but to implement significant cuts to services including to those for the most vulnerable in our societies,” he said.

The IFS report said the mini-budget prompted a seismic shock to the outlook for the public finances that left them deeper in the red.

“This is because the permanent tax cuts were bigger than had been expected,” and because the expectations for Bank of England interest rates have rocketed to almost 6%, pushing mortgage rates towards 8%.

Most economists have warned ministers their plans to lift the economy come at the wrong time, with inflation soaring to about 10% and unemployment at a 40-year low.

[UK benefits and pensions](#)

Handing households extra funds via tax cuts is likely to push inflation higher, adding pressure on the central bank to increase interest rates by even more than currently expected.

The OBR is the Treasury’s independent forecaster and will provide estimates for economic growth and the impact of the budget on the public finances

when the chancellor publishes his autumn statement on 31 October.

Citigroup said the weaker outlook was likely to temper the Bank of England's appetite for interest rate rises next year and it would cap rates at a peak of 4.5%, rather than the 6% investors currently expect.

Benjamin Nabarro, the bank's chief UK economist, said the devaluation of the pound towards parity with the dollar would previously have made exports cheaper, boosting output and productivity and giving the government a quick exit from economic stagnation.

He said the negative impact of Brexit and the lack of skilled workers meant industry would struggle to benefit from a lower value currency, meaning stagnation was likely to persist.

"The medium-term outlook for investment remains strikingly weak. Aggressive monetary tightening [by the Bank of England] suggests any meaningful recovery is likely to be pushed into 2025," he said.

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2022.10.11 - Spotlight

- ['No one felt guilty about having fun' Sadie Frost on the 90s, Dracula and turning her back on Hollywood](#)
- [Psychiatry wars The lawsuit that put psychoanalysis on trial and changed the course of medical history](#)
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[Sadie Frost](#)

[Interview](#)

‘No one felt guilty about having fun’ – Sadie Frost on the 90s, Dracula and turning her back on Hollywood

[Emine Saner](#)



‘I feel stronger, wiser, more grounded now than I’ve ever been’ – Sadie Frost near her Wiltshire home with her dog, Cherry. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

She was a part of the Primrose Hill set, married to Jude Law and friends with Kate Moss. Now, 30 years after her first starring role in Francis Ford Coppola’s vampire classic, she is back on the big screen and turning her hand to directing



[@eminesaner](#)

Tue 11 Oct 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 07.30 EDT

In the pub, in a village so quaint it has a duck pond and jars of homemade pickled onions for sale outside cottages, they are talking about the celebrity who has moved in nearby. At least one customer does a comedy double-take when, five minutes later, [Sadie Frost](#) walks in. For it is she – actor, fashion designer, 90s cool girl turned director, sausage dog owner and now countryside dweller.

Frost and Cherry the dog moved here in the summer, to a cottage with a perfect thatched roof and views across the hills. She still has a flat in Primrose Hill – the north London area to which she is forever linked – but she has let it to a friend, and when she is in London, she stays with her mum

or sisters, so Wiltshire is home now. It has been a time of change. The youngest of her four children has just started university and, at 57, after more than 30 years of parenting, she can suddenly do pretty much whatever she wants. Time, she says, “was always taken up by the kids and, being a single mum, every bit of the day was planned, fitting around them”. When they needed her less, she was left with so much time and energy, she says: “I just thought: ‘I’ll throw myself into as many things as I can that I really feel passionate about.’”



Frost and Gary Kemp on their wedding day in 1988. Photograph: Dave Hogan/Getty Images

Frost’s documentary, [Quant](#), about the fashion designer Mary Quant, came out last year to decent reviews, and now she is making another one – more fashion, more 60s – about Twiggy, which the model herself asked Frost to direct. As much as she is enjoying this new work, it seems to be a surprise to her. When she was approached to make Quant, she says: “I was like, ‘This is impossible – I would never know where to start.’” She had been an actor first, then a film producer for years, and had directed shorts, but now she submerged herself in research and learned from the team she assembled. “It became fascinating and I lived and breathed it for two or three years.”

She considers herself primarily a director these days, although we are meeting over a pot of tea to talk about acting – specifically her first big role. She was cast in Francis Ford Coppola’s film [Bram Stoker’s Dracula](#), which has just been resurrected in cinemas to celebrate its 30th anniversary. Frost played Lucy, an exuberant young woman turned sexually voracious vampire, seduced by Gary Oldman’s Dracula. The slight problem is that Frost hasn’t seen the film recently and it is not entirely clear that she has ever seen it – “I never watch anything I do” – and it was made such a long time ago that although her memories of working on it are good, they are hazy.



Frost in the 1992 film Bram Stoker’s Dracula. Photograph: Everett Collection/Rex Features

At the time, Frost was in her 20s, married to the pop star [Gary Kemp](#) – they met when she was in one of Spandau Ballet’s videos – and had a baby son, Fin. “I just remember one minute being a young woman in London, just had a baby, not thinking I was going to get a break like that to do a film in Hollywood,” she says, “and then I get a call: ‘Can you be in Hollywood tomorrow for a screen test for Francis Ford Coppola?’”

Coppola made it feel, she says, “like you’re in this family with him. He mentored me, really helped and he made everything exciting.” Despite her inexperience, she doesn’t remember it being intimidating, partly because the

cast, including Winona Ryder, were supportive. “Any job is nerve-racking, and there were days that I was nervous, but you have to take a deep breath and think: ‘I’m going to make the most of this.’”

If I may jog her memory, in her 2010 memoir *Crazy Days*, Frost writes of going to stay at Coppola’s house before they started shooting. Ryder and Oldman were there, staying in character, she writes, and she was expected to act like Lucy, a sexually confident woman. In reality, she writes, she felt shy and like “a plain young mum from Camden Town”, a bit drunk on a martini. To make matters weirder, Frost writes that Coppola tells her a hairdresser will be coming to take care of her – and she soon finds out that it is to shave her pubic hair. Frost shrugs it off now. Lucy had red hair and Frost’s was black, and she would be wearing a see-through dress; there was a belief, she says, that European women were strangers to a razor. “I was like ‘Oh, come on, steady on – it’s a little bit personal’,” she says. Did they do it? “Well, you know, there’s all the hair and makeup tests, and on that level of doing film for Columbia [studios], they’re doing the full works – you’re supposed to be perfect for the character.”

She talks vaguely about the 90s being a different time, including attitudes to sex scenes. “Now, when I do a film, and there are young actors doing a love scene, they have a choreographer. When I did love scenes in my 20s, it would just be like: ‘Action!’” On *Dracula*, it was different, she says. “In that sense, they were quite structured, like: ‘You’re going to be doing this, and this happens, and your [vampire] teeth are there and there’s blood going to be coming out there.’ That’s Hollywood, in the sense that when you’re doing a scene on a film that size, they would go into detail in an in-depth way to make you feel comfortable. It was a long time ago.” She laughs a little. “I’ve got no bad memories or scars from it. Visually, it was a beautiful film. It was an exciting time in my life. It’s nice to have those memories.”

Frost had been modelling and acting since she was a child, and there were other times on other jobs, she says, “where I felt like, ‘No, this shouldn’t be the way’ and I’ve made a correction or spoken to my agent.” She doesn’t want to get into specifics. “You might be working with a team of people who maybe aren’t too respectful of certain situations, but I’m not going to bring up one particular thing,” she says. “I’ve dealt with everything as I’ve gone along – I said things at the time. I stood up for myself, and I would stand up

for other people. That's all you can really do – and it's good that the industry has changed, and people are more aware of exploitation.”



Frost, pictured in 1986, aged 20. Photograph: Kevin Holt/Daily Mail/Shutterstock

After Frost's high-profile role in *Dracula*, she could have stayed in Hollywood and capitalised on it – her agent wanted her to – but she returned to London. “What mattered to me was what I was doing at home, and Fin.” A big movie career “didn't matter enough”. It was partly her need to feel settled and grounded in the real world, not Hollywood. Also, for Frost, who had grown up with a father who was an artist and nonconformist, success didn't necessarily mean movie-star riches, but an interesting, creative life.

Frost was born in London; her mother, Mary, was 16 when she had her, and her father, David Vaughan, was an erratic man who suffered periods of mental illness but was also wild and creative, a psychedelic artist who did work for the Beatles. Life didn't settle down much when Vaughan left the family and Mary married Frost's stepfather (she took his surname) – the family did things like take off for Marrakech for several months in a Citroën 2CV. When Frost got a scholarship to the drama school Italia Conti, it was, she says, “a healthy thing for me at that age, to get out of the environment I was in”.

How did the chaos of her childhood affect her? “I always describe it as really colourful,” she says. “Me and my mum are incredibly close, and I’ve got lovely sisters and lovely brothers [she has nine siblings between her mother and father]. I had a very odd relationship with my dad; it took a long time to come to terms with some of the stuff that happened.” At the time of his death in 2003, they were estranged, “so that was a difficult thing. I’ve worked really hard at accepting it and loving him for what he was, and taking all the positive experiences I had out of my childhood. He showed me a lot of very creative things, how to think outside the box and not to conform. He didn’t want me to fit in.”

To anyone who followed the so-called Primrose Hill set in the 90s, Frost was very much an insider, but she at least increasingly thinks of herself as an outsider, now she has more time alone. “I had all the kids and I think I filled everything with that noise. But I’ve got a real internal life and creative life that is very insular sometimes, and I realised I spend a lot of time on my own. Which is something about getting older, I think.”

She met [Jude Law](#) on the set of *Shopping*, her next film after *Dracula*, and her marriage to Kemp ended. She and Law went on to have three children, and for a while the couple seemed to be at the heart of the cool London scene. Frost was in Pulp’s video for *Common People*, became best friends with Kate Moss and set up a production company with Law and others, including the actor Jonny Lee Miller.

When I bring up the 90s, with perfect timing Cherry the sausage dog lifts her head from the chair on which she is sitting and sighs wearily, but Frost indulges me. “Everyone had fun, and no one felt guilty about having fun,” she says. “Music was brilliant, London was brilliant, there was an amazing, exciting vibe.” It was uncomplicated, she says, in an age before social media. “It wasn’t manufactured – everyone was just who they were. You were making mistakes and learning as you’re going along, whereas now everyone’s so scared of ‘This has to be like this’, and status.”



Frost and Jude Law in October 1997, a month after they married.
Photograph: Dave Benett/Getty Images

Did she ever buy into the idea that she and her friends were the cool crowd? “I don’t think you know,” she says. “Now, everyone judges if they’re cool by how many likes they have on social media and how much attention they’re getting. Whereas at that time, it just happened.” Somebody knew somebody else and suddenly whichever hot rock star or actor was part of the gang.

Her house wasn’t, contrary to tabloid opinion, the party house, she says. She had “four kids there, and tea and Sunday lunch”. And while other members of the gang have had struggles with drugs and alcohol, Frost insists she wasn’t a big partyer. “I’ve always exercised, done yoga, been a vegetarian. I always had to put the kids to bed, so I had a routine. I went out, I had fun but I’ve always been quite disciplined.” She does miss that time, she says, and not just for the vibe. “I miss the kids being little as well. I wish I had a time machine, to go back there every now and again, to the kids sitting around having tea after school, doing their homework.”

After the birth of her last child, Rudy, in 2002 (for a snapshot of cool London at the time, Frost’s friends Moss, Moss’s then-boyfriend Jefferson Hack, the actor Rhys Ifans, and the model Rosemary Ferguson were all

waiting outside the delivery room), Frost left her acting agent and didn't really start going for auditions again until quite recently. Did she worry about her acting career and whether she would be able to get back to it? She did, she says, but adds: "If I didn't get an opportunity to be in a film, or someone was brushing me off because I'd been in the media too much, because they were hacking me [Frost was [awarded damages](#) in the phone-hacking scandal], the saddest thing would have been if I'd let that affect me, and been depressed and not been a good mum. We don't all get what we want. Why should we? I'm nothing different."

While bringing up her children, she started a fashion company, FrostFrench, and produced films. She also dealt with postnatal depression – the last occurrence so bad, around the time her marriage to Law was also imploding, that she ended up being sectioned in California for four weeks – and intense and damaging tabloid scrutiny. Frost is not someone who seems to dwell in the past. "I've learned that you can get through anything. Just make the most of every day, be grateful for the good things, don't look at the bad things. I do feel inspired and excited about the future."

Now, she is at a stage, she says, where "I'm not dissecting any one part of my life, I'm looking at it as a whole." She has more time, and choices. She is still acting, and reels off a list of projects, but seems more keen on directing – she has written a screenplay she hopes to make next year. "I feel stronger, wiser, more grounded now than I've ever been. A lot of women are written off at that age, that you can't do something different, and you can't go back to work."

Three years ago, Frost took a master's degree in film production. She had set up her own production company and thought, she says: "If I want to do this, and I want to be taken seriously, I'm not good with figures. I needed to get it drilled into me." Did she really worry about not being taken seriously? "I think all my life I've had people judge me and have their own opinions," she says. She used to feel more unsure of herself, but less so now. "When you get older, that's one good thing about it – you just do not care about a lot of that stuff."

- Bram Stoker's Dracula is in cinemas in the UK now and in the US from 23 October.

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Psychiatry wars: the lawsuit that put psychoanalysis on trial

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‘I didn’t see how I could ever get back to a normal life’: how burnout broke Britain – and how it can recover

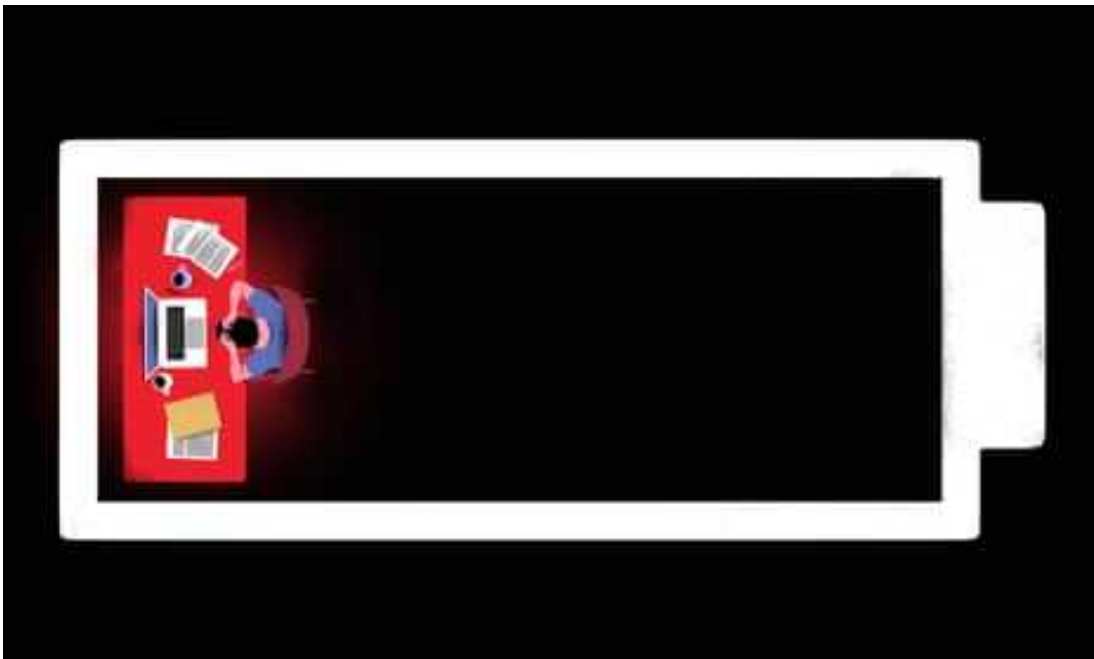


Illustration: Sébastien Thibault

First smartphones made work inescapable. Then came the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. We are more overstretched and stressed than ever before

– but there’s a way out



[Gaby Hinsliff](#)

Tue 11 Oct 2022 01.00 EDT

Amy Gandon rarely does things by halves. Naturally energetic, she thrives on feeling as if she is making a difference at work. When the pandemic hit, she was working in Whitehall as a senior civil servant and found herself putting in 14-hour days on the government’s Covid response. At first, she thought it was normal to feel constantly exhausted.

“When you’re working in an emergency situation, lots of feelings that might prefigure burnout – constant adrenaline, racing thoughts, racing heartbeat a lot of the time, feeling I couldn’t switch off at night – are indistinguishable from what I thought I *should* be feeling in that context,” says Gandon, 32. “I thought that was part of being professional and responsible. I do care a lot, I want to work hard.” She found it difficult to let go at the end of the day, worrying about whether there was something more she could have done. “There are big consequences to this stuff. It’s not easy.”

Even when she started to feel emotionally detached, she didn’t suspect burnout. It was only after a panic attack so severe she thought she was dying

that she realised something was wrong. Ironically, she says, her doctor went off sick with burnout shortly after signing her off work.

Sam Fender cancelled several gigs last month, declaring: 'Me and the boys are burnt out'

Burnout used to be a furtive secret, something few dared admit to for fear of being judged professionally. Not any more. When the 28-year-old singer-songwriter Sam Fender [cancelled several gigs last month](#), declaring “Me and the boys are burnt out”, he kickstarted a public conversation about burnout. Shortly afterwards, the 22-year-old Brit award winner Arlo Parks also scrapped some of her tour dates, announcing: “[I am broken](#).”

Generation Z, raised to be open about mental health, may find it easier than older workers to admit to feeling overwhelmed and unable to carry on. But they are not the only ones at risk. A recent paper on midlife crises from the National Bureau of Economic Research [concluded](#) that “the maximum level of work stress is reached at approximately the age of 45”. Middle age often brings hefty responsibilities but also nagging questions about whether the years of slog were worth it, or how much longer you can maintain the same pace.

For work itself is becoming more intense, following us home through our phones or piling up in jobs where those who leave don't get replaced. The prevailing mood of rolling economic crisis – first the financial crisis, then a pandemic, now an inflation shock – hasn't helped anxiety levels, either.

In [Can't Even: How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation](#), the American journalist Anne Helen Petersen argues that insecure jobs and housing have left the under-40s feeling frazzled and precarious, fearful of everything coming crashing down. For her contemporaries, she argues: “Burnout is foundational; the best way to describe who we've been raised to be.”

Rising interest in a [four-day week](#), the popularity of working from home and the alleged vogue for “[quiet quitting](#)” (refusing to go above and beyond professionally) all suggest a broader yearning for less stressed working lives.

Liz Truss may have put her name to a book describing Britain as a “[nation of idlers](#)”, but we are hardly unique in mutinying, with a recent [study](#) by the management consultants Deloitte across 10 countries showing 53% of women felt their stress levels were higher than a year ago and almost half felt burnt out. Are we nearing the end of our tether?



Healthcare professionals are at high risk of burnout, particularly since the pandemic. Photograph: Ivan-balvan/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Burnout was only formally recognised by the World Health Organization in 2019, not as an illness but as an occupational health phenomenon “resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”. (If work isn’t the cause of your stress, however bad that stress is, for the WHO it is not strictly burnout.) Its [definition](#) combines feeling drained of energy, becoming less professionally effective and – crucially – feeling cynical, negative or distant from your job. The nurse who is too jaded to feel for patients and the war correspondent who is numb to atrocities are classic examples.

“When pressure exceeds your ability to cope with it, that’s stress and burnout,” says [Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology](#) at the University of Manchester. “The first sign that you are getting burnt out is your behaviour begins to change. If normally you are fairly affable, you lose

your sense of humour, or at meetings, when you are usually engaged, you're quiet." Taking a holiday doesn't help: you still feel jaded when you get back.

Cooper agrees there is a difference between this kind of burnout and use of the word to describe a broader sense of millennial anxiety. "Being disenchanted is what we're seeing in that generation. I think they are looking for something different from work." But that doesn't make them lazy, he adds – it may be that watching their parents' generation work all hours, only to be cut loose by employers in a downturn, has simply convinced them that slavish loyalty doesn't pay. "They are prepared to work hard, these kids. It's not that they want to be protected or just want things their own way," he says. "They are saying to us that the older generation put up with this, but they won't." In the long run, he argues, they are probably doing everyone a favour. "If you consistently work long hours, you will get ill. Anything over 40 hours a week is not good for you."

Like anxiety and depression, burnout seems to be [more commonly reported by women than men](#), although it's unclear whether that is specific to female working lives – and the fact women typically still carry more of the domestic load – or because it is harder for men to admit they are struggling. Jeremy, a retired lawyer, thinks his burnout was partly fuelled by his reluctance to complain about overwork: "Perhaps at some level I liked being the only one who could sort things out." But in retrospect he wishes he had been more willing to push back, "not burn the midnight oil and my health".

The term "burnout" was coined in 1974 by the American psychologist [Herbert Freudenberger](#) to describe the consequences of stress plus high levels of dedication in "caring" professions such as health and social work – jobs more often done by women. Last summer, the House of Commons health select committee [reported](#) that "burnout is a widespread reality in today's NHS" and had been building up well before the pandemic, with BAME staff risking "additional challenges" due to discrimination.

Ayesha, 41, was a consultant paediatrician in a busy Welsh hospital when Covid hit. After the initial terror of infection came an endless cycle of testing and isolating, plus nagging anxiety about her patients. Redeployed from her usual ward to A&E, she was out of her professional comfort zone.

Her shifts changed constantly as colleagues went down with Covid, meaning she could rarely relax. “It was the complete lack of being able to plan even a weekend off, constantly being vigilant or feeling obliged to be available – that was tough. Plus the constant undercurrent of anxiety about what if a child seriously sick with Covid comes in?” She started feeling frustrated by parents bringing children in for relatively minor complaints, and ground down by treating problems that were more societal than medical. “I was seeing the same families time and time again, and nothing was changing – it was to do with the situation they were in.” When she eventually quit, she felt immediate relief. She plans to go travelling with her partner, although the sense that she is wasting her medical training weighs on her conscience.

It is striking how often burnout sufferers talk not just about their workloads, but the emotional weight of responsibility they feel. Denyse Whillier is a Brighton-based business coach for female entrepreneurs who came close to burning out a decade ago, when she was the CEO of a small charity for elderly people. “We were always in a financial juggle: grants coming to an end, does that mean I’m going to have to let staff go? If I didn’t come up with the goods I was going to have to make really awful decisions,” she remembers. The stress became so bad she was hyperventilating at work, but, as the boss, she felt unable to tell anyone. “You’ve got to be seen to hold it all together, particularly as a woman. You can’t turn up not looking on your game.”



Perks of the job ... some employers are offering staff exercise bikes to combat stress. Photograph: Justin Paget/Getty Images

Far from being weak, she says, the burnout sufferers she has encountered tend to be unusually diligent high performers, “the type of person who pushes towards achieving things and maybe has a tendency towards perfectionism”. Ironically, these traits – drive, commitment, not wanting to let other people down, persevering when others wouldn’t – are ones employers value highly. As Whillier points out, that gives companies who don’t want to lose their best people good reason to help prevent burnout.

There are glimmerings of change in some infamously “work hard, play hard” industries, including tech. Twitter has instigated a paid monthly [#DayofRest](#) for staff, and the Wall Street investment bank Jefferies has [offered free Pelotons and fitness packages](#) to some of its analysts, following complaints of overwork.

But Prof Cooper, who runs a forum of major employers with an interest in occupational health, says millennials would rather feel consistently valued and supported than have gimmicks such as mindfulness sessions or sushi delivered to their desks. The best thing anyone at risk of burnout can do, he says, is talk to someone – a trusted friend, colleague or health professional – which is why employers are increasingly offering free confidential

counselling, or appointing corporate directors of wellbeing to encourage conversations about mental health at work. But what if yours isn't so enlightened?

In *Can't Even*, Petersen writes angrily that her contemporaries won't be fobbed off with advice on managing their own stress because "this isn't a personal problem. It's a societal one and it will not be cured by productivity apps or a bullet journal, or face mask skin treatments." She also rails against advice to "do what you love" for a career, arguing that it trains people to see work as a passion for which they should sacrifice everything. "A good job," she writes, "is one that doesn't exploit you and you don't hate", even if it's not exciting.



Greek getaway ... Joy Parkinson went freelance so she could take breaks between contracts. (Picture posed by model.) Photograph: Westend61 GmbH/Alamy

Yet settling for something duller but easier seems a rather dispiriting solution. "I can't relate to that way of working where you just work the hours and then you finish and completely compartmentalise the job," says Joy Parkinson, 32, who suffered from burnout while working in arts communication in Glasgow. "If the majority of your life is spent working, it's a real shame if people don't love their job."

She began to struggle during the pandemic, as lockdown forced performers to cancel live events or put them online. Working alone from her one-bedroom flat, glued to the news to try to figure out what was and wasn't allowed, she felt "stuck in some form of working constantly, but also in a kind of limbo. I didn't understand how we were ever going to get back to a normal life." Her managers were "really helpful" when she said she was struggling, easing the workload on her entire team. But in the end she went freelance, which gave her the freedom to take breaks between contracts. (When we speak over Zoom, she is in Greece, following a hectic summer working on the Edinburgh festival.) A course of cognitive behavioural therapy has also given her tools to manage anxiety if it strikes again.

Self-employment isn't for everyone, however, and few of us can afford to quit our jobs in a cost-of-living crisis. Employers are legally obliged to take reasonable steps to mitigate work-related stress, such as referring you to occupational health specialists. If stress is making you ill, you can be signed off work by a doctor as you would be for any physical illness.

If you are worried you might be nearing burnout, Whillier recommends not just talking to managers about easing your workload but making time for exercise (yoga and dance classes worked for her) and asking honestly whether you are shouldering more responsibility than you need to, at work or at home. "I felt the whole burden was on me. If I look back now, I can see why I felt that, but it actually wasn't."

If you have already burnt out, it is worth knowing that recovery and a successful return to work are possible.

Claudia, 40, a mother of two who works in external affairs, says it helps to remember that it "isn't a personal failing" but a physical reaction to pressure, much like breaking an ankle. "You can't carry on and if you force yourself, you are going to make it worse." When her doctor signed her off with burnout, her boss suggested she ignore the medical advice and carry on. Instead, she quit, and after taking several months out to recover is now working again but for a company with a more supportive culture.

She has also, she says, learned to pace herself. “I have a discipline now that’s ‘Right, I’m going to knock some things off the to-do list’ rather than trying to do it all. It’s incremental things: take one thing out of the diary, cancel one meeting, don’t let your mum come over at the weekend.”

The catch, of course, is that for the kind of highly driven employees most at risk from burnout, slowing down may not come easily. Gandon, who eventually left her job last summer, is now running a research project on stress and burnout among civil servants. Recovery has felt frustratingly slow at times, she says, and she had to force herself to rest. But she is looking forward to returning to a full-time job this autumn.

“I’d always be the person who wanted to throw myself at stuff and maybe I had to learn a hard lesson to pace myself better – not like ‘I’m going to make sure I leave at 6pm tonight,’ but actually saying no to things, and that’s uncomfortable,” she admits. But it may be more sustainable in the long run, perhaps, than always saying yes.

Some names have been changed

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2022/oct/11/how-burnout-broke-britain-and-how-it-can-recover>

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Barbara Chase-Riboud: ‘The so-called culture war has nothing to do with culture’

[Hettie Judah](#)

The artist danced with James Baldwin, was helped by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and sculpted Malcolm X. Now she’s received the only honour she ever wanted



‘He was afraid of the dark’: Barbara Chase-Riboud at Giacometti Foundation. Photograph: Michel Ginies/SIPA/Rex/Shutterstock

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Barbara Chase-Riboud is listing the only three Black American women to have ever been awarded the Légion d’honneur, France’s highest order of

merit: “There’s [Josephine Baker](#), there’s Dr [Ruth Simmons](#), who was the president of Brown University, and there’s me.”

As a sculptor, novelist, poet and occasional fashion model, Chase-Riboud had, in a fanciful way, been eyeing up the award since her childhood in Philadelphia. “As a little girl I learned about Josephine Baker as a war hero, and that she had the Légion d’honneur. I decided that was the one decoration I really wanted to have in life. And finally, I got it this year, at the same time Josephine was entered into the French Pantheon!”

We’re speaking ahead of two retrospectives – one at London’s [Serpentine North](#) Gallery, the other at the [Pulitzer Arts Foundation](#) in St Louis, Missouri. It is also publication day for *I Always Knew*, a memoir structured around 30 years of letters from Chase-Riboud to her mother Vivian Mae Chase. The pages pulsate with romance, high fashion and celebrity. There are tales of intrepid trips. There are encounters – with [James Baldwin](#) (who “does a wild twist”), with [Alberto Giacometti](#) (“who slept with the lights on because he was afraid of the dark”), with [Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis](#) (who made possible the publication of Chase-Riboud’s bestselling 1979 novel [Sally Hemings](#)) and dozens of other luminaries.



Chase-Riboud in 1981 with one of her sculptures. Photograph: Louis Monier/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images

The letters are gossipy and intimate. Mother and daughter were close in age, their relationship sisterly and unreserved. I want to know more about her mother, and the formation of the brilliant, intrepid young woman that emerges from the letters – but Chase-Riboud won't play ball. She doesn't want the book read with a backstory: "It was very important to drop the reader in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean."

Thus we find ourselves at sea. In 1957, not yet 20, this young sculptor boarded the liner *Le Flandre* on her way to a fellowship at the American Academy in Rome. "All the French waiters think I'm very pretty and that I don't look American," she wrote to Vivian Mae during the voyage. "They keep spouting this French to me, which I don't understand at all, so I just smile sweetly."

The waiters were prescient. Within a few years, Chase-Riboud would marry the French photographer [Marc Riboud](#) and start a family in Europe. Today she lives between a home in Paris and Rome, the site of a foundry where she casts sculptures made using a lost-wax process that dates back to the fine Edo bronze work of the [kingdom of Benin](#). She has lived in many languages. "I'm different in French than I am in English. And I'm a different mother in French than in English. I dream in French ..." she pauses knowingly, "and I curse in Italian."

Through the letters, we accompany Chase-Riboud through the [US civil rights movement](#) and the violence that followed on the other side of the Atlantic. "People assume I was distanced from it, but I was not – the Europeans were very aware what was going on. The coverage of the whole movement was much less in American media than it was in Europe. I felt distanced only with the news of Malcolm X's assassination. It arrived like a bombshell for me."

In the 57 years since, [Malcolm X](#) has become a central subject, one that Chase-Riboud has explored in tall cast bronze and braided fibre sculptures. "The idea of making a statue of Malcolm grew with this idea that he was beyond memory. He was emblematic. He was more important than he knew.

And he was more important than we knew.” Chase-Riboud describes her monumental abstract forms as “steles”, evoking the ancient Egyptian carved stones at Karnak or Luxor.

These contemporary monuments raise questions about which figures are remembered, and which histories preserved. “People in power get to write history, not the oppressed,” she says. “I love the way people say this is a ‘culture war’: it’s nothing to do with culture. It has to do with power, it has to do with history, it has to do with the suppression of half the population in the United States of America.” As with her exploration of historic figures such as Sally Hemings – an enslaved woman who bore six children by President Thomas Jefferson – Chase-Riboud’s interest in monuments came decades ahead of its time.

She tells me that she discovered her old letters in 1991, in a blue metal box among Vivian Mae’s clothes. But it was too soon after her mother’s death. Instead, she waited until 2008 to read them. “I was surprised. I didn’t know who that silly girl was. Who did she think she was? What did she think she was doing? How could she have the nerve?” she recalls, reliving her life of adventure. “I was turning the pages as if I didn’t know what I had done!”

- Barbara Chase-Riboud’s Infinite Folds is at [Serpentine North Gallery, London, 11 October-29 January](#). I Always Knew: A Memoir is published by Princeton University Press.

2022.10.11 - Opinion

- Allegations swirl around Paul Dacre's Daily Mail. Until they clear, a peerage would be a travesty
- The Tories fear and loathe the NHS, but they know they have gone too far this time
- UK childcare is collapsing – and forcing mothers back into the home
- I've got my thermals out, but as long as I resist the coat, can I pretend it is not yet autumn?

[Opinion](#) **Paul Dacre**

Allegations swirl around Paul Dacre's Daily Mail. Until they clear, a peerage would be a travesty

[Jane Martinson](#)



It is embarrassing that Doreen Lawrence is alleging wrongful activity during his editorship. The truth must be revealed



‘Lawrence is one of six people to launch legal action against Associated Newspapers, alleging serious unlawful activity during Dacre’s time in charge.’ Photograph: David Crump/Daily Mail/REX/Shutterstock

Tue 11 Oct 2022 05.14 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 08.11 EDT

At the black tie banquet to celebrate Paul Dacre’s 25 years as editor of the Daily Mail in 2017, Doreen Lawrence sat at the editor’s side. In 1997, the paper’s front page had pictured five men under the headline “Murderers”. Later that year Jack Straw, as home secretary, set up the Macpherson inquiry into the handling of her son Stephen Lawrence’s murder, bringing in legal changes that would go on to allow the [prosecution and conviction of two suspects](#).

It was considered the essence of public service journalism. But more than that, it became a shield with which Dacre and the Mail were able to defend themselves from accusations that his paper deployed racism and discriminatory attitudes as part of the main title’s USP. It was also used by industry figures who cited the Mail’s stance on behalf of the Lawrences as evidence that the mainstream media is a force for harmonious good.

It must be embarrassing then that five years on from that banquet, the now Lady Lawrence is one of six people to [launch legal action](#) against Associated

Newspapers – publishers of the Daily Mail, the Mail on Sunday and the Mail Online – alleging wrongful activity during Dacre’s time in charge.

The allegations, which include phone tapping and the use of private investigators to secretly place listening devices inside people’s cars and homes, have been strenuously denied by the Mail as “preposterous smears”.

But news of the legal action, broken by [Byline Investigates](#), and the subsequent revelation that the former [Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes](#) has filed a case accusing Associated Newspapers, the owner of the Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday and MailOnline, of phone hacking have done little so far to dent expectations of Dacre’s imminent elevation to the House of Lords. Theresa May’s successor, Boris Johnson, is understood to have put Dacre forward in his resignation honours list for services to journalism. Many will continue to wonder about the true value of those “services”. The paper’s support for Johnson’s Brexit undoubtedly sowed division across the UK.

The Mail branded appeal court judges “[enemies of the people](#)” and parliament’s second house the “House of Unelected Wreckers”.

Chris Bryant, the Labour MP and standards chair who has accused Dacre of “poisoning the well of British politics”, has called for any potential peerage [to be delayed](#) during the legal action. He admits that there isn’t much he or anyone else in parliament can do to stop this final act of the Johnson administration. Instead, the decision is up to the Lords Appointments Commission, chaired by Lord Bew. But surely a pause button must be pushed, at least until the truth or otherwise of the allegations is run to ground.

This requires the utmost formal scrutiny, not least because there has been relatively little coverage of the case so far, despite the seriousness of the allegations filed by Lawrence and the others, who include Elton John and Prince Harry (dismissed by the Mail as “having already pursued cases elsewhere”).

The Mail itself issued a remarkable denial last week, suggesting rogue actors were at work and accusing campaigners of persuading Lawrence to believe

someone it called a liar. Standing four-square behind their man, Dacre's supporters echo the rogue investigator line, which was originally used by Rupert Murdoch's News group at the start of the phone hacking scandal. For his part, Dacre has consistently and categorically denied any Mail involvement in hacking, calling, in his evidence to the Leveson inquiry in 2012, Hugh Grant's suspicions that the paper had hacked his phone "[mendacious smears](#)".

Much is at stake for the newspaper group, of course, whose owner Lord Rothermere doubled down on his longstanding and profitable support of Dacre a year ago by ousting his successor, Geordie Greig, and bringing Dacre [back into the fold](#). Greig had gone out of his way to "detoxify" the brand, as he put it, working with Stop Funding Hate after his appointment in 2018. Following his departure, that campaign group renewed its call for advertisers to [drop the Mail](#) in April this year. It seems that Lawrence – whose experiences with the Mail were previously said to have shown the title at its best – may now have joined its critics.

It may be that eventually Dacre dons ermine and takes a place in the Lords: that would be bad enough. But for him to go to a place of public service without clarity about claims that allege a great deal of public harm would be a travesty.

- Jane Martinson is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/oct/11/allegations-paul-dacre-daily-mail-peerage-travesty-doreen-lawrence>

[OpinionNHS](#)

The Tories fear and loathe the NHS, but they know they have gone too far this time

[Polly Toynebee](#)



As 7 million people wait for treatment and nurses prepare to strike, the government desperately tries to deflect the blame



‘Coffey had the effrontery to claim the NHS originator was Tory Sir William Willink.’ A portrait of Aneurin Bevan, architect of the NHS, in Cwmbran, Wales. Photograph: Huw Fairclough/Getty Images

Tue 11 Oct 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 08.00 EDT

This is what a collapsing NHS looks like. Each metric is worse than the last, every health professional I meet is stuck for words. “This is the worst I’ve ever seen in my career,” says Prof Martin Marshall, head of the Royal College of GPs council. The longtime editor of the [Health Service Journal](#), Alastair McLellan says, “This is the worst – except for next year which will be even worse.”

Never before have [7 million people](#) waited for treatment. Never have so many NHS staff resigned as in [recent months](#), fleeing impossible jobs in understaffed wards, facing a real pay cut. As patient numbers rise, GP numbers fall. Some 3,000 [medical school places](#) were cut this year and there have been 8% fewer applicants for nurse training. Dire ambulance response times yield horror stories of heart-attack and stroke victims dying needlessly, as [ambulances queue](#) to hand over patients to A&E, because [13,000](#) beds are blocked with people needing social care.

This omnicrisis seems to be the new normal. News cameras may soon return to wards to capture this latest Covid wave now that 10% of hospital beds in England are filled with [Covid patients](#), an increase of 97% [since 20 September](#). Some catch the virus in hospital while others are admitted due to Covid-19. All need isolating, and staff and other patients need protecting.

Brace for winter; there have been warnings of severe flu. This time, reporters need to spell out why the [NHS](#) is so vulnerable after 12 years of flat funding. Beds have been cut and there is no workforce plan. In a burst of candour, the NHS England board received the brutal truth last week from its chief finance officer, Julian Kelly. He warned of £20bn cuts by 2024, forcing the NHS “to completely revisit investment in cancer, mental health, primary care and diagnostic capacity” looking again at “what the NHS can deliver”. Kelly, a former Treasury director general of public spending, explained the government’s refusal to reopen spending will mean existing funds will need to cover pay rises and other inflation costs.

Richard Meddings, the former chairman of TSB Bank, is now [chair of NHS England](#). The government said the banker would “bring an outsider’s eye to the NHS” but if it wanted an austerian, it may be disappointed: Meddings warned that unfunded pay awards and inflation will mean a 10% cut in NHS spending by 2024/25. (Remember that 2024 is election year.)

At the Tory fringes you heard the usual complaints that the NHS is a “bottomless pit” in urgent need of “reform” – code for cuts and private insurance that will cost more for less. They want growth? A failing NHS drags the economy down as [500,000 previously employed](#) people drop out of the workforce due to ill health. Britain is the only developed country where people are leaving the workforce, according to Financial Times number-cruncher John Burn-Murdoch. The number of working-age people in Britain reporting numerous serious health conditions has rocketed by 735,000, according to his analysis. NHS waiting lists are the reason why.

Health secretaries – five in just over four years – should take the Hippocratic oath: first do no harm. The NHS begs politicians to stop imposing targets to impress voters. Thérèse Coffey’s mantra – “I will hold the NHS to account” – won’t stop her party being held to account.

Tories look with a kind of fear and loathing at the NHS, its perennially vulnerable flank. They always leave it in need of rescue after impossible “efficiency savings”, but this time they know they’ve gone too far. Their idiot know-nothings try deflecting blame. Last week, the new health parliamentary private secretary [James Sunderland spouted](#): “The solution is not more money, it’s better managers ... People not performing need to be sacked. We need to reinvest money spent on executives and management into the coalface.” The NHS has fewer administrators than comparable health services: would he deploy more doctors and nurses behind desks instead?

Asking a health expert what on earth a health secretary can do, lacking cash and staff, they said bleakly, “Look busy” – and so she does. GPs draw most fire. Coffey has added yet another target to GPs’ [existing list of 72](#), as counted by Jeremy Hunt. She “expects” everyone to see their GP within two weeks; according to the president of the Royal College of GPs, Clare Gerada, fewer GPs held [35m more appointments](#) last year; 85% of patients are seen in two weeks and 44% on the day they ask. But Coffey busies herself subjecting CEOs of the [15 lowest scoring hospitals](#) to regular “Cobra-style” inquisitions.

Coffey is intent on blaming the NHS for the backwash of ill-health caused by rising deprivation. Women in poor areas of England [die younger](#) than in most OECD countries and poverty has contributed to a million life-threatening [asthma attacks](#) in the UK. The state of the NHS always reflects society’s health: this government has cut the real value of benefits in [seven of the past 10 years](#).

More money is an essential stopgap, but the [NHS staffing crisis](#) will take years to fix. It’s no surprise that temping agencies are making record profits; they cost the NHS [£2.5bn last year](#). The government has shunned Jeremy Hunt’s call for a long-term workforce strategy. Labour’s Wes Streeting has pledged a [10-year workforce plan](#), doubling medical school places, nursing and health visitor training. But no incoming Labour administration can fix the NHS overnight: after years of under-training, staff can’t be magicked out of thin air.

The nurses, who have [lost 10%](#) in pay since 2010, are balloting for a strike: junior doctors were paid [26% less in real terms](#) this year than in 2008. Other health workers will ballot next. The public that clapped and painted rainbows will [back striking health workers](#), even if state-shrinkers grind their teeth at voters' everlasting love for the NHS. Polling shows people are a lot [less satisfied](#) with the health service, but if Tories hope running the NHS down breaks that emotional bond, it hasn't happened. Nor are more people paying for private insurance. Although the number of people paying for one-off private operations from their savings has soared, the number of insured people using private hospitals fell by 16% in 2021.

In her conference speech, Coffey had the effrontery to claim the NHS originator was a Tory baronet, Sir Henry Willink, the wartime health minister involved in the Beveridge report; she says it was he "[who conceived the NHS](#)". My thanks to [Roy Lilley](#), health commentator extraordinaire, for showing that Willink in fact opposed nationalising hospitals as he believed it would "destroy so much in this country that we value" (his party vehemently resisted the NHS). Willink cut 12% of medical school training and helped to cause an acute doctor shortage. His later confession that this was a "misjudgment" is something not yet heard from George Osborne and David Cameron, though the NHS will suffer their "misjudgments" for years to come.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

OpinionChildcare

UK childcare is collapsing – and forcing mothers back into the home

[Lucy Pasha-Robinson](#)

Spiralling costs, thanks to Brexit, the cost of living crisis, and government failure, are leaving some parents with no option but to give up work



‘I know I’m not the only one who compares my wages with the cost of childcare, and wonders if the stress is worth it.’ Photograph: Photofusion Picture Library/Alamy

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Nothing can prepare you for the birth of your first child – the joy, the horror, the total discombobulation, but also the humbling awareness of just how little you knew about the realities of raising children. Tired babies do not, as I had expected, just “nod off”. Nor do all newborns love the car (mine screamed with such ear-shattering persistence we had to stop driving). But ask any expectant parent about the state of British childcare and you will

settle upon a seemingly universal understanding: the system is woefully unfit for purpose.

After a Brexit exodus [decimated staffing levels](#) in nurseries, the pandemic quietly pushed the early years sector past the point of no return, and this winter promises even more hardship. [Deliberate underfunding](#) means providers have little choice but to charge astronomical fees, which have increased at a rate that far outstrips wages, to cover their own sizeable outgoings. And as energy prices rise, so too will costs.

Trying to find a nursery place for my daughter this year revealed just how depleted the provision is, with 18-month waiting lists as standard, and some waits so long their lists were closed. Demand far outstrips supply, thanks to a staffing crisis that shows no signs of abating as low-paid workers jump the sinking ship in favour of [better pay](#) and less stressful jobs. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of childcare providers in England [plummeted by 4,000](#), and [86% of early years providers](#) say the government funding they receive for three- and four-year-olds does not cover the cost of delivering those places. One nursery owner in the north-east tells me: “I haven’t been able to pay myself since November 2021 ... I’ve had to take a second job just so I can live.”

It doesn’t take much creativity to imagine how this crisis is spilling over into the lives of working mothers. I know I’m not the only one who compares my wages each month with the cost of childcare, and wonders if the stress of juggling both, only to be barely breaking even, is worth it. Nearly [three-quarters of part-time workers are women](#), and 57% of them feel they have no choice but to work part-time.

Friends share their own nightmare stories: one in full-time work texts to say her child’s nursery is closing its doors permanently with just a week’s notice due to staffing shortages, leaving her scrambling for childcare cover. Another says their nursery, struggling to cope with rising energy bills, is suddenly charging an extra £10 a day for lunch and activities.

But this winter, as household costs continue to rise, things could become even more dystopian. In the past year, the number of women not working in

order to look after family has risen by 5% – a trend-bucking increase the likes of which hasn't been seen for 30 years, with women between 25 and 34 most affected. Put simply, too many women can no longer afford to work. And as the cost of living and energy crises bite, this steady stream of mothers disappearing from the workforce threatens to build to a raging torrent.

Florencia is being forced to make a maddening choice between working and staying afloat. She and her husband employ a nanny to look after their two-year-old daughter, who has special needs, while they both work. "With the spike in costs, we can no longer afford [the nanny] so I have decided to take time off," she tells me.

Laura, a 39-year-old Canadian who has two children, left her staff job at a top London university this year. After paying for childcare, she says, she "wasn't even breaking even. It was like, is it even worth working?"

Lauren, also 39, has been unemployed since she was made redundant during the pandemic. "I can't afford to pay for a nursery until I get a job, and I can't seriously look for a job without childcare," she says. "My husband works, but we're in our overdraft every month now as things are getting more and more expensive." She says that her sense of identity has suffered from not "being something other than someone's mum, or wife".

These stories should frighten us all – they point to a growing trend of working mothers being pushed by force and en masse back into the home. Too hyperbolic? "I don't think it's an exaggeration at all. I think this is exactly what we're seeing," says Joeli Brearley, the founder of Pregnant Then Screwed. These are women who *want* to work but have no viable means of doing so, who are being failed by decades of government shortsightedness. "People still do not grasp this notion that if you invest in the childcare sector, you're investing in the economy, because it enables people to work," says Brearley. "What they think is: 'My taxes are paying for your children.' And that's not fair."

At the end of this month, more than 10,000 families are set to participate in [mass protests](#) over political inaction on the issue. And it's about time. Investing in childcare could [boost](#) the annual income of working mothers in

the UK by £10bn, according to a study by the Centre for Progressive Policy. That translates to an additional 3% in their economic output – surely something even the most fiscally or liberally conservative governments can recognise as a positive. But for now, says Mary-Ann Stephenson of the Women’s Budget Group, “it’s a bleak picture. If women can’t afford childcare they either depend more on informal care from their families, which can lead to older women leaving the workforce, or they can only work part-time reduced hours, or they leave the labour market altogether”.

Government [proposals](#) to reduce staff-to-child ratios in nurseries as a way to reduce fees are largely unsupported by providers and parents alike. I ask the nursery owner whether it will make any difference for nurseries already operating at a loss. Not a chance, she tells me: “There’s no nursery in the land that’s going to be able to reduce their fees.”

As more working mothers are pushed to the fringes, the consequences will be felt in the [gender pay gap](#) – the monitoring of which is itself at risk. And in the long term, more and more women of retirement age will sleepwalk into poverty without the opportunity to build up healthy pensions during their working years.

But work is also about identity. It is an anchor to society, a reflection of our self-worth, a life raft of normality when family life threatens to consume us. There’s a reason those chintzy “gin and tonic – mummy’s little helper” signs are so commonplace – a glib expression of just how awful it can be to be a stay-at-home parent. It should no longer be taboo to say that lots of mothers have no desire to stay at home, and that many children benefit from being looked after in organised childcare settings. Generations of women, not hundreds, but millions – from the very youngest, to the very oldest – are being failed. And slowly but surely, we are rolling back the clock on equality.

- Lucy Pasha-Robinson is a writer and commissioning editor
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for***

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I've got my thermals out, but as long as I resist the coat, can I pretend it is not yet autumn?

[Zoe Williams](#)



At this time of year, I find myself scuttling around the streets in profound denial



Feeling the cold. Photograph: Pheelings Media/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Tue 11 Oct 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 10.05 EDT

A lot of people have their identity wrapped up in how late they can leave it before they put the heating on. If they can wait until November, they are restrained, stoical, masculine in all its best senses. If they can push it to Christmas Day, they are all those things plus they could probably live through a blitz without complaining, if only someone would give them the chance. If you are living with a person of this ilk, all I can tell you is that I once heard of a man whose Christmas present to his wife was heating vouchers that she could trade for warmth, until they ran out. So it could be worse, in other words.

I don't have a dog in that fight, living under a tyranny of teenagers, who sometimes want it tropical and other times are so swayed by a 15-second energy-conservation video they saw on TikTok that they are prepared to wear gloves in the house. But I'm in profound denial about the outdoors. I honestly believe that if I can leave the house without a coat on, that means it's not yet autumn. It's an almost Truss-esque rebuttal of external realities.

I spend a lot of time scuttling to the tube, where it's summer all year round, then settle myself proudly on the Victoria line, thinking: "Who's laughing

now, people in coats? I bet you wish *you* could feel this muggy tube breeze of recirculated farts on your bare elbows.”

Around now, the thermals come out, in ever more abstruse variations (they certainly didn’t make polo neck onesies when I were a nipper). You can look and feel as though you’re in a single layer, some kind of early June uniform, whereas in fact you’re in two layers, and one of them was devised by 70 years of continuous Japanese innovation for use in a snow festival.

For at least a fortnight, when the weather can take no more of this nonsense and answers every argument with a biting wind, I just stop going out. Finally, I’ll cave in to a coat, at around the same time as all the real men are setting their thermostats to 18.5C – Christmas Day.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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[International trade](#)

UK firms using legal muscle to facilitate human rights and climate abuses – report

Transform Trade charity says British-based companies are among main bringers of cases based on bilateral investment treaties



Miners in Bolivia. Transform Trade says the UK has recently instigated 66 cases involving the legal instruments known as investor-state dispute settlements, which disproportionately target developing countries. Photograph: Paul Jeffrey/Alamy

[Haroon Siddique](#) *Legal affairs correspondent*

Tue 11 Oct 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 16.54 EDT

UK companies operating overseas are afforded far greater legal protections than the citizens of the countries they invest in, leading to corporations

getting away with human rights and climate change abuses, [a report has found](#).

The Transform Trade charity says the majority of UK [bilateral investment treaties](#) (BITs) contain no mention of climate change, the environment or human rights, meaning companies are not held accountable for violations.

By contrast, it found the UK is playing a key role in the rise of cases where corporations sue states, in private courts, for lost profits under controversial [investor-state dispute settlement \(ISDS\) mechanisms](#) specified in BITs.

ISDS cases have been used to challenge government responses to economic crises or taking climate policy actions, with awards running to billions of pounds.

Corporations based in the UK have brought 66 cases under ISDS mechanism in the past 10 years, the third highest of any country based on all known cases, and the number has increased in recent years, the report says.

Cases are said to have disproportionately targeted developing countries like Bolivia, Congo-Brazzaville, Tanzania and Colombia. The UK has no BITs with western European or north American countries, the report says.

Charlotte Timson, CEO of Transform Trade, said: “It can’t be right that British mining companies can sue developing countries for protecting their people and the environment. But that’s exactly what’s happening. If our new PM wants to live up to her claim that Britain is an advocate for human rights and climate action around the world, and wants to promote freedom and prosperity, then she must ensure that our trade deals don’t sabotage our existing commitments.”

The report says the threat of ISDS proceedings also imposes a “regulatory chill”, inhibiting governments from legislating to address human rights abuses and climate change for fear of being sued. It adds that only one of the UK’s 99 current BITs contains a provision that alludes to the environment and none contains provisions in relation to human rights.

“Many human rights abuses across the world can be linked back to corporations based in the UK, with UK laws inadequate in preventing and addressing these abuses,” the report says.

[A separate report published by the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre last month](#) found that 129 attacks on human rights defenders between 2015 and July 2022 were connected to UK business activities, one in five of which resulted in people being killed.

There has been no criminal prosecution of a UK corporation for human rights abuses overseas and just 17 human rights cases brought in the civil courts, with none yet having been successful at trial, although six have been settled and eight are ongoing, the Transform Trade report found.

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It says the UK is also playing a significant role in the global increase of ISDS cases, as home to the highest number of investors acting as third-party funders of such claims in return for a share of any award granted.

The report concludes: “It is clear that UK law reform is needed in order to protect the climate, provide access to justice for victims, and enforce criminal penalties for British companies that violate human rights abroad.”

A Department for International Trade spokesperson said: “The government has made clear that we will not compromise on our environmental protections, including in free trade agreements.

“Bilateral investment treaties contribute towards a positive business environment for investors, and they do not eradicate governments’ right to regulate on environment and labour standards.”

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Pledge aid or deprive Commonwealth's poorest in diseases fight, UK warned

Latest advances to curb Aids, tuberculosis and malaria are beyond reach without funding, says Global Fund's executive director



Countries will face 'very acute and difficult trade-offs if we don't get the resources we need', said Peter Sands, the fund's executive director. Photograph: Sajjad Hussain/AFP/Getty Images

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

Tue 11 Oct 2022 02.30 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 02.45 EDT

Some of the poorest countries in the Commonwealth may be left unable to deploy cutting-edge UK innovations against three of the world's deadliest diseases if Britain fails to give generously to a key international fund, the UK government has been warned.

Peter Sands, the executive director of the [Global Fund](#) to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, said the combined death toll from the diseases could be halved in the next four years in the countries where the fund invests.

However, he said that “extraordinary opportunity” would only be possible with sufficient financial resources to allow badly affected countries to use new scientific tools such as Oxford University's promising [malaria vaccine](#) and a groundbreaking [HIV prevention drug](#) developed by a British pharmaceutical company.

Historically, Britain has been the third-largest donor to the Global Fund, which provides two-thirds of all international financing for malaria

programmes and three-quarters of the money for TB programmes.

But [at a recent conference](#) in New York, aimed at securing the fund's resources for the next three years, Britain failed to make a pledge, with Vicky Ford, the minister for development, [insisting the UK](#) would continue to be “a strong supporter and contributor”, without committing to a figure.

The government has until late October, when the fund will begin the process of allocating its resources to the countries in which it invests. In the past, more than half the money raised has gone to Commonwealth countries, among which the UK's failure to pledge in September has caused alarm.

Without enough money, Sands warned, governments on the frontline of the fight – many of which are Commonwealth countries – will be forced to prioritise “basic life-saving essentials” over more sophisticated efforts to curb the diseases once and for all.

“The challenge is that if most of the money is just going on delivering ... essentials [such as antiretroviral treatment and insecticide-treated bed nets] there's very little resource to enable the rapid introduction of the newer tools that will actually win against the disease,” Sands told the Guardian.

Governments would also face “very acute and difficult” choices between keeping those essentials going and investing long term in their health systems to make them better prepared to withstand a future pandemic, he added.

“Countries will face very difficult trade-offs between sustaining immediate life-saving priorities, and investing in these longer-term, health system capacities. And those are going to be very acute and difficult trade-offs if we don't get the resources we need.

“I think there is significant concern among Commonwealth leaders about the fact that the UK did not make a pledge,” said Sands.

“If you look at the three diseases, I'm afraid that the countries with the highest disease burden on all three diseases are all Commonwealth countries. South Africa has the most number of people who are HIV-positive

in the world. Nigeria has almost 30% of global malaria cases. And India has about a quarter of the world's TB. In most Commonwealth countries, these diseases are killing more people than Covid.”



A health worker checks a child's pulse during trials for a new malaria vaccine in Kilifi County, Kenya, 19 May 2022. Photograph: Luis Tato/the Guardian

One such country is Rwanda, which increased its own Global Fund pledge from \$2.5m to \$3.25m (£2.9m). In a statement to the Guardian, the Rwandan ministry of health said it looked forward to support from Britain for the “critically important” programme.

“It is up to each country to decide on their particular contribution. Rwanda contributed and increased by 30% over 2019 in line with the pledging target. We look forward to the UK continuing to robustly support the Global Fund along with the other G7 countries,” it said.

All governments were asked by the fund to increase their pledge for the next three years by 30%, to get the fight against the diseases back on track after the pandemic. For the UK, that would be £1.8bn, up from £1.4bn. If, as many fear, it pledges less, there will be a significant dent in the overall amount of money available.

About 2.8 million people die globally from TB, malaria and Aids-related illnesses every year.

A spokesperson for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said: “As the third largest donor to the Global Fund, the UK has invested £4.4bn to date to fight HIV and Aids, tuberculosis and malaria around the world. We will continue to support this vitally important work and will make our pledge after informing parliament.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/11/pledge-aid-or-deprive-commonwealth-poorest-in-diseases-fight-uk-warned>

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US news

Democratic senator threatens to freeze weapons sales to Saudi Arabia over support of Russia

Strong remarks by chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee indicate possible sea change in US policy



Robert Menendez hit out at Mohammed bin Salman's decision to 'help underwrite Putin's war through the OPEC+ cartel' Photograph: Alexey Nikolsky/SPUTNIK/KREMLIN/EPA

[*Stephanie Kirchgaessner*](#) in Washington

[@skirchy](#)

Mon 10 Oct 2022 20.15 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 20.16 EDT

The congressional backlash against [Saudi Arabia](#) escalated sharply on Monday as a powerful Democratic senator threatened to freeze weapons

sales and security cooperation with the kingdom after its decision to support Russia over the interests of the US.

Washington's anger with its Saudi allies has intensified since last week's Opec+ decision to cut oil production by 2m barrels, [which was seen as a slight to the Biden administration](#) weeks ahead of critical midterm elections, and an important boost to Russia.

But the remarks by Senator Robert Menendez, who serves as chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, indicated a serious possible sea change in US policy.

Hitting out at Mohammed bin Salman's decision to "help underwrite Putin's war through the OPEC+ cartel", Menendez said there was "simply is no room to play both sides of this conflict".

"I will not green-light any cooperation with Riyadh until the Kingdom reassesses its position with respect to the war in Ukraine. Enough is enough," he said.

Another Democratic senator and a member of Congress – Richard Blumenthal and Ro Khanna – expressed similar sentiments in an [opinion piece](#) for Politico that also accused Saudi Arabia of undermining US efforts and helping to boost Russian president Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

"The Saudi decision was a pointed blow to the US, but the US also has a way to respond: it can promptly pause the massive transfer of American warfare technology into the eager hands of the Saudis," they wrote.

"Simply put, America shouldn't be providing such unlimited control of strategic defense systems to an apparent ally of our greatest enemy – nuclear bomb extortionist Vladimir Putin."

While similar proposals have failed to pass in the past, Blumenthal and Khanna said "intense bipartisan blowback to Saudi's collusion with Russia" meant that "this time is different". Their piece followed Chris Murphy, another Democratic senator, last week calling for a "wholesale re-evaluation

of the US alliance with Saudi Arabia” and Tom Malinowski, a New Jersey Democratic congressman, introducing legislation to withdraw US troops from the Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.

In his statement, Menendez suggested he would be willing to make exceptions and did not support an outright ban on all support, saying he would block all arms sales and security cooperation “beyond what is absolutely necessary to defend US personnel and interests”.

A spokesperson for the senator did not immediately respond to questions about the nature of those possible exceptions. The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Menendez and others’ statements suggest that Democrats in Congress are poised to take a tougher stance against Saudi Arabia than the White House has publicly said it is willing to accept.

Joe Biden previously threatened to cut off all US support for Saudi offensive operations in Yemen, but a damning report released earlier this year by the government accountability office, which serves as a congressional watchdog, found that the Biden administration’s move to [classify weapons as offensive or defensive was largely meaningless](#).

Since vowing to turn Prince Mohammed into a “pariah” because of his alleged role in approving the murder of US-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Biden changed course this summer and met with the Saudi heir as part of a broader attempt to improve Saudi-US relations.

That outreach was broadly criticised as having failed last week after the OPEC+ decision.

William Hartung, senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute, commended Menendez’s statement but said that to have “maximum impact”, the cut-off ought to cover “all weapons transfers, spare parts, and maintenance to the Saudi military”.

“In addition, a suspension should be tied not just to Saudi Arabia’s ties with Russia or stance on the Ukraine war, but also to pressing the Saudis to

refrain from airstrikes on Yemen and to fully lift its blockade on that nation as a step towards good faith negotiations to end the conflict,” he said.

Khalid Aljabri, whose father, Saad, is an exiled senior Saudi intelligence official, said the “weaponization” of oil was likely to have a broader impact on the US relationship with Saudi, as ordinary Americans would probably begin feeling the ripple effects of Saudi’s decision at the gas pump.

Aljabri said it was not clear whether congressional anger seemed more potent than the Biden administration’s own stance because Democrats had more to lose ahead of November’s critical midterm elections, or whether the White House and Congress were playing a game of “good cop, bad cop” in attempts to influence the kingdom’s policies.

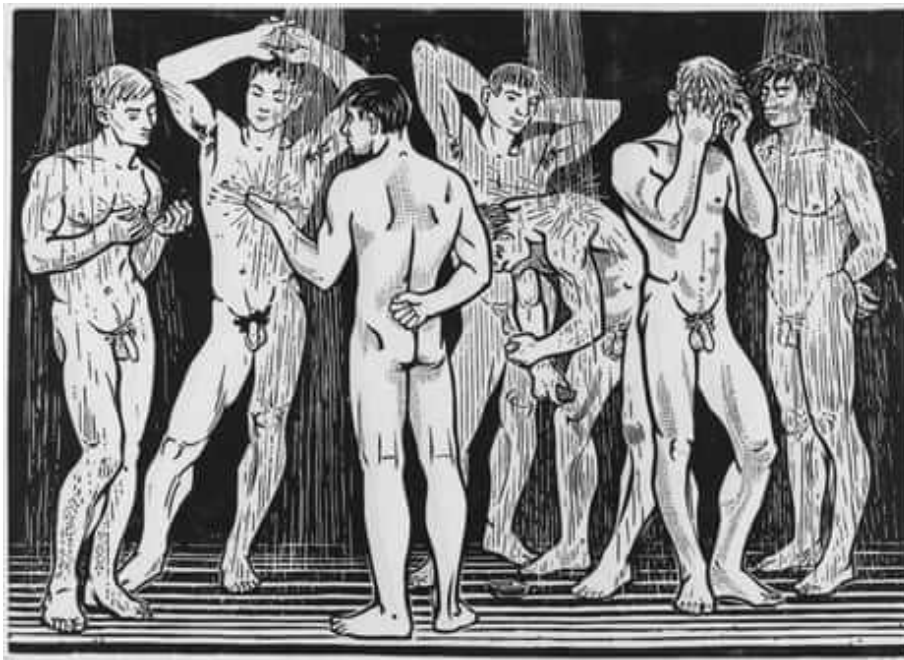
“Either way, they tried appeasement and fist bumps and it didn’t work. [Mohammed bin Salman] only understands the language of power. It is high time the Biden administration acts like the senior partner in this relationship,” he said.

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Germany.

Jürgen Wittdorf: Berlin gallery revives homoerotic art of communist era

In what would have been artist's 90th year, first retrospective at Biesdorf Palace has been a surprise success



Under the Shower (1964). Photograph: Courtesy: Privatsammlung Berlin und Schloss Biesdorf

[Philip Oltermann](#) in Berlin

[@philipoltermann](#)

Tue 11 Oct 2022 00.00 EDTLast modified on Wed 12 Oct 2022 00.09 EDT

Seven men wash the sweat off their toned bodies in a communal shower. Unless you squint and mistake a tightly gripped bar of soap for something else, their limbs are suspended in tantalising proximity but never quite touch.

The German artist Jürgen Wittdorf's 1963 linocut print, from a series titled Youth and Sport, may look like something out of a top-shelf graphic novel or the virile drawings of the gay liberation icon [Tom of Finland](#).

Yet the sensuous shower scene was never meant to scandalise, even while the men's yearnings were hiding in plain sight: commissioned by [the East German state](#), a framed print hung for years in the staircase of Leipzig's sports academy and was later reproduced in a newspaper of the regime-run socialist youth movement.

Sixty years later, it is the visible tension between outward conformity and hidden desire that is driving a revival of Wittdorf, who fell into obscurity after the collapse of the German Democratic Republic and died in poverty in Berlin four years ago. In what would have been his 90th year, a first retrospective at the Biesdorf Palace gallery has been a surprise success, drawing 13,400 visitors to Berlin's Marzahn district since its opening at the start of September.



Sports Students' Builders Brigade (1964). Photograph: Courtesy: Schwules Museum Berlin und Schloss Biesdorf

“What makes Wittdorf's work so fascinating is not only his masterful craft,” said Karin Scheel, who curated the show with the gallerist Stephan Koal,

“it’s also the life lived we can glimpse from these images, of a sexuality that was suppressed and later embraced.”

While the German Democratic Republic decriminalised sexual acts between men in 1968, a year before West [Germany](#), there were few public places where gay and lesbian lifestyles could be lived unchecked. In the early 60s there had been political campaigns against “erotic bars”, and naturism did not become a mainstream movement until the 70s.

“When it came to homosexuality, the east was as bourgeois as the west,” said Andreas Sternweiler, a friend of Wittdorf’s who curated his first solo exhibition at Berlin’s Schwules Museum in 2012.

Art, however, was a place where men were allowed to celebrate male bodies, especially in a socialist realist style that fetishised a healthy physique. Wittdorf had his first sexual experiences with other men in 1963, while working on the Youth and Sport cycle, eventually coming out that year to some close friends and fellow artists. His fascination with the male form takes the viewer to groups of cyclists, Olympic swimmers or builders on a lunch break. His women are more standoffish, arms crossed over chests.



Swimmers (1964). Photograph: Courtesy: Sammlung Linkersdorff, Berlin und Schloss Biesdorf

Wittdorf had won his first admirers two years previously, with a series of woodcut prints called Cycle for Youth. Young people especially could recognise themselves in his pictures of teenagers kissing in alleyways, young couples riding motorbikes, or fresh-faced fathers juggling their offspring and bags of shopping.

“He was very interested in young people’s yearning for individual expression,” said Jan Linkersdorff, a former pupil of Wittdorf’s.

“The people in these pictures are self-confident in their own right, not because of the red flags they carry or political symbols they brandish,” said Scheel of Cycle for Youth, which sold thousands of copies.



Young Couple, part of the Cycle for Youth series (1961). Photograph: Courtesy: Schwules Museum Berlin und Schloss Biesdorf

Elder East Germans in particular remained sceptical: critics found the young people in the Cycle for Youth series too westernised; newspaper readers wrote letters complaining about a picture in which a young man kept his hands in his pocket during a dreamy kiss with a petticoated woman. Sternweiler said the picture was mainly autobiographical: an early expression of his being left cold by the other sex.

While Wittdorf felt unease with East Germany's social norms, he never openly rebelled against the system. A member of the ruling Socialist Unity party since 1957, he earned a living running drawing classes for border guards and police officers, who commissioned him to make a mural for the canteen at their Berlin headquarters. The mingling of artists and workers in creative "circles" was part of a state programme to bridge the chasm between intellectuals and the proletariat.

The Biesdorf Palace retrospective, which runs until February 2023, has portraits of punks with green hair next to men in uniform, hung in the wild floor-to-ceiling "Petersburg" picture arrangement that Wittdorf himself practised at home. A tender portrait of Lenin is, slightly awkwardly, kept apart from the rest, stuck above the elevator door.

With the collapse of the German Democratic Republic, Wittdorf's income through teaching work ran dry. Already in his 60s, he kept running drawing classes for friends from his apartment but was eventually forced to sell off his private collection of antiques and other artists' works in order to make ends meet.

After his death, the remaining works piled up in his Berlin apartment were sold at a house clearance auction to settle outstanding debts, with his former pupil Linkersdorff winning the bid.

Still, life outside the regulated socialist state was not only marked by disappointment. "He was embittered by his own artistic obscurity, but he also enjoyed the freedom he had gained," said Sternweiler, whose 2012 show meant Wittdorf had a taste of his own revival in the last years of his life. "West Berlin's gay scene was more diverse, and that's something he cherished."

The works from Wittdorf's later period return to his favoured all-male lineups, with men now attired in leather chaps and straps, with neither artist or subject making any effort to hide their excitement.

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Japan

Japan opens borders to tourists as last pandemic travel restrictions eased

Japan removes strict Covid-19 travel curbs, fuelling hopes a tourist boom will reinvigorate the economy



A tour guide waits to meet her group near a shopping street in Tokyo. Individual travellers will be able to visit Japan without visas from 11 October. Photograph: Eugene Hoshiko/AP

Guardian staff and agencies

Mon 10 Oct 2022 23.22 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 07.34 EDT

Japan has fully opened its doors to visitors after more than two years of pandemic isolation.

On Tuesday, the country reinstated visa-free travel to dozens of countries, ending some of world's strictest Covid-19 border controls. Japan has also

lifted the 50,000-person entry cap and ended the requirement for tourists to travel as part of tour groups, Kyodo news agency reported.

Prime minister Fumio Kishida is counting on tourism to help invigorate the economy and reap some benefits from the yen's slide to a 24-year low – but hopes for a tourism boom face tough headwinds: a shortage of hospitality workers, lingering pandemic concerns, and predictions from economists that tourist returns would be gradual.

Kishida said last week the government is aiming to attract 5tn yen (\$34.5bn) in annual tourist spending. That goal may be too ambitious for a sector that has withered during the pandemic.

Spending from overseas visitors will reach only 2.1tn yen by 2023 and won't exceed pre-Covid levels until 2025, economist Takahide Kiuchi wrote in a Nomura Research Institute report.

Since June, Japan has allowed tourists to visit in groups accompanied by guides, a requirement that was further relaxed to include self-guided package tours.

Just over half a million visitors have come to Japan so far in 2022, compared with a record 31.8 million in 2019.

Arata Sawa is among those eager for the return of foreign visitors, who previously comprised up to 90% of the guests at his traditional inn.

“I'm hoping and anticipating that a lot of foreigners will come to Japan, just like before Covid,” said Sawa, the third-generation owner of the Sawanoya ryokan in Tokyo.

Flag carrier Japan Airlines Co has seen inbound bookings triple since the border easing announcement, president Yuji Akasaka told Nikkei newspaper last week – but international travel demand won't fully recover until around 2025.

“I don’t think there’s going to be a sudden return to the pre-pandemic situation,” said Sawato Shindo, president of Amina Collection Co, a 120-shop gift and souvenir chain.

Hopes for tourism’s roaring return are also tempered by a shortage of workers. Almost 73% of hotels nationwide said they were short of regular workers in August, up from about 27% a year earlier, according to market research firm Teikoku Databank.

Akihisa Inaba, general manager at the hot-spring resort Yokikan in Shizuoka, central Japan, who said short staffing during the summer meant workers had to forego time off.

“Naturally, the labour shortage will become more pronounced when inbound travel returns,” said Inaba. “So, I’m not so sure we can be overjoyed.”

Whether overseas visitors will wear face masks and abide by other common infection controls in Japan is another concern. The strict border controls were broadly popular during most of the pandemic, and fears remain about the appearance of new viral variants.

On Friday the government approved changing hotel regulations so that operators can refuse guests who do not obey infection controls during an outbreak.

“From the start of the pandemic until now, we’ve had just a few foreign guests,” said Tokyo innkeeper Sawa. “Pretty much all of them wore masks, but I’m really not sure whether the people who visit from here on will do the same.”



Business owner Hideyuki Abe are hoping tourists will return to spend up big in his electronics shop. Photograph: Yuri Kageyama/AP

One force that may buoy the return of visitors is the drop of the yen: [the yen has weakened](#) sharply against the dollar, giving some visitors much heftier buying power and making Japan attractive to bargain hunters targeting Japan's electronics, luxury goods and retail districts.

In Tokyo's Akihabara electronics district, Hideyuki Abe's shelves filled with watches and souvenirs like samurai swords and toy cats with bobbing heads. Abe employs about 50 people and had resorted to layoffs after the pandemic struck in 2020. Some Akihabara shops have closed down since then, but he bided his time.

"Hanging on is where power lies," Abe said. "Now, I am a bit worried about a shortage of workers."

With pandemic restrictions waning and the dollar at a three-decade high of about 145 yen, he believes the tourists will be back.

"This time," he says, "it's a perfect opportunity."

Reuters and Associated Press contributed to this report

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Kwasi Kwarteng says ‘let’s see’ when asked about potential U-turn on corporation tax – as it happened

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Solar power

Liz Truss on collision course with Jacob Rees-Mogg over solar power ban

PM wants to prevent panels on 58% of farmland but business secretary says renewables need to be boosted

- [Jacob Rees-Mogg: I'm no green energy sceptic](#)



Rees-Mogg is understood to think it is ‘unconservative’ to tell farmers what they can do with their land. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

[Helena Horton](#) *Environment reporter*

Thu 13 Oct 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 00.27 EDT

Liz Truss is facing a rebellion from Jacob Rees-Mogg’s business department over plans to ban solar power from most of England’s farmland.

The prime minister and her environment secretary, Ranil Jayawardena, want to ban solar from about 41% of the land area of England, or about 58% of agricultural land, the [Guardian revealed](#) earlier this week.

But her business secretary, Rees-Mogg, is understood to believe it is “unconservative” to tell farmers what they can and cannot do with their land. Her climate minister, Graham Stuart, said on Wednesday he would be speaking to Defra about the plans as more ground-mount solar is needed to meet renewable energy targets.

In a [piece for the Guardian](#), Rees-Mogg, who has previously decried “climate alarmism”, insists he is convinced by the need to boost renewable energy.

He also reveals new policies including loosening regulations for businesses to put solar power in place and giving homeowners grants to install panels on their houses.

In the piece, he says he is “not a green energy sceptic”, adding that his department would give “unprecedented support” to renewable energy sources. Rees-Mogg also brands coalmines and oil rigs as “dark satanic mills”, vowing to replace them with windfarms.

On solar, he adds: “We are exploring options to support low-cost finance to help householders with the upfront costs of solar installation, permitted development rights to support deployment of more small-scale solar in commercial settings and designing performance standards to further encourage renewables, including solar PV, in new homes and buildings.”

Stuart told the environmental audit committee in parliament on Wednesday that his and Rees-Mogg’s Department for Business, [Energy](#) and Industrial Strategy opposed the ban.

He said his department would be speaking to Defra about its plans.

“We’re going to work closely with Defra, and the British energy security strategy set out an expectation for a fivefold increase in solar,” he said. “It’s

clear that we need significant growth in both ground-mount and rooftop solar to meet this ambition.”

The rebellion comes after reports that Truss has [berated her cabinet ministers](#) for briefing against her more unpopular policies, including rumours she considered linking benefit rises to wages rather than inflation.

Truss’s spokesperson confirmed on Monday that the plans to ban solar from agricultural land were going ahead. This is despite analysis in the Financial Times showing that in doing so, England would lose £20bn in investment, which critics said would harm her growth agenda.

Asked about the Guardian’s report, Truss’s official spokesperson told journalists: “I can point you back to what the prime minister said, I think at the start of September, when she said she doesn’t think we should be putting solar panels on productive agricultural lands, because obviously as well as the energy security issue, we face a food security issue. So we need to strike the right balance.”

The prime minister has always had a personal ambivalence towards ground-mount solar, [falsely claiming](#) when she was environment secretary that solar panels harmed food security. During her leadership campaign this summer, she dismissed panels as “paraphernalia”, adding: “On my watch, we will not lose swathes of our best farmland to solar farms.”

Truss is understood to have the support of Jayawardena, who would have to submit the plans to change the farmland grading system to Rees-Mogg’s department and the department for levelling up in order for it to be approved.

He has asked his officials to redefine “best and most versatile” land (BMV), which is earmarked for farming, to include the middling-to-low category 3b, on which most new solar projects are built. Land is graded from 1 to 5, and currently BMV includes grades 1 to 3a. Planning guidance says that development on BMV land should be avoided, although planning authorities may take other considerations into account.

Rees-Mogg's pro-renewable comments may come as a surprise to green campaigners, who have been alarmed by his previous remarks on climate.

Last month, he [told department staff](#) that Britain “must get every cubic inch of gas out of the North Sea”, a leaked video shows. Critics at the time accused the business secretary of “putting his ideology before the climate” and “greenwashing fossil fuels” by prioritising gas over renewables.

Jacob Rees-Mogg claims ‘domestic’ gas is green in leaked footage of first BEIS address – video

He has also been a keen advocate of fracking, [with a leaked email](#) showing he was trying to evade scrutiny of new energy projects, including those using the controversial method. Sources close to the business secretary later clarified that he wanted to be able to quickly build for all energy methods, including renewables and fracking.

An email to officials, seen by the Guardian, set out that he had noted that parliamentary legislation was not subject to judicial review, and could potentially be used to speed along new projects.

Rees-Mogg has also said he would be “delighted” to have fracking in his back garden, and has called those who oppose shale gas extraction “luddites” and “socialists”.

Rees-Mogg tells Tories he'd welcome fracking in his back garden – video

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Economic policy.

No 10 dismisses rumours of Liz Truss U-turn on tax cuts

Gilts and pound rallied after speculation cuts to corporation and dividend taxes wouldn't go ahead

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Liz Truss has committed to a real-terms rise in overall government spending.
Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Peter Walker](#)

Thu 13 Oct 2022 08.35 EDTFirst published on Thu 13 Oct 2022 04.38 EDT

Downing Street has dismissed the idea that [Liz Truss](#) could be about to perform a U-turn on more of the mini-budget tax cuts, amid rumours another policy shift could be imminent in an attempt to placate Conservative MPs and financial markets.

Both UK government bonds and the pound rallied strongly, in part due to continued bond-buying by the Bank of England, but also in response to speculation about a reverse on planned cuts to corporation and dividend taxes.

But asked if he could rule out a U-turn, Truss's official spokesperson said: "Yes – as I said in answer to a number of questions on this yesterday, and the position has not changed from what I set out to you all then."

He also confirmed that there would be no changes to the timing of when tax cuts announced in last month's mini-budget might be phased in.

The spokesperson reiterated Truss's commitment that overall government spending will rise in real terms this financial year, although this is expected to include the £60bn estimated cost of the bailout for energy bills, meaning some departmental budgets could fall.

Economists have warned that markets could react with dismay if the chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, announces a broadly unchanged fiscal plan when he sets out the government's broader economic programme on 31 October.

With spending cuts seen as politically toxic, some senior Tory MPs have been pressuring Truss and Kwarteng to reverse or delay some of the planned tax reductions.

In a round of media interviews on Thursday morning, the foreign secretary, [James Cleverly](#), appealed to colleagues for unity after a bruising day for Truss, when she was repeatedly criticised at the 1922 Committee of Tory backbench MPs.

Robert Halfon, the MP for Harlow, told the committee she had "trashed the last 10 years of workers' Conservatism", while others present described the mood as "funereal" and more downbeat than some of the showdowns faced by Boris Johnson or Theresa May.

While some Tories are plotting how to remove Truss – a tricky feat given party rules mean she can not face a no-confidence vote for her first 12

months in office – Cleverly said doing so would only make the situation worse.

“I think that changing the leadership would be a disastrously bad idea, not just politically but also economically,” he told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme.

He said the party should “stay focused on growing the economy” and dismissed the torrent of acid criticism levied by colleagues and reported by journalists.

“Some people like having quotable tweets and some people like delivering good government. I’m in the camp of people that like delivering good government,” Cleverly told Sky News.

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The medium-term growth plan was brought forward from 23 November in an attempt to reassure the markets, while Truss is also inviting groups of MPs into Downing Street for “listening exercises” over the coming days.

Labour said Kwarteng, should reverse the mini-budget because “the sums simply don’t add up” and welcomed Truss’s confirmation there would be no public spending cuts.

Lucy Powell, the shadow culture secretary, said energy support should not be funded purely through borrowing but from a fresh windfall tax for energy companies.

“Kwasi Kwarteng and Liz Truss can put their fingers in their ears and say it’s all OK, we’ll carry on as normal, and we’ll all continue to pay for that with increased mortgage rates, with inflation out of control and other prices going up.

“Or they can do the responsible thing and listen – not just to the big economic global institutions like the IMF [International Monetary Fund] – listen to parliament, listen to the public and they can reverse their mini-budget and go back to the drawing board.”

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[Liz Truss](#)

‘Pig’s ear’: Tory press raises doubts about Liz Truss’s future

Once-loyal papers such as the Sun and Daily Mail start to turn on PM amid financial turmoil

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‘In her abject powerlessness she is like a leader who has been in office for years and has run out of options and support,’ says the Daily Mail. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK parliament/AFP/Getty

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) *Political correspondent*

[@breeallegretti](#)

Thu 13 Oct 2022 05.44 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Oct 2022 13.31 EDT

Conservative commentators are beginning to turn against Liz Truss, with rightwing newspapers such as the Sun and [Daily Mail](#) rounding on her for

making a “pig’s ear” of the mini-budget, while other observers suggest her premiership could be extremely short-lived.

Though she was initially heralded by some as a prime minister to drive through true-blue policies with the most radical reforms in decades, unease is growing in Tory circles about her leadership.

Recent [market turmoil](#), a series of screeching U-turns and the expectation more will follow are compounding jitters about Truss’s future.

The Daily Mail, in its editorial on Thursday, reserved the top slot in its three-pronged editorial column to savage the Bank of England governor, Andrew Bailey, but used the second to raise concerns about Truss. It said her “dash for growth is already limping badly after she made a pig’s ear of presenting her ambitious mini-budget and was forced into humiliating U-turns”.

Though critical of her leadership, the Mail, which endorsed Truss during the leadership contest, did say the principle of tax cuts and pursuance of growth was the right one and urged Tory rebels to get behind it.

Emblazoned across the rest of the page was a comment piece by its columnist Stephen Glover. One extract read: “In her abject powerlessness she is like a leader who has been in office for years and has run out of options and support. But she has only just started! And she has a majority of nearly 70.”

Meanwhile the Sun, which did not endorse either Truss or Rishi Sunak, used its editorial on Thursday to go after the new prime minister.

While it admitted “global forces are in play” and also harangued Threadneedle Street for “mixed messages”, the paper said Truss “fuelled the chaos by claiming no government spending will be cut”, asking: “How, then, can she balance the books?”

In a final riposte, the leader added: “The mayhem is terrifying. Markets crave stability and confidence. Ours have neither.”

Criticism also came from the [Financial Times](#), which said Truss had presided over “Britannia Unhinged” – a reference to the book titled Britannia Unchained she wrote with Kwasi Kwarteng and other free-market backbenchers in 2012.

And the Economist said in a thundering editorial this week that Truss “blew up her own government”, and the few days she had in power that were not spent mourning the Queen’s death meant her honeymoon period had “the shelf-life of a lettuce”.

In addition to the scorn poured on Truss by the national press, the editor of an influential website within the Tory party – Conservative Home – said there were doubts about whether the mini-budget could survive at all.

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Paul Goodman told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “I am beginning to wonder whether or not ministers and Conservative MPs are capable of putting together a package of public spending cuts on the scale required. And if they do, whether they’re going to be acceptable to the markets, or whether the markets are now going to demand the withdrawal, in effect, of the mini-budget, or most of it, that [Kwasi Kwarteng](#) announced only very recently.”

Goodman said “all sorts of different people are talking about all sorts of different things because the Conservative backbenchers are casting around for a possible replacement for Kwasi Kwarteng, even for a possible

replacement for Liz Truss” – mentioning that Sunak, Penny Mordaunt, Boris Johnson, Kit Malthouse and Sajid Javid’s names had been touted.

He added: “I have to say I’m not very enthusiastic about this kind of idea myself, nor am I enthusiastic about the prospects of the Conservative party junking what would be its fourth leader in seven years.”

One of the key economists Truss touted during the leadership contest, Gerard Lyons, also said on Thursday that while markets were in a febrile state before the mini-budget, “that clearly has contributed to a lot of the problems”.

He told Times Radio: “The mini-budget itself shouldn’t have been a mini-budget, it should have been as it said on the tin, a fiscal statement, where they just clarified what the markets had discounted – namely, reversing the two planned tax increases in terms of corporation tax and national insurance ... and also coming up with the energy levy.”

Lyons added that Kwarteng, in his Halloween medium-term growth plan, “needs to convince the market that their fiscal numbers add up”.

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2022.10.13 - Spotlight

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‘We’ve brought each other a lot of happiness’: the Hairy Bikers on love, food, stardom and chemo

[Paula Cocozza](#)



‘When we get together, there’s always big man hugs’ ... David Myers (right) and Si King. Photograph: Andrew Hayes-Watkins

Best mates for 30 years, TV stars for 20, Si King and David Myers have become one of Britain’s favourite double acts. As Myers copes with cancer, their closeness has never meant more

[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Thu 13 Oct 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 10.20 EDT

The [Hairy Bikers](#) are having a tough time. David Myers has no hair and Si King has no bike. It sounds like an existential crisis. King’s problem is easily fixed because he is “in between motorcycles” and can’t wait to get his leg over the saddle again. But [Myers is 14 sessions into a course of chemotherapy](#), with six to go, and his year “hasn’t been normal” to say the least. He prefers not to specify the type of cancer “because everybody then goes Googling, everybody becomes an amateur doctor ... And I don’t want to be judged – yet,” he adds. “A huge inconvenience,” he says ceremoniously, “is the best way to describe it.”

Some festivals cancelled their bookings, not wanting just one hairy biker. Others invited King to gig solo while Myers stayed home, testing recipes from their new book, [Brilliant Bakes](#), and “eating like it’s been going out of fashion, to get the calories in me”. Under this sort of duress, some double acts might question themselves: who they are, how they work, whether they will work again. But King and Myers know that what makes them who they are isn’t really hair or bikes – it’s each other.

“We are like a cog and a wheel,” King says. He is the younger one, at 55, with a silvery mane while Myers, 65, is famed for his handlebar moustache, though of course the chemo has put paid to that. People muddle them up, but “we go along with it, or tell them our name’s Brian”, Myers says. He always stands on King’s left. It has been that way since they got out of a lift in their first show nearly 20 years ago and worried about continuity between cuts. “It’s got to the point where it feels uncomfortable the other way round,” Myers says. Even “just as mates walking down the road, we keep our proper sides”.

For King and Myers, there is no such thing as on- and off-camera selves. “As Dave often says, we’re not complicated enough to be anyone else,” King says.

Although their [Agony Uncles](#) podcast has continued and Myers has worked on the book, this conversation represents a rare joint appearance – albeit on a video call. King is speaking from the Northumberland/County Durham borders, Myers from his home in rural Staffordshire. They have saved meeting in person, Myers says, “for when it’s been really useful”. For instance, when he and his wife, Liliana, moved recently, Liliana rented an Airbnb two doors down, “and basically put me in there with Kingy” while she sorted their house. And, before that, when the chemotherapy started, “things were really quite rough” for Myers. “You have to have a port put in your chest. It’s where they put the stuff in rather than opening up your arms. But Si was there for that whole week until things were under control.”

“We’re brothers to each other, really,” King says. “It transcends friendship.”

Brothers? Really? They seem to get on much better than siblings.

“Like siblings in the way that you accept each other’s faults and move on, rather than bitch,” Myers clarifies. They do have occasional spats, such as the one last week when Liliana was away and King came to take Myers to hospital. It was the morning before chemo. “I was really nervous, like you are,” Myers says. “And he made me porridge. And he saw in the cupboard these seeds. *Superseeds*,” he whispers, “*that my wife tries to get down my throat*. So what does he do? He puts a handful in my porridge. Oh! I was like a parrot!” pecking at them. “It’s all right! I’ll make you another!” King said. (He ate the seeded one.)

As bust-ups go, this seems pretty mild. Especially as they pottered happily all week: a visit to the National Motorcycle Museum, and a pottery where they “bought pots and drank tea canalside”. And they cooked every night, Myers says – dishes “going back to our youth”. King made savoury mince and potatoes, and together they made Lancashire hotpot. I’m wondering if they are getting nostalgic, because Brilliant Bakes is all about baking from their childhoods.



Myers (left) and King in 2005. Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

“I certainly am now, given the hand that’s been dealt me this year,” Myers says. “I think about the past with huge, great jealousy, and affection. Watching some of our old episodes on the telly when I’m ill, I don’t look like myself. And I look at myself there with my best mate, thinking, you know ... I remember I said to Lil, ‘That used to be me.’ ‘No,’ she said. ‘That *is* you.’” But over the seven months since his diagnosis in late March, it must have been hard to keep his old self in mind.

“We’ve got a lot to be nostalgic about,” King says.

They met 30 years ago, while working on a TV adaptation of Catherine Cookson’s *The Gambling Man*. King was second assistant director – he later became location manager on the *Harry Potter* films – while Myers was a makeup artist. He had started as a BBC trainee after graduating in fine art from Goldsmiths, University of London, and worked on all sorts, from Des O’Connor’s highlights to Adam Ant’s stripe. The night they met, Myers walked into the pub in Newcastle where most of the crew were “on a spritzer and sandwich”, saw King at the bar ordering curry and a pint and said: “I’ll have what he’s having.”

It's easy to imagine the evening unspooling as they discovered their common ground – there is so much of it. Both were bullied as children: King for his weight, Myers for alopecia. Both came from families of “grafters” – King's dad working on ships, Myers' at the paper mill in Barrow-in-Furness. Both had much older siblings, and seriously ill parents: King was eight when his father died, while Myers' mother was diagnosed with MS when he was seven. But, no, they say, they didn't talk about any of this. That was the great thing about writing their 2015 autobiography, [Blood, Sweat and Tyres](#), King says. “We found out quite a lot about each other.”

“What's the point of mulling over the old shit that's caused trouble?” Myers adds. “If we got together, are we going to sit there, and I'm going: ‘My mum had MS,’ and you, your dad with kidney failure? No, we're going to go fishing and get drunk and have a good time. Together, we've brought each other quite a bit of happiness.”

When they worked as crew, Myers and King were aware of performers as “the talent”, and I wonder at what point they realised they had become the talent. “We never have,” King says immediately. “Never have,” Myers agrees. In fact, when they filmed one of the first BBC programmes, the crew went for pizza, and “I got kind of nervous. I said to the director: ‘Have we pissed the crew off? Nobody's asked us for supper.’ He said: ‘Normally the talent don't eat with the crew.’ It broke the ice. But that wasn't us at all. Crikey, no.”

King, who has been listening quietly, says: “Talent is what you bring. Talent is your character. It's not just a thing. It's made up of all sorts of elements of character and personality. And the application thereof. Can I speak for you?” he asks Myers. “I don't think I've made it at all. I don't know what ‘made it’ is. Is that material wealth? Is it enlightenment? What we can say is: ‘I have had – and continue to have – an amazing life.’”



‘We’ve got a lot to be nostalgic about.’ Photograph: Andrew Hayes-Watkins

“I tell you,” Myers says, “I’ll feel I’ve made it when I get the all-clear from this bloody cancer. That’s going to be completely life-changing, life-affirming. And life never will be the same again.”

Myers says he is proud of King for his work this year, but has King felt less of a hairy biker for being alone? “Wow. No?” he asks, folding his arms. “How do I answer that?”

Recently, though, he has struck out. He and Myers usually avoid politics. But just after our conversation, [King joined an Enough Is Enough rally in Newcastle](#). As a child, he and his mum struggled to find the next 50p for the meter. “We were in a position where we were paying more than anybody else but less able to afford it than anybody else.” Now, he has “friends who work in the NHS and have to use food banks. People are being thrown into poverty and desperation ... My God, man, it’s just outrageous.”

King has always kept his politics “very quiet”. Now, though, “that time is gone,” he says. He chose to address the rally “because being silent on this is complicit. And I’m not complicit in that system. I think you have a responsibility to call it out when you see it if you have a profile.” He is at pains to stress that this is not about party politics. “It’s simply about being

human and having some empathy ... a rallying call to have faith in us as human beings, that we can make changes by the choices that we make about the people that represent us.”

Myers can relate. His daughter is in the process of buying a first flat and confronting the “possibility that the mortgage may double”. As a student, he used to sit in Karl Marx’s chair at the British Library – was that a statement of ideology? “No,” he says, “it was nothing political.” He just thought it was cool.

When Myers began chemo, did King consider shaving his head in sympathy? ‘If he’d asked us, I probably would have’

He was studying the pre-Raphaelites at the time, “fascinated by the decadent Victorians”, and craved a lavish cascade of hair, but “I had nothing! I couldn’t get a corkscrew curl to save my life!” he says. The alopecia did help to make his recent hair loss feel livable, though. “I just said to my wife: ‘Oh shit, get the clippers out. I’m done with this.’ It was harder for her to do, because she’d never seen me with no hair. But she did come out with a great line when my eyebrows went. She said: ‘Darling, you look like they pulled you out the mould before you’d finished.’”

When Myers began his treatment, did King consider shaving his head in sympathy? “Er, no. I mean, if he’d asked us, I probably would have.”

Myers butts in. “My wife said the same thing. ‘I’ll shave mine out of support.’ I said: ‘Don’t do that because, then, you do realise, we can’t go out together?’ Not being sexist, but I think [baldness] is easier for a bloke.”

He strokes his scalp. “My little fuzzy hair’s coming back now,” he says. “It’s all on numbers. And the numbers are going the right way. So it encourages you to carry on.”

Over the years, they have both had illnesses and accidents: Myers life-threatening pneumonia, King an aneurism. And Myers also had the pain of losing his fiancée, who died of cancer in 1998. Have these experiences helped him to cope with his cancer?

“No, I’ve had enough,” he replies. “I thought I’d paid my dues when I was a kid with my mother. And I’ve got the hugest respect for my wife for putting up with me. I’m a ... what’s the word? I get angry with myself, and I try to keep it to myself, but sometimes – you know, words spill over, which I feel guilty about. But no, I don’t think it helps you cope at all.”

“Quite the opposite, actually. Quite the opposite,” King adds. They have a habit of reinforcing each other’s words, singing each other’s choruses. In some ways, they are more like a married couple than siblings. When King mistakenly refers to *It’s a Wonderful Life* as Myers’s favourite film, Myers tells him: “No, that’s your ex-wife’s favourite film. Even I know that. Wrong wife, mate!”

But they are wary of overthinking their relationship. Myers shares a story he once heard “about an old sage” who, appropriately enough, “had a big long beard. And somebody came to him and said: ‘Master, do you sleep with your beard under the sheets or over the sheets?’ And from that moment on the fella never had a good night’s sleep.”

King thinks that what they really bring to each other is “generosity and kindness”.

“I would say the love. And I appreciate your warmth,” Myers says. “When we get together – there’s always the big man hugs. Sometimes, when he tries to kiss me on the lips, it gets a bit ...” He purses his lips and wipes at them furiously. “But I was well grateful for it last week, so I’m not complaining. I think it’s the shared experiences that’s the best, because we do understand.”

Myers wants to return to work next year. “I’m hoping. Hand on my heart, I am. It’s going to take work and physiotherapy to get myself stronger,” he says. “But that’s going to be a hell of a day. That pizza down the pub is going to be quite special.”

The Hairy Bikers’ *Brilliant Bakes* by Si King and Dave Myers is published by Seven Dials, (£25). To support the Guardian, buy your copy from bookshop.theguardian.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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‘It felt like I was never going to get better’: patients navigating long Covid



Dylan, 10, has been suffering from long Covid. His doctor kept on saying ‘kids don’t get it’. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Those affected with long Covid have to cope with an illness that is not yet well understood. Three patients discuss their journey

- [Read the Guardian's new series, Living with long Covid](#)

[Linda Geddes](#) , [Hannah Devlin](#) and [Nicola Davis](#)

Thu 13 Oct 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 04.06 EDT

Long Covid is now estimated to affect [2 million people in the UK](#), and almost [145 million globally](#). It's a complicated diagnosis to receive and those affected have to cope with both the physical symptoms and the psychological strain of having an illness that is not yet well understood and does not have well-established treatments. We heard from three long Covid patients on how they navigated this journey.

Dylan, 10: 'It felt like the doctors didn't believe me, which made me really sad'

Unlike many adults who caught Covid at the start of the pandemic, seven-year-old Dylan didn't have a continuous cough or fever when he became ill in late February 2020. Instead, he had bad stomach pains, bouts of vomiting, night sweats, aches and extreme tiredness.

When he started complaining that it was difficult to breathe, his mum, Heidi Bohrn, initially thought he was having a panic attack. An NHS adviser had already told them to avoid hospital unless Dylan developed a fever, because of the risk of catching Covid.

Several days later, Heidi was also experiencing breathing problems but with no Covid tests available, the family held tight. Six weeks later, Heidi was improving. However, Dylan's problems had only just begun.

He began vomiting bile every night, and his heart and breathing problems returned. Other seemingly random symptoms – a rash on his stomach, nosebleeds, involuntary shaking – would appear and disappear, as if on a loop.

At the start of 2020, Dylan had been a healthy child growing up in Buckinghamshire, UK. A video taken in January captured him happily splashing about in the waves during a family cruise to the Caribbean. Now he struggled to get out of bed most days, let alone play with his toys and friends.

Throughout the pandemic, children's experiences of Covid have been largely downplayed. Because they seemed less likely to become seriously unwell, the general assumption was that, unless they were unlucky enough to develop a rare but serious condition called multi-system inflammatory syndrome, they would be fine.



Heidi Bohrn and son Dylan. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

We now know that [up to one in seven children and adolescents](#) still have symptoms 15 weeks later – including unusual tiredness and headaches – while about one in 14 have five or more persistent symptoms. And, whereas trials for potential treatments for adults with long Covid have finally begun, none of them involve teenagers or children.

“The biggest challenge is that GPs don’t know how to recognise long Covid, and they don’t understand when to refer,” says Sammie McFarland, founder of the [Long Covid Kids](#) support group. “We’re still fighting against that

early narrative that children weren't affected. It has created a barrier to getting any support or belief."

Although Heidi had private healthcare insurance, she had to fight to get Dylan seen by a doctor. When he was finally assessed, it was to check his chest pains weren't symptomatic of an underlying heart condition. They weren't.

"The doctor didn't believe it was long Covid," Heidi says. "He kept saying, 'Kids don't get it.' Because we didn't have a positive PCR test, they were in complete denial. I think that's what upset us most: because there's no physical test that shows a biomarker [for long Covid], it must be all in your head."

Frustrated, the family turned to internet support forums. "The support, emotionally and psychologically, has been immense," says Heidi. "Dylan's also been chatting to other kids, so it's nice for him to feel like he's not alone"

They found practical suggestions online too. Because some adults with long Covid had anecdotally benefited from taking antihistamines, some parents had tried giving them to their children, with some success. After speaking with a pharmacist, Heidi suggested Dylan give them a try. She also started him on a low-histamine diet (avoiding foods such as oranges, bananas, spinach and tomatoes, and cured/processed meats) and a gluten and dairy-free diet, plus a probiotic and various nutritional supplements. "I generally feel like it helps him with a slight improvement – particularly with his sleep and stomach pains – but he still suffers extremely," Heidi says.

No clinical trials have yet been published to support this approach. David Warburton, a professor of paediatrics at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, says: "I do really feel for these parents, and I can understand their frustration with the medical system. On the other hand, as a physician, you don't want to be prescribing something when you don't understand what it's doing. And you don't want to do harm."

Warburton serves on a committee for the US National Institutes of Health's Recover initiative, which is currently trying to prioritise potential treatments

for long Covid that could be tested in clinical trials – including antihistamines. “For each of these things, we have to consider the safety profile, the available evidence and the potential benefit-to-toxicity ratio. It is a massive task, which is proceeding as fast as we can go.”

Over months, Dylan’s symptoms slowly began to improve; he even managed to attend school for a couple of days a week. But then, in October 2021, he caught Covid again. About six weeks later, the vomiting returned – often 10-15 times a day. “He was unable to go to school from then onwards, really,” says Heidi.

This time, Dylan was referred to a gastroenterologist. The only obvious abnormality they detected was low stomach pH, for which Dylan was prescribed a drug that reduces stomach acid production, and another typically used to prevent nausea and vomiting associated with cancer treatment. This helped, but the other symptoms persisted – and so the doctor referred Dylan to a long Covid clinic.

While waiting for that appointment, Dylan caught Covid a third time, which set him back again.

Finally, in late June 2022, Dylan’s appointment at the long Covid clinic arrived. They didn’t have a protocol to offer yet, but they listened; the session lasted one and a half hours. “It was the first time he’d really been listened to, so it was really good,” Heidi says.

So far, he has seen a physiotherapist, who has given him some gentle stretches and exercises to help build up his strength, as he was limping on his left leg due to muscle pain. He has also been assigned a psychotherapist, who drew up a plan for a gradual and phased return to school.

“At the beginning, it felt like the doctors didn’t believe me, which made me feel really sad. I felt like I was never going to get better,” says Dylan, who is now 10. “My last visit was completely different, the doctors spent time understanding me and I can see they really want to help me. They made me focus on that, and I know I can get better with time.

“It was nice going back to school, and it has made me feel a lot better knowing that I’m not going to get stuck like this. I’m mainly looking forward to playing sports, and playing with my friends.”

Most of all, Dylan is looking forward to visiting his grandad, who lives in Spain. “I haven’t seen him in person for three years,” he says.

Heidi is currently planning a trip there, but she remains worried about Dylan catching Covid again. “It’s just a matter of when, not if.”

– *Linda Geddes, science correspondent*

Candace, 45: ‘I was very unkind to myself’



Candace. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

“I am not a singer,” Candace admits. “I’m not ever going to sing in public. So it was a little bit daunting when they asked us to turn our mics off mute.”

Candace, a 45-year-old HR director from Hertfordshire, UK, is describing her experience of the English National Opera’s [Breathe programme](#). Over the past six weeks, she and other non-singers have been learning lullabies together over Zoom under the supervision of a professional singing coach.

The aim is not to hit the right notes, but to learn to breathe again after struggling with breathlessness, one of the most common symptoms of long Covid.

I accompany Candace to a lunchtime session. Our coach, Lea, starts by asking everyone to rate their current energy levels (responses range from 7% to 90%) and then moves on to stretching and breathing exercises. He has a calm, encouraging demeanor and a cosy-looking dog in the background. We're invited to join in with a lilting Irish lullaby, Connemara Cradlesong. "Picture yourself somewhere safe," Lea tells us. "We're going to put a bit of that sea air and that safety into our hum."

Candace first became ill in late February 2020. As an asthmatic, going down hard with coughs was familiar, but when she started struggling to breathe she headed to the hospital, where she was admitted for three days. Covid was not yet on the radar of UK doctors and she was initially diagnosed with pericarditis, an inflammation of tissue around the heart.

By September, the cardiology team had changed their mind and concluded that Candace was suffering from long Covid. The diagnosis was a relief as it finally gave her an explanation for her symptoms, but she wasn't getting any better. "I couldn't do day-to-day things," she says. "I'd get breathless trying to cook and my heart rate would just go absolutely crazy." Her favorite activities – hiking, camping with her teenage children – soon became out of reach.

Candace's initial instinct was to push on through. When we chat over Zoom, she has the brisk, friendly air of someone who is used to getting things done at work. "Life went on," she says. "I'm the head of HR for an organisation and we had to furlough staff, we had people having mental health problems. I'd be on calls at 8pm at night. I was very unkind to myself."

Things went from bad to worse. Even minor exertion would leave her gasping for breath (breathlessness affects roughly one-third of those with long Covid, [according](#) to the Office for National Statistics). And because lying down worsened her symptoms, she fell into a cycle of sleeplessness and anxiety.

After more than a year's wait, she was finally referred to the long Covid clinic at Imperial College NHS Trust in March this year and offered a place on the ENO Breathe programme.

“I did think, ‘How are they going to be able to help?’” Candace says. “But I was at the point where I was willing to try anything.”

A challenge in treating long Covid is that symptoms vary widely and patients' underlying pathology probably falls into several different subgroups. “Normally in medicine, you try to understand what's causing the symptoms and then you try to treat the cause,” says Dr Keir Philip, a clinical research fellow at Imperial College London, who led [a randomised controlled trial](#) on the efficacy of the ENO Breathe intervention.

In the case of breathlessness, Philip says, people often develop disordered patterns of breathing, which can mean that the symptom persists even after the underlying pathology has begun to recover. Anxiety about breathlessness can also make the problem worse. This is not to suggest psychological factors are the sole cause, but they are an element doctors can help with. The beauty of doing the rehab through singing is that patients “focus on their breathing, without focusing on their breathing”, Philip says.

The trial has been a success, with data showing that 81% of participants reported improvements by the end of the programme and 74% saying their levels of anxiety were better. Candace says this has been her experience.

“A turning point for me was around posture,” she says. “You're often taught to hold in your tummy and have a straight back, but this meant I wasn't breathing down to my tummy. I was more of a shallow breather. I've learnt that it's OK to let your tummy out every now and then because it has an impact on how deeply you can breathe.”

She also learnt to pace herself accordingly. “It's frustrating because in my mind I'm a quick person,” she says.

“I know that physically I'm still on a journey,” she adds. “I've played tennis competitively since I was 11 years old. I'd love to be able to get back on a court but I'm not ready yet.”

We catch up again two weeks later, after Candace has had more physiological tests at the clinic. She still doesn't have a clear answer but she feels she's making a gradual physical recovery. Knowing she has a doctor, rehab nurse and physiotherapist involved in her ongoing recovery feels like an important safety net. This week she's started doing some gentle cycling – the first time she has actively exercised.

“It's just so nice to be able to do things again,” she says. “My balance of what's been tough and what's been normal has been changing and that just makes me so happy.”

– *Hannah Devlin, science correspondent*

Asad Khan: ‘When you become a patient, it doesn't matter what you were before’



Dr Asad Khan. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

When it comes to long Covid, there is no shortage of articles describing desperate patients and maverick doctors. But for Asad Khan, it is a crass picture.

“I just felt like, well, they've not lived our life. It's not sensitive,” he says.

Before the pandemic, Khan was a respiratory consultant in Manchester, a keen gym-goer and an active family man who enjoyed travel. But all that changed when he caught Covid.

“I got it in November 2020, working in a respiratory Covid ward with inadequate PPE,” he says. “I was in bed, high temperature, feeling absolutely dreadful, off my food and drink for about a month.”

But duty called and Khan returned to work. Within days, there was a change for the worse. Khan’s symptoms ranged from chest pain to palpitations, shortness of breath, a distressing rash over the face and neck, a need to pass urine every five to 10 minutes, and a pulse rate up to 160. “As we know now, going back [to work] too early or exerting yourself is precipitant for long Covid, and I think that is what happened,” he says. “I was a complete mess. And I had no idea what was going on.”

After joining a Facebook group for doctors with long Covid, Khan was advised he may have mast cell activation syndrome – a condition in which immune cells release too much of certain substance into the body, resulting in symptoms of an allergic reaction – and postural tachycardia syndrome, described by the NHS as an abnormal increase in heart rate that occurs after sitting up or standing. The group also suggested the investigations and tests he might need.

“That’s really the story of my life since then,” says Khan. “Speaking to other people who have tried things and have been successful, going and finding a physician who is willing to push the boundaries for me, and then obtaining a treatment. I have been my own coordinating consultant, there hasn’t been anyone to do that for me.”

The disappointment and frustration Khan feels is palpable as he describes how he was let down by some colleagues who he feels put up barriers to care.

“When you become a patient, it doesn’t matter what you were before. There is this power imbalance, which means that you have no credibility and you’re not reliable. And you’re potentially exaggerating your symptoms, and

you're just out to get some drugs. That's how I felt in lots of encounters," he says.

Dr Betty Raman, associate professor of cardiovascular medicine and long Covid expert at the University of Oxford, says patients are desperate to feel better, but that there are currently no evidence-based treatments for long Covid, creating a difficult situation.

"The lack of treatment is further complicated by an absence of definitive diagnostic tests which has fueled ongoing anxiety and frustration among those living with the condition and has led to a growing distrust of patients for healthcare services and medical professionals," she says.

By September 2021, Khan had deteriorated to the point that even a sliver of light or slight noise was intolerable, and he was largely bed-bound – just looking at a phone screen made him vomit.

That month he travelled to Germany [for a procedure called apheresis](#), or "blood washing", in which blood is filtered to [remove microclots and inflammatory molecules](#) – the latter having been found in the blood of people with long Covid by researchers including Prof Resia Pretorius, an expert in clotting physiology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Khan says the apheresis and anticoagulation therapy made a significant difference to him, although his progress has been set back by several bouts of Omicron.

It is far from the only potential therapy he has received. The list of experts Khan has seen and treatments he has tried seems exhaustive; appointments with cardiologists and immunologists have occurred alongside the use of complementary therapies like acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine, cranial osteopathy. He has also tried breathwork, cryotherapy and neutraceuticals.

"All of this has obviously been very expensive, it has cost approximately £50,000," he says, adding he no longer has any savings.

But as we chat over the phone, there is a clearly an elephant in the room. Many of the approaches Khan has tried have little evidence to back their use, or are experimental.

Raman says excessive clotting and vascular problems have gained considerable traction as potential causes of long Covid. However, systematic evidence from rigorous blinded placebo-controlled clinical trials that test apheresis and anti-clotting regimens in long Covid are still awaited.

Prof Ami Banerjee of University College London, who is running a trial into possible treatments for long Covid, is among those who are uneasy about embracing unproven “cures”.

“I do not judge or blame patients at all. That’s not my area. In fact, my aim is to make sure that patient safety is paramount,” he says.

Banerjee says there has been slowness and even neglect in developing treatments and trials for post-viral conditions, adding that some people with long Covid have now been waiting for two years for progress.

But, he warns, being in such a position can increase a person’s vulnerability, meaning they may be willing to try almost anything – even if there is little evidence of effectiveness or data on patient safety.

“What I’m saying is that we should not change the bar of the science or of the safety that is required just because it’s long Covid,” he says. Instead, he says, research needs to step up.

“I’m actually arguing 100% for more trials and quicker trials,” says Banerjee, adding he has faced a number of regulatory hurdles to get his own trials up and running.

While Khan also backs the use of clinical trials, he says many patients cannot wait for their results.

Has the shift from clinician to patient affected Khan’s views?

“I would have said, a year ago, wait for the trials. But now what I will say is, there is evidence that these patients have, for example, micro-clotting,

they've got that dysbiosis. Let's demonstrate these things. And let's try these treatments, understanding the risks and benefits, whilst trials are waiting to report," he says.

"Trials take forever. And, you know, people say that good research can't be rushed. Well, that's nonsense. I mean, it can and should be – it was rushed for acute Covid with the Recovery trial."

Yet Banerjee is cautious about a gung-ho approach to potential treatments. "That's not what we do in any other disease," he says, adding patients with long Covid should be treated with the same respect, the same science and the same care, as if they had heart failure or leukaemia. "Everything that's done in healthcare should be based on evidence, experience and expertise."

To go out on a limb and try something different may sound like the move of a brave medical professional but it could, argues Banerjee, endanger patients, while understanding of diseases, and how to treat them, is best advanced when potential therapies are examined in standardised randomised controlled trials, to avoid biased results.

"The way to do it would be to do trials at scale, rather than going off to unregulated places and providers," he says.

"Not everybody's bad. But there's a clear conflict of interest in anybody who's selling these treatments, without evidence at these costs. You have to understand that they're not totally neutral and unbiased in this situation."

Social media, he adds, can exacerbate the situation. "All kinds of unscrupulous people are selling stuff to a vulnerable patient group, who might then go on Twitter, and say, 'I've tried five things and this has worked for me.' Yet, that could be a placebo effect or unrepresentative of the effect on all patients. This is not a step forward in healthcare or in science in my book – rather, it could be exploiting a vulnerable population."

The narrative of vulnerable patients and radical doctors is criticised by Khan.

“It does not take into account that patients are desperate because they are not getting any meaningful help on the NHS, and these doctors are amongst only a handful that are willing to push the boundaries, take risks and help them,” he says.

For Raman, the perceived mismatch in attitude between healthcare professionals and patients is familiar.

“Many doctors have tended to adopt a more cautious approach [to procedures such as apheresis] which, according to some [patients], is inconsistent with the sense of urgency witnessed in the treatment or prevention of severe acute infection,” she says.

But, she adds, such hesitancy may be rooted in the ethical framework by which doctors are bound: the Hippocratic oath.

Raman says that for many with long Covid, personal experience or anecdotal reports of successful treatments offer the only sources of hope for a cure.

“Many are willing to attempt any form of treatment, irrespective of the costs or potential for adverse effects,” she says. That, Raman adds, should serve as a stark reminder to public health authorities and governments of the need to support ongoing clinical trials in long Covid to prove or disprove specific recommendations.

“In the absence of such efforts, the economic burden of long Covid – including increasing unemployment and complications from untested treatments – is likely to multiply, imposing further pressures on our already stretched and vulnerable health care system,” she says.

– *Nicola Davis, science correspondent*

This article was amended on 13 October 2022 to correct some misspellings of Asad Khan’s surname.

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Wrong again! Why is Liz Truss floundering after her U-turns, while Johnson and Blair shrugged theirs off?



Not for turning? ... (Clockwise from left) Boris Johnson, Theresa May, Gordon Brown, Tony Blair and Liz Truss. Illustration: Andy Watt/The Guardian

The PM has performed a series of screeching U-turns since entering Number 10. But is abandoning a policy always a disaster – or is there a way to get away with it?



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Which is the worst U-turn since [Liz Truss](#) became prime minister? Sure, you're going to say the tax cuts for the rich, an absolute by-numbers disaster, from the market crash on the day of the announcement, through days of fresh catastrophe and an absent leader, in flat denial that anything was wrong, to the reversal itself, inelegantly announced ("We get it and we have listened") to a party and, more importantly, a national economy in disarray. But let me just offer for comparison the lesser-spotted double U-turn: first the Tories were going to make a fuller financial statement on 23 November, then, in a panic, they brought it forward to the end of October, only to push it back to its original date, then, just this week, pulled it forward again. Does U-turn even cover this? Should we be calling it a hokey-cokey?

Clearly, this is a government in unusual straits: it is reaching the point where it wouldn't even be able to follow through on a sound decision, with its MPs in open rebellion and its polling numbers a galloping disaster. These

conditions create ever more tergiversation: opponents have seen the weakness and know that there's no such thing as a brick wall, only an MDF partition that hasn't been sledgehammered hard enough, while friends who have been humiliated by defending a position that is later reversed fall silent. But Truss isn't the first prime minister to U-turn: indeed, every leader will change a position at some time or another.

But is it always a disaster? What is the most detrimental effect: that it makes you seem weak, that it emboldens your enemies, or that it discourages your friends? And if Truss's are the worst U-turns in modern British politics, what made the others so much less bad, in retrospect, so salvageable?



Boris Johnson. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

One former adviser to [Boris Johnson](#) gives the view that was quite common in Johnson's camp, that "whereas the media and Westminster really get inflamed by a U-turn, normal people are more than OK with one. A well-timed U-turn for the right call, clearly, the general public en masse would see it as the right decision." Tom Baldwin, author and former senior political adviser to Ed Miliband, says: "Contrast Truss's with Johnson's U-turns: he made them endlessly, and they reinforced what people thought was his essential brand. He didn't really stand for anything. He was a cipher for

moods and feelings. Truss comes in after Johnson, and says: ‘What we’re going to give you is pure unadulterated class-A Thatcherism – not cut with anything. It’ll knock your head off, this shit. And then she has to backtrack on that. So while Johnson’s U-turns reinforced what people already thought his government stood for, Truss’s have utterly undermined everything she stood for.”

This point is probably best made by comparing two U-turns made by one leader: [Gordon Brown](#). The first time Brown reversed, it had been widely briefed that he would hold a snap election in 2007, then he saw the polling numbers and denied it had ever been the plan. The second time, he (or rather Alistair Darling) wanted to abolish the 10p tax rate in 2008, then abandoned the plan after a backbench rebellion among Labour MPs who thought it would hurt the poorest. That turnaround actually worked fine with his brand. He was a solutions-driven, economically minded man whose pressing concern was social justice; if he changed his mind in pursuit of that: no problem. The election turnaround was a car crash, though. Partly because, as political media adviser Scarlett McGwire remembers: “Everybody knew that the reason he wasn’t going for an election was because of the polls, and he denied that. He denied that he’d even been planning an election, even though the briefings had gone out. Leaflets had been printed!”

With a U-turn, you either do it so gradually that people don’t notice, or you do it quickly

Tom Baldwin

Baldwin agrees: “When you think of his first few months in charge, he was ‘not flash, just Gordon’. A sensible, principled leader. After that, his enemies were able to put him across as a spin-driven, poll-soaked maniac who changed his mind with every sweat-stained shirt.” The tragedy was that Brown would have won that election; he just wouldn’t have won by as many seats as [Tony Blair](#).

Timing matters, both of the manoeuvre itself and the context around it. The former adviser to Johnson insists: “Doing a U-turn well has a very small window. In this case [Truss’s tax U-turn], they waited far too long. The same rule applies with resignations: there’s a window where you can do a really

dignified resignation. But if you miss it and resign too late, there's no dignity in it."

Baldwin says: "You either do it so gradually that people don't notice, or you do it quickly." Truss's U-turn was uniquely bad: fast enough that the news agenda never moved on, so "everything she did [was] under the microscope, her authority draining away by the moment", Baldwin says, but slow enough that she had time to give an interview to the BBC's Nick Robinson promising no U-turn that had yet to air by the time there were ferrets everywhere and the reversal was under way.

But her timing, contextually speaking, could also hardly have been worse. In 2015 George Osborne made a huge about-turn on his proposed cuts to tax credits, which were slated to deliver a full third of the welfare reduction he'd promised in the Tory manifesto, but there was such a lag, with so much going on – the manifesto, the election, the surprise victory – that most people probably wouldn't even remember that now. He also had an unexpected £27bn windfall from low interest rates, which is of course (hollow laugh) the exact opposite of Truss's situation.



Protesters burn an identity card; Tony Blair later made an uncharacteristic U-turn over the policy. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Some leaders are like the Men in Black, and when they U-turn you immediately forget the policy, the backlash, the reversal, the lot. Blair actually did row back on a few things, both on the precipice of the policy (he had a silly idea to march delinquents to a cashpoint for an instant fine of the £100 that they definitely wouldn't have, which he let go of, and he also rolled over on ID cards), and over the longer term, with his crime agenda. His antisocial behaviour orders were, at their height, simply catapulting children into the criminal justice system – at one point, there were 3,500 under 18s in prison, for mainly stupid offences such as spitting. After sustained campaigning, from the Howard League and similar, those numbers dropped from 2005; it was a reversal by stealth, or to put it another way, a government seeing the effects of its actions and reconsidering. Overall it was win-win, since Labour had established itself as tough on crime while simultaneously role-modelling that it could, at a push, see reason. Blair was rarely forced into reversals-on-a-sixpence, because he wasn't a last-minute merchant. MccGwire remembers: "Before the 97 election, all the things he knew he had to promise, like the minimum wage, like Scottish devolution: he'd stress-tested it all. He'd sat round a table and said: 'Where are the weaknesses?' It wasn't because he was decisive, or that he stuck to his guns. The reason was that he'd done the work beforehand, and he was always very aware of how his MPs and the rightwing press felt." Arguably, he got so good at herding cats that he lost sight of the fact that maybe the cats were running away for a reason. "We remember Blair now," Baldwin says, "for not making U-turns even when we wanted him to, like on Iraq".

Not making U-turns can be a major problem. It ossifies you and cuts you off

Tom Baldwin

Theresa May was all numbers and no wet brain when she devised her social care policy ahead of the 2017 election. She was therefore completely blindsided by the highly emotive issue it became, once it was reframed a "dementia tax" – a horrible roulette where innocent people had to sell their houses to fund their descent into Alzheimer's. Her famous U-turn on this was absolutely painful to watch, as she stood there insisting "Nothing has changed", gurning her way through this word salad of a clearly changed policy. But it wasn't so much her awkwardness as her anger in this

announcement that made it so dangerous for her. She seemed to have lost her cool, and keeping calm and carrying on was very much part of her vibe. Where previously the plotting against her had been limited to a pro-Brexit hardcore in her own party, there was a contagion after this to more of the Tory party and more of the public.



Theresa May. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

And on Brexit: so many people reversed their position, [Conservatives](#) especially becoming fierce leavers despite having originally campaigned for remain (including Liz Truss and Theresa May), but it's one of those things we politely decline to notice, Leave being now considered the gravity position, so to arrive late to it is merely coming to your senses. Exactly the same thing will happen when the world realises we should restore relations with our nearest huge trading bloc, if we ever want a return to prosperity. You won't be able to find a person in the street, let alone in parliament, who ever thought Brexit was a good idea.

Opposition figures are in the enviable position that they don't have to reverse anything, since the world isn't watching them. But that doesn't mean they don't change their stance. "Gordon Brown," says Neal Lawson, a director of Compass, previously a Brown adviser, "was incredibly protective of his intellectual ability and judgment. The big thing that he never wanted

to be exposed on Black Wednesday, when we crashed out of the ERM and he was shadowing Norman Lamont, is that his policy was exactly the same as the government's. He went out there saying: 'This is terrible', just crossing his fingers that no one would notice."



The U-turn over the 'pasty tax' was spun as emblematic of the government's 'back office economies'. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

Leaders get a huge amount of leeway if they have explained the long game beforehand, and their U-turn makes sense within it. So Cameron and Osborne had pitch-rolled for ages on the need to fix the public finances ahead of the 2012 budget. Much of that was mendacious, incidentally, since they were flogging the programme as back-office economies, the political equivalent of putting on a jumper and finding money down the back of your sofa, whereas in fact they were bringing local government to its knees and reducing benefits claimants to penury. Nonetheless, people understood the agenda and some even trusted it. The move to redefine "hot food" for VAT purposes, the so-called "pasty tax", sparked a huge backlash, from Greggs and everyone who likes Greggs – a vast section of the population, almost as many as now say they'll vote Labour – and they reversed it. But this worked in their favour, reinforcing their presentation of the economic programme as little savings here and there, a bit more VAT on a sausage roll, and making them look as though they were listening.

Truss's terrible start can be divided into the deliberate and the accidental. The ideological stuff, she is doing on purpose. Her and her chancellor's budget was a "signifier", MccGwire says: "We're going to let the rich have their way, and we're not going to do anything for the poor." When we try to recast that as ineptitude, it's because we're not facing "how ideological she is", Lawson says, "how much she swallowed Reaganomics, and intended to do them in practice". However, ideology isn't the top trump here: it doesn't tame markets or alter political realities, it can't deliver her the votes she needs in the Commons or the numbers she needs in the polls, and it can't change the fact that in empowering her rebels, she has made herself a zombie leader. She can't move forward on her own agenda, but nor can she cave in to her blue opponents, because they don't agree with each other, either.

At the centre of all these miscalculations was the faith that Truss could sell herself to the nation as Margaret Thatcher rebooted without understanding who Thatcher actually was politically, or anything about her trajectory. "Thatcher, in her early incarnation," Baldwin says, "was constantly backing down. She backed down on her early confrontations with the miners; she was actually rather flexible." She also had that ineffable quality, Katie Perrior, former director of communications for May, says: "Thatcher had quite a good ear to her own party and to the public at large." When she became the "lady who's not for turning", that was her self-fashioning, and it didn't work out that well for her. "Later on," Baldwin says, "she was seen as brittle and unchanging, unwavering, unthinking, unlistening", and it was under those conditions that the poll tax debacle brought her down. "Not making U-turns," Baldwin concludes, "can be a major problem. It ossifies you and cuts you off."

It is too late for those subtleties and history lessons now: Truss has become the lady who is for turning but constantly tells you she isn't, with an approval rating of -47, the least liked prime minister on record. Was it the fact of the U-turns that brought her here, or the damage done that cannot be undone, or the execution, which was more like a 17-point turn on a motorway? Some awful cocktail of all three, which is going to give the nation its worst ever hangover.

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Russia 1985-1999: TraumaZone review – ingenious, essential viewing from Adam Curtis



Power of nostalgia? A still from Russia 1985-1999: TraumaZone.
Photograph: BBC

Showing everyone from reindeer herders to scientists wrapping themselves in sticky tape to head into Chernobyl, this fine series traces the latterday Russian revolution that brought in a kleptocracy and paved the way for Putin



[Stuart Jeffries](#)

Thu 13 Oct 2022 04.37 EDTLast modified on Sat 15 Oct 2022 06.20 EDT

‘If you had a wish, what would it be?’ asks the interviewer. The lugubrious woman is struggling to stick damp wallpaper back on a damp wall in a Moscow flat some time in the 1980s. ‘Huh?’ she asks. ‘I don’t have any dreams and even if I did they wouldn’t come true. I don’t believe in anything or anyone.’

‘And,’ she adds with a cheeky grin that almost redeems the miserable scene, ‘I don’t believe in you, either.’

The story of the Soviet Union between 1985 and 1999 that [Adam Curtis](#) tells in TraumaZone (BBC iPlayer) is how such depressive nihilism rose up to do battle with any lingering faith Russians had in the Kremlin to deliver a communist paradise as predicted by Marx.

Through an hour-long montage of ingeniously selected contemporary footage of everyday Russians from reindeer herders to striking miners, from beauty contestants to Afghan firefighters, from scientists wrapping themselves in sticky tape to investigate Chernobyl's nuclear core to grotesque Muscovite fashion shows, Curtis builds up a picture of the era when the mask of Soviet competence slipped. The [1986 Chernobyl meltdown](#) and cover-up did not help, nor did the authorities' murderous ineptitude in not clearing the nearby villages for two days after the explosions. The calamitous retreat from Kabul between 1988 and 89 after 15,000 Soviet soldiers died and the red army was defeated by mujahideen was arguably more psychically deranging to Russians than Vietnam was to Americans.

Two clips in particular bring me up short. A camera enters a bathroom in Moscow's Kosmos hotel, known then for gimcrack luxury and sex workers. Something has gone terribly wrong. The taps, like something from a David Lynch nightmare, pump out water so brown it can't just be rusting pipes. And yet, even as disasters unfold and the Soviet dream disappears like sludge down the plughole, we see the Soviets' last space probe, Phobos 2, off on its mission to explore the moons of Mars. We watch footage from that craft just before radio contact cuts out. It complicates any simplistic image of the Soviet Union as a basket case; it also had the right stuff to try to explore Mars's moons before Nasa. The Soviet Union was not just tragically behind capitalism's expansionist curve.



Out in the cold ... a still from Russia 1985-1999: TraumaZone. Photograph: BBC

Curtis's film, the first of a seven-part anatomisation of modern Russia, is essential viewing. It will help you grasp how what Putin now presides over is not so much a country as a toxic zone whose inhabitants live with chronic PTSD and compensate for that (and the psychosexual failings of its tyrant leader) by indulging his imperialist folly. It suggests that nihilism was an unintended consequence of [Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika](#). If the Soviet Union was killed off, the Kremlin's prints are on the murder weapon.

Perestroika, signifying initially a restructuring of the Soviet economy to give managers of big industrial plants freedom from Moscow control, was meant to save communism. It backfired horribly. Soon after Gorbachev announced perestroika in a speech at the Lada Togliatti factory in Samara Oblast, some scary-looking gangsters are filmed waiting to loot the Ladas as they come off the assembly line. The managers, Curtis's captions tell us, decided to flog off the new cars to crooks. Perestroika created a lucrative, countrywide black market.

A latterday Russian revolution started here whereby the kleptocracy replaced the communist gerontocracy. [Boris Berezovsky](#) profited by buying cars from the plant on consignment, then paying the producer at a later date

when the money had lost much of its value. Curtis doesn't clinch the point that it was this oligarch who, by creating the Unity party and courting the former KGB officer, became Putin's kingmaker.

Nor was Berezovsky the first to profit from perestroika. Curtis shows us the [first oligarch, Mikhail Khodorkovsky](#), whose fortune began when he had an idea bananas enough to be a subplot in a [Bulgakov novel](#). Under Soviet socialism, factories and businesses settled accounts with each other in so-called *beznaichnye*, a virtual money or non-cash. Under perestroika, though, non-cash became real cash and Khodorkovsky became rich speculating in it. Curtis cuts to the rise of capitalist excess in a Moscow nightclub. "I'm a mischievous Moscow playboy," sings the lead singer of Alpha, as the gaudily rich bust their grisly moves. "Got everything a woman wants / Stupidity, power, fear and violence in my heart." Curtis cuts from that to a Russian TV version of The Lord of the Rings, where the ring of power, wrested from Gollum, serves as a symbol for how free-market kleptocracy is seizing power.

Then we switch to [Kim Philby's funeral](#), in which the open casket of the British traitor and Soviet hero is borne to its grave; its progress is paused for a long while that so his widow, Rufina Pukhova, can embrace him one last time. When friends finally pull her away from the frozen corpse, it seems it is not so much Philby heading to the grave as the Soviet Union itself.

This article was amended on 14 October 2022. An earlier version said that the Soviet Union had got "into Martian orbit" before Nasa. The latter's Mariner 9 spacecraft was the first to make it to Mars; the reference should instead have been to a later Soviet probe, Phobos 2, being the first to attempt to explore one of Mars's moons. This has been corrected.

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2022.10.13 - Opinion

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- An NHS in crisis and boom time for private health: that's the bleak prognosis now
- From brown bears to grey wolves, Europe's persecuted carnivores are bouncing back

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Boris Johnson's Covid laws took away our rights with flick of a pen. Don't let that happen again

[Adam Wagner](#)

Ministers were able to rule by decree for more than two years. That's not true democracy and it remains a risk in the future



Boris Johnson addressing the nation from 10 Downing Street as he placed the UK under lockdown in March 2020. Photograph: PA

Thu 13 Oct 2022 05.07 EDTLast modified on Thu 13 Oct 2022 11.35 EDT

It is almost three years since the first case of a novel coronavirus was identified in Wuhan, China.

It's just over two and a half years since Boris Johnson gave us a “very simple instruction”, that we “must [stay at home](#)”, followed – three days later

– by a law that for the first time in our history would impose a 24-hour curfew on almost the entire population. The years, months, weeks and days since have been so relentless – and at times almost beyond belief – that it is difficult to begin to process them. Many of us have experienced personal bereavement, and everyone has been touched in some way.

But as tempting as it is to move on, to focus on other important issues vexing our society, there are some aspects of the past three years we must face up to.

There are a hundred lenses through which to view this important period in modern history, but as a barrister I have looked at the more than 100 laws that placed England in lockdown, imposed hotel quarantine, international travel restrictions, self-isolation, face coverings and business closures.

These were probably the strangest and most extraordinary laws in England's history, imposing previously unimaginable restrictions on our social lives, bringing into the realm of the criminal law areas of life – where we could worship, when we could leave home, even who we could hug – that had previously been purely a matter of personal choice.

By early 2020, the Johnson government already had form for [seeing democracy as a gadfly](#) to be swatted away, having tried, and failed – thanks to the supreme court – to shut down parliament for weeks to ram through a Brexit deal. When the pandemic hit, it is no surprise that it took the same approach to involving parliament in the most consequential decisions and laws in living memory.

The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 allowed for ministers to enact the coronavirus regulations with almost no parliamentary scrutiny. Of 109 lockdown laws, only eight were considered by parliament before coming into force, usually only a day before. The rest became law (literally) as soon as Matt Hancock, the then health secretary, put his signature at the bottom of the page.

I am not suggesting that emergency law-making would ever be straightforward and neat, following all the processes of ordinary legislation. During public emergencies, events move swiftly and mercilessly. But it did not have to be like *this*.

Also troubling was the constant refrain that the government was “following the science”, by which it meant its scientific advisory group, Sage. But decisions were ultimately taken in the extremely powerful but opaque Covid-19 cabinet committees, presided over by four ministers – [Boris Johnson](#), Rishi Sunak, Matt Hancock and Michael Gove. No minutes were released and no explanation offered of how decisions were made. This was the most powerful government committee since the second world war, but received no scrutiny. Important political decisions need to be understood, scrutinised and tested. These hardly were.

We still live in the state that permitted ministers to rule by decree for more than two years, and where basic freedoms were removed without democratic scrutiny or accountability. In 2008, the Public Health and Wellbeing Act was amended to include vast powers for ministers to use in the case of a public health emergency. And because ministers would have the power to impose laws without parliament having to review them for four weeks (or sometimes longer), they could, as one prescient member of the House of Lords put it during the brief 2008 debate, “at the stroke of a pen ... limit and constrain the daily lives and freedoms of citizens”.

Parliament, meanwhile, allowed itself to play the role of a 1,400-person rubber stamp. The police, tasked with enforcing the ever-growing mass of legislation, often being changed more than once a week, floundered between excessive and unjustified intrusions into our private lives, or – as was initially the case with the Partygate investigation – attempting to stay out of the fray altogether. The courts, for their part, also played a limited role, ruling repeatedly that pandemic policy – even when it interfered with fundamental rights – was a matter for government and parliament, not judges.

Why does this matter now? Because the pandemic – and the ease with which ancient freedoms such as the right to protest, to worship, to see our families, were removed essentially by decisions of a tiny group of ministers – should

be a wake-up call. It is only a matter of time before a new crisis will arise – either connected to Covid-19, to another virus or to another kind of emergency altogether.

We must face up to the fact that we are not well protected from a government if it wanted to use a state of emergency to corrode our freedoms. We have no written constitution, meaning it is more difficult for people to claim their rights, and – unlike in many other democracies – the courts are reluctant to become embroiled in cases involving fundamental rights that involve political controversy. Government power has been on the rise for years, not least through the ever increasing use of secondary legislation to set policy. And our public health legislation remains extraordinarily broad.

CK Allen, scholar of the vast emergency powers built up during the second world war, reminds us that freedom “is not easily gained, and, once surrendered – however necessary the surrender may be – is even less easily regained”. As tempting as it is to put this dark period in our history behind us, it is only by looking back that we can, finally, hope to move forward.

- Adam Wagner is a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers. His debut book is [Emergency State: How We Lost Our Liberties in the Pandemic and Why it Matters](#) (Vintage)

[Opinion](#) **Private healthcare**

Why is private health booming and the NHS in crisis? Because that's what ministers want

[Aditya Chakraborty](#)



Don't be fooled: your suffering on a record waiting list is great business for some firms



Illustration: Bill Bragg/The Guardian

Thu 13 Oct 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 13 Oct 2022 10.06 EDT

A man keeps sliding through my door. Dressed in blue hospital scrubs, he wears a hostly smile and a beard sprinkled with grey to denote experience. The leaflet he is on asks a question: “Tired of waiting?” It also has an answer: “Private treatment made easy”.

I’ve never had a surgeon flop on to my doormat before. Discounts for a Domino’s, yes. Ebulliently misspelt flyers about guttering, naturally. But this is the first time private hospitals have asked over and over if sir fancies a scalpel somewhere intimate. And opening the leaflet from Circle, I find promises galore. “Eliminate the wait,” urges the UK’s largest private hospital group, while “treatment is more affordable than you think” is above a price list: knee replacements start at £13,250, a hysterectomy goes for nearly £9,000, and snipping out your child’s tonsils costs “from £3,276”.

If those sums sound stretching, the leaflet advises, I can spread the cost with a whole suite of loans. Get that titanium hip 12 months interest free! And shopping around is easy, too. Why, midway through the paragraph above, another leaflet arrived, from a rival chain of hospitals. If you want to see just how our [NHS](#) gets privatised, this is the moment to study your junk mail.

Perhaps you're among the [more than one in 10 English people](#) waiting for routine hospital treatment. Maybe you've read about the massive [cuts looming in cancer care](#) and GP appointments and wondered at the misery to come. But there are a few for whom this purgatory of pain is great business. For those who own and run private hospitals, it spells millions in extra profits. Because when patients can no longer stand the years and the uncertainty of hoping they can get a hernia repair or a colonoscopy, they end up paying out of their own pockets or sinking into debt to see a private firm.

Look no further for an example than the letters pages of this newspaper. It was there, two weeks ago, that [Philip Wood of Kidlington](#) told his own story. "I was on an 18-month waiting list for laser surgery on my prostate. Informed of little hope of medium-term surgery, I opted for private treatment, saw a urologist within a fortnight and was operated on shortly after." He describes himself as a "desperate pensioner", out of options. There are so many like him, a whole army of the unwilling.

An entirely new customer base is taking shape, more provincial and poorer than is traditional – and defined by their despair. London has always been the centre of private medicine, but according to the latest figures, Wales has seen the number of people going private [more than double](#) in the first three months of this year compared with the same period in 2019, while in Scotland it has shot up by 72%. Contrary to stereotypes of private medicine, they're not after bigger breasts or thatched bald spots. In 2022, there has been a tripling of the numbers of patients after hip replacements, while the number one procedure is removing cataracts.

This country prides itself on its public healthcare, yet within the first three months of this year, more than 12,000 Britons each scraped together thousands of pounds just to be able to see. For the private health firms, this spells boom time. The biggest private hospital group listed on a UK stock exchange is Spire Healthcare, which grew out of the Bupa group. In the first six months of 2022, it took [£174m from patients](#) paying out of their own pockets – nearly as much as it made in the [whole of 2019](#). Private firms have watched Tory PM after Tory PM starve the NHS of funds. They are prepared. As [David Rowland](#) of the Centre for Health and the Public Interest says, "Multinational investors have bet against the NHS for years, knowing this moment would arrive."

All this fits a pattern that keeps repeating in these years of austerity. Something vital in the public sector is squeezed almost out of existence – and then its ad hoc, improvised, inadequate replacement becomes the new norm. Within a decade, food banks have become part of the welfare state. People within the charity sector have told me to expect the same to happen with “[warm hubs](#)”, the community centres and churches opening this winter to ensure locals don’t freeze; they will be a permanent fixture by 2030. So it will be with paying for your own elective procedures. “Attitudes are changing,” says the [boss of Spire](#), Justin Ash. This is a “fundamental shift”.

Whole swathes of the NHS are restricting patients to the removal of cataracts in only one eye, not both, I was told by Anita Charlesworth of the [Health Foundation](#). Which leaves no alternative for those who want to see, apart from to go private. Spire’s own analysis shows that demand has soared 54% among households earning less than £40,000 a year. For a family already just scraping by, a knee op spells financial ruin. Where do they go to raise such sums?

One answer is to follow the example of poor Americans or Indians, and beg strangers on the internet. The crowdfunding website GoFundMe told me they’ve noticed a big increase this year in the number of UK medical fundraisers, with a 31% rise from 2019 in those mentioning MRI and a 127% jump in those seeking cash for hip replacements.

Take a young man called Aidan, who has had a bone deformity since childhood. He is now suffering “an unbelievable amount of pain” and has tried everything from physio to massages to medicine (“I’m completely maxed out on all the drugs,” he says). He needs surgery – but the doctor says there’s a long wait. Mid-consultation, he breaks down: “I can’t wait 12 months, doc, I’ve no quality of life now.” So here he is, “out of ideas and clutching at straws”.

At the root of all this misery is an irony. All those extra thousands of pounds people are now having to spend are only to jump the queue, because private hospitals train no doctors and employ barely any consultants of their own. As Philip Wood writes in his letter, the urologist he paid so much to see gained his experience in the NHS. And those private hospitals are only in

business because of the subsidy they've received over decades from the taxpayer. During the pandemic, the sector was bailed out by the then health secretary, Matt Hancock, to the tune of [at least £2bn](#) – in return for which it treated a grand total of [eight coronavirus cases a day](#).

Here in miniature is the story of the UK since 1979: the public sector hacked back while private firms are handed taxpayers' money to replace it. Pensioners and ordinary working people are forced to pay for their own care even while incomes shrink and their costs soar. And so the social contract that holds together the NHS and so much else is shredded.

This is the system that you and I have to endure, and for which we have to foot the bill. Yet I don't recall seeing it advertised on a leaflet.

- Aditya Chakraborty is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionRewilding](#)

From brown bears to grey wolves, Europe's persecuted carnivores are bouncing back

[Sophie Ledger](#)

Wildlife has an amazing ability to recover – but only if we keep vital legal protections in place



A brown bear chases away crows in a forest in eastern Finland. Photograph: Olivier Morin/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 13 Oct 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 13 Oct 2022 04.58 EDT

In the latest of what can often seem like the “final nails in the coffin” of biodiversity across Europe, we heard in recent weeks that [UK environmental protection is under threat](#). But while the global scale of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss remain alarming, vital [new research](#), which I helped lead,

shows there are also heartening examples of European wildlife bouncing back from the brink.

For the past two years, we at the Zoological Society of London's Institute of Zoology, along with colleagues at BirdLife International and the European Bird Census Council, have been investigating the fortunes of 50 European wildlife species over the past 50 years, from humpback whales to Iberian wild goats to white-tailed eagles. Each of these species are incredible comeback stories, and researching how they have recovered has been a refreshing and inspiring endeavour – the Eurasian beaver and European bison, for example, have both increased in average relative abundance by more than 16,000% since 1960.

Among the 50 species we followed, all five of Europe's large carnivores – brown bears, grey wolves, Iberian and Eurasian lynxes, and wolverines – showed increases in their average relative abundance over recent decades, from a 44% increase for brown bears to a 1,871% increase for grey wolves.

Now, while it might sound counterintuitive when referring to predatory species, the increase and expansion of large carnivores across Europe is actually positive for biodiversity and for the health of our wider ecosystem. Predators hold great influence within ecosystems – regulating other species in the food web from the top down. Through predation and scavenging they also contribute to vital ecosystem processes such as nutrient cycling and carbon-storing processes, and can help control disease and invasive species. What's more, large mammal species (both carnivores and herbivores) significantly influence the structure and composition of natural habitats. These factors all contribute towards boosting the capacity of an ecosystem to withstand changes and diversifying the provisioning services upon which we depend.

Increases in large fauna, especially carnivores, are exciting for Europe. Grey wolves, brown bears, wolverines, Eurasian and Iberian lynx were hunted and persecuted, affected by habitat loss and fragmentation and, as a result, suffered severe declines until around the mid-20th century.

Centuries of agricultural expansion and industrialisation, in addition to hunting, have dramatically changed the shape of Europe's nature. With so many degraded habitats, and one in nine species in Europe [threatened with extinction](#), wildlife has had to adapt. Many species have retreated into refugia – islands of wild spaces within human-modified landscapes. This was the trajectory for most of Europe's large carnivores – persecuted and hunted to near eradication – so it has been remarkable to examine their comeback .

But what has made these remarkable recoveries possible? Our team found that legal protections were key to species survival across the board. For the birds in our report, habitat protection and restoration, as well as reintroductions and translocations, were important factors in their recovery, while for mammals, the top factors were natural expansion, recolonisation and species ecology.

Carnivore comeback is not without challenges and contention – accommodating their return will often require human communities to adapt their behaviour and ensure we prevent risks of damages or impacts on livelihoods. However, the comeback of large carnivores can bring opportunities for local employment and investment through wildlife tourism. Participatory approaches, financial compensation schemes, education programmes and policies to support communities as they transition towards coexistence with these revived carnivores are vitally important for acceptance. These challenges are not new, or unique: coexistence with wildlife is a global issue, one which is increasingly important to work towards if we want to bend the curve of biodiversity loss and meet commitments to confront the climate crisis.

For some of these species, such as the Iberian lynx, their recoveries remain highly conservation-dependent, and ongoing work will be vital to ensure that their fragile positive trajectories are maintained to become self-sustainable. For others, the ability to adapt and tolerate human activity sets them up well for recoveries with minimal interventions, as long as they have the space they need, and any pressures on them are kept in check. For species previously overexploited through hunting or persecution, maintaining regulations and protective measures will be key.

It is timely to highlight the importance of ongoing legal protection and environmental policies, which have been vital to the recovery of many if not most of the birds and mammals within the study. EU nature directives and long-established environmental legislations have allowed continuing legal protections for species and habitats, and provided an enabling environment for wildlife to recover. Commitments to ongoing protective measures and ecosystem regeneration are key to improving biodiversity and making meaningful steps towards a bright future for nature and people.

For now, these impressive recoveries, largely enabled through legal protections, are a positive reminder that even from dire situations, wildlife can recover – if we let it.

Sophie Ledger is a researcher at the Zoological Society of London's Institute of Zoology and lead author for the 2022 [Wildlife](#) Comeback report

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2022.10.13 - Around the world

- [Alex Jones Conspiracy theorist ordered to pay Sandy Hook families \\$965m for hoax claims](#)
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[Connecticut](#)

Alex Jones ordered to pay Sandy Hook families \$965m over hoax claims

Verdict is second big judgment against Infowars host over promotion of the lie that the 2012 massacre never happened

Infowars host Alex Jones ordered to pay Sandy Hook families nearly \$1bn over hoax claims – video

[Maya Yang](#)

Wed 12 Oct 2022 19.01 EDTFirst published on Wed 12 Oct 2022 16.07 EDT

The conspiracy theorist Alex Jones should pay \$965m to people who suffered from his false claim that the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting was a hoax, a [jury in Connecticut](#) decided on Wednesday.

The verdict is the second big judgment against [the Infowars host](#) over his relentless promotion of the lie that the 2012 massacre never happened, and that the grieving families seen in news coverage were actors hired as part of a plot to take away people's guns.

It came in a lawsuit filed by the relatives of five children and three educators killed in the mass shooting, plus an FBI agent who was among the first responders to the scene. A Texas jury in August awarded nearly \$50m to the parents of another slain child.

The [Connecticut](#) trial featured tearful testimony from parents and siblings of the victims, who told how they were threatened and harassed for years by people who believed the lies told on Jones's show.

Strangers showed up at their homes to record them. People hurled abusive comments on social media. Erica Lafferty, the daughter of the slain Sandy

Hook principal, Dawn Hochsprung, testified that people mailed rape threats to her house. Mark Barden told how conspiracy theorists had urinated on the grave of his seven-year-old son, Daniel, and threatened to dig up the coffin.

Testifying during the trial, Jones acknowledged he had been wrong about Sandy Hook. The shooting was real, he said. But both in the courtroom and on his show, he was defiant.

He called the proceedings a “kangaroo court”, mocked the judge, called the plaintiffs’ lawyer an ambulance chaser and labeled the case an affront to free speech rights. He claimed it was a conspiracy by Democrats and the media to silence him and put him out of business.

“I’ve already said ‘I’m sorry’ hundreds of times and I’m done saying I’m sorry,” he said during his testimony.

Twenty children and six adults died in the shooting on 14 December 2012. The defamation trial was held at a courthouse in Waterbury, about 20 miles (32km) from Newtown, where the attack took place.

The lawsuit accused Jones and Infowars’ parent company, Free Speech Systems, of using the mass killing to build his audience and make millions of dollars. Experts testified that Jones’s audience swelled when he made Sandy Hook a topic on the show, as did his revenue from product sales.

In both the Texas lawsuit and the one in Connecticut, judges found the company liable for damages by default after Jones failed to cooperate with court rules on sharing evidence, including failing to turn over records that might have showed whether Infowars had profited from knowingly spreading misinformation about mass killings.

Because he was already found liable, Jones was barred from mentioning free speech rights and other topics during his testimony.

Jones now faces a third trial, in Texas near the end of the year, in a lawsuit filed by the parents of another child killed in the shooting.

Families and their attorneys hailed the verdict. Chris Mattei, an attorney for the victims, [said](#): “We are going to enforce this verdict as long as it takes

because that is what justice requires.”

“There will be more Alex Joneses in this world, but what they learned here today is that they absolutely will be held accountable,” [said](#) Lafferty.

It is unclear how much of the verdicts Jones can afford to pay. During the trial in Texas, he testified he couldn’t afford any judgment over \$2m. Free Speech Systems has filed for bankruptcy protection. But an economist testified in the Texas proceeding that Jones and his company were worth as much as \$270m.

Jones responded to the jury’s decision on Wednesday by [saying](#) on his show, “This must be what hell’s like – they just read out the damages. Even though you don’t got the money.

“They want to scare everybody away from freedom. They want to scare us away from questioning Uvalde and what really happened there or Parkland or any other event,” Jones added, referring to the school shootings that occurred in Uvalde, Texas, this year and in Parkland, Florida, in 2018.

“We’re not scared, we’re not going away and we’re not going to stop ... For hundreds of thousands of dollars, I can keep them in court for years, I can appeal this stuff, we can stand up against this travesty, against the billions of dollars they want,” he said before asking his viewers for donations to fund his platform.

- *The Associated Press contributed reporting*

[China](#)

Anti-CCP protest and lockdown fears fuel China tensions before congress

Images show banners emblazoned with protest messages hanging from overpass on major road in Beijing



Protest banners reportedly seen on Sitong Bridge overpass in Beijing on Thursday, in an image shared on social media. Photograph: Twitter

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei and [Verna Yu](#)

Thu 13 Oct 2022 10.07 EDTFirst published on Thu 13 Oct 2022 04.29 EDT

A rare protest against the Communist party in Beijing and fears over renewed Covid restrictions across Shanghai are stoking political tensions just days before President Xi Jinping is expected to secure a third term in power in a key [meeting on Sunday](#).

On Thursday, at least half a dozen [photos and videos](#) emerged on social media, showing two banners emblazoned with protest messages hanging

from an overpass of a major thoroughfare in the north-west corner of the Chinese capital. The photos show plumes of smoke billowing from the bridge.

“We want food, not PCR tests. We want freedom, not lockdowns. We want respect, not lies. We want reform, not a cultural revolution. We want a vote, not a leader. We want to be citizens, not slaves,” reads one banner hanging over Sitong Bridge, an overpass on Beijing’s Third Ring Road in Haidian district.

A second banner called for a boycott of schools and strikes and the removal of Xi. Bloomberg reported seeing burned-out marks on the bridge in the spot where videos showed a fire burning, and verified the position of signposts that appeared in the photos.

Such a bold act of protest is highly unusual in [China](#), particularly before a politically sensitive event, and would certainly draw ire from the top leaders and end in heavy punishment for the protesters. The police have pulled out all the stops in a “100-day operation” to thwart any potential social unrest that could disrupt a smooth transition of power in the leadership reshuffle at the 20th party congress.

Meanwhile, a rollout of Covid restrictions across Shanghai has fuelled fears the city is heading towards another lockdown, as officials seek to contain outbreaks before the congress.



Covid testing in Shanghai on Thursday. Photograph: Aly Song/Reuters

Shanghai residents, who endured an arduous [two-month lockdown this year](#), have reported sudden snap lockdowns across the city this week with several schools moving to online classes. At least 46 residential buildings or neighbourhoods had been designated medium risk and one high risk, across 14 of Shanghai's 16 districts, local media [reported](#). Several districts have also shut down entertainment and sporting venues, and all new arrivals must get tested within 24 hours, authorities said on Sunday.

The city government said there was no mass school shutdown or lockdown coming, but the word-of-mouth reports of small localised restrictions, the erection of fences, and snap lockdowns [trapping people at home](#) or in other buildings [have heightened unease](#). On social media, some residents complained of fire escapes being locked, and pets left without care after owners were taken to quarantine. Others shared information about previously unreported lockdowns of shops and buildings.

Shanghai recorded just three locally transmitted cases and 44 asymptomatic cases on Wednesday. All tested positive while already in centralised quarantine facilities, and added to a total of 1,173 cases, 83% of them asymptomatic, since July.

Since Monday, China's health commission has reported about 1,120 confirmed cases and 4,202 asymptomatic cases. The majority were recorded in Xinjiang, which has been [subjected to severe lockdown restrictions](#) in recent months.

At least 36 Chinese cities across 31 provinces were under various degrees of lockdown or control this week, affecting about 197 million people, according to monitors.

Across China, some people were blocked from returning to Beijing after the Golden Week holiday by alerts warning they “may have a time and space relationship with the epidemic risk”. The blocks prompted speculation it was to reduce the risk of an outbreak in Beijing during this weekend's party congress.

Other Chinese cities have increased testing, closed tourism sites and halted public transport. Shenzhen, which reported 33 cases on Wednesday, has ordered daily testing for all arrivals for three days, while in Beijing the shuttle buses bringing tens of thousands of workers in from Tianjin and Hebei were suspended.

In Zhengzhou city, Henan, where 12 cases were reported, all residents must get tested every 24 hours in order to take public transport or enter public spaces, and in Guangzhou, where 10 cases were reported, authorities launched a mass testing drive and partial lockdown of at least one district.

China's case numbers are low by global standards but the government has pledged a “dynamic zero” Covid strategy of containing and eliminating every outbreak. The policy was successful throughout much of the pandemic but has been challenged by the high transmissibility of newer variants, and the threat of sudden lockdowns and travel restrictions have begun to chafe with citizens.

“Is there anyone unluckier than me?” said one person who recently arrived in Zhengzhou. “I have experienced the lockdown of Xi'an, the lockdown of Shanghai, and now it's Zhengzhou, please!”

In consecutive days of coverage this week, state media espoused the need for all citizens to stick with the policy, saying it was the only way to avoid huge losses of life and a run on medical resources. The article was widely shared with hundreds of millions of views but thousands of comments were censored, prompting some readers to joke that “dynamic zero” was [being applied to comment sections](#).

Additional reporting by Chi Hui Lin

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/13/shanghai-covid-restrictions-fuel-fears-of-another-lockdown>

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Iran

Cracks appear among Iran elite as senior figure calls for hijab policing rethink

Prominent conservative politician Ali Larijani warns against ‘rigid response’ after month of unrest



Larijani has been a central figure in Iranian politics for decades. Photograph: Omar Sanadiki/Reuters

[Patrick Wintour](#) *Diplomatic Editor*

Wed 12 Oct 2022 11.45 EDTLast modified on Thu 13 Oct 2022 00.11 EDT

The first cracks have started to appear among Iran’s political elite over the country’s month-long women-led protests, with a senior figure calling for a re-examination of the enforcement of compulsory hijab law and an acknowledgment that the protests have deep political roots, and are not simply the product of US or Israeli agitation.

The call for restraint came from Ali Larijani, a former speaker of the Iranian parliament and an impeccable establishment figure.

His tone contrasted with a continued uncompromising line on Wednesday from the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, parliament and security forces, as well as concerted efforts to undermine the credibility of the family of Mahsa Amini, the 22-year-old Kurdish woman who died after being arrested by morality police last month, sparking a wave of protests across the country.

Protesters had called for a mass rally in Tehran on Wednesday after violence overnight in the capital and in the Kurdish towns of Sanandaj, Saez, Bukan and Dehgan. Many shops remained shut in protest against the regime, while a demonstration led by the Tehran bar association was broken up by security forces.

What the latest footage from Iran tells us about the regime – video explainer

Internet blackouts have continued in an effort to stop the protesters gathering, as it has become increasingly clear that many on the streets are no longer only interested in the policing of the hijab, but want the entire regime overthrown.

The Iran Human Rights centre, based in Oslo, said the death toll had surpassed 200. A well-known reformist politician, Mostafa Tajzadeh, was also sentenced to eight years in prison for collusion with others against the system. Ali Salehi, prosecutor general in Tehran, said 60 indictments had been issued against rioters in the capital.

But in a sign that the one-dimensional harsh line of the government is not universal, Larijani broke a long period of silence to question excessive state enforcement of the hijab, the issue that may have led to Amini's death.

In a lengthy interview with an [Iranian news site](#), he warned that extremism in enforcing social mores leads to extremist reactions. "The hijab has a cultural solution, it does not need decrees and referendums. I appreciate the

services of the police force and Basij [paramilitary militia], but this burden of encouraging the hijab should not be assigned to them,” he said.

“Do not doubt that when a cultural phenomenon becomes widespread, rigid response to it is not the cure. The people and young people who come to the street are our own children. In a family, if a child commits a crime, they try to guide him to the right path, the society needs more tolerance”.

He added: “It’s like a person has a migraine, but we write a prescription for him like a person with a heart disease and all its arteries are closed. In the issue of hijab, we were in this situation.”

Larijani pointed out that during the period of the Shah’s rule prior to 1979, the hijab was not encouraged, but many people wore hijab voluntarily.

“Islamic government means that people manage their own affairs. It is the same in terms of social justice. If the affairs are managed by the people, their talents will flourish.

“The problem is that if in a society, young people do not implement one of the sharia rulings correctly from an intellectual and social point of view, this is not 100% wrong.”

He also rejected the widely promoted theory that Iran’s Islamic society may crumble the way that Andalusia – according to some scholars – fell into Christianity in the 15th century due to the removal of the requirement to wear the hijab.

He said that in some Islamic societies, “hijab rules are more rigid than ours. Is there less corruption in them? No, it was more hidden.”

Larijani has been a central figure in Iranian politics for decades. He was banned from standing for the presidency last year ostensibly because the guardian council deemed him unqualified, but in reality due to the threat he posed to the winner, Ebrahim Raisi, the candidate favoured by the supreme leader.

Criticism is also creeping into the heavily censored press that veers from denouncing the riots to dismissing the notion that any protests exist.

“What is currently happening on the level of governance in our country is based neither on the separation of powers nor [the inclusion of] a diversity of outlooks in management,” read a piece in the daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami.

“We have witnessed the consequence of a non-inclusive view [of governance] in our country over the past 14 months,” it said.

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- [Live Kwasi Kwarteng heads back to Westminster early as Tory discontent over mini-budget grows](#)
- [Mini-budget Kwasi Kwarteng dashes home early from US amid U-turn chaos](#)
- [Live Business: markets price in more U-turns Kwasi Kwarteng returns early from IMF](#)
- [Conservatives Senior Tory warns Truss economic U-turn must be 'significant'](#)

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Kwasi Kwarteng reportedly believes Liz Truss ‘only has a few weeks’ – as it happened

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Kwasi Kwarteng dashes home early from US amid tax U-turn chaos

Chancellor cuts short International Monetary Fund meetings after insisting his job is safe, as Liz Truss appears to take reins on corporation tax cut



Kwasi Kwarteng before rushing home from IMF meetings in Washington. Photograph: Simon Walker/HM Treasury

[Larry Elliott](#) *Economics editor*

Fri 14 Oct 2022 01.22 EDT First published on Thu 13 Oct 2022 20.58 EDT

Kwasi Kwarteng has dramatically cut short his visit to the International Monetary Fund, flying home early from Washington in response to the mounting political crisis over his tax-cutting budget.

Adding to signs that the government is preparing to announce a U-turn over its plan to scrap a rise in corporation tax, the chancellor left the US capital a day earlier than planned.

Treasury sources said the chancellor had two constructive days in Washington but was keen to get back to London to engage with colleagues over his medium-term fiscal plan, due to be announced on 31 October.

But his unscheduled departure on a late-night flight from Washington capped a day of drama for the Truss government and prompted comparisons with the sterling crisis suffered by the Labour government in 1976.

Then, the chancellor Denis Healey turned around at Heathrow rather than fly out to an IMF meeting in Manila after pressure mounted on the pound.

Treasury sources refused to comment on whether Kwarteng's decision meant a U-turn on corporation tax was imminent, but the chancellor was under pressure to make a decision before the financial markets open for business on Monday.

The pound and government bonds – or gilts – rallied yesterday at rumours of a change of heart on tax. But the Bank of England's support scheme for bonds comes to an end on Friday.

“This is all about the medium-term fiscal plan,” a treasury source said. “The chancellor wanted to make sure he had as wide a range of colleagues as possible engaged with it.”

Kwasi Kwarteng says he is focused on mini-budget and ‘not going anywhere’ – video

Earlier, Kwarteng was forced to deny his position as chancellor was in peril, insisting he was “absolutely, 100%” confident he would still be in post next month despite a growing Tory rebellion.

But there were signs yesterday that decisions on tax were being taken by Liz Truss in London rather than by the chancellor 3,000 miles away across the Atlantic.

On another febrile day in Westminster, government sources told the Guardian that No 10 officials – rather than their Treasury counterparts –

were reviewing the mini-budget in the prime minister's efforts to balance the books.

Truss has repeatedly promised to cancel the former chancellor Rishi Sunak's plans to put up corporation tax from 19% to 25%. Sources suggested that a potential climbdown could involve putting it up by just one or two percentage points, rather than the full 6%.

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Conservatives

Senior Tory warns Truss economic U-turn must be ‘significant’

Mel Stride says that markets won’t be settled if government’s policy change just ‘nibbles at the edges’



Mel Stride, the chair of parliament’s Treasury select committee. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

[Jamie Grierson](#)

[@JamieGrierson](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 04.32 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 05.06 EDT

A senior Conservative MP has said that [Liz Truss](#) must not “nibble at the edges” but instead perform a “powerful” and “significant” U-turn with its so-far disastrous economic plan.

Mel Stride, the chair of parliament’s Treasury select committee, told the BBC’s Today programme: “My personal view is that it [a U-turn] should

happen, we have reached a point where we need this very powerful and significant signal to the markets that fiscal credibility is firmly back on the table, and I think that means doing something right now and not delaying.

“Doing something very significant too – right at the heart of that will be unwinding the position on corporation tax.

“The danger here is the argument in the room lands in a place where they decide to nibble at the edges of this and I’m afraid I don’t think that will cut it, and you could end up in that circumstance in the worst of all worlds where you’ve U-turned but doesn’t settle the markets in the way we need to.”

Stride’s comments came as the chancellor, [Kwasi Kwarteng](#), cut short a visit to Washington DC on Thursday, adding to signs that the government is preparing to announce a U-turn over its plan to scrap a rise in corporation tax, a centrepiece of its much vaunted “growth plan”. The chancellor was expected to land in London on Friday morning and head to talks with the prime minister.

Kwarteng’s so-called mini-budget, fully endorsed by Truss, sent shockwaves through the financial markets with its £45bn package of unfunded tax cuts.

Yields on gilts, UK government bonds, surged in the wake of the announcement on 23 September, a signal of a crashing investor confidence in the UK’s fiscal credibility.

Both bonds and the pound steadied at the start of London trading on Friday as the Bank of England’s bond-buying programme comes to a close with yields on UK 30-year gilts falling back by 1.6% to 4.47%, and the pound rising 0.3% higher at 1.127 against the US dollar – in a sign trading sentiment is improving.

Stride said he hoped the chancellor was flying home from the US early to have conversations with the prime minister and row back on tax cuts announced in the mini-budget.

He told the BBC Radio 4 programme: “Well it could well be that a U-turn is about to happen and of course he will want to be in the room discussing that if that is about to happen.”

Speaking later on BBC Breakfast, Stride said his advice to Kwarteng, over rowing back on tax cuts was: “Do it now.”

The comments come after Kwarteng insisted he was “not going anywhere” and he would publish his medium-term fiscal plan on 31 October with assessments from the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

The trade minister, Greg Hands, who backed Truss’s rival Rishi Sunak in the Tory leadership contest, was on media rounds defending the government’s record and denying reports that MPs were plotting to remove Truss.

Hands said he does not recognise reports that senior Tories are plotting the possibility of replacing Truss with a joint ticket of Sunak and Penny Mordaunt.

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The trade minister told Sky News: “I was a supporter of Rishi Sunak; somehow I’d be very surprised at that story.

“I was talking only yesterday with Penny Mordaunt. I don’t recognise that story at all.”

Hands, who was a prominent backer of Sunak, was asked if the markets would have more confidence if Sunak was in No 10.

He said: “Rishi Sunak did not win the leadership contest, Liz Truss did win the leadership contest. I am dealing with the situation that we are in.”

Hands said “let’s wait and see” when asked if there would be any more U-turns on the mini-budget.

He told Sky News: “Let’s wait and see. You won’t have long to wait for 31 October for the chancellor to lay out those plans. I do say that the prime minister and the chancellor are absolutely resolute, determined.”

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- 'I'm going to get there' They're slowly recovering from long Covid – but how?
- Living with long Covid I was an athlete – now I'm 30 and in a wheelchair thanks to long Covid
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Aubrey Plaza: ‘I totally care what people think and I wish that I didn’t’

[Hadley Freeman](#)



Aubrey Plaza in London, October 2022. Photograph: Tim P Whitby/Getty Images for BFI

The actor notorious for playing sardonic oddballs on loving Danny DeVito, keeping up with her Parks and Rec co-stars and why she's nowhere near as kooky in real life



[@HadleyFreeman](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 10.18 EDT

The night before Aubrey Plaza and I met up, she went to the premiere of her latest film, [Emily the Criminal](#), at the London film festival, and was surprised to see an old friend in the audience. It was [Aziz Ansari](#), her co-star on the sitcom [Parks and Recreation](#). “I hadn’t seen him in a really long time, and he lives here now and it was honestly like seeing a family member,” she says, her signature dry monotone belying the warm smile on her face.

What did they talk about?

“I was saying how sometimes I imagine, like, what if my career was happening to April Ludgate, would that be funny?” she says, referring to her supremely cynical-verging-on-nihilistic character on the show. And it is funny, thinking of April, who couldn’t be bothered to answer a phone, now producing and starring in acclaimed indie films like [Ingrid Goes West](#) and [Emily the Criminal](#), as Plaza is. Thinking about any of the small-town characters from that star-making show – Tom, Ben, Ron – making it as big

as the actors who played them have since (respectively, Ansari, Adam Scott, Nick Offerman) is surreal.

But of all the show's cast members, it's [Chris Pratt](#), who played dopey Andy Dwyer, who has had the most unexpected career trajectory, going from doughy unknown to chiselled action star.

"I was joking about this with Aziz. Like, imagine if Chris's career was happening to Andy. That makes sense now, right? And of course – *of course* – Andy would end up marrying a Schwarzenegger," she says, referring to Pratt's real-life wife, Katherine Schwarzenegger (yes, as in, daughter of).

Today, Plaza is in a London hotel suite, dressed in a camel-coloured short skirt suit with a tan jumper and brown boots. She has just finished filming the wildly awaited second series of [The White Lotus](#), and there is also an upcoming, and slightly improbable, Guy Ritchie film, Operation Fortune, in which she stars alongside [Jason Statham](#) and Hugh Grant. And yet, despite all the colour coordination and professional polish, it takes a few moments to not see April Ludgate, the world's most sarcastic intern, who asked where she got her haircut replied: "Prison."

This is a common mistake people make with Plaza and she knows she hasn't helped matters. There are multiple YouTube compilations of her April-like appearances on US talkshows with titles such as "Aubrey Plaza is really WEIRD and AWKWARD. I love it!" Whereas most celebrity appearances on those shows are full of carefully scripted cheese and schmooze, Plaza's are more in the vein of [Andy Kaufman](#), the late comedian who preferred uncomfortable silences over easy laughs. "I don't know many people from Delaware," David Letterman once said to her, after asking where she is from. "Thank you," Plaza replied with half-held breath, as if taken aback by his comment (Letterman paused and then laughed in surprise). "What's your red carpet strategy this year?" [Conan O'Brien](#) asked her. "I'm just gonna get as drunk as I can and deny, deny, deny," she replied.



Crime time ... In Plaza's latest film, *Emily the Criminal*, she runs scams to pay off student debt.

"Each time I think, 'Just surrender to the process, go with it.' But I always go off script because I'm desperately trying to have a real moment there and even if it's uncomfortable, I prefer that to doing something fake. Because that's what makes me uncomfortable. So I end up doing a character," she says.

So she's not naturally like that, gleefully confounding people's expectations?

"No, I'm a total people pleaser, and it's something that I'm dealing with in therapy. I think that might come as a surprise to people because they project on to me this disaffected persona. But I totally care what people think, and I wish that I didn't. I wish I was more like Emily, in fact, and it was really good for me to play that character because it reminded me that I can assert myself, and I can set boundaries and stuff, because I'm really not good at that," she says.

Written and directed by John Patton Ford, making his debut feature, *Emily the Criminal* is a tense, smart film. Plaza plays Emily, a gifted artist stuck in a deadening food-delivery job that offers no protections, no security and little pay. She tries to get something better but an old conviction for assault

makes that impossible. The closest she gets is the offer of an internship at an ad agency, but when she finds out that it's unpaid and she protests, the boss (Gina Gershon) tells her she's spoiled. A colleague at the food delivery company puts her in touch with Youcef (Theo Rossi), an immigrant who has figured out a quick way to make an illegal buck, and Emily – ground down by student debt so large she can't even pay off the monthly interest – is in.

"I loved how cathartic the story is, especially for young people in America who are drowning in debt. So it felt like an opportunity to do something that could really mean a lot to someone, that they felt seen in a way," Plaza says.

Emily fits into a roster of intriguingly original characters she has played who have sharp corners and awkward angles – the kind that would be described by a film studio as "unlikable". There was the obsessive Ingrid in *Ingrid Goes West*, who stalks and befriends an Instagram influencer (Elizabeth Olsen); the sadistic nun, Sister Fernanda, in the black comedy [The Little Hours](#), which was written and directed by Plaza's then boyfriend and now husband, Jeff Baena; the cynical journalist Darius in the endearingly quirky [Safety Not Guaranteed](#); and, of course, there's April.



Bad habit ... Plaza, as the sadistic nun Sister Fernanda, and Dave Franco as Massetto, in *The Little Hours*, 2017. Photograph: Gunpowder & Sky/Allstar

“We’re so used to accepting male characters who are unlikable and flawed and we just watch them do their thing. But with female characters, we’re conditioned to analyse them and want them to be likable. I think it’s cool to normalise the female antihero because women do questionable things, and you still like them. To me, it’s not about likability, it’s about relatability, and if you create a fully fleshed out character, people will see something in it that they relate to,” she says.

But isn’t it hard to get a movie greenlit if the woman isn’t obviously likable?

“Maybe at a [film] studio, and this one wouldn’t have had a chance at a studio because there would have been too many notes about likability. But that’s why independent films are the best, because we don’t have to listen to those people and we can do whatever we want,” she says with a barely suppressed “ha ha ha” in her voice.

As well as starring in the film, Plaza produced it, and previous films that she produced include some of her best work: *Ingrid Goes West*, the very dark and meta [Black Bear](#), and the upcoming FX animated series *Little Demon*, in which she plays the ex-wife of Satan, voiced by Danny DeVito.

“It was never a conscious choice, like, ‘I will be a producer.’ It was more like I became a producer because I cared too much [how the movie turned out]. And it’s really fun – it’s fun for my opinion to matter,” she says.

How was it working with DeVito?

“Oh my God, what an asshole,” she deadpans in full April mode, and then drops it. “I love him. He’s just funny and it’s a non-stop funny, funny time. I think this is the first cartoon for which people have gone method because whenever we meet up we talk like we’re an old, bickering divorced couple because we’re both so corny and ridiculous.”

Plaza grew up in Delaware, the daughter of an Irish-Catholic mother and a Puerto Rican father. “I was definitely the only Puerto Rican doing competitive Irish dancing,” she says. She was born when her parents were 19 and she remembers them going to night school to get their professional qualifications (her mother is a lawyer and her father is a financial adviser).

“My two younger sisters are a lot more like April than me, whereas I was more like Lesley Knope,” she says, referring to [Amy Poehler’s](#) hard-working character in Parks and Rec. “My parents are very ambitious and they came from nothing. So I grew up watching them work really hard to get to where they are today, and as a child I had this hunger to make a name for myself.”



Classic ... Parks and Recreation cast member, from left: Chris Pratt, Aubrey Plaza, Retta, Rashida Jones, Nick Offerman, Aziz Ansari, Rob Lowe, Amy Poehler, Adam Scott, Jim O’Heir. Photograph: Hayes/NBC-TV/REX/Shutterstock

Plaza discovered acting as a shy child when she happened to audition for community theatre and fell in love with doing characters: “I felt like, I don’t know, I could just survive better or something. And then I never thought about doing anything else.” After studying film production at New York University, she interned at Saturday Night Live and soon after that, barely out of her teens, she flew to Los Angeles to audition for Judd Apatow’s film [Funny People](#), which she got. She was then asked to meet with producer, writer and director Michael Schur, about his upcoming project, following on from his success with the US version of The Office. The casting director described her as “the weirdest girl I’ve ever met”.

“I have no idea what I did in that meeting to weird them out so badly. But I think I just didn’t realise what a big opportunity this was for me. I had never been to Hollywood before. I was a huge fan of The Office and this meeting was on the set of The Office, and I was so distracted by all the famous people walking around, like, ‘Oh my God, it’s BJ Novak! And Mindy Kaling!’ I think maybe they were more used to normal actors who seem like they are actually trying to get the job.”

Plaza, of course, did get the job, and, despite ending seven years ago, Parks and Rec has endured in pop culture, to the point that during the pandemic the cast did a reunion Zoom to cheer people up. Few shows were as comforting to rewatch during the bleak days of lockdown as Parks and Rec, which managed that near impossible trick of being cheerful but never cheesy, smart but not snarky. But surely she is tired of annoying people like me asking about a show that ended so long ago?

“I don’t ever mind talking about it. It was kind of this unique thing where we actually knew how special it was as we were making it, and a lot of that came from Amy. She was the producer and number one on the call sheet and whoever is number one, that’s the energy that informs the vibe of the set.” There is still, she says, a Parks and Rec cast members text chain, where they all check in with each other a couple of times a month: “[This summer] we were all congratulating Adam and Amy on their Emmy nominations. We’re incredibly supportive of each other,” she says, referring to Adam Scott’s best actor nomination for the Apple+ series Severance and Poehler’s for best director of a documentary for [Lucy and Desi](#).

When I interviewed Poehler in 2015, shortly after the show ended, she told me that she, Plaza and Rashida Jones, who was also in Parks and Rec, regularly hung out together. Does that still happen?

“Oh yeah, we are incredibly close. It’s like family. And there’s also Kathryn Hahn [who appeared in the show occasionally]. During the pandemic we’d all meet up and hang out in Amy’s yard. I’m an older sister, so they are like my big sisters, and Amy never had sisters, so she’s always like, ‘You guys are my sisters.’ Rashida has sisters but, you know, not like us,” she smiles.

Plaza says the mistake people keep making is that they confuse her shyness for weirdness: “Maybe it confuses people that I just don’t take things that seriously. You see actors all the time who take themselves so seriously and you’re like, ‘Oh my God, you’re talking about *a movie*. I try not to lose that spirit because it’s got me where I am today. Seriously, we’re all gonna die one day.” April couldn’t have put it better.

Emily the Criminal is released on 24 October

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/oct/14/aubrey-plaza-i-totally-care-what-people-think-and-i-wish-that-i-didnt>

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‘I’m going to get there’: the slow path to recovery from long Covid



Yvonne Shield suffers from Long Covid. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

For some people living with long Covid, their symptoms have improved. One thing is clear, though: in recovery, one size does not fit all

[Read the Guardian's new series, Living with long Covid](#)



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Fri 14 Oct 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 09.37 EDT

Florence Mutesva fell ill on the ward. A nurse for 18 years, she had been caring for patients with respiratory problems at University College London hospitals (UCLH) when her symptoms came on. Beyond feeling ropery, she was scared. It was March 2020 and people were dying as the first wave of Covid – a mysterious new disease – swept across Britain.

Mutesva signed off sick on 23 March, a date branded on the brains of many in Britain as the day the prime minister announced the nation's first lockdown. Mutesva had little choice in the matter: the infection took hold and incapacitated her. She was coughing and struggling to breathe. She had palpitations and pains in her chest. She couldn't get to the shower without stopping for breath.

Concerned about her condition, doctors called her back to the hospital. Mutesva tested positive for Covid and was monitored for hours, but was later sent home. "I was really worried because I live on my own," she says.

“As a nurse, when a patient has chest pains and is struggling to breathe, you get worried, it’s an emergency.”

Her family was keen to check on her, so Mutesva had them phone her at 9am each day. If she didn’t answer, they had instructions to alert the concierge. She left her front door unlocked in case they had to come for her. “I didn’t know, when I went to bed, if I was ever going to wake up,” she says.

That first bout of Covid was brutal, but it was not the end of the story. Although most people who catch the virus have a mild disease which clears up in a few weeks, Mutesva, 43, was one of those who experience long-lasting illness. The Office for National Statistics estimates that [1.8 million people in the UK are living with long Covid](#), with symptoms lasting more than four weeks. Nearly half, or 43%, caught the virus more than a year earlier. Typically, a fifth say their symptoms substantially limit their day-to-day activities.



NHS medical staff wearing PPE work in a corridor in a ward for Covid patients. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

Mutesva was off for 10 weeks before she returned to work. Her sense of smell, which had abruptly vanished, had returned and she seemed to be

improving: she was tired, but the chest pains were easing and she could walk to the tube station without stopping.

Rather than returning full-time straight away, Mutesva started on reduced hours. After five weeks she tried her first 12-hour shift. It did not go well. The breathlessness, palpitations and chest pains returned, and she ended up in A&E. Doctors urged her to take another week off.

It was August before Mutesva got a sense of what was wrong. Doctors at University College hospital in London had set up a long Covid clinic where tests showed her blood oxygen fell when she performed a simple exercise of repeatedly standing and sitting. Furthermore, a specific blood test suggested she might have “[microclots](#)”. It is little more than an idea at the moment, but there is some evidence that tiny blood clots may underpin some symptoms in some patients, for example by impairing the diffusion of oxygen into blood in the lungs.

Mutesva was put on a three-month course of rivaroxaban, an anticoagulant that is used to prevent and treat blood clots. “After three months I was feeling much better, all the symptoms were resolving,” Mutesva says. But when she stopped the drug, they soon came back. She restarted the treatment, which helped again, only for the symptoms to return once more when she stopped. As of July, Mutesva had taken four courses of the drug. Six weeks after the last course, her symptoms had not come back. It may be the breakthrough she has been waiting for. “I’m not 100%, but I’m 90% better,” she says.

After two years, the illness has had knock-on effects throughout Mutesva’s life. She was redeployed to a desk job and doesn’t know if she’ll ever manage her previous 12-hour nursing night shifts. The financial hit leaves her hundreds of pounds worse off each month. Her social life has suffered, and she cannot travel back to Africa to see family as often as she used to.

Other changes are more positive. Mutesva was severely overweight before the pandemic. In the past two years, she has lost nine stone (126lb). She started walking at the weekends and also walks around the block for half an

hour at lunchtime. “I’m more active intentionally,” she says. “It has helped my recovery.”

‘There’s something more going on’

Doctors at UCLH launched the long Covid clinic when they became worried at the number of Covid patients being readmitted to hospital. To find out what was going on, they called nearly all the Covid patients who had been discharged in the previous month. Nearly half sounded unwell enough for the doctors to call them back in.

Doctors assessed patients in UCLH’s “Find and Treat” van, a mobile health clinic that travels around London providing diagnoses and care for homeless and other vulnerable people. Word soon got around. GPs called up to ask if they could send patients over. NHS staff – who were badly hit by Covid – were a good proportion of those.

The initial worry was that patients would have complications from Covid, such as inflammation in the lungs, says Dr Melissa Heightman, a specialist in respiratory medicine at UCLH. Some did, but the doctors saw a much broader range of problems. Patients had severe fatigue, breathlessness that couldn’t be explained, palpitations, chest pain, headaches, a loss of smell, dizziness. “That was very worrying given the large numbers of people who were getting infected,” Heightman says.

Because people’s symptoms varied so much, the clinic pulled together specialists from different fields to work up treatment plans. “We felt very alone at the beginning because there weren’t many of these clinics,” says Heightman. “People were saying, isn’t this just a post-viral thing? I said no, it’s worse. This isn’t just feeling tired for a couple of weeks. There’s something more going on.”

‘I still have so far to go’



Megan Willis, a dance teacher who suffers from long Covid. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

Megan Willis, a 34-year-old dance teacher at a secondary school in Beckenham, also caught Covid in the first wave. She had a bark of a cough and lost her sense of smell, but like many in education, tried to power through. The cough eventually cleared up and, apart from the loss of smell, Willis felt fine in the summer. But that autumn, just before half-term, it hit her. “I couldn’t breathe,” she says. “I couldn’t get out of bed.”

Willis went to hospital and was put on oxygen, but the doctors soon sent her home. Routine tests flagged up nothing untoward. “My oxygen levels were average, everything came back average. But I knew something wasn’t right,” she says. “As a dancer, you really understand your body. I was insanely fit, but they kept saying average is really good. I was really frustrated.”

Willis took a fortnight off and then worked through the winter. She felt OK for a while, though she had started gasping for breath. She pushed through 2021, but early this year her condition deteriorated. She couldn’t walk for more than five minutes. She couldn’t carry anything. She got shooting pains in her arms and legs.

In March, Willis got an appointment at the UCLH long Covid clinic. There, doctors found she had developed a breathing disorder. Her nose felt completely blocked even though scans revealed that it was fine. She was signed off work and was hit by overwhelming fatigue. She slept for nine to 10 hours a day. As a single mother, she turned to family and friends to ferry her daughter to and from school. “It was awful,” she says. “I couldn’t do a food shop, I couldn’t drive for long, I couldn’t do anything.”

The clinic arranged for Willis to have breathing physiotherapy, a 12-week course on Zoom with others whose breathing had been knocked sideways by Covid. The aim was to retrain the brain to breathe normally again, but the course had other benefits. The clinic brought a community together. “Everyone said the social side, and the mental side, were so difficult,” she says. “You look fine, but it’s an invisible disease.”

Willis was put on antihistamines – drugs used to dampen down allergic reactions – and started taking antidepressants to help with the mental toll of her life becoming so drastically limited. She joined a patient group on Facebook, is trying acupuncture and reflexology, and transformed her diet, dropping wheat, dairy, caffeine, alcohol and high-sugar foods. After a brief return to work in July, school broke up for the summer.

Willis believes she is on the mend, but the prospect of going back to full-on dance teaching in the autumn is daunting. “I’m much better than I was in March, but I still have so far to go,” she says. Her sense of smell has not come back, but it’s the physical fitness Willis misses most. “I want to get back to where I was. I can’t let go of the super-fit person I was for 25 years. Mentally, it’s like, who am I?”



Megan Willis: 'I can't let go of the super-fit person I was for 25 years.'
Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

Surveys by the Office for National Statistics find that [long Covid is more commonly reported by females](#), the middle-aged and people living in more deprived areas. It is more prevalent among health and social care workers and those in education. People with pre-existing conditions are also at greater risk. But long Covid clinics aren't seeing all these people. While 70% are female at the UCLH clinic, and many are in the higher-risk age band, very few have co-morbidities. The doctors do not have many patients from deprived backgrounds.

Heightman suspects that GPs find it harder to identify long Covid in patients with multiple health problems, because other conditions muddy the waters. If a doctor knows a patient was fit and well before Covid, but a month later is struggling with fatigue, it is easier to refer them straight to the clinic. Patients from more deprived areas might struggle even to see a GP, then explain what is wrong – especially if there's a language barrier – and get the right care.

"We are definitely seeing a selected cohort," Heightman says. "The people we see are very unwell, but they are people who have managed to explain

their symptoms and get a referral.” Work is now under way to reach into communities to find those in need of help.

‘I seemed to be in this zombie state’

Yvonne Shield, 58, also caught Covid as the UK entered its first lockdown. The health charity worker had a busy social life and went to the gym three or four times a week for spin classes, body combat and personal training. But Covid hit her hard. Her chest and lungs hurt and she struggled to breathe. She had a continuous headache, severe fatigue, and her hair began to fall out.

After a phone consultation with her GP, Shield was prescribed antibiotics for pneumonia, but her symptoms didn’t improve. “I seemed to be in this zombie state of being very unwell for a long time, but not so unwell that I needed to be hospitalised,” she says.



Yvonne Shield: ‘I seemed to be in this zombie state of being very unwell for a long time.’ Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

Shield was furloughed for 18 months. Beyond feeling overwhelmingly tired, she had brain fog and couldn’t think as clearly as before. She did very little around the house and made only simple meals. She spent a lot of time sitting

down, and could feel her fitness ebbing away and her joints seizing up. “People told me I had to go out for walks and build myself back, but it had almost the reverse effect. I’d sleep for two hours to get over a 20-minute walk. I had to learn how to pace myself.”

Shield took the breathing physio course through the long Covid clinic, which helped her to breathe more deeply again. But doctors found she had developed asthma. They prescribed an inhaler which Shield says “transformed” her life. “My symptoms improved,” she says. “They weren’t eradicated, but they improved incredibly, and it helped the fatigue as well.”

The asthma may be with her for life, but Shield feels she is gradually getting better. “My journey is one of improvement, but it is a lot slower and a lot more frustrating than I imagined it would be,” she says. “I’m probably at 70% because I can’t do what I used to do. It’s slow, but I’m going to get there.”

There is no clinical test for long Covid. Instead, patients undergo an assessment that aims to rule out other causes and then identify the components of their illness. Some symptoms can be treated with medicines: the headaches, palpitations and dizziness. Others, such as breathlessness, can be improved with breathing physiotherapy. Many patients need psychological support for the substantial mental challenge long Covid can present.

One of the most common aspects of long Covid, however, is proving harder to treat: fatigue. Patients seem to fall into two groups: some have suffered a severe loss of fitness and benefit from support to gradually recover their physical fitness. But there are others who, whenever they try to be active, find all their symptoms worsen.

“One of the most important research questions for us is why do some people get this horrible post-exertional symptom exacerbation and others don’t?” says Heightman. It means there is no single recipe for treating patients. The approach must be tailored to each individual.

‘I started losing motivation’

Krunal Patel, 24, was in his penultimate year at medical school in October 2020 when he went out with friends for drinks and dinner. At the bar, the drinks seemed weak but he thought little of it. When they moved on to a Chinese restaurant, he became more concerned. The food tasted incredibly bland. Worried that he might have Covid and spread the virus, he called it a night and went back to his flat. There, he tried some Haribo sweets and found them tasteless. He found a bulb of garlic but couldn't smell it. "I didn't feel unwell," he says, "but I thought this must be Covid."

From chatting to friends who had caught the virus before, Patel suspected his senses would be disrupted for three weeks or so. But two months later, nothing had changed. Social media was full of random "treatments" that he'd previously dismissed for lack of evidence, but he started trying them out, figuring he had nothing to lose. They made no difference.

The NHS [recommends smell training](#) for some patients, so Patel ordered a kit and began the programme that December. The training involves smelling a fixed set of four scents every day and focusing on the sensory experience. He learned that he could still experience certain tastes: sweet, sour, salty and so on, but his sense of smell was shot. He kept a daily log to track his progress, but after a month found he had nothing to write. "There wasn't anything happening and I started losing motivation," he says. "I thought, is it not going to come back?"



Dr Clair Vandersteen wafts a tube of odors under the nose of a blindfolded patient in a hospital in Nice, France, to better understand Covid-related anosmia. Photograph: John Leicester/AP

The loss of smell was more than an annoyance. Patel's mood slumped and his motivation to eat waned. "I ended up changing my diet around quite a lot. I'd only eat food if it had a complex flavour profile. I'd double up on the spices. All soup tasted the same. Anything with a single texture was boring. Even milk chocolate was boring," he says.

When exam time came, Patel found he was force-feeding himself one meal a day to keep his energy levels up.

The loss of smell came with risks, too. When Patel accidentally left the gas on at his parents' house, he had no idea until his mum rushed over to turn it off.

Other details surprised him. Surgery had never particularly appealed to him, in part because electrocautery – a process that uses a hot wire to destroy abnormal tissue and seal blood vessels – produces such an awful smell. "It's really unpleasant, but I couldn't smell it any more," he says. "And now weirdly, I've become more interested in pursuing surgery."

Patel soon heard about an anosmia clinic at University College hospital for people who had lost their sense of smell and taste. Doctors found that Patel's sense of smell was about 10% of what it should be. They suggested a course of steroids. The drug had a swift impact, though it wasn't what Patel expected. Flavours and scents became more apparent, but seemed to be mixed up. Before taking the steroid, he enjoyed the flavour of watermelon and clementines, but those flavours faded. At the same time, coffee started to smell horrible. "It's still the most unpleasant scent I can smell. It's like I'm hypersensitive to it," he says.

Patel was discharged from the anosmia clinic last summer and says his sense of smell remained much the same for months. But in April this year, he started picking up more scents when people were cooking, and detecting more flavours in dishes he'd given up on. "That's where I am now. I've gone from thinking it'll come back, to feeling it's stagnated, to feeling maybe there's more to this process of recovery yet."

'As long as Covid is around, long Covid will be around'

Heightman says a major priority now is to "stabilise" the services that have been pulled together. Soon, research will start feeding into treatments. UCLH and UCL are leading the [Stimulate-ICP](#) trial, one of the most important clinical studies of long Covid to date, involving patients, doctors, researchers and industry. It will test medicines, diagnostics and digital tools for rehabilitation to see which can make a difference. There may be some important benefits with repurposed medicines, but that is for the trial to find out.

"I think as long as Covid is around, long Covid will be around," says Heightman. "We have to be prepared for this to be an ongoing need."

For patients, long Covid can be horribly frustrating as well as debilitating. Social media and news reports often promote what sound like breakthrough therapies, but there is no simple cure for long Covid, not least because it is probably more than one condition. The key for doctors is to build patients' confidence that they can improve if they actively engage in recovery plans.

“I see people making really important recoveries,” Heightman says. “Some people get better steadily with time and other people have a more rocky road, but there are hardly any patients we’ve been looking after for a year or more who aren’t hugely better than when we first met them. We expect you to get better with time, and the right support.”.

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Living with long Covid

I was an athlete – now I’m 30 and in a wheelchair thanks to long Covid

I know a runner, a fighter, a coach are still in me. But I don’t feel like her any more

- [Read the Guardian’s new series, Living with long Covid](#)

by Savannah Brooks. Illustrations by Julia Louise Pereira

Fri 14 Oct 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 04.12 EDT



It is the first time that I have been so close to the
 sea. I have been told that the sea is a place of
 solitude and of glory. The solitude and glory
 are waiting for me. I am waiting for the sea.



Figure 1
 The first time I have
 been so close to the
 sea. I have been told
 that the sea is a place
 of solitude and of glory.
 The solitude and glory
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Engineering and
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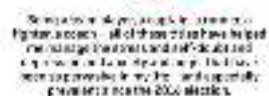


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My 2 children both have dyspraxia, they are and have been. I am one of the few adults who can still read and write, I am proud of that.



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MIA on vaccines, vindication and her visions of Jesus: ‘People fear me for some reason’

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2022.10.14 - Opinion

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- Truss is frantically blowing on the embers of neoliberalism. But it is a funeral pyre
- What's it like working from the pub? Well, the beer numbs your cost-of-living anxiety
- Markets leap on reports of Liz Truss's tax cuts U-turn. No time to dally

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The Tories have trampled on renters for too long, and Liz Truss is about to feel their pain

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



In plenty of Tory marginal seats, soaring rents are already leading frustrated voters to look elsewhere for answers



Illustration: Nate Kitch

Fri 14 Oct 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 03.05 EDT

When [Liz Truss](#) met her MPs on Wednesday, the mood, by all accounts, was as if there had been a death in the family.

One MP reportedly described “a terrible feeling of [sorrow in the room](#)” as backbenchers listened despondently to a leader who has barely been in office a month yet already seems broken beyond repair.

It’s the markets that call the shots now, not the prime minister. Truss will surely have to junk much of her ill-judged mini-budget to placate her new masters, but will even that be enough? A chaotic U-turn could merely strengthen investors’ view that Britain has become a basket case. It’s still hard to envisage the precise mechanism for triggering a general election, but it’s even harder to imagine staggering on like this for another two years. The funereal Westminster mood reflects the fact that many Tory MPs now expect to lose their jobs sooner rather than later, and are beginning to wonder how they’ll pay the bills. To which the nation could be forgiven for responding: well, now you know how it feels.

Rocketing interest rates make this a scary winter for anyone with a mortgage, but arguably even scarier for renters. Rents were already on the rise before this crisis, driven by a shortage of properties as tenants streamed back into big cities post-pandemic. When the pressure group Generation Rent surveyed its supporters, it found 45% of those who had been in their current place for more than a year had been [asked to pay more](#), with cut-throat competition for flats sparking bidding wars and even outbreaks of gazumping. But the big difference between now and Black Wednesday, the last time mortgage rates suddenly rocketed, is that this time renters are more directly exposed.

The private rented sector has [almost doubled](#) since the early 1990s, as social housing dwindled and an army of amateur landlords, property moguls and assorted hustlers moved in to plug the gap. Back in 1992, bespoke buy-to-let mortgages had yet to be invented. Now [more than 60%](#) tenants have a landlord reliant on one. How will overstretched landlords respond once their mortgage costs start rising, too? Some will surely try to pass the hit on to tenants. Others might get cold feet and try to sell up. A fire sale of ex-rentals may sound like heaven for buyers, but would risk turmoil in the short term for renters competing over whatever's left.

How realistic is the prospect of buy-to-let blowing up? The National Residential Landlords' Association surveyed members when interest rates first started rising this summer, and concluded they would only sell up in significant numbers if the base rate reached [between 3 and 5%](#). Rates are now at 2.25%, with the Bank of England due to consider another hike in [early November](#) – days after a [Halloween fiscal statement](#) from Kwasi Kwarteng, which is supposed to reassure the markets. Given the chancellor's track record, it feels unwise to bank on that.

What makes all this so politically acute is that renting long ago morphed from a youthful rite of passage into a more permanent life stage, including for families with children settled at school who can't just up sticks and move easily. Thankfully, Liz Truss this week [ruled out](#) scrapping a planned ban on "no fault" evictions, which might have left tenants even more insecure. But a third of renters who voted Conservative in 2019 have [already switched parties](#), according to recent polling for the housing charity Shelter. It identifies a string of Tory-held marginals across the south-east of England

with high proportions of unhappy renters, from Hastings and Rye or Milton Keynes North to Filton and Bradley Stoke on the outskirts of Bristol, long a canary in the mine for housing affordability.

[Average rents](#) in the city are £1,125 a month, not far off London prices, but Bristolians aren't on London salaries. Because it's expensive to buy here, almost half the city's residents rent, leaving too many people chasing too few flats (one Bristol university is now [sending students to digs in Wales](#)).

Under pressure from local rent campaigners, Bristol's Labour mayor, Marvin Rees, has committed to examining the case for rent controls, or formally capping what landlords can charge. Rent caps have been widely, if controversially, imposed in European cities from [Dublin](#) to [Barcelona](#), and the Scottish government has pledged to [introduce them in Scotland](#) by 2025 (having already [frozen rents](#) until at least March 2023 as an emergency cost of living measure).

In Bristol, a [living rent commission](#) has been established to explore the idea of rent caps, and although there's little chance of it becoming reality anytime soon – that would require ministers granting the city new powers, which London's mayor Sadiq Khan has already [tried and failed](#) to get for the capital – the aim is to build the case nationally. But it's also perhaps to stay one step ahead of an increasingly desperate mood, in a city where radical Greens nip closely at Labour heels.

Capping rents doesn't permanently fix a housing crisis: only building more affordable houses really does that, and critics have long argued that squeezing landlords' profits merely encourages them either to skimp on repairs or sell up. (In Ireland, some blamed a 2017 decision to freeze and then regulate rents for triggering the kind of housing shortage that saw [150 people queueing round the block](#) recently to view one house in Dublin.)

At best it could help the poorest renters keep a roof over their heads while more houses are built, assuming Britain can get over its resistance to building them. But it's an idea born of desperation whose popularity is best understood as a distress signal, a warning sign of frustration bubbling up in cities that are becoming unliveable-in because more sustainable solutions have consistently been ducked.

It's this kind of desperation, built up over 12 years but intensified in recent weeks, that gives some otherwise chipper Labour MPs cause to worry.

Can a future Starmer government really satisfy what will be sky-high expectations, not just on housing but on so many other pressing challenges, if all it inherits from Truss is debts and a pile of smoking rubble? The Tory backbencher Charles Walker was brave but right to [argue recently](#) that his colleagues should now accept their time is over, and focus on their patriotic duty to leave things in the best possible shape for their successors. The real sorrow in the room is the knowledge that that almost certainly won't happen, leaving the rest of us to live with the consequences of this madness for some years to come.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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[Opinion](#)[Economic policy](#)

Truss is frantically blowing on the embers of neoliberalism. But it is a funeral pyre

[Andy Beckett](#)



Just as the rest of the world is rejecting free-market economics, we have a purist in No 10. It could come at a very high price



‘Liz Truss is one of the keenest remaining Margaret Thatcher fans in Britain.’ Truss during prime minister's questions in parliament on Wednesday. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Fri 14 Oct 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 12.37 EDT

Purity can be a dangerous thing in politics. The world is full of impurities. Compromises are often needed to make policies work. Voters also rarely reward politicians for having a consistent ideology. Sometimes they see such people as fanatics.

Yet without a set of stubborn beliefs, governments and political parties can become directionless. They can lack a sense of purpose and a compelling story. The common centrist argument that grownup government is pragmatic ignores the fact that the most influential British governments since the second world war, Clement Attlee’s and Margaret Thatcher’s, changed society to fit their worldviews more than vice versa.

Liz Truss, one of the keenest remaining Thatcher fans in Britain, wants her government to be similarly transformative, or “disruptive”. “The status quo is not an option,” she told [last week’s Tory conference](#). “We are the only party with a clear plan to ... build a new Britain.”

That plan is currently in deep trouble, thanks to its widely perceived sketchiness and extremism, Truss and her cabinet's shortage of political nous and communications skills, and her lack of a mandate from either the electorate or her members of parliament. But there is another, less examined reason why she is struggling. Her government has taken office when the philosophy that has re-energised and reshaped conservatism worldwide since the early 70s – a philosophy to which the Truss government seems as devoted as any in British history – finally appears to be declining.

Neoliberalism, the belief that free markets, low taxes and a state with little or no interest in equality will produce the best economic and social outcomes, has fallen out of fashion even among the business elite and their chroniclers. In the Financial Times this week, the columnist Rana Foroohar argued that the west was entering a [“post-neoliberal era”](#): there would be more state intervention in economies, more regulation of markets and more power for workers.

Yet Truss says she wants a country with the opposite characteristics: a [“lean state”](#), less [“red tape”](#), less redistribution of wealth and stricter [anti-union laws](#). This confrontation between Downing Street's neoliberal purists, still pushing for a few last victories, and the political, economic and even financial market forces massing against them, is making Tory politics a compelling and globally significant spectacle, at least as much as the party's divisions. In Britain, arguably the first democracy where neoliberalism was tried, it is simultaneously ploughing onward and dying.



‘At a conference fringe event, Jacob Rees-Mogg warned, ‘You can’t go for a year zero approach. People will think we’re just lunatics.’ Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

This was vividly clear at the Tory conference. In a tent on the supposed fringe of the event, hosted by the anti-state Taxpayers’ Alliance and the free-market Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), packed discussions about the radical things the government should do next featured ministers such as Kwasi Kwarteng and Jacob Rees-Mogg. These were much more animated than the speeches in the main hall. The IEA’s director, Mark Littlewood, presided over the discussions with an air of barely contained delight. At one point, he said he was “very excited” about the Truss premiership. Rarely have ideologues exerted so much influence over a British government.

Yet it is influence on a government under siege. The speakers in the tent were often almost drowned out by anti-Brexit protesters, just feet away outside the conference perimeter, blasting out the mocking theme music from Benny Hill. And sometimes even the most confident rightwing contributors sounded spooked by the government’s unpopularity. On deregulating business, Rees-Mogg warned: “You can’t go for a year-zero approach. People will think we’re just lunatics.” An adviser to Littlewood, Sam Collins, went further. “Attempting to introduce free-market reforms and

doing it badly,” he said, “can poison the well for a generation.” The Truss government may be doing just that.

In the early, expansive years of neoliberalism, unpopularity and policy failures were less of a problem. The first country where the philosophy was applied was not a democracy. Augusto Pinochet’s [dictatorship in Chile](#), which began with a military coup in 1973, turned what had been a relatively open and egalitarian society into a laboratory for polarising free-market policies such as privatisation and austerity. “There was much bloodshed and numerous political prisoners were taken,” Alan Walters, a rightwing British economist who worked with the Pinochet regime, wrote in the Times in 1990. “But [there was also] vigorous economic recovery, the wonder of the rest of Latin America.”

Walters went on to be Thatcher’s chief economic adviser during some of the most divisive periods of her premiership. While obviously less authoritarian than Pinochet, her government similarly used coercion, such as aggressive policing and [anti-union laws](#), to suppress opposition to neoliberal policies. In both her Britain and his Chile, as in the nation Truss envisages, some economic freedoms – to get rich, to avoid regulation – were considered more important than others, such as freedom from overwork or poverty. Enough powerful interests, and enough of the public, supported this rightwing approach, even though it only intermittently produced strong economic growth, for neoliberalism to spread all over the world for half a century.

But nowadays the philosophy is in retreat even in its original heartlands. In Chile, the current president is Gabriel Boric, probably the most leftwing since Salvador Allende, the socialist whom Pinochet overthrew. In Britain, the latest annual social attitudes survey shows that even among Conservative supporters, [only 7%](#) want a smaller state and lower taxes. Neoliberalism has become a minority faith, far less popular than the socialism and social democracy it supposedly defeated for good back in the 70s and 80s.

Yet the Truss government is trying to press on regardless. Over the coming weeks, assuming her administration survives that long, announcements are promised about deregulatory reforms to everything from childcare to the planning system. One explanation for her persistence with this largely unwanted revolution may be that the Tories have tried everything else they

can think of. Since returning to power in 2010, they have hastily produced and discarded a succession of solutions to Britain's problems, from David Cameron's "big society" to Theresa May's focus on the "[just about managing](#)" to Boris Johnson's populist nationalism.

Perhaps neoliberal purism is the only option some Tories feel they have left – the only way to give their ageing, messy government some clarity and momentum. But between now and the next election, unless there are a lot more government U-turns, the price of that purism, for the party and for the country, may become frighteningly clear.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#) [Working from home](#)

What's it like working from the pub? Well, the beer numbs your cost-of-living anxiety

[Imogen West-Knights](#)

With so many pubs facing closure this winter, some are trying to create the new WFH – let's call it WFP



‘Sit where you like’ ... by day, many pubs could double up as office spaces.
Photograph: Jon Super/AP

Fri 14 Oct 2022 05.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 05.11 EDT

“I guess you can just sit wherever, really,” the woman says, seeming a little nonplussed as she gestures at the dozens of empty tables. I booked a slot at this London pub on its “work from the pub” scheme, but it seems I needn’t have bothered with the planning. I am the only customer in here. Which makes sense – because this is a pub, and it’s 11am on a Tuesday.

Trouble is brewing for pubs. Earlier this year there were [7,000 fewer of them](#) in England and Wales than a decade ago. Pubs were bruised by the pandemic, and now, like all hospitality venues, they are staring down the barrel of the cost of living crisis, which will mean vastly increased energy bills and customers with less beer money in their pockets. More than 70% of pubs do not expect to survive the winter, according to one survey.

So, they need to get us through their doors any way they can. One of these ways is by encouraging people like me, who work from home, to work at the pub instead. Remote-working deals, which Fuller's and Young's pubs up and down the country are offering, are a formalised version of what many people without an office have had to do between meetings, or when their boiler is broken: set up shop in their local to hammer out some emails. For £15 at this particular pub – prices vary elsewhere – you get a desk (read: classically wonky, tacky-to-the-touch pub table), a plug socket, unlimited tea or coffee and something for lunch.



Young's pub in south London. Photograph: Sally Howard/The Observer

That I had most of the pub to myself may have had something to do with the fact that – despite what the website said – the scheme hadn't officially started yet, and the staff hadn't been informed about it. "See, sometimes

[they] just do things and don't tell us about it," one worker said, rolling their eyes. They kindly agreed to do it for me anyway.

So, what is it like working from the pub for an entire working day? First, "entire working day" is difficult to achieve given that most pubs generally don't open until 11, if not 12, and while I am a lazy, good-for-nothing freelancer, I'm not *that* lazy or good for nothing. (Some on the scheme say they will be opening from 10am.) And, as I can attest to from my time working in a pub, the morning period should really belong to the staff. It's when they can put on the music a bit louder, chat behind the bar, and do their admin tasks before anybody shows up, about lunchtime. Other downsides include the fact that it does just smell like a pub: that sweet, musty tang of beer and barbecue sauce. And if you need to take a video call, it looks very much like you're in the pub, too.

While we're doing the downsides: for £15 you can eat much nicer food – I had a bruschetta remarkable for having no flavour at all (I have recently taken a Covid test), although perhaps that's my fault for ordering bruschetta at a pub. And at home you don't have to listen to Hey There Delilah while you work. That said, £15 isn't bad, considering that hot-desking at somewhere like WeWork, for instance, costs £240 a month, but you have to pay for the whole month and bring your own lunch. And after the first couple of hours, I do manage to sort of forget I'm in the pub at all and focus enough to get some work done. Also, the availability of a glass of red wine whenever I decided it was acceptable to order one did make the afternoon pass quickly. I'm not sure how scaleable this working day is, though, if you're the kind to succumb to the temptation too readily.

So although working from home is, of course, cheaper, I did indeed get things done, perhaps more than I would have done at home, where I can convince myself that it is imperative I dye my eyebrows right now instead of responding to a difficult request from an editor, or put my face within two centimetres of my cat's and whisper: "I love you." Unlike at home, it would feel like an act of psychopathy to sit here during a lunch hour that turns into a lunch hour-and-a-half and stare listlessly at old Derren Brown videos on YouTube.

What makes me feel a bit uneasy about all this is that it's hard not to read "work from the pub" as ominous writing on the wall, like all the adverts around at the moment that say: "We know things are awful – here's how you can save a tiny bit of money." Things are bad, not just for you but for everybody, and set to get worse. So sure, work from the pub and have a beer at 4pm. Or two. Anything to numb that low-rumbling anxiety about what the next few years are going to look like. Cheers!

- Imogen West-Knights is a writer and journalist based in London

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[Nils Pratley on finance](#)[Mini-budget 2022](#)

Markets leap on reports of Liz Truss's tax cuts U-turn. No time to dally

[Nils Pratley](#).



As PM ponders which measures to junk from mini-budget, pound rises by two cents against dollar



The governor of the Bank of England's vow to stop buying gilts next week now looks slightly more credible. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian
Thu 13 Oct 2022 14.00 EDTFirst published on Thu 13 Oct 2022 13.59 EDT

Financial markets don't hang around. Primed for UK government U-turns, they leaped on the first reports that Liz Truss is now getting down to the task of deciding which tax measures – [with the freeze on corporation tax to the fore](#) – will have to be junked from the mini-budget. The pound rose by two cents against the dollar.

Gilts, or government IOUs, were also in demand on the whiff of a return to a version of fiscal responsibility. The yield on the 30-year gilt, which had been screaming crisis at 5.1% only 24 hours earlier, descended to 4.5% – to the great relief, one assumes, of the governor of the Bank of England, whose [vow to stop buying gilts](#) next week now looks slightly more credible. The message to the UK from markets was unmistakable: here is your escape chute, now please take it.

Over in Washington, [Kwasi Kwarteng](#) insisted he was going nowhere and that “our position hasn't changed”, but the jig is surely up. A U-turn is being priced in, and the market action will be furious if expectations are disappointed. International investors simply won't fund the chancellor's

original mini-budget on terms that make sense for the government; the price in higher borrowing costs, for households and businesses, would wipe out any benefits from the hopeful go-go growth stuff.

The next stage in the market end of this drama will inevitably be a demand for quick resolution. The 31 October date for the next fiscal event is too far away and George Osborne's point is almost unanswerable: "Given the pain being caused to the real economy by the financial turbulence, it's not clear why it is in anyone's interests to wait 18 more days before the inevitable U-turn on the mini-budget," said the former chancellor.

Quite. Never mind the hit to political egos and careers, the whole process will go down easier without another round of gyration in gilt prices. Time to get on with it.

Climate minister flunks test on Bulb nationalisation



Business secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg and climate minister Graham Stuart leave 10 Downing Street. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Given all of the above, one assumes Jacob Rees-Mogg, business secretary and [occasional Guardian columnist](#), hasn't had time to get his head around

the lessons to be drawn from [the nationalisation of Bulb a year ago](#). Instead, the climate minister, Graham Stuart, was rolled on to give the government's official response to good recommendations from the business select committee a couple of months ago. On two fronts, Stuart flunked it.

Why, we've all been wondering, didn't the government order the administrators of Bulb to put hedging contracts in place to cover Bulb's forward energy purchases? All energy supply companies hedge – it is how the industry works. When gas prices climbed even higher after Bulb's failure, the costs to the public purse rose massively.

Actually, we know why the government hesitated. The Treasury deemed hedging to be “too risky”, Kwarteng told the committee in May when wearing his former ministerial hat. So, given that the approach backfired, the real question is whether the government would do things differently if it finds itself nationalising another energy company? Stuart just gave a non-answer about Bulb's power purchasing strategy being kept under “close and constant review”.

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Worse, he dodged the pressing question of who will pick up the tab for rescuing Bulb. Since £4bn is a credible estimate of the final loss before [the likely sale to Octopus Energy](#), it's not a trivial matter. The liability can either be swallowed by the public purse, or ministers can exercise their right under the “special administration regime” to shove the cost on to everybody's energy bills. If it's the latter, it equates to about £150 for every household.

Again, the government ducked for cover in its formal answer. It intends to use “the shortfall mechanism placed on suppliers”, which is another way of saying a levy would be added to bills; the only qualification is that the timing hasn’t been decided.

Come on, it would be absurd to hit consumers with the cost of Bulb’s blow-out when ministers are desperately trying to remove items from bills. As the committee chair Darren Jones said, it would also be regressive; better to take the hit via general taxation.

Many reforms to the energy market are complicated – not least the vital question of where to set the revenue cap on renewable and nuclear generators so that it extracts a fair deal for consumers but also encourages investment. Bulb is supposed to be the easy bit. The government needs to rethink.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/nils-pratley-on-finance/2022/oct/13/markets-leap-reports-truss-tax-cuts-u-turn-no-time-to-dally>.

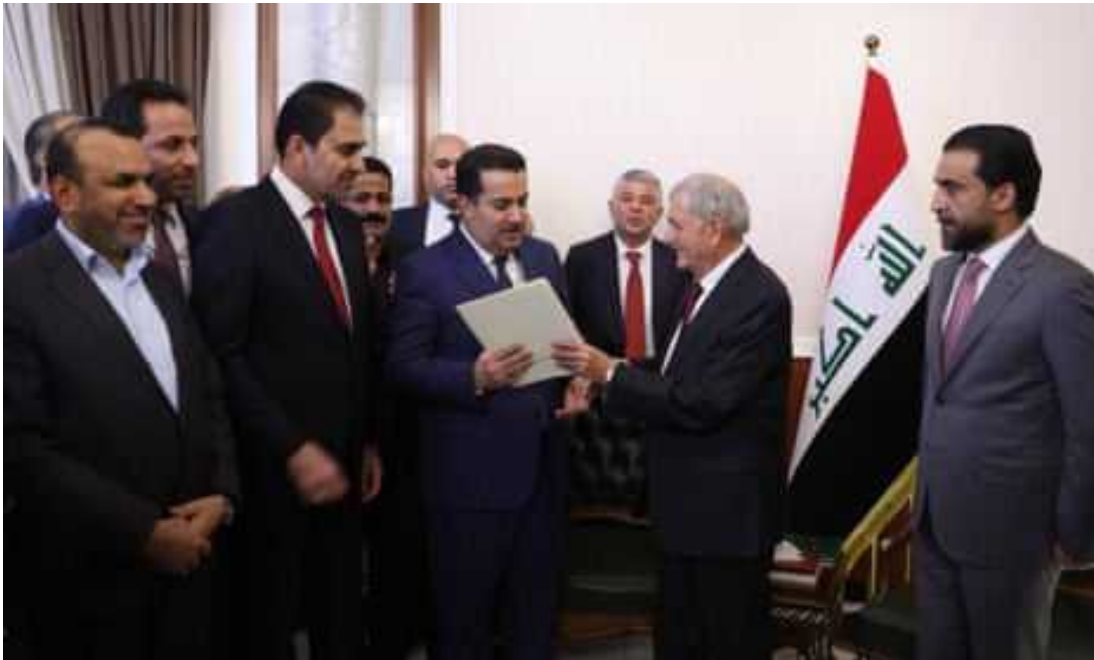
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Iraq

Hope for stability as Iraqi parliament elects president

Abdul Latif Rashid nominates Mohammed Shia al-Sudani for prime minister after year of turmoil centred on Sadr movement



Iraq's new president, Abdul Latif Rashid, second from right, hands over the letter of assignment to form a new government to the nominated prime minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. Photograph: Iraqi Parliament Media Office/EPA

Agencies in Baghdad

Thu 13 Oct 2022 19.47 EDT

Iraq's parliament has elected as president the Kurdish politician Abdul Latif Rashid, who immediately named Mohammed Shia al-Sudani prime minister-designate, ending a year of deadlock after a national election in October 2021.

The presidency, traditionally occupied by a Kurd, is a largely ceremonial position, but the vote for Rashid was a key step toward in forming a new government, which politicians have failed to do since the election.

Rashid, 78, was the Iraqi minister of water resources from 2003 to 2010. The British-educated engineer won against the former president Barham Salih, who was running for a second term.

He invited Sudani, the nominee of the largest parliamentary bloc known as the Coordination Framework, an alliance of Iran-aligned factions, to form a government. Sudani, 52, previously served as Iraq's human rights minister as well as minister of labour and social affairs.

Sudani has 30 days to form a cabinet and present it to parliament for approval.

The US said it welcomed the end of the deadlock. "The United States urges all parties to refrain from violence and to resolve differences amicably and peacefully through the political process."

Thursday's vote was the fourth attempt to elect a president this year. It took place shortly after nine rockets landed on Thursday around the Iraqi capital's Green Zone, according to a military statement.

At least 10 people, including members of the security forces, were injured in the attack, according to security and medical sources.

Similar attacks took place in September as the parliament was holding a vote to confirm its speaker.

Thursday's parliament session comes a year after an election in which the populist Shia Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr was the biggest winner but failed to rally support to form a government.

Sadr [withdrew his 73 lawmakers in August and said he would quit politics](#), prompting the worst violence in Baghdad for years when his loyalists

stormed a government palace and [fought rival Shia groups](#), most of them backed by Iran and with armed divisions.

Sadr, who has not declared his next move, has a track record of radical action, including fighting US forces, quitting cabinets, and protesting against governments. Many fear protests by his supporters.

On Thursday, security personnel put checkpoints across the city, closed off bridges and squares and erected walls across some of the bridges leading to the fortified Green Zone.

“Now Iran-backed groups are dominating the parliament, they have a friendly judiciary and have dominated the executive [authority] ... they will need to benefit from it, one way to benefit from it is to do it gradually or suddenly and try marginalise or expel pro-Sadrists from the state apparatuses,” said Hamdi Malik, specialist on Iraq’s Shia militias at the Washington Institute, adding the approach on how they do it will determine how Sadr will react. Under a power-sharing system designed to avoid sectarian conflict, Iraq’s president is a Kurd, its prime minister Shia and its parliament speaker a Sunni.

The presidency was fiercely contested between Iraqi Kurdistan’s two main parties: the Kurdistan Democratic party (KDP) which nominated Rashid, and its traditional rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which nominated Salih.

Rashid’s election raises concerns about escalating tensions between the KDP and PUK, who fought a civil war in the 1990s.

The KDP and PUK were unable to iron out differences and agree on one candidate.

“The relationship between the PUK and the KDP is at its lowest,” said Zmkan Ali Saleem, assistant professor of political science at Sulaimani University.

However, Saleem predicted the tension would not lead to a break in the relationship between the parties and would eventually calm down because

Rashid is a PUK member and his wife is a powerful figure within the party.

With Reuters and Associated Press

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China

Dissidents in China detained and harassed as Beijing prepares for party congress

Government critics and activists intimidated by police ahead of Sunday's Communist party meeting, where Xi Jinping is expected to gain third term

- [Everything you need to know about China's Communist party congress](#)



Attendants in Beijing wait for visitors to an exhibition showcasing the Communist party's achievements in the run-up to Sunday's congress. China's security apparatus has detained dissidents to ensure the political gathering is not disrupted.

Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Verna Yu](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 00.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 01.56 EDT

Chinese authorities have stepped up surveillance and harassment of government critics as part of a crackdown on dissent ahead of the Communist party's upcoming 20th congress, its key political gathering.

Since mid-September, numerous activists and petitioners seeking to lobby the government have been detained or put under house arrest across China, while many human rights lawyers have been intimidated, harassed and followed by agents. They say authorities, wary that their criticisms of the government could lead to social discontent and threaten the regime, are pulling out all the stops to silence them ahead of [the twice-in-decade event](#), set to start on Sunday.

Xi Jinping is expected to gain an unprecedented third term as a party leader at the congress, sparking the highest level of security to keep any potential disruption in check.

“Every morning, the police would call me to check my plan for the day. They order me not to go anywhere, see anyone or say anything to them,” said one lawyer who was disbarred and had his law firm closed for defending politically sensitive cases. “The message is clear: ‘We are watching your every move.’”



Visitors stand in front of a picture showing Chinese president Xi Jinping at a Beijing exhibition entitled Forging Ahead in the New Era, showing the Communist party's achievements. Photograph: Noel Celis/AFP/Getty Images

The lawyer, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals, said Chinese social media platforms block all his posts and even when he skirts the firewall to post on Twitter, local police summon him and issue warnings on posting politically sensitive content.

On Wednesday, lawyer Yu Wensheng, who has spent four years in jail, was barred from going out by security staff at his housing compound. He said police warned him against going to foreign embassies, talking to journalists, or posting on Twitter ahead of the congress. "I guess they're trying to scare us," he said, insisting he would not back down.

Another rights lawyer, Wang Quanzhang, who was jailed on subversion charges for defending activists, said authorities had stepped up surveillance on his family in recent days. This week, more agents were deployed to watch and follow his family when they go out and police warned him against airing his opinions, he said. "I guess the surveillance will escalate in the next few days," he said.

Veteran lawyer Li Heping also received the same treatment. His wife, Wang Qiaoling, said that since mid-September, plainclothes policemen had been guarding their housing compound and police cars follow them whenever they go out. “It is an intimidation strategy to frighten us,” she said. Lawyer Xie Yanyi said security cameras around his home had all been upgraded in recent days while police cars guard his compound. Lawyer Jiang Tianyong remains under tight surveillance in his home town in rural Henan with little means of communication with the outside world.

Prominent writer Gao Yu who is in fragile health, cannot be reached. Veteran activist Hu Ju said on his WeChat account on Thursday that he has been forced to leave Beijing for around 10 days and fears that the stringent Covid measures may delay his return to tend to his sick mother.

A number of petitioners across [China](#) who had planned to bring their grievances to Beijing have been forcibly taken from their homes and detained. Police detained many staying near Beijing and forcibly sent them back to their home towns for detention. One petitioner told Radio Free Asia that police set up checkpoints at railway stations and on roads to block them from entering Beijing. Once found, they would be sent back to their home towns, where they would be detained.



Military personnel stand guard near Tiananmen Square in Beijing as China prepares for the 20th party congress. Photograph: Mark R Cristino/EPA

Minsheng Guancha (or Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch), a website that [reports human rights violations](#) in China, has documented dozens of cases of activists and petitioners being confined to their homes, forcibly repatriated and detained ahead of the party congress. Many have been detained for up to 15 days on the vaguely defined charge of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”.

The Chinese authorities have long used blanket charges such as “provoking trouble” to target those seen as a thorn in the side of the government.

Just two weeks before the congress, the Ministry of Public Security announced that its “100-day” crime busting operation, which started in June, had resulted in 1.43 million people being arrested.

The head of the operation, Qiu Baoli, said the campaign, implemented with a “heavy fist”, laid a “solid foundation” for safeguarding the political meeting.

Observers say the crackdown on dissidents and activists would have fallen under this campaign because they are often accused of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” for protesting.

But even such an extensive operation did not manage to completely eliminate voices of dissent. On Thursday, a rare protest in Beijing against the Communist party and its policies stoked political tensions just three days before the congress which will re-anoint Xi as the party leader for the next decade.



Protest banners reportedly seen on the Sitong Bridge overpass in Beijing on 13 October in an image shared on social media.

Photograph: Twitter

Photos and videos emerged on social media show two banners hanging from an overpass of a major thoroughfare in the northwest corner of the Chinese capital. Plumes of smoke could be seen billowing from the bridge. “We want food, not PCR tests. We want freedom, not lockdowns. We want respect, not lies. We want reform, not a cultural revolution. We want a vote, not a leader. We want to be citizens, not slaves,” reads one. A second banner called for a boycott of schools and strikes and the removal of Xi.

Although images and keywords related to the protest were censored by internet police, many people made oblique remarks referring to the incident on Chinese social media platforms. “It is strange when the word ‘brave’ has become a sensitive keyword,” said one on WeChat. On Twitter, which is inaccessible from China unless one skirts the firewall, the images and videos went viral and drew a large amount of supportive comments. It appeared to have also energised the exiled Chinese dissident community, with some holding an online seminar analysing the significance of the protest .

Meanwhile, internet censors have also pulled out all the stops to police cyberspace, barring many politically sensitive words and phrases, including nicknames of Xi, descriptions of the stormy weather, and even the bear head emoji – as Xi has been compared to the cartoon character Winnie the Pooh – according to Radio Free Asia.

Local authorities have been under extreme pressure to ensure a stable and positive environment in China for the meeting, but have been challenged by [widespread outbreaks and growing frustration](#) with the zero-Covid measures. Across China, some people who left Beijing for the Golden Week holiday have reported they have been blocked from returning.

Alerts sent by the mandatory healthcode app informed users they “may have a time and space relationship with the epidemic risk” and must delay their return until risks were ruled out or they had spent seven days in a “low risk” area. About 90% of the country is currently designated medium or high risk, according to China’s government.

Even the air is controlled. On Friday, Hebei province’s iron and steel industry was ordered to halve its output for a week. No reason was given for the order, but China’s government has often limited polluting industries around the time of major events to ensure clear blue skies.

Additional reporting by Helen Davidson

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/14/dissidents-in-china-detained-and-harassed-as-beijing-prepares-for-party-congress>

New Zealand

New Zealand pet shelters are being swamped with axolotls. Are Minecraft and TikTok to blame?

Thousands of the smiling amphibians have been handed in, as some owners of the hot new pet are overwhelmed by unexpected arrivals



An axolotl boom is seeing thousands of unwanted or poorly cared for amphibians accumulating at New Zealand's pet rescues. Photograph: Paul Starosta/Getty Images

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Thu 13 Oct 2022 23.38 EDTLast modified on Sat 15 Oct 2022 19.15 EDT

An axolotl boom is seeing thousands of the smiling amphibians accumulating at New Zealand's pet shelters, with some blaming their newfound popularity on Minecraft, TikTok and other online games.

Amelia Seales, who runs an amphibian, reptile and animal rescue in Dunedin, said she now had 2,000 axolotls in her care, after 600 of the creatures had arrived last week. “So if anyone is looking for an axolotl, feel free to send them my way,” she said.

Seales said some inexperienced owners were failing to desex their pets or accidentally placing breeding pairs together in tanks. The amorous amphibians ended up “having accidental clutches and [owners are] not knowing what to do with the eggs ... then ending up with literally thousands of them and not being able to find them a home,” she said.

“They can produce a huge number of eggs,” said SPCA science officer Alison Vaughan. “That situation can very quickly get out of control.”

Axolotls are considered [critically endangered in the wild](#), but are widely bred in captivity. Their growth has been driven partly by their popularity online, where their little faces, set in a constant grin, are well suited to memes and shareable videos.

The creatures have been a hit on [TikTok](#), where their hashtag has accumulated 2.6bn views.

Axie Infinity, an online game where players battle cartoon axolotls, peaked at about 2.7m users in November last year. Perhaps the greatest contributor to the axolotl renaissance, however, might be Minecraft, the [enormously popular](#) children’s world-building game, where the amphibians were introduced as a companion creature in 2021.

Google trend reports indicate that searches for axolotl peaked when Minecraft introduced them in July 2021, but have remained elevated since. Internationally, [outlets began reporting last year](#) that axolotls had become a hot new pet for Minecraft-playing children.

But animal care experts say some owners are naive about the commitment involved. Dr Helen Beattie of Veterinarians for Animal Welfare said she’d had concerns since last year, when she said increasing numbers of children began asking their parents for pet axolotls.

“Right at the time that [Minecraft](#) introduced the capability of spawning said axolotls in the program – there were concerns at that point about the demands kids were then making to their parents around getting the real deal,” she said. “They’re not easy pets ... They’ve got really specific needs.”

Danni Mokomoko, who runs [Wellington Amphibian and Reptile Rescue](#), said the rescue received 25 axolotls arrive last week. He thought their increasing popularity was possibly linked to Minecraft.

Mokomoko said that many people didn’t understand the effort required to keep an axolotl – the rescue had had “hundreds of people enquire” about adopting over the past two weeks, but most evaporated when they were told about the equipment and treatment required to keep an axolotl healthy and happy.

Seales was sceptical that Minecraft alone could account for high axolotl numbers, saying she blamed the growth more on irresponsible breeding. She also said they made excellent pets – as long as families were prepared and did proper research around tanks, food, and care. For those considering taking one on, the translucent creatures are not a short-term experiment – they can live for up to 25 years.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/14/new-zealand-pet-shelters-are-being-swamped-with-axolotls-are-minecraft-and-tiktok-to-blame>

Global development

EU border agency accused of serious rights violations in leaked report

Classified document alleges Frontex involvement in cover-ups and illegal pushbacks of asylum seekers from Greece and Malta



Officers of Frontex, the EU's Border and Coast Guard Agency, on the Greek island of Kos. Those pictured are not implicated in any of the allegations. Photograph: Aris Messinis/AFP/Getty Images

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[Katy Fallon](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 01.45 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 08.50 EDT

A classified EU report on Frontex, the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency, details serious allegations of cover ups of human rights violations in EU member states by the agency and its staff.

The report, more than 120 pages long, is the result of a months-long investigation and a score of witness interviews by Olaf, the EU anti-fraud agency. The findings, in part, led to the dramatic [resignation of Frontex executive director, Fabrice Leggeri](#), in April this year. Until now the classified document has been available only to members of the European parliament under strict conditions. German freedom of information specialists Frag Den Staat, Lighthouse Reports and Der Spiegel, to whom the report was leaked, [have now published the document in full](#), citing reasons of public interest particularly for the European taxpayer, whose taxes help to fund the agency.

The Guardian was given access before the report's online publication. It details a series of concerns about how Frontex staff or assets (such as aerial surveillance vehicles) witnessed or concealed knowledge of pushbacks of

asylum seekers from Greek territory during Leggeri's tenure. The document also describes how Frontex staff expressed concern about "repercussions" from local authorities for reporting violations.



Frontex deputy executive director Aija Kalnaja. Photograph: Martin Divišek/EPA

The EU's [best-funded agency, with a budget of €754m](#) (£650m) has been under scrutiny since Leggeri's resignation in April, and there have been calls for it to withdraw from operations in Greece due to reports of human rights violations at its borders, including illegal pushbacks of asylum seekers. Athens strenuously denies such practices and maintains it strictly adheres to international law. Frontex, which has a new interim leader, Aija Kalnaja, issued a statement last week reiterating that its "actions in the Aegean Sea region had been carried out in compliance with the applicable legal framework". The agency has suggested an [increased Frontex presence](#) in Greece would be the solution to concerns of rights violations.

The report is peppered with snippets of private WhatsApp messages and interviews revealing internal discussions and worries about how to report sightings of alleged pushbacks in [Greece](#). One exchange between staff regarding an incident where a Frontex surveillance craft sighted a migrant boat being towed back to Turkish waters by the Greek coastguard in April

2020, discusses how long they can wait to launch a serious incident report into it. “Don’t think we can wait much longer”, one message reads, “We also have to think about our reputation once it gets fully investigated.” The incident was finally reported, but not with a serious enough label to merit a full investigation. One person interviewed said, “it appeared ... that the agency was clearly trying to cover the Greek authorities”.

The report testifies to the credibility of many of the pushback allegations investigated and reveals internal fractures. One staff member said the agency’s [fundamental rights team](#), who monitor the agency’s obligations in accordance with EU and international law, were “not real Frontex colleagues”, while another suggested that a fundamental rights officer attempting to investigate allegations was bringing a “Khmer Rouge” style regime of terror to the agency.

Allegations concerning Greece make up a significant part of the investigation, but mention is also made of a serious incident of four migrant boats spotted in the Maltese search and rescue zone between 10 and 12 April 2020. It was concluded likely that one boat was “probably towed” to Italy by Maltese authorities, while others were pushed back to Libya by a fishing vessel registered in Libya but based in [Malta](#). The report says this incident was also wrongly classified to circumvent a full investigation into the alleged violation.



The Turkish Coast Guard rescues migrants allegedly illegally pushed back into Turkish territorial waters by Greek forces off the coast of Mugla, Turkiye, on 3 September 2022. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Under its own regulations, “serious and persistent violations of fundamental rights”, would require a termination of Frontex operations. Responding to initial media reports about the findings of the EU anti-fraud investigation in July, Frontex said that it “strongly believes” the agency should strengthen its presence in Greece, which operates in a “very complex geopolitical environment”.

Others disagree. “We are looking at 43,000 toddlers, women and men who were kidnapped by European agents from safety in EU territory and abandoned at sea by Frontex and Greece in 2.5 years, with the full support of the commission and all member states,” said Omer Shatz and Iftach Cohen from Front-Lex, who are taking the agency to court in response to the allegations and report. “Our case requests the court to order Frontex to comply with EU law, terminate this operation and stop this despicable madness,” they said.

Frontex said it took the report seriously but that practices depicted in it were ones of the past. The agency said it had taken measures to address

shortcomings and make changes for the better, adding they had developed a plan with Greek authorities to “right the wrongs of the past and present”.

Greek and Maltese authorities were approached for comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/14/eu-border-agency-frontex-human-rights-violations-report>

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Dismay as key cholera vaccine is discontinued

Exclusive: halt to production of Shanchol vaccine alarms WHO amid ‘unprecedented’ global outbreaks



Production of Sanchol vaccine will stop this year. The WHO linked outbreaks in Haiti, Syria, Nigeria, Malawi and Lebanon to climate change, driven by both too much and too little water. Photograph: Mohammad Ponir Hossain/Reuters

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 07.21 EDT

The manufacturer of one of only two cholera vaccines for use in humanitarian emergencies is to halt production at the end of this year, just as the world faces an “unprecedented” series of deadly outbreaks, the Guardian has learned.

Shantha Biotechnics, a wholly owned Indian subsidiary of the French pharmaceutical company Sanofi, will stop production of its Shanchol vaccine within months and cease supply by the end of 2023, causing alarm among health officials.

Philippe Barboza, the World [Health](#) Organization’s team lead for cholera, said Shantha’s move to halt production had come despite repeated appeals from the WHO’s director general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

“To say the least, it’s a very disappointing strategy,” Barboza said.

Shanchol is one of only two oral cholera vaccines suitable for use in a [global emergency stockpile](#) used to supply countries battling outbreaks as well as

for preventive vaccination campaigns. This year it made up about 15% of the stockpile's doses.

Although easily treatable, cholera is estimated by the WHO to kill [up to 143,000 people](#) annually in the world's poorest countries, where access to clean water and basic sanitation remains patchy. Countries including Haiti, Syria, Lebanon, Nigeria, Malawi and Ethiopia are fighting outbreaks now.



A woman brings her child to a cholera clinic run by MSF in the Cité Soleil slum of Port-au-Prince last week. Haiti has had its first cases of cholera in three years, with 16 people dead so far. Photograph: Richard Pierrin/AFP/Getty

A spokesperson for Sanofi said the decision to stop producing the vaccine had been taken in October 2020 and that, as “a responsible partner”, it had “informed global health organisations and cholera stakeholders three years before supply discontinuation”.

The spokesperson said: “We took this decision in a context where we were already producing very small volumes versus the total demand for cholera vaccines and in the knowledge that other cholera vaccine manufacturers (current and new entrants) had already announced an increased supply capacity in the years to come.

“The production of Shanchol will stop at the end of this year. Supply will be discontinued next year. Additionally, in the interests of the global cholera programme we entered into an agreement with our public health partners to complete a transfer of knowledge related to the manufacture of Shanchol.”

Last week Tedros warned that the climate crisis [had “turbocharged”](#) the spread of cholera, with extreme weather events such as floods, cyclones and droughts further reducing people’s access to clean water.

Of particular concern, he said, was the average fatality rate from the disease, which this year, according to the WHO’s data, was almost three times the rate of the past five years.

“With an increasing number of outbreaks, supply [of vaccine] cannot keep up with demand,” Tedros warned. “We urge the world’s leading vaccine manufacturers to talk to us about how we can increase production.”

For a disease driven both by an excess and a scarcity of water, climate change had this year exacerbated all the usual causes of cholera, Barboza added. “What is, I would say, unprecedented is the concurrence and succession of massive outbreaks in different parts of the world,” he said.

The increased fatality rate was also “extremely concerning”, he added, particularly as cholera was relatively simple to treat with oral or intravenous hydration and antibiotics.

“In 2022, people should not die of cholera,” Barboza said. “You don’t need a respirator or anything very complicated, but people are dying just because they don’t have access to healthcare. And this is not acceptable.”

While two doses of the oral cholera vaccine only give immunity for around three years in adults, they have come to be seen by health officials as an important tool. Although the long-term solution to cholera remains ensuring access to clean water and good sanitation, “the vaccine is the gamechanger because it allows countries to buy time to implement the rest,” Barboza said.



A mother holds her child, diagnosed with cholera, in a hospital in Deir ez-Zor, Syria, last month. The UN linked the outbreak to unsafe drinking and irrigation water from the Euphrates River. Photograph: Baderkhan Ahmad/AP

He is urging other manufacturers to step forward to help boost supply. EuBiologics, the South Korean makers of the other oral cholera vaccine, [Euvichol](#), were “doing their best” to increase capacity, he said, adding: “But, as you can understand, relying only on one manufacturer is extremely dangerous.”

[In Malawi](#), the disease has killed [110 people and infected nearly 4,000](#) since March when the first case was reported, according to Khumbize Chiponda, Malawi’s health minister.

[In Syria](#), where cholera was detected in late August, it has torn through the country, with more than 13,000 suspected cases reported, including 60 deaths. Probably as a result of that outbreak, neighbouring Lebanon has also recorded its [first cases since 1993](#).

Earlier this month, authorities in Haiti reported the [first new cases in three years](#): by 8 October there were more than 220 suspected cases in the Port-au-Prince area, including 16 deaths. Barboza said that if swift and concerted

action were not taken, a repeat of the [2010 disaster, when nearly 10,000 people died](#), would be on the cards.

A spokesperson for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which funds the international stockpile, said the organisation was committed to supporting countries' efforts to control cholera. "The global stockpile of cholera vaccine, which Gavi has supported since 2014, is designed to be responsive to countries' immediate needs in controlling outbreaks," they added.

"The stockpile maintains a level of 5m doses, and for most of this year the available volume has exceeded this target. This is the case currently and should doses be called upon for current outbreaks, stocks can be replenished rapidly, with manufacturers responding to increased demand by maximising production when necessary."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/14/who-dismay-key-oral-cholera-vaccine-shanchol-discontinued-amid-unprecedented-global-outbreaks>

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- [Benefits Truss must raise payments in line with inflation, Javid says](#)
- [Economy Kwasi Kwarteng to launch debt-cutting plan on 31 October](#)
- [Live Business: UK to publish fiscal plan and OBR forecasts on 31 October](#)

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Conor Burns suggests Liz Truss should not have sacked him before groping claim investigated – as it happened

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Benefits

Truss must raise benefits in line with inflation, Javid says

Former Tory chancellor also calls on Kwasi Kwarteng to speed up release of OBR forecasts



Sajid Javid and Liz Truss pictured in July last year. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[Peter Walker](#) *Political correspondent*

[@peterwalker99](#)

Mon 10 Oct 2022 04.28 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 04.56 EDT

Liz Truss must increase benefits in line with inflation rather than earnings, the former chancellor [Sajid Javid](#) has said, as the prime minister faces increasing Conservative pressure to relent over the issue.

Victoria Prentis, the work and pensions minister, insisted no decision had been made, while seeming to hint she would prefer the more generous

settlement.

Asked about how to help people on benefits while inflation is close to 10%, almost double that of the growth in earnings, Prentis told Sky News on Monday: “It’s really important that we make sure that we target the government resources at the most vulnerable.”

Javid’s intervention came a day before the Commons resumes, with the prime minister reportedly ready to launch a charm offensive to improve relations with her MPs following a notably fractious first few weeks in office and a turbulent Conservative conference.

Truss is [expected to potentially bow](#) to pressure for the inflation-based increase in benefits, with new research saying the real-terms reduction from an earnings-based rise could push an extra 450,000 people into poverty.

Interviewed by BBC Radio 4’s Today programme on Monday, primarily to [talk about mental health](#) and the suicide in 2018 of his older brother, Tariq, Javid was asked whether he believed benefits should rise according to the inflation rate.

“People are going through incredibly challenging times,” Javid said. “We can all see that in our communities. So I personally believe that benefits must stay in line with inflation. The government is reviewing its decision, but I hope that decision is a clear one, so the upgrade is with inflation.”

Javid, who was the chancellor as well as the health secretary at different times under Boris Johnson, having previously been the home secretary under Theresa May, also strongly indicated he believed Kwasi Kwarteng, Truss’s chancellor, should speed up the release of forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility about the impact of the recent tax-cutting mini-budget, scheduled for 23 November.

“It’s right that the chancellor has said that there’s going to be this OBR report,” Javid said. “It’s right that he’s committed for this report to show debt falling as a proportion of GDP. It’s important we maintain fiscal rules, as he said.

“But I would definitely encourage him to publish it as soon as he can. The sooner the better, as far as the markets are concerned.”

While saying he backed Truss’s overall plan to grow the economy, Javid said he hoped “lessons have been learned over the past few weeks” in which the government made a series of U-turns, such as the decision to reverse a plan to abolish the top 45p rate of tax.

He said: “We’ve obviously taken some blows. It’s been a very challenging time. But what we have also seen is that the government has listened, Liz Truss has listened. We saw that with the 45p rate.”

Speaking earlier on Sky, Prentis said the decision on benefits would happen next month, Chloe Smith, the work and pensions secretary, Chloe Smith, needing to consider next week’s data on inflation and earnings.

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“She can’t do anything until those figures have come and she will then consider how to, if at all, uprate benefits and what figure to choose,” Prentis said. “She has a very wide discretion to do that. We make a decision and we communicate it, usually by the end of November.

“It’s obviously a really worrying time for people on benefits because they know that inflation is rising. And they want us to make this decision as soon as we possibly can so that they have the security of knowing how their benefits will be next year.”

In another apparent sign of Truss seeking to reach out to more parts of the Tory party, it was announced on Sunday night that Greg Hands, a strong supporter of her rival in the party leadership race, Rishi Sunak, has returned to his old job as an international trade minister.

Hands was among a mass of Sunak backers to be sacked from government when Truss took over, appointing ministers almost entirely from her loyalists. But he has replaced [Conor Burns, who was dismissed last week](#) following allegations of inappropriate behaviour at the party conference.

The move was welcomed by Grant Shapps, another former minister who has emerged as a leading Tory voice opposing Truss. He [said in a tweet](#) that it was a “great appointment”.

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[Economic policy](#)

Kwasi Kwarteng to launch debt-cutting plan on 31 October

Chancellor will also bring forward publication of OBR forecasts after pressure from MPs

[Live coverage: UK to publish fiscal plan on 31 October](#)



Kwasi Kwarteng promised more than £40bn of unfunded tax giveaways largely directed at middle and high earners last month. Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

[Richard Partington](#) *Economics correspondent*

[@RJPartington](#)

Mon 10 Oct 2022 05.20 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 08.08 EDT

Kwasi Kwarteng has brought forward the date of his debt-cutting plan to 31 October after pressure from MPs over the unfunded tax and spending promises announced in last month's mini-budget.

The chancellor told the Commons Treasury committee that he would use the new date to announce his “medium-term fiscal plan”, alongside the release of fresh forecasts for the economy and public finances from the [Office for Budget Responsibility](#) (OBR).

The decision to rush forward the announcement to Halloween leaves the chancellor with three weeks to find ways to balance the books after promising more than £40bn of unfunded tax giveaways last month.

Kwarteng had planned an update on 23 November alongside the release of OBR forecasts in an attempt to quell [turmoil in financial markets](#) and a rebellion among backbench Conservative MPs after he sidelined the Treasury watchdog for last month’s mini-budget.

It comes amid heightened tension at the heart of government over Liz Truss’s plans to balance the books after the mini-budget. The prime minister has faced the threat of another rebellion over a potential sub-inflation increase for benefits, after being forced into a U-turn over plans to abolish the 45p rate of income tax for Britain’s highest earners.

Kwarteng’s move to bring forward a second set-piece in as many months comes after the pound crashed to the lowest level to date against the dollar and UK government borrowing costs soared in the wake of his [tax-cutting plans](#).

The chancellor has faced calls to publish OBR forecasts at the earliest possible opportunity to show commitment to sustainable finances, although he had previously hoped to hold out until late November.

In a letter to the Treasury committee chair, Mel Stride, Kwarteng said he hoped the “short extra delay” in the release of OBR forecasts would be acceptable.

“It will allow for a full forecast process to take place to a standard that satisfies the legal requirements of the charter for budget responsibility enacted by parliament and that also provides an in-depth assessment of the

economy and public finances. And it will provide time for the medium-term fiscal plan to be finalised,” he said.

The government is widely expected to push for reductions in public sector spending to help balance the books while prioritising tax cuts Truss says are vital for growing the economy. The government has set a 2.5% growth rate target for GDP, arguing that stronger growth could help to cover the cost of tax cuts while funding public services.

However, City economists have warned the plans to shield families from soaring energy bills and prioritise tax cuts for higher earners are unlikely to have a significant impact on growth, and could risk fuelling persistently high inflation.

Analysts have said the Bank of England could be forced to drastically increase interest rates to mop up the inflationary burst, as well as offset the impact from the fall in the pound after the mini-budget. Weakness in sterling can add to inflation by driving up the cost of imported goods.

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Bringing forward the date of the chancellor’s fiscal event will, however, help to inform the central bank’s next decision on interest rates, due on 3 November.

It comes as Kwarteng scrambles to find ways to fill a black hole in the government finances left by his unfunded tax promises and a wider deterioration in economic activity amid high levels of inflation caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Charlie Bean, a former member of the OBR, and an ex-Bank of England deputy governor, told the Guardian last week that the chancellor would face [a shortfall of between £60bn and £70bn](#) to meet the government's ambition to reduce debt as a percentage of GDP over the next three years.

Kwarteng could push back the target date for a fall in the national debt as a share of the economy to five years, which would provide more breathing room, and is likely to argue that his plans should help to spur faster economic growth.

Bean said there were three options for the chancellor to balance the books: further [U-turns on his tax-cutting plans](#); deep [cuts to public spending](#); or risking the ire of [already rattled financial markets](#) by adding to the national debt.

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[Business live](#)**Business**

Fitch predicts deeper UK recession; mortgage rates climb – as it happened

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UK cost of living crisis

‘We want to get on with what we love’: what union activists are fighting for

A train cleaner, a 999 call handler and a museum guide say they are tired of feeling unvalued and being left behind financially



Unison member Trevor Chalkley works at the National Mining Museum for England in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian



[Heather Stewart](#)

Mon 10 Oct 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 05.26 EDT

An autumn wave of strike action is sweeping across the UK, embracing industries and sectors long untouched by industrial strife, as workers struggle to make ends meet in the face of double-digit inflation.

Here, we speak to three trade union activists on the frontline of the cost of living crisis about why they got involved, and what they are fighting for.

Bella Fashola



Bella Fashola is determined to get train cleaning work taken back in-house.
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

“You are never going to win the fight overnight. But we’re going to give it all we’ve got because we have no other option. It’s as simple as that,” says 26-year-old train cleaner Bella Fashola.

Employed by facilities management company Churchill, she works on Govia Thameslink trains, from Hastings station in East Sussex.

As an RMT rep, Fashola has been helping to organise colleagues to fight for a £15 an hour wage, sick pay and help with travel costs. They took strike action earlier this year and are now preparing to ballot for a fresh round of stoppages – and coordinating with cleaners from other outsourcing firms.

“We’re currently on the real living wage, if you can call it that, which is £9.90. We still have no company sick pay, and obviously Covid hasn’t just disappeared into thin air,” she says.

Fashola describes having “roughly eight minutes” to clean a train – removing rubbish from seats and on the floor, cleaning the tables, emptying the bins, and cleaning the toilets. “It’s kind of like you’re set up to fail really, aren’t you?” she says.

“You can’t take pride, because you feel like you come into work and you’re just completely beaten down. You’ve been battered from pillar to post with the cost of living going up.” She blames the business model of outsourcing, arguing that it encourages undercutting. “We will fight to the bitter end until they put us back in-house,” she says.

Fashola decided to become actively involved in the union after the Covid pandemic, when her mother was diagnosed with cancer and she ended up taking unpaid leave to care for her.

“When I came back, I was like, we need to sort this out. We need to get this organised. And we will need to fight back. Because surely people can still remember what a vital role all cleaners in all sectors played during the pandemic?”

Recruiting her colleagues to the cause has meant bringing together such a diverse group, some fellow trade unionists have called it the “United Nations strike”. “We’ve got about 40 different nationalities on the Churchill contracts alone,” she says.

Joyce Stevenson



Joyce Stevenson says a lot of her members don't get paid break time, despite working 37-and-a half-hour weeks. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

“I've been employed by [BT](#) for 44 years, all of which time has been dealing with 999 calls – so it's not a decision that anybody would take lightly but the responsibility for where we are has to lie with the company.”

Joyce Stevenson, 63, was among the emergency call handlers employed by BT who joined in strikes this week. They had been excluded from previous industrial action; but the Communication Workers Union (CWU) leadership decided this time they would join the picket lines.

Stevenson says the job, which involves fielding emergency calls and passing them on to the relevant service, can sometimes be intensely stressful. “For example, my members had to deal with Grenfell. Because we couldn't get calls through to the fire authorities, we had to keep speaking to these people, many of whom would not have made it out of the building alive. That's not something that happens every day, but it is something that happens,” she says.

She says her colleagues accepted that the depths of the pandemic was not the time for a pay rise, but decided to take action when BT opted to impose an across-the-board £1,500 increase earlier this year.

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It's not a decision that anybody would take lightly

Joyce Stevenson

“A lot of our members are only being paid £21,500 for working 37-and-a-half hours; and they don’t get any paid breaks, so all their breaks are over and above that,” she says.

“Some of the call centres have got food banks, and it’s food banks for the staff – with a notice up, saying: ‘If you feel like you’ve run out of money at the end of the month, come and get a few bits.’”

“From the day that I started, I loved my job: loved answering the calls, loved everything about it. I really did – but it really is soul-destroying now, when you see what’s happening,” Stevenson says.

“We all got a kind of pin badge during the pandemic, and on it it said: 999 Heroes. And at the time you thought, I’m really doing my bit; but that was on the basis that you thought: well, when we come out of the pandemic, we’ll be treated with respect. But it’s just not happened.”

Trevor Chalkley



Museum guide Trevor Chalkley, a former coalminer, says he hasn’t had a significant pay rise for years. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The

Guardian

“We don’t want to go out on strike. We don’t want to have picket lines. We don’t want to fall out with people. We just want to get on with what we love,” says 67-year-old Trevor Chalkley, a guide at the National Coal Mining Museum for England in Wakefield.

Chalkley, who leads visitors underground to give them a taste of life at the coalface, was a miner himself for 43 years. “Generally, we all absolutely love the work we do, especially preserving the mining heritage,” he says.

Yet staff at the museum have just voted in favour of industrial action, after they were offered a 4.2% pay rise earlier this year – a deal that was rejected by Unison members “quite overwhelmingly”.

“I suppose like many people in our type of work, over a number of years we’ve not really had any significant wage rises, or anything that’s matched inflation,” he says, adding that this year has presented “several financial challenges”.

Predictions of sharply rising energy prices and double-digit inflation “really spooked people”, he says.

With the full-time wage at £18,000, those who can afford it have been forced to dip into their savings, he explains. “Nobody can keep doing that, can they? So it’s changed the mindset of people.”

With his Unison colleagues, Chalkley has been arguing for a more generous deal and for the museum to “share the pot out” instead of offering a percentage increase, with the aim of helping lower-paid workers.

Even before they have set the date for any walkout, there are signs the staff’s defiance may have borne fruit. “The museum has now indicated that they will make a revised offer, which we will be considering,” Chalkley says. “I wouldn’t say there was light at the end of the tunnel, but at least we’re talking.”

Asked whether he took part in the miners' strike of 1984-85, he says mildly: "I was involved in the strikes in the 70s. I was in a different position in 1984.

"It's amazing really: everybody when you talk about the miners, the first thing they say is, oh, 1984, the strike – but it was one year out of 200 years of mining."

This article was amended on 13 October 2022. The National Coal Mining Museum for England is not "part of the Science Museum group" as an earlier version said, although it does receive its core funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport through the group. The reference has been removed.

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iPhone

iPhone 14 review: familiar design but now easier to repair

Same performance and battery of predecessors with better camera and significant changes on the inside



The iPhone 14 is essentially an iPhone 13 with slightly better cameras and a totally redesigned interior. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian



[Samuel Gibbs](#) *Consumer technology editor*

Mon 10 Oct 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 02.01 EDT

On the surface, the [iPhone](#) 14 looks like a very minor upgrade. But a redesigned inside makes it easier and cheaper to repair, marking a major shift in the right direction for Apple.

Weak currency rates against the dollar mean the new iPhone is £70 (A\$50) more expensive than its predecessor, priced at £849 (A\$1,399) despite costing the same \$799 in the US. It is an unfortunately familiar story for all of Apple's current products, and likely others to be released this year.

On the outside the iPhone 14 is basically [the same as its predecessor](#) with a 6.1-inch standard 60Hz OLED screen, aluminium sides and a glass back. It even has the same A15 chip as used in the [13 Pro models last year](#), and the same long battery life of about 44 to 48 hours between charges. Use it sparingly and you'll get about two days between charges.



The glass back can now be replaced much more easily if smashed, making it quicker and cheaper to repair. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The biggest changes are hidden from view. Previously, the back glass panel was essentially glued to the frame, making its replacement when smashed a painstaking process requiring full disassembly of the device from the front. Now the iPhone 14 has a new mid-frame design that allows it to be [opened from both front and back](#). It's not quite the modular, user-repairable dream demonstrated by [the Fairphone](#), but it is a big step in the right direction for Apple.

For the user, that means better heat dissipation so you can game for longer. But for repairs it means you can replace the back glass as easily as you can the screen, which is a significant improvement for the longevity of the device. The result is that back glass repairs cost £169, down from £300-plus from Apple. Third parties are likely to charge less again.

[Like the iPhone 14 Pro](#), the new phone ships without a sim card tray in the US, relying [entirely on digital eSims](#), but continues to have the sim tray outside the US, including the UK. [Emergency satellite SOS](#) is rolling out in November, but only to phones sold in the US or Canada.

Specifications

- **Screen:** 6.1in Super Retina XDR (OLED) (460ppi)
- **Processor:** Apple A15 Bionic
- **RAM:** 6GB
- **Storage:** 128, 256 or 512GB
- **Operating system:** [iOS](#) 16
- **Camera:** dual 12MP rear with OIS, 12MP front-facing camera
- **Connectivity:** 5G, wifi 6, NFC, Bluetooth 5.3, Lightning, UWB and GNSS
- **Water resistance:** IP68 (6 metres for 30 mins)
- **Dimensions:** 146.7 x 71.5 x 7.8mm
- **Weight:** 172g



The phone takes 110 minutes to fully charge, hitting 50% in 25 minutes using the included Lightning cable and a 20W USB-C power adaptor (not included). It also supports 15W wireless charging. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Sustainability

Apple does not provide an expected lifespan for the battery but it should last in excess of 500 full charge cycles with at least 80% of its original capacity and can be [replaced for £105](#). Out-of-warranty [screen repairs cost £289](#), while back glass repairs cost £169. Repair specialists iFixit awarded the phone seven out of 10 for repairability, [praising the new internal design](#).

The 14 contains recycled gold, plastic, rare earth elements, tin and tungsten. The company breaks down the [phone's environmental impact](#) in its report. Apple offers trade-in and free recycling schemes, including for non-Apple products.

iOS 16



The dual-camera array on the back of the iPhone 14 is slightly larger than its predecessor meaning old cases won't fit the new phone. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The 14 [ships with iOS 16](#), which is a more playful version of Apple's software and has a revamped lock screen among many other new features. You can expect at least five years of software and security updates and potentially as many as seven.

New for the iPhone 14 line is car-crash detection, which senses the high impact force of a traffic collision and automatically calls the emergency services if you do not respond within 20 seconds.

Camera



The camera app is one of the easiest to use with new features such as photographic styles, action camera and improved portrait modes accessed via a swipe. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The 14 has the same familiar dual-camera setup on the back without an optical zoom, as with previous non-Pro iPhones. But the main 12MP camera sensor is physically bigger than its predecessor, boosting low-light performance by up to 49%. Shots taken in middling- to low-light conditions, such as indoors, are significantly sharper than before and the dedicated night mode is required less frequently.

The ultra-wide camera has better low light performance thanks to improved software processing but remains otherwise unchanged. The two combined are reliably good cameras, but the lack of an optical zoom is disappointing compared to rivals.

The selfie camera has been improved for the first time in many years on the iPhone, now with twice as good low-light performance, autofocus and a sharper lens. Pictures are crisper with better detail, particularly in low light or unsteady conditions, as is the case for most selfies.

Video capture remains class leading. A new action mode stabilisation system works wonders in bright light, but struggles with anything else.

Overall the 14's cameras are good, but lack range for the price.

Price

The iPhone 14 costs from [£849](#) ([\\$799](#)/[A\\$1,399](#)) with 128GB of storage.

For comparison, the iPhone 14 Plus costs [£949](#), the [iPhone 14 Pro](#) costs [£1,099](#), the [Samsung Galaxy S22+](#) costs [£949](#), the [Galaxy Z Flip 4](#) costs [£999](#) and the [Google Pixel 6](#) costs [£599](#).

Verdict

At first glance the iPhone 14 is basically an iPhone 13 with slightly improved cameras. It has the same screen, chips, long battery life and design. But it hides a shift change for Apple with reconfigured guts that allow it to be repaired more easily and for less. It is a definite upgrade for longevity, even if it's not a whizz-bang feature, and hopefully something that's rolled out to the rest of Apple's smartphone line soon.

While it's certainly not worth upgrading from recent models, if you're looking to replace an older device coming to the end of its life, the iPhone 14 is a great, safe phone with all the elements that make iPhones some of the best on the market. The currency-driven price increase stings, but trade-in deals could help soften that blow.

Pros: easier and cheaper to repair, better cameras, water resistant, Face ID, long battery life, good performance, good screen, durable and easy to hold, long software support.

Cons: no USB-C, need your own charger, no telephoto camera, screen slower than competition and 14 Pro, price increase outside the US.



The 6.1in size of the iPhone 14 is still the best balance of a large enough screen and fairly compact body for carrying and use. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

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‘I can change the way Black women are seen’: Viola Davis on stereotypes, success and playing a warrior

[Ellen E Jones](#)



‘I’m not God. What I can do is what I can do’ ... Viola Davis. Photograph: Kirk McKoy/Contour RA

Raised in poverty, the actor has conquered Hollywood, winning an Oscar, an Emmy and two Tony awards. Now she has brought her passion project to the screen – *The Woman King*’s epic tale of an elite female fighting force



Mon 10 Oct 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 11 Oct 2022 07.21 EDT

Viola Davis is tired. I know because she has told me – “Let me just be honest, I’m *tired*,” she says at one point, with all the heartfelt emphasis of those Academy Award-winning eyes – but I also know because I’ve seen her latest film, and anyone would be tired after pulling that off. [The Woman King](#) is an 1820s-set, action-packed historical epic about the Agojie, the all-female warrior unit of the Kingdom of Dahomy, which once existed in what is now Benin. [Davis](#) gives a performance of phenomenal physical and emotional power as Agojie general Nanisca. Her co-stars include Star Wars’ [John Boyega](#) as King Ghezo, but while he spends most of the film peacocking around the palace, the women are out doing bloody battle. The fight choreography is thrilling, and the then 56-year-old Davis did nearly all her own stunts.

In preparation, Davis and her female castmates, [including erstwhile 007 Lashana Lynch](#) and Thuso Mbedu, the fast-rising star of [Barry Jenkins' The Underground Railroad](#), embarked on a rehearsal period like no other. "I mean, I'm a woman who works out, but not like five hours a day," says Davis. Today, she looks red-carpet-ready in a white pearlescent dress, with a full face of flawless makeup and hair piled high. Only her monogrammed hotel slippers suggest she is still in recuperation mode. "Me and Thuso would do choreography where we had to fight 15 or more men, on a day-to-day basis." The sprinting, weightlifting and martial arts continued even after they had flown out to the South African shoot location, then in 30C heat. "Trust me," Davis adds with a throaty chuckle, "by the time I got to the last stunt, I definitely celebrated with a glass of pinotage."

This eight-month warrior workout was only the most recent leg of The Woman King's seven-year struggle to the screen. "It's a fight," says Davis, who was also one of the film's producers through her company JuVee Productions. "I call it The Fight. It's a fight to find partners who have the same vision as you, who are able to give it a green light. And then the other fight, if it's a predominantly Black female cast, is that because we haven't led the global box office, there's no precedent that it will work and make the money back for the people who invest in it ... The bottom line is money. It's not about cultural impact – it's about money."

Davis says telling stories she wants to tell remains a struggle, even now. In 2016, she completed the coveted "triple crown of acting" (an Academy Award, an acting category Emmy and a Tony – or two, in Davis's case) by winning the best supporting actress Oscar for her role opposite Denzel Washington in the [1950s drama Fences](#). She is the first and, to date, only Black actor to do so. Only eight years earlier, she had sprung to mainstream notice with an eight-minute, single-scene, Oscar-nominated turn alongside Meryl Streep in the 2008 film [Doubt](#). And yet, she says: "I can't walk into every room and get any movie made. I actually feel pretty confident, but I can't do that."

But she is used to fighting for what she wants. In April, her bestselling memoir Finding Me revealed just how much she had to overcome in her youth.



Davis with Denzel Washington in *Fences* (2016), for which she won a best supporting actress Oscar. Photograph: Paramount Pictures/Allstar

Davis grew up the second-youngest of six children, amid abject poverty, racism, sexual abuse, domestic violence and alcoholism. Living in a rat-infested, condemned building, the sisters were too terrified to go to the toilet at night and all became chronic bed-wetters. When the pipes froze over, during the merciless Rhode Island winters, they had no way to clean themselves and had to go to school smelling of urine, only to face more bullying. Davis says she and all her sisters were subjected to sexual assaults by relatives, baby-sitters and the neighbourhood “dirty old men” while their parents were too caught up in their own struggle for survival to offer any protection. (She has since forgiven and reconciled with them both.)

She calls her four sisters “my platoon”, while their predominantly white home town was “a minefield ... where you were constantly trying to dodge little and big explosions that could level you”. No wonder she feels such a personal connection to *The Woman King*. “Here’s the thing: we’re sisters, the Agojie are sisters. That’s not the mentality of just hanging out, doing some shopping and having an Aperol spritz. It is a spirit of literally going into battle, and it’s for the love of each other that you’re fighting.” Nanisca is the kind of action role that might have been all high kicks and smart quips in other hands, but Davis imbues enough authentic emotion that she is

already being talked of as a contender for yet more awards. “I don’t see Nanisca as an action hero,” she says. “She is a woman who is a warrior.”

One of the movie’s most powerful moments comes from this understanding. It’s in a scene at the slave market, where Nanisca and her troops are meeting General Oba of the enemy Oyo Empire, for what he assumes is a payment of tribute. Instead, Nanisca ambushes him with an attempt to provoke a war, but just before that moment-of-no-return a fleeting expression of terror passes across her face. It is the physical demonstration of a line that Davis often quotes by the novelist Anne Lamott: “Courage is fear said with prayers.”

“Every time I approached Oba,” Davis says, “I was approaching the man who sexually assaulted me. I was not just approaching the enemy. Listen, the things that have taken the strongest human being down have been a traumatic memory that they could not fight through.”

I arrived in Hollywood having hopes and dreams for my career, but never quite having ownership or agency

Does she mean “me” in the method acting sense? Or is she drawing directly from her own experience? “I’m talking about Nanisca, but I talk about Viola in terms of facing my fears too, every single day ... Every woman who has been sexually assaulted knows *exactly* what I mean at that moment.”

These glimpses of the human beneath the genre trappings have become a [Viola Davis](#) speciality. In the six-season TV melodrama *How to Get Away With Murder*, it was the moment when Davis’s character, the law professor, adulteress and possible sociopath Annalise Keating, gets home after a long day of being fierce and fabulous, sits down and takes her wig off. In *Fences*, it’s the streaming tears and snot that Rose never wipes away as she finally offloads decades of disappointments on her husband.

Davis obviously has deep respect for acting’s therapeutic potential, but is more ambivalent about her formal training. She describes her four years at New York’s prestigious performing arts conservatory, Juilliard, as “Eurocentric ... I felt I came in with a wrong palette. I was too big. I was too

Black. My voice was too deep.” In the same breath, though, she credits Juilliard with funding her transformational first trip to Africa, back in the 90s.

It was in the Gambia, as she was watching a performance by the *kañeleng* – an association of childless women – that Davis says everything clicked into place. “They were just screaming, not even with any objective of singing beautifully. It was the objective of just making noise, so God can hear it.” In that moment she understood what it meant to make art, and what her own contribution might be: “If I don’t start with the palette of what is Viola, then I’m doing absolutely nothing. Whether or not it’s received by the masses, I cannot control. But I can control that.”



Davis’s performance in Steve McQueen’s *Widows* (2018) earned her a Bafta nomination. Photograph: Photo Credit: Courtesy Twentieth Century Fox/Film4/Allstar

Davis has had her own struggles with infertility, as she details in her memoir. When she was a single woman in her early 30s, an operation to remove fibroids on her womb left her with a small window in which to get pregnant. This led to an incident, now passed into Viola Davis lore, in which she manifested her future husband with a *kañeleng*-like directness. “God, you have not heard from me in a long time. I know you’re surprised. My

name is Viola Davis,” she remembers saying, before issuing, in prayer form, a dating wishlist that included “ex-athlete”, “someone real country” and someone who “had a wife before me and children already”, so there was no pressure to get pregnant. Three weeks later she met the actor and producer Julius Tennon, who was all of those things, and in 2011 they adopted their daughter, Genesis.

But back to the present. “I’m 57 years old,” Davis says, all that fatigue back in her voice. “I don’t have the same enthusiasm that I had at 28, or younger. When I saw [Cicely Tyson](#) for the first time, it was: ‘Wow, I can be Miss Tyson. I can be a great actress of the stage and cinema – people will just throw flowers at me!’” Her role in *Doubt*, alongside Meryl Streep, gave her a big lift, at the age of 42. “And I said: ‘Oh my God! I hit it!’ But that lasts for two seconds or less. Because with that comes disillusionment, with that comes exhaustion ... There is an emptiness that comes with fighting for success.” Davis says she now understands her work not only as a means to escape poverty, or attain a sense of self-worth, but as her small part of a larger struggle for justice. “At the same time, I have a true understanding of my limitations as a human being. I cannot carry the weight of the past on my shoulders. I can’t do that. I’m not God. What I can do is what I can do.”

For Davis, *The Fight* is also about kicking open that narrow on-screen box that women who look like her currently have to fit into. “What is *in my power* to change is to show people that we are more than the stamp that people have put on dark-skinned women. That we are sexual, that we are desirable, that we can be smart, that we are way more expansive and our identity is not determined by your gaze. I can change that. I can change the way Black women are seen, to some extent, within the industry.”

Davis knows something about that “box”, having earned her second of four Academy Award nominations for playing a maid – some said a modern-day [Mammy](#) – in 2011’s civil rights-era drama *The Help*. The supporting cast was filled with impressive Black actors, including Davis’s childhood hero Cicely Tyson and her friend Octavia Spencer, who won an Oscar for her role. The lead, though, was white actor Emma Stone, playing a well-meaning journalist who sets out to expose her town’s racism. Davis has since spoken of her regret over making the film, saying she felt she had “betrayed myself and my people”.

Now that *The Woman King* has finally arrived, it feels, says Davis, like “a culmination of my career over the last 33 years”. It is a film that could not have been made without her and represents her ascension to a whole new level. “I arrived in Hollywood having hopes and dreams for my career, but never quite having ownership or agency,” she says. “*The Woman King* has seemed like the ultimate gift and conduit to give me that agency.”

This is also a much-anticipated moment of “culmination” for many others besides. It is for anyone who dared hope [Black Panther](#)’s success might change Hollywood; for anyone who wants period dramas to tell diverse, untold stories that confront the legacy of colonialism, and also for anyone who’s ever wondered why women in action movies tend to be twentysomethings in high heels, but Liam Neeson still gets to punch through walls when he’s pushing 70.

Can Davis see herself doing a similar pivot towards more action roles? She gives this suggestion the kind of derisive look that Annalise Keating reserved for her most moronic law students. “Oh no. *No*. That doesn’t appeal to me *at all*. My body is so sore right now.”

The Woman King is in cinemas now

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2022.10.10 - Opinion

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[Opinion](#)Neanderthals

Behind this Nobel prize is a very human story: there's a bit of Neanderthal in all of us

[Rebecca Wragg Sykes](#)

Svante Pääbo deserves his accolade – palaeogenetics is an expanding field that tells us who we are



‘You need vision, persistence and pioneering methods to recover immensely old, fragile genetic material.’ Svante Pääbo with a replica of a Neanderthal skeleton. Photograph: Hendrik Schmidt/AP

Mon 10 Oct 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 16.54 EDT

The Neanderthals have won a Nobel prize. Well, almost. Even if most people haven't heard of [Svante Pääbo](#), the Swedish geneticist whose work on ancient genomes and human evolution has landed him with 2022's award

for physiology or medicine, or the exact science behind palaeogenomics and ancient DNA, they certainly *have* heard of Neanderthals.

Honouring his contribution to building this incredibly vibrant field of palaeogenomics, the award is much deserved: you need vision, persistence and pioneering methods to recover and sequence immensely old, fragile genetic material. But it's also a recognition of the astonishing revelations about our deep history that have come from palaeogenomics, which holds many untapped secrets about who we are today, including settling the long-debated question of whether [Neanderthals](#) and *Homo sapiens* ever encountered each other and, let's say, "warmed up" those icy tundra nights (the answer is yes, many times).

For research communities, the prize also feels like a recognition of the relevance of work on palaeogenomics, human origin and archaeology more broadly – and its continuing importance. Research in the 21st century on our hominin relations, including Neanderthals, is an entirely interdisciplinary, collaborative endeavour. All kinds of material analyses take place, in all sorts of ways. We use photogrammetry or lasers to record entire caves in 3D; trace how stone tools were moved across the land; examine microlayers within ancient hearths; even pick out the starches preserved in grot between ancient teeth. And the advent of the ability to retrieve palaeogenomics from extraordinarily old contexts was nothing short of revolutionary. Today, DNA can be extracted not only from bones, but even from cave sediments: the dust of long vanished lives, waiting for millennia to be found. It has made it possible to assess individual Neanderthals' genetic profiles, and has opened windows into previously invisible population histories and interactions.

More than a decade on from the first big findings, today there is a huge community of palaeogenomics researchers, in large part thanks to Pääbo, with many having trained with him. Among the younger generations at the front end of the sampling, processing and analytical work – who may be the first to make and recognise key new discoveries – many are women. They include Mateja Hajdinjak of the Crick Institute whose work has identified complex patterns of interbreeding among Neanderthals and the earliest *Homo sapiens* in Europe, and Samantha Brown from the University of Tübingen, whose meticulous work on unidentifiable bone scraps found the

only known first-generation hybrid, a girl whose mother was Neanderthal and father Denisovan (closely related hominins from eastern Eurasia). Alongside wielding scientific clout, they are overturning outdated ideas that the “hard sciences” of statistics and white coats (or, in palaeogenomics, full-body protection) are male domains.

As an incredibly fast-moving field, palaeogenomics has achieved an enormous amount in a relatively short space of time. Innovative approaches are constantly being developed, and it must be admitted, even for those of us working in human origins, that keeping up with new methods and jargon can be challenging. The rapidity of advances, especially in competitive academic contexts, has also led to a number of ethical issues. While many are being tackled, the direction of some research may soon force the field to lay out official standards and draw ethical red lines when, for example, reconstructing the brains of Neanderthals using genetic engineering.

Ultimately, while decoding ancient hominin genomes has allowed us to identify which inherited genes we have today – hence the physiology or medicine element of the Nobel prize – the recognition of Pääbo’s work seems more about much deeper themes, resonating with something of a Neanderthal zeitgeist. Since the discovery of their fossils more than 165 years ago, science has been engaged in dethroning *Homo sapiens*, demoting us from special creations to something still marvellous but not entirely unique.

Palaeogenomics bolstered this vision of an Earth that hosted many sorts of human, at least five of which were still walking around just 40,000 years ago; translate that figure to a generational scale, and you’d see a chain of just 2,000 people linking hands. Ancient DNA has confirmed that we are both embedded within a rich history of hominin diversity, and that we still embody that history ourselves. Alongside the genetic material we acquired “sideways” through interbreeding with Neanderthals and other species, [a recent study](#) found that less than 10% of our genome is distinctive to *Homo sapiens*, evolved uniquely in us.

Most strikingly, popular understanding has shifted too. While some still drag out “Neanderthal” as a slur, it now seems somewhat abstracted from general

public views. The archaeological evidence for Neanderthals' complex, sophisticated minds, with genetic revelations of how close we really are to them, has transformed opinion on who they were, and what that means for us. The knowledge that the very stuff of Neanderthals is still present today – in each human heart, thumping with fear or joy – has forged a new emotional connection not just to them, but to all our other hominin relations. It also underlines the fact that they, and we, have always been part of a planetary web of life.

The most profound legacy of Pääbo's establishment of palaeogenomics is, or should be, humility. Because it turns out that many of the earliest *Homo sapiens* populations entering Eurasia eventually shared the same fate as the Neanderthals they met and mingled with. Their lineages vanished, culturally but also genetically, leaving behind no descendants among living humans. Perhaps the greatest inheritance they left us is understanding that our story is not one of predestined, exceptional success, but a blend of serendipity and coincidence; and that being the last hominin standing is not necessarily something to be proud of.

- Rebecca Wragg Sykes is an archaeologist and author of [Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art](#)

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[Republic of Parenthood](#) [Parents and parenting](#)

I've stopped trying to be the perfect mum, and it's a huge relief

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



We're told that motherhood is supposed to be your life's work. But the 360-degree model is bad for me and for my baby



A research paper has suggested that mother-child play is culturally and class specific. Photograph: PeopleImages/Getty Images/iStockphoto

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Flashback to NCT, and I'm asking our course leader Alison about going to the loo: "So you say that we are not supposed to leave them unattended, ever ... so how exactly do I, without putting too fine a point on it ... go to the toilet?"

I'm six months in now and have eventually learned that, sometimes, you need to let the baby cry so you can go to the toilet/make a cup of tea/shove a cold samosa in your mouth while you mourn your past life of nicely prepared little lunches. I used to feel guilty doing this. My husband going back to work at four months coincided with the baby suddenly needing constant entertainment, and I started to feel guilty about that too, because sometimes I would put him in the bouncer and read a book (my tight 10-minute set of politically correct nursery rhymes having fallen flat).

Whence had I caught this guilt? Not from my own mother or any of the older women I know. Not social media influencers, whom I avoid completely. And not parenting books, either – I opened *The Wonder Weeks*,

observed its literal checklist of developmental milestones, and decided it was a recipe for madness. I had already missed the boat on tummy time.

Research led me to resolve that I had somehow absorbed what Judith Warner calls “total-reality motherhood”. In other words, it’s the cultural notion that motherhood is supposed to constitute your entire life’s work, with all other aspects of your identity sacrificed on the altar of 360-degree parenting. It seems this pernicious ideology began in the 1990s but reached fever pitch at the turn of the millennium. These days it afflicts my generation through bastardised, social media filtered versions of attachment theory and gentle parenting philosophies. To quote one article: “Now mothers were always to be ‘on’, engaged in relationships with their children that were at once kinesthetic, tirelessly management oriented, and unrelenting in their emotional solicitations.”

Eliane Glaser frames it [as the cult of the perfect mother](#), elsewhere it’s “intensive mothering” or “conscientious cultivation”. However it is described, it boils down to the belief that every moment must have conspicuous educational or emotional value. As far as I’ve read, it is a largely western construct and is not only bad for women, but also bad for children, who should be allowed to discover the world for themselves or through play with other children. It manifests in the competitive obsession with baby classes, where everything is a learning opportunity (see also the baby sensory movement). Hence, perhaps, my (in hindsight) insane decision to take a three-month-old premature infant to baby swimming, an activity to which he objected to in the strongest terms. What was I thinking? And why did I feel so guilty when we quit?

Perhaps it’s all a symptom of highly educated women being stripped of their identities overnight and needing some sort of outlet. Was this why all the other mothers in the introducing-solids workshop seemed to have a professorial knowledge? I started to feel bad until I remembered that I have been consuming solid food myself for many years now with no problems. If I’m still cutting up his food when he’s 35, I’ll devote some time to feeling bad about doing purees.

I haven’t liberated myself from all maternal guilt – that would be impossible – but in the last two months I have been mindfully giving less of a toss and

am far happier. The baby is happier too, because his mother is less anxious. None of these proponents of total-reality motherhood ever seem to take maternal mental health into account. Whether it's pushing breastfeeding at all costs or telling you that any kind of sleep training will result in the same sad neglectful hush observed in [Romanian orphanages](#), there never, ever seems to be an acknowledgment that a mother on the verge of a breakdown might do more damage to her kid than a bottle of formula or a short time spent learning to self-settle.

If you're wondering how I managed to successfully purge myself of perfectionism, the answer is that I read two things. First, a research paper called [Accounting for variability in mother-child play](#) on how mother-child play is culturally and class specific, and actually undesirable. Second, the book *French Children Don't Throw Food* by Pamela Druckerman, which is a decade old, but totally liberating. Reading it, all of my memories of nannying in France began to resurface, and something clicked into place.

French women are practically unique in the west in that they don't buy this intense perfectionism. They don't ditch their jobs to do childcare, they don't pounce the minute their child needs something, they don't obsess about milestones, and they don't constantly narrate their play (their babies also, apparently, tend to sleep). Most importantly they often – and it feels shocking to even write this – put themselves first.

As Élisabeth Badinter writes in *The Conflict*: “French women have avoided the dilemma of all-or-nothing motherhood”, because “unlike most Europeans, they have the benefit of historic recognition of their identities beyond motherhood”. Badinter also notes that the childcare system there supports the expectation that the state should provide this service in order to facilitate part-time mothering.

Unfortunately, our own childcare system is sorely lacking – but there is still much to take from the French mindset. I genuinely think Druckerman has saved my sanity. Now, time to feed the baby. But first, I'll feed myself.

What's working

The baby visited his ancestral homeland and was read to in Welsh by his

Nain and Taid. I also discovered Seren Swynol, a soft toy that sings Welsh nursery rhymes. One for the Christmas list.

What's not

The baby continues to despise car journeys, despite the admirable efforts of two taxi drivers to soothe him by playing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star at full blast. Time to start taking the bus more.

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist

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Truss is exposing ‘levelling up’ as the hollow, cynical soundbite it always was

[Sarah Longlands](#)



Voters were seduced by Johnson’s promises, but his successor is showing the Tories care little about ‘left behind’ areas



Liz Truss meets party members in Leeds during her Tory leadership campaign in July. Photograph: Getty Images

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In a country with [4.3 million children](#) living in poverty, a cost of living crisis and rampant inflation, every sensible person in Britain will be relieved to hear that the government is going for growth. It's funny that no one thought of this before. But wait a minute: didn't the Cameron government have a plan for growth – a “northern powerhouse”? Wasn't Johnson's big policy levelling up? If you live in a “left behind” area, this continual invocation of growth as a panacea can feel a bit desperate. That's certainly how Liz Truss [sounded last week](#) as she trotted out yet another growth plan.

It's the places that have not only been left behind, but kept behind (many of which voted Tory in 2019) that will undoubtedly be feeling decidedly rattled and a lot worse off after the chaos of the last few weeks. In the short time that she has been prime minister, Truss has managed to jettison both the government's economic credibility and what little was left of a plan for tackling the UK's spiralling regional inequality.

Where you live in the UK determines not only your income and your prospects of a job, but your health and wellbeing. For many people, it can be

the difference between life and death. People born in the poorest areas of England and Wales [can expect to live between eight and 10 years less](#) than those in the richest areas. More than a decade of austerity, followed by the pandemic, have [exacerbated regional inequality](#): 21% of jobs in the north of England [are paid less than the real living wage](#). The manifesto pledge to level up the UK won the Conservatives the 2019 election, but Truss seems willing to abandon this in favour of a generic and banal focus on growth.

Having grown up in Leeds and Paisley, Truss could have sounded plausibly interested in a mission to address regional disadvantage. Instead, she has framed the debate as a simple choice between growth or decline, between the state and the market, revealing the rigidity of her belief in a status quo where Whitehall knows best. All talk about devolution has magically disappeared. Instead, for Truss, closing the gaps is simple: just bake a bigger pie, because that means more slices for everyone.

The problem is that bigger pies also mean bigger appetites. In the absence of regulation or sound fiscal policy, the bigger the pie, the greater the risk that it is gobbled up by those most able to take advantage. Truss's plan is to keep upping the stakes to achieve a rate of growth that not only sustains the voracious appetites of the wealthy but also allows a [few crumbs to fall](#) from the plate to those on the lowest incomes. This will result in unfairness, making life even harder for those who are already struggling to make ends meet.

When Truss talks about an “[anti-growth coalition](#)”, she is deliberately missing the point. Few of us doubt the need for real economic change in our towns, cities and rural areas. However, the questions that we are asking are about who stands to benefit from the growth she hopes to generate.

Take Truss's pledge to push ahead with [investment zones](#). These supposedly attract new investment to create jobs. But we've been here before. England already has [48 enterprise zones](#), which pit regions against each other in beauty contests to attract businesses, which can often become a race to the bottom. The assumption behind this policy is that these areas have no value to investors beyond their capacity to generate value-added profits, where the

proceeds of growth will be owned by global multinationals rather than local communities. But our regions have so much more to offer than that.

The harsh reality is that there will be no return to growth any time soon. Low growth has become Britain's reality; the pandemic, Brexit, the climate and cost of living crises, and now rising inflation and interest rates, have all guaranteed that growth will remain stagnant for the foreseeable future. Instead of peddling fairytales, politicians need to focus on what is really important. Ensuring people can live good lives, whether or not we have growth. We must apply our efforts to rethinking and rewiring our economic system by building on the values, strengths and wealth of our places. We need to ask questions about how people can have a real stake in the economy, not just through employment, but also through democratic design that ensures the spoils of growth are owned and shared by everyone.

If [Liz Truss](#) wants to be bold – and if she wants to secure the votes of the places that backed her predecessor in 2019 – she could invest in local public services. Health, education, housing: each of these sectors are in crisis after more than a decade of political disinvestment. The Truss government could put aside outdated fantasies about markets and growth and instead make the UK's public services the bedrock of a future economy, providing certainty to business and a source of pride to all of us once again. I'm sure someone must have thought of that before.

- Sarah Longlands is the chief executive of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies

[OpinionUK cost of living crisis](#)

Relax, everyone! France has found a solution to the energy crisis

[Emma Beddington](#)



It's called a jumper. If you're not familiar with the concept, keep an eye out for photos of President Macron and his economy minister, Bruno Le Maire



Dress sense ... President Emmanuel Macron wearing a roll neck jumper to an official engagement at the Elysée Palace. Photograph: Ludovic Marin/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 10 Oct 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 12.34 EDT

Crass responses to the energy crisis may be the one thing we won't run out of this year. The brisk "being cold is good for you" line has grim echoes of the whippet-thin fitness fanatic I shared an office with in the late 90s, who insisted his hypothermia-level thermostat was "good for your metabolism" with a pointed glance at my thighs. Nostalgia for ice on the inside of windows is so popular it might make the John Lewis Christmas ad, while determinedly cheery tips on keeping mould at bay or dealing with silverfish and plaster beetles are depressing beyond belief. Is this really where we are as a nation? (Yes, and a generation of renters has been wearily familiar with all these problems for years: heroic social housing campaigner [Kwajo Tweneboa's Twitter account](#) gathers particularly egregious examples.) At least no one here has suggested sharing showers, [as one Swiss minister has](#).

Thank goodness, then, for the news from France, where they're approaching what they are calling "*sobriété énergétique*" (energy restraint) in [the Frenchest way possible: with turtle necks](#), the traditional uniform of the Left Bank intellectual. Economy minister Bruno Le Maire was first off the starting blocks, declaring on the radio that the nation would no longer see

him in a collar and tie, but in roll neck sweaters: “That will help us make energy savings and show restraint.” Le Maire followed through the next day with a navy-blue fine-gauge number. He has since [Instagrammed himself](#) in a dove grey one, nonchalantly holding an espresso cup in his Normandy garden.

Never one to be left out by a political fashion moment ([remember his Volodymyr Zelenskiy-inspired hoodie?](#)), Emmanuel Macron has been [photographed in a chunkier roll neck](#) I thought was black, but which was declared “anthracite”– *un soupçon* Milk Tray man. Meanwhile, the prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, has upped the ante with [a butterfly motif slim padded jacket in meetings](#). I’m not convinced anyone this side of the Channel can carry this look off, but it’s all so gloriously Gallic my cockles – if no other part of me – are warmed.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/oct/10/relax-everyone-france-has-found-a-solution-to-the-energy-crisis>

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[North Korea](#)

North Korea says missile tests simulated striking South with tactical nuclear weapons

Kim Jong-un said his forces were ‘completely ready to hit and destroy targets at any time from any location’

- [North and South Korea tensions explained in 30 seconds](#)



In a photo provided by the North Korean government, Kim Jong Un inspects a missile test at an undisclosed location. Photograph: AP

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Sun 9 Oct 2022 22.38 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 23.23 EDT

North Korea’s [recent flurry of missile tests](#) demonstrated its ability to carry out strikes with tactical nuclear weapons, its leader, Kim Jong-un, has said,

adding that his forces were “completely ready to hit and destroy targets at any time from any location”.

Kim, who [last month said the North’s transformation into a nuclear power was “irreversible,”](#) said the drills were “an obvious warning and clear demonstration” to the country’s enemies.

The regime’s short-range tactical nuclear missiles would be unable to reach its nemesis – the US – but could theoretically be used against the South and Japan.

In a report carried on Monday, the state news agency KCNA said that Kim had ordered the test launches in response to large-scale navy drills by South Korean and US forces.

Tokyo and Washington recently resumed the exercises, including the deployment of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier the USS Ronald Reagan to waters off the east coast of South Korea – a move that infuriated Pyongyang, where the drills are seen as a rehearsal for an invasion.



The USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier participated in a joint anti-submarine drill in waters off South Korea on 30 Sept, 2022. Photograph: AP

In response, [North Korea](#) “decided to organise military drills under the simulation of an actual war,” KCNA reported.

Army units involved in “the operation of tactical nukes, staged military drills from 25 September to 9 October in order to check and assess the war deterrent and nuclear counterattack capability of the country,” the report said, confirming that Kim had personally directed the exercises.

Official photographs showed Kim at all of the missile launches and exercises, giving orders and posing with smiling soldiers.

“They’re pursuing a tactical nuclear weapon for sure,” said US-based security analyst Ankit Panda. “I suspect they’ll gradually nuclearise many of their new short-range missiles, including the manoeuvring missiles.”

The fact that North Korea has described all seven of its recent missile launches as being linked to “tactical nuclear operations units” is significant, he added, since the inventory includes everything from short-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, to a new short-range missile designed to be launched from a submarine.



Kim Jong-un oversees a military drill in an image provided by North Korean media. Photograph: KCNA/EPA

Kim, who has presided over dramatic improvements in missile and nuclear development despite years of UN sanctions, has long wanted to acquire tactical nuclear weapons – smaller, lighter weapons designed for battlefield use – and made it a top priority at a key party congress in January 2021.

Last month, North Korea [revised its nuclear laws to enable it to conduct preemptive nuclear strikes](#), including in response to conventional attacks.

Kim guided exercises by the country's nuclear tactical operation units over the past two weeks, involving ballistic missiles with mock nuclear warheads, KCNA said, adding that they were meant to deliver a strong deterrent message.

“The effectiveness and practical combat capability of our nuclear combat force were fully demonstrated as it stands completely ready to hit and destroy targets at any time from any location,” KCNA quoted Kim as saying. “Even though the enemy continues to talk about dialogue and negotiations, we do not have anything to talk about nor do we feel the need to do so.”

The various tests simulated targeting military command facilities, striking main ports, and neutralising airports in the South.

Tactical nuclear weapons

South Korean and US officials say there are signs North Korea could soon detonate a new nuclear device in underground tunnels at its Punggye-ri nuclear test site, which was officially closed in 2018.

Analysts say putting small warheads on short-range missiles could represent a dangerous change in the way North Korea deploys and plans to use nuclear weapons.

On 4 October, the North test-fired a ballistic missile farther than ever before, flying what it said was [a new intermediate-range ballistic missile over Japan](#) for the first time since 2017.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said North Korea had “multiple motivations” for publicising the launches.

“Kim Jong-un’s public appearance after a month-long absence provides a patriotic headline to mark (Monday’s) founding anniversary of the ruling Workers’ party,” Easley said.

“Pyongyang has been concerned about military exercises by the US, South Korea and Japan, so to strengthen its self-proclaimed deterrent, it is making explicit the nuclear threat behind its recent missile launches,” he added.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/10/north-korea-says-missile-tests-simulated-striking-south-with-tactical-nuclear-weapons>

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US news

Mother of Dahmer victim condemns Netflix series: 'I don't see how they can do that'

Shirley Hughes, mother of Tony Hughes, an aspiring model who was among more than a dozen men murdered, speaks out



Rodney Burford portrays Tony Hughes and Evan Peters portrays Jeffrey Dahmer in the 2022 Netflix series Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story. Photograph: Netflix series 'Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story'

[Ramon Antonio Vargas](#)

Mon 10 Oct 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 15.55 EDT

The mother of aspiring model Tony Hughes, who was among more than a dozen men murdered by Jeffrey Dahmer, has condemned the recently

released [Netflix](#) series about the serial killer who took her son's life, saying she doesn't understand how the television show could be made.

Shirley Hughes told the Guardian on Sunday that she hadn't seen all of Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story, which focuses one of its 10 episodes on her son, who was deaf and just 31 years old at the time of his slaying in 1991. Nonetheless, she'd concluded that “it didn't happen like that”.

“I don't see how they can do that,” Hughes said, before adding that it was difficult to talk about Tony's murder and politely ending the call. “I don't see how they can use our names and put stuff out like that out there.”

Now 85, the still-grieving mother joined a growing chorus of people whose relatives were murdered by Dahmer and who have mounted [a loud backlash](#) against Netflix's dramatization of his killing spree in Milwaukee.

The hit series' main players, including creator Ryan Murphy and Dahmer actor Evan Peters, have insisted that the show strived to put the victims' stories and their families' trauma at the heart of the production.

But the show, which also depicts how Dahmer got away with his killing spree for so long because authorities ignored the concerns of Black and other minority community members, has faced criticism for not consulting the families of the slain.

The cousin of Dahmer victim Errol Lindsey – Eric Perry – wrote on [Twitter](#) that his relatives found out about the series when Netflix released it on 21 September and it quickly became the platform's most-watched show.

Netflix wasn't required to consult victims' families because the events it portrays are public record, but the way things went down re-traumatized the loved ones of those murdered by Dahmer, Perry added.

Perry's cousin and Lindsey's sister, Rita Isbell, who is portrayed as calling Peters's Dahmer “Satan” in a series courtroom scene, wrote separately that the show felt “harsh and careless”.

The episode where the show's producers arguably tried hardest to focus on a victim was the sixth, telling the story of how Tony Hughes fatally crossed paths with Dahmer.

Viewers see how Tony Hughes – portrayed by deaf actor and former reality television star Rodney Burford – loses his hearing in his infancy after a doctor misprescribed him medication amid what his mother has previously described as a battle with pneumonia.

He grows up communicating through sign language, reading lips and writing notes by hand. His sister tells him she wants to name the child she is expecting after him. He also is close to his mother, has dreams of modeling, hopes to find a committed romantic partner, and enjoys dancing at clubs with two friends who – like him – are deaf and gay.

Burford's performance as Hughes has been praised as compassionate and haunting, but many have found the episode grueling to watch.

None of Jeffrey Dahmer's victims deserved to die but the episode about Tony Hughes is especially heartbreaking. So hard to watch.
[#DahmerNetflix](#) [#JeffreyDahmer](#) [#DahmerMonster](#)
pic.twitter.com/REZO0zjqkk

— Casey Moore (@caseyleemoore) [September 23, 2022](#)

The episode – titled “Silenced” – shows Hughes meeting Dahmer during a night out and striking up a relationship with him. The show implies that, as Hughes tries to leave after a night spent together, Dahmer murders him, possibly with a bloodied hammer.

The episode ends with Dahmer cooking and eating Hughes's liver after donating money to a search effort that his victim's mother and other family members mounted after his sudden disappearance.

A subsequent victim who escaped from Dahmer alive ultimately led to his being convicted of 16 murders. Prosecutors determined that Dahmer mainly lured his victims to his apartment under the guise of sexual interest, drugged

them, strangled them or otherwise killed them, and sometimes performed sex acts with their corpses before dismembering them.

He was sentenced to life in prison in 1992 and was beaten to death by a fellow inmate two years later at age 34.

Shirley Hughes, who was teaching a Bible class in Milwaukee when her son was murdered, hasn't spoken much in public about Tony. She learned of his killing after investigators discovered his skull in Dahmer's apartment and identified it through dental records.

But, at the time that Dahmer was charged with his killing spree, she told United Press International that she felt relief at knowing why her son had disappeared while also being emotionally shattered by the fate he met.

"It hurts," Shirley Hughes told the wire service. "I shed tears. They're not tears of sorrow, and it's not disbelief in the Lord. The tears [are] tears of hurt because it hurts. It hurts real bad. But you have to trust and pray and just keep going day by day."

Shirley Hughes constantly attended Dahmer's criminal court proceedings, [according to the Associated Press](#). Though Dahmer wasn't known to have money, in 1992, Shirley Hughes [won](#) a civil court judgment allowing her to intercept \$10m of any money offered to the serial killer for movie, publication or television rights to his story.

She later moved from Milwaukee to a state in the south-eastern US.

The actor Karen Malina White portrays her in the controversial Netflix show.

Taiwan

Taiwan's president calls for unity against Chinese disinformation before elections

Tsai Ing-wen compares China's 'bullying' to Russian invasion of Ukraine on de facto national day



Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen at the National Day celebrations.
Photograph: Daniel Ceng Shou-Yi/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[*Helen Davidson*](#) and *Chi Hui Lin in Taipei*

Mon 10 Oct 2022 04.58 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 06.13 EDT

Taiwan's president has called for domestic political unity to combat Chinese disinformation and cyberwarfare destabilising society before next month's local elections.

Addressing crowds at Taiwan's de facto National Day on Monday, Tsai Ing-wen said Taiwan had to increase its resilience and international standing in the face of China's growing authoritarianism. She warned Beijing that Taiwan would not give up its democracy or sovereignty, but she remained willing to restart communications – which [China](#) cut off after her election in 2016.

“Only by respecting the commitment of the Taiwanese people to our sovereignty, democracy, and freedom can there be a foundation for resuming constructive interaction across the Taiwan Strait,” Tsai said.

Beijing has sworn to annex Taiwan, which it claims is a province of China, and its threats have increased in recent years. As well as increased military action towards Taiwan, China has also been [accused of waging cyberwarfare](#).

[Chinese disinformation efforts](#) often increase [during Taiwanese election periods](#), and local elections, scheduled for late November, are often seen as a precursor to presidential elections, which follow about a year later.

“Taiwan is one of the countries most [targeted by information warfare](#), a non-traditional security threat that persistently interferes with the functioning of our democratic system,” said Tsai.

Differences and debate were welcome “but we should unanimously and resolutely stand behind our free and democratic system, no matter how much external pressure we face”.

Tsai pledged to improve transparency and anti-disinformation work to combat foreign infiltration and sabotage, citing the daily pandemic briefings as an example which informed the public and reduced panic and misinformation.

She compared China's “bullying” of its neighbour and its expansion into the South and East China Seas to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

“We absolutely cannot ignore the challenge that these military expansions pose to the free and democratic world order ... The destruction of Taiwan's

democracy and freedom would be a grave defeat for the world's democracies," she said, praising local Taiwanese [enthusiasm for civilian defence training](#). She said it was the best example of being "all in this together".

Chinese officials have said Taiwanese people would be subjected to "re-education" after invasion, and that pro-independence advocates would be punished under Chinese law.

Tsai also sought to reassure the international community that the tensions were not a threat to the global semiconductor supply – the majority of which comes from Taiwan.

"The concentration of the semiconductor sector in Taiwan is not a risk, but is the key to the reorganisation of the global semiconductor industry," she said, pledging to help "optimise" a worldwide restructuring of the chip supply chain, with Taiwanese firms playing a prominent role.

Double Ten Day, or 10 October, commemorates the start of the Wuchang Uprising in 1911, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Republic of China, Taiwan's official name. After the Chinese civil war the ROC government fled to the island of Taiwan and established a government in exile there. Double Ten day is still celebrated in Taiwan, more recently as a de facto national celebration.

A few thousand spectators were granted access to the highly secure event area via a lottery, sitting opposite the president and hundreds of dignitaries.

Johnny Hsiao told the Guardian he enjoyed the event, but things had changed. "Taiwan Strait is more in conflict now, and opinions are more divided.

"I think the status is a little nervous ... but we think it's safe," Hsiao said. "I think it's part of the DPP government's strategy to make Taiwan people think about independence. Most Taiwan people, including me, want to keep it stable and nobody wants to have any war between China and Taiwan."



Johnny Hsiao taking photos with his wife at the end of Taiwan's national day celebration. Photograph: Helen Davidson/The Guardian

This year's formal celebrations were smaller than in 2021, [which was a display of military might](#), including the parading of missiles and other heavy artillery. Instead it focused on bilateral friendships, with personal thanks to the visiting president of Palau, which is one of just 14 governments that recognise Taiwan. It also heavily featured Japanese connections. Japan switched recognition to China 50 years ago, but is culturally, politically and strategically close to Taiwan, particularly as China grows more aggressive.

In her speech, Tsai noted that Taiwan will fully reopen its borders on Wednesday, for the first time since the pandemic began in January 2020. Taiwan ran one of the strictest and most successful responses of the pandemic, but had been slow to reopen to international visitors despite having tens of thousands of local cases a day.

“I'm happy about this, it's been a long time since we went abroad or foreigners came to Taiwan,” said Hsiao. “We welcome any visitors from the world.”

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Malaysia

Malaysian PM dissolves parliament and calls early election amid political strife

Ismail Sabri Yaakob, who becomes shortest serving PM in Malaysian history, hopes to win stronger mandate for party



Ismail Sabri Yaakob said he was calling the election to end questions over the legitimacy of his government. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Reuters in Kuala Lumpur

Mon 10 Oct 2022 05.16 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 06.11 EDT

Malaysia's prime minister, Ismail Sabri Yaakob, has called for an early election, hoping to win a stronger mandate for his party and stabilise the rocky political landscape that has plagued the country over the last four years.

The ruling party's rush for an election comes as the economy, still recovering from the Covid pandemic, has begun to feel the pinch of rising costs and a global slowdown.

An election was not due until September 2023, but Ismail has been under increasing pressure from some factions of his ruling coalition to hold the vote earlier because of infighting.

In a televised speech, Ismail said the country's monarch had agreed to his request to dissolve parliament on Monday, and an election date would be announced by the election commission. Polls must be held within 60 days of the dissolution of parliament. Voter turnout could be reduced if the chosen date falls during the year-end monsoon season.

Ismail said he was calling the election to end questions over the legitimacy of his government and return the mandate to the people.

"The people's mandate is a powerful antidote for the country to manifest political stability and create a strong, stable and respected government after the general election," Ismail said.

The election commission did not have an immediate comment.

Malaysia has been mired in political uncertainty [since the last election in 2018](#), a historic vote in which the opposition ousted the United Malays National Organisation party which had governed for more than 60 years since independence, amid widespread corruption allegations.

But the winning coalition collapsed within two years due to infighting, returning UMNO to power in a new alliance.

Malaysia has had three prime ministers since the 2018 election.

With the dissolution of parliament, Ismail, who came to power in August 2021, becomes the shortest serving prime minister in Malaysian history.

His UMNO party urged early elections to take advantage of what they see as favourable sentiment towards them.

UMNO won elections held at the state level as recently as March, when it wrested back control of the southern state of Johor from the opposition, which had won in 2018.

In April, Ismail was named as UMNO's prime minister candidate, though it was unclear if he still had that support.

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Global development

Tigray rebels tortured and killed civilians in renewed fighting, survivors claim

Witnesses claim the attacks in Amhara region last month were carried out on those the TPLF suspected of supporting Ethiopian federal forces



Ethiopian civilians displaced from Kobo town by fighting at a makeshift camp in Dessie, Amhara. Photograph: Tiksa Negeri/Reuters

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

Lucy Kassa

Mon 10 Oct 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Oct 2022 06.23 EDT

Tigrayan rebel forces have killed dozens of civilians during their latest occupation of a town in the Amhara region, survivors claim, after fighting resumed last month in the northern area of [Ethiopia](#).

The alleged killings took place in the town of Kobo, located along the highway to the capital, Addis Ababa. Between 13-15 September, Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) fighters shot dead unarmed civilians they suspected of supporting federal forces and local militias, survivors have told the Guardian.

In one district of Kobo alone, witnesses counted 17 bodies of people killed over two days.

Fighting between Ethiopian federal forces and Tigrayan rebels erupted again in late August, shattering a [six-month humanitarian truce](#). On 4 September the TPLF announced it had captured Kobo but in the past week rebels withdrew from the town amid fierce fighting with federal troops and Amhara militias.

Meanwhile, fighters were killing people and looting in Kobo, residents said.

“It started on Tuesday, 13 September. Before that day the Tigray fighters were intimidating residents, looting, and searching for hidden arms. There was no fighting inside Kobo when they committed the killings. Federal troops had already withdrawn weeks earlier and it was Tigray forces who had fully occupied the town,” said Bekalu*, a 47-year-old father of three who fled the town after witnessing the killings.

The extrajudicial executions were carried out during house-to-house searches by the rebels, according to the testimonies of seven survivors.

“On 14 September a group of Tigray fighters came to our neighbourhood. They were searching houses, harassing civilians they found inside and asking them where they hid weapons. They would torture those who replied that they didn’t have weapons.

“Then I began hearing gunshots and screams of neighbours. The fighters were shouting ‘kill them, they are dogs of Amhara militias’,” said Mekdes*, 29, who survived by hiding in a neighbour’s house.

Another witness told of seeing a woman and her son murdered. “I saw the Tigray fighters dragging out a mother and her teenage son from their house to the road. They viciously beat them. They were yelling at them: ‘Your husband is an Amhara militiaman.’ The mother was screaming: ‘That’s not true. Please stop, leave my son. We don’t have guns’,” said Sentayhu*, 53, a shopkeeper who fled Kobo after the killings.

“They shot both the son and his mother in the head. The woman, who I know by sight as a local resident, was in her 60s and her son was 17 years old. They looted everything in my shop. They threatened me to give them all the money I have, or they would kill me.

“I was relieved they stopped by looting the shop and did not shoot me like other residents. Terrorised by what I saw, I fled the next day, leaving behind everything I had,” he said.



Spent bullet casings near a mass grave in Chenna, near Gondar. The massacre of at least 125 civilians in September 2021 was allegedly by Tigrayan rebels, though they denied responsibility. Photograph: Amanuel Sileshi/AFP/Getty

Witnesses shared with the Guardian a list of the names and ages of some of the victims whose bodies they could identify, including women and teenagers.

Muluken*, a 25-year-old truck driver who lives in Addis Ababa, heard from his displaced relatives that four of his childhood friends had been killed.

“Communications to the town were cut off when the Tigray fighters controlled the town,” he said, “so there was no way to talk to my relatives there.

“Only last week, my cousins, who managed to flee to nearby towns outside the control of the Tigray fighters, gave me a call. That is when I learned about the execution of four friends,” he said. “As far as I know they were innocent, unarmed residents. Political activities or involvement in fighting groups were things they had no interest in.

“When my relatives notified me of their deaths over the phone, they told me the Tigray fighters first rounded them up together with other young residents

they suspect of supporting the Amhara militias. Then they executed them. Their bodies were later collected by locals and buried in churches.”

The latest killing spree in Kobo is follows an earlier one just over a year ago. In February, Amnesty International [reported that Tigrayan fighters had executed at least 24 unarmed civilians](#) in and around Kobo, last year on 9 September. In its report, satellite imagery shows an increase in graves in sites where witnesses said victims were buried.

A spokesperson for the Tigray government did not respond to the Guardian’s requests for comment on the allegations of the killings in Kobo.

Extrajudicial killings and massacres by all sides have been documented throughout the conflict in northern Ethiopia, which will have continued for two years in November.

An [initial report](#) released last month by the UN international commission of human rights on Ethiopia, which was formed in December 2021 to investigate abuses during the war, concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that parties to the conflict had committed war crimes and human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence and airstrikes on civilians.

Among other crimes, the report highlights that the Ethiopian government has used starvation as a weapon of war. It said it believed Tigrayan forces had committed war crimes and human rights abuses including large-scale killings of civilians in Amhara, sexual violence, widespread looting and the destruction of property in Kobo and Chenna.

Kaari Betty Murungi, chair of the UN human rights commission, said: “With a resumption of hostilities in northern Ethiopia, there is a very real risk of further civilian suffering and further atrocity crimes.”

Heavy fighting between federal forces and rebels is continuing, with Tigrayan leaders accusing the Eritrean government of launching a full-scale offensive alongside the Ethiopian army and local militias.

** Names have been changed to protect their identity*

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Russia-Ukraine war live: ‘endemic corruption and poor logistics’ harming Russian military, says UK – as it happened

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[Russia-Ukraine war at a glance](#)[Ukraine](#)

Russia-Ukraine war latest: what we know on day 234 of the invasion

Russian submarine seen off French coast and being escorted by French navy;
Vladimir Putin says ‘no need’ for talks with Joe Biden

- [See all our Russia-Ukraine war coverage](#)



A relative of a killed Ukraine serviceman looks at his portrait during the opening of a photo exhibition, titled Azov Regiment: Angels of Mariupol, in Kyiv to mark Ukraine’s Defenders Day on Friday amid the war with Russia. Photograph: Sergei Supinsky/AFP/Getty Images

[Miranda Bryant](#), [Martin Belam](#) and staff

Fri 14 Oct 2022 20.49 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 20.50 EDT

- **Vladimir Putin said he believed the “partial mobilisation” of army reservists would be completed in two weeks.** The Russian president said after attending a summit in Kazakhstan on Friday that a total of 222,000 reservists would be called up, down from the 300,000 figure initially circulated after the order last month.
- **The Belarus defence ministry said Russian troops would start arriving in the country “in the next few days” as part of its joint force.**
- **The US and Germany are to deliver sophisticated anti-aircraft systems to Kyiv this month** to counter attacks using Russian missiles and kamikaze drones, Ukraine’s defence minister said. Oleksiy Reznikov said Ukraine would receive the Iris-II air defence system from Germany this month.
- **A Russian submarine has reportedly been spotted off the French coast and escorted by the French navy.** The submarine was spotted sailing on the surface off the Brittany coast at the end of September, the French navy said on its Twitter feed. It said British and Spanish warships had also been involved in monitoring the submarine’s movements.
- **Putin has called for the humanitarian corridors for Ukrainian grain to be closed if they are used for “acts of terror”.** At a news conference in the Kazakh capital of Astana he also said there was “no need” for talks with the US president, Joe Biden.
- **A Ukrainian member of Kherson’s regional council has condemned Russia’s “evacuation” of the occupied city, saying it is in fact a “deportation”.** The council member also said it was an evacuation for collaborators, urging residents to go to Ukrainian-controlled territory if they could.
- **The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has responded to criticism from the Ukrainian government** calling for immediate access to all PoWs, saying: “We share the frustration regarding our lack of access to all prisoners of war.” Its comments

came after the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, accused the ICRC of inaction in upholding the rights of Ukrainian prisoners and called on it to visit the Olenivka camp in eastern Ukraine, where dozens of Ukrainian PoWs died in an explosion and fire in July.

- **Elon Musk's SpaceX says it can [no longer pay for critical satellite services in Ukraine](#)**, according to CNN. SpaceX is reportedly asking the US government to start paying instead.
- **The US will send munitions and military vehicles to Ukraine as part of a new \$725m security assistance package**, the defence department said on Friday. The package is the first since Russia's barrage of missiles fired on civilian population centres in Ukraine this week, Reuters reports, and will bring total US security assistance since Russia's invasion to \$17.5bn.
- **Democrats on Capitol Hill have suggested [transferring US weapons systems in Saudi Arabia to Ukraine](#)** and suspending a planned transfer of Patriot missiles to Riyadh in the wake of what they call a "turning point" in Washington's relationship with the kingdom.
- **Saudi Arabia will provide \$400m in humanitarian aid to Ukraine**, Saudi state news agency SPA said. It added that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman called Zelenskiy on Friday, Reuters reported.
- **A newly discovered hacking group has attacked transportation and logistics companies in Ukraine and Poland** with a novel kind of ransomware, Microsoft said on Friday. The attackers targeted a wide range of systems within an hour on Tuesday, Microsoft said in a blog post, adding it had not been able to link the attacks to any known group yet. Notably, however, researchers found the hacks closely mirrored earlier attacks by a Russian government-linked cyber team.
- **Oleh Synyehubov, the governor of Kharkiv, said two 16-year-old boys were among those injured** by Russian shelling in the region in the last 24 hours.

- **The UK Ministry of Defence said that “Russia continues to prosecute offensive operations in central Donbas and is, very slowly, making progress”. The ministry said that “in the last three days, pro-Russian forces have made tactical advances towards the centre of the town of Bakhmut in Donetsk Oblast” and “likely advanced into the villages of Opytine and Ivangrad to the south of the town”.**
-

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Turkey.

Turkey coalmine blast leaves at least 41 dead

Interior minister says 110 people were inside the state-owned mine when the explosion occurred



A co-worker of the coal miners trapped under the rubble waits at the explosion site. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Ruth Michaelson](#)

Sat 15 Oct 2022 09.52 EDTFirst published on Fri 14 Oct 2022 17.36 EDT

An explosion deep inside a coalmine in Turkey's mountainous northern Black Sea region has killed at least 41 people, with rescue efforts and work to contain a fire in the facility continuing for hours on Saturday.

Turkish officials including the energy minister, Fatih Dönmez, said initial assessments indicated the blast on Friday inside the state-owned mine was

caused by a firedamp explosion, a reference to the combustion of pockets of highly flammable gases trapped in the coal bed.

“All search and rescue teams are on duty,” he said, adding that the mine’s ventilation system had continued to work.

President [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#), who cancelled a planned trip to Diyarbakir province to visit the site of the incident in the port town of Amasra, announced on Saturday afternoon that the search and rescue operation was complete.

State television showed white smoke billowing from the mine entrance over the mountainside, with a reporter at the site [stating](#) more than 12 hours after the incident: “The fire is happening underneath us, it’s still active.”

The interior minister, Süleyman Soylu, who travelled to Amasra to oversee rescue efforts, said 110 miners were inside the facility at the time of the explosion, and that 49 had been trapped in a high risk area of the mine.



The interior minister, Süleyman Soylu, speaks to the press after the explosion. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Rescue workers pushed through the night as concerned relatives of those trapped gathered close to the TTK Amasra Müessesese Müdürlüğü mine. Soyly said that by Saturday morning at least 58 had been rescued or escaped from the mine, and a further 11 had been taken to hospital, with the status of one miner unclear.

The incident at a state-run facility in a part of the country traditionally associated with support for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development party presents a challenge for the government. There have been a number of high-profile mining disasters in recent memory, drawing questions about whether the state has done enough to protect workers in a dangerous industry.

The head of one Turkish mining union [told the local Cumhuriyet news outlet](#) that increasing safety measures after disasters was insufficient. "The important thing is to value people while they are alive," he said, referencing two major mining disasters in Turkey in 2014. "There are mines all over the world, but these disasters always occur in mines in Turkey," he said.

A prolonged fire inside a mine in the town of Soma in western Turkey in 2014 caused the worst mining disaster in the country's history, where 301 miners died from carbon monoxide poisoning and at least 162 others were injured.

That incident drew widespread public outrage, amid questions from families and observers about what they said was insufficient government oversight and lack of safety precautions at the facility.



Ambulances on standby for miners trapped under the rubble. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

“Prosecutors found that the mine company had been informed of but apparently ignored clear warning signs of dangerous gas [firedamp] levels and rising heat in the mine, all of which contributed to the deaths,” [said Human Rights Watch](#). Prosecutors later said a [second deadly mining incident in 2014 that killed 18 people was preventable](#).

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Both incidents provoked widespread demands for better inspections and enforcement of safety procedures, prompting officials to state two years ago that mining accidents [had been reduced by almost 60%](#).

The Turkish Hard Coal Authority [stated](#) that İbrahim Özkarcı, who heads the energy division of a government audit body, [recently visited the mining facility in Amasra](#), but pushed back against reports that he had done so “for audit purposes”. Instead, they said, this was “a courtesy visit” and that indications otherwise “do not reflect the truth and contain disinformation”.

Erdoğan said he would cancel a speaking engagement in the Diyarbakır region, and would aim to visit Amasra. He emphasised that multiple ministers were dispatched to the town to oversee rescue efforts and that prosecutors had opened an investigation into the cause of the incident.

“Only the statements of our official institutions regarding this sad event should be taken into account, and malicious content containing provocative and disinformation should not be respected,” he [added](#).

Shortly before the incident, Turkey’s parliament passed a sweeping new law criminalising alleged disinformation, which [campaigners warned muzzled vital press freedoms](#) in the run-up to an election expected in June 2023 or before.

Turkey’s police headquarters said they would take legal against 12 people who they claimed incited hate about the incident on social media.

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[Robbie Coltrane](#)

Robbie Coltrane, star of Cracker and Harry Potter, dies aged 72



Robbie Coltrane died on Friday, according to his agent. Photograph: ITV/REX/Shutterstock

Scottish actor who graduated from the alternative comedy scene to become a major performer known for taking on complex and difficult roles

- [Peter Bradshaw on Robbie Coltrane](#)

[Andrew Pulver](#) and [Nadia Khomami](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 12.52 EDT Last modified on Sat 15 Oct 2022 06.25 EDT

Robbie Coltrane, whose acting career spanned everything from Bond films to Cracker to Harry Potter, has died aged 72.

The news was confirmed by his agent on Friday.

Born Anthony Robert McMillan in the prosperous Glaswegian suburb of Rutherglen, Coltrane was educated at Glenalmond College, an independent boarding school whose corporal punishment he described as “legalised violence”, before going to the Glasgow School of Art. He had second thoughts about his ability as a painter, and switched to live performance, acting in radical theatre companies (including a troupe from San Quentin State prison) and doing standup, taking the pseudonym Coltrane as homage to celebrated jazz musician John Coltrane.

His first screen credit was Waterloo Sunset, the Richard Eyre-directed Play for Today in 1979, in which he played opposite Queenie Watts’s care-home escapee. Thereafter, he had small appearances in films and TV shows, including Flash Gordon, Are You Being Served?, Krull and Britannia Hospital, his distinctive appearance and sheer size helping him stand out from the crowd.

From Fitz to Hagrid: Robbie Coltrane's most memorable roles – video obituary

Coltrane’s comedy skills began to take precedence, as he found success in the early 1980s in TV sketch shows such as Alfresco and A Kick Up the Eighties. These placed him firmly in the school of 80s alternative comedy alongside Ben Elton, Emma Thompson and Rik Mayall – an identity reinforced by his regular participation in Comic Strip Presents films

including such key entries as Five Go Mad in Dorset, The Beat Generation and The Bullshitters.

However, Coltrane's abilities as an actor were increasingly in evidence, and he had considerable success in 1987 with Tutti Frutti, the John Byrne-scripted, Bafta-winning TV series about a washed-up Scottish rock'n'roll band. Coltrane found himself increasingly sought after for bigger roles in higher-profile projects, from Derek Jarman's Caravaggio (in which he played a cardinal) to Falstaff in [Kenneth Branagh's Henry V](#). But it was two religious-themed comedy films – Nuns on the Run and The Pope Must Die – that propelled Coltrane to leading-man status, and put him on the map in the US.

Coltrane's raised status was confirmed by his casting as the criminal psychologist "Fitz" Fitzgerald in Jimmy McGovern's TV series Cracker, which first aired in 1993. A defiantly non-comic role, Fitzgerald was a groundbreaking creation: brilliant at his job but a mess in his personal life. Coltrane won the best TV actor Bafta in 1994, 1995 and 1996 for the role. Fitzgerald's addictive lifestyle also reflected the actor's: Coltrane admitted to being a heavy drinker in the 1980s, and remained famously combative, [once threatening to beat up Piers Morgan in a London restaurant](#). He then found himself cast in two Bond films, GoldenEye and The World Is Not Enough, as morally ambiguous KGB agent Valentin Dmitrovich Zukovsky.

Coltrane settled into a mid-period career of alternating roles in plush Hollywood productions (Message in a Bottle, From Hell, Ocean's Twelve) with easygoing TV appearances (Alice in Wonderland, The Gruffalo). He also indulged his interest in vintage cars in the 1997 series Coltrane's Planes and Automobiles. However, he found himself at the top of the list for the casting of Hogwarts' school caretaker Rubeus Hagrid in the film adaptation of JK Rowling's [Harry Potter](#) series – a role he is said to have only taken on after his children urged him to.

The first in the series, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, was released in 2001, and gained Coltrane a new audience of younger fans, and helped re-energise his career, particularly on British TV. In 2009, he played

investigating detective DI Hain in David Pirie's Murderland, and his performance as a TV star accused of sexual abuse in the 2016 Channel 4 show National Treasure [was greeted with acclaim](#).

Tributes began pouring in for the late actor on social media. Stephen Fry, with whom he starred in the comedy series Alfresco, said: "I first met Robbie Coltrane almost exactly 40 years ago. I was awe/terror/love struck all at the same time.

"Such depth, power & talent: funny enough to cause helpless hiccups & honking as we made our first TV show, 'Alfresco'. Farewell, old fellow. You'll be so dreadfully missed."

JK Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books, paid tribute to "an incredible talent". "I'll never know anyone remotely like Robbie again," Rowling wrote, accompanied with a picture of the pair. "He was a complete one off, and I was beyond fortunate to know him, work with him and laugh my head off with him."

Daniel Radcliffe, who starred as the titular wizard in the films, shared fond memories from their time on set together as he paid tribute to Coltrane. He said: "Robbie was one of the funniest people I've met and used to keep us laughing constantly as kids on the set.

"I've especially fond memories of him keeping our spirits up on Prisoner Of Azkaban, when we were all hiding from the torrential rain for hours in Hagrid's hut and he was telling stories and cracking jokes to keep morale up.

"I feel incredibly lucky that I got to meet and work with him and very sad that he's passed. He was an incredible actor and a lovely man."

The first minister of [Scotland](#), Nicola Sturgeon, said Coltrane had "such range and depth as an actor, from brilliant comedy to hard-edged drama".

The actor Robert Lindsay said he was "in shock at the death of my dear pal Robbie Coltrane. We shared a Hollywood journey that will live with me forever. Another great star to light the heavens."

Coltrane married the sculptor Rhona Gemmell in 1999, [but they separated in 2003](#). They had two children. The actor was made an OBE in the 2006 New Year's honours list for his services to drama and he was awarded the Bafta Scotland Award for outstanding contribution to film in 2011.

In his later years, he appeared less frequently in film and television, but returned to be interviewed for HBO's Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return To Hogwarts – where he spoke of how his legacy as Hagrid would live long beyond him.

Coltrane's agent of 40 years Belinda Wright on Friday thanked the medical staff at Forth Valley Royal Hospital in Larbert, near Falkirk for their “care and diplomacy”.

In a statement, she added: “Robbie was a unique talent, sharing the Guinness Book of Records' Award for winning three consecutive Best Actor Baftas for his portrayal of Fitz in Granada TV's series Cracker in 1994/1995/and 1996 with Sir Michael Gambon.

“He will probably be best remembered for decades to come as Hagrid in the Harry Potter films. A role which brought joy to children and adults alike all over the world prompting a stream of fan letters every week for over 20 years.

“James Bond fans write too to applaud his role in GoldenEye and The World Is Not Enough. For me personally, I shall remember him as an abidingly loyal client as well as being a wonderful actor, he was forensically intelligent, brilliantly witty and after 40 years of being proud to be to called his agent, I shall miss him.”

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Robbie Coltrane obituary



Robbie Coltrane, ‘a fat boy from Rutherglen’, who won a Bafta three years in succession. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

Comedian turned critically acclaimed actor, from Cracker’s sarcastic, cerebral Fitz to the half-giant Hagrid in Harry Potter

[Stuart Jeffries](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 14.11 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 15.13 EDT

The actor [Robbie Coltrane](#), who has died aged 72, was regularly described as a big man of the British screen. Journalists said he was heavy on talent yet thin-skinned as an interviewee. He disliked his encounters with the press. But the larger-than-life roles with which he was most associated – the criminal psychologist Fitz, Harry Potter’s half-giant friend Hagrid – demonstrated something else: they were performances of a kind of crumpled vulnerability that was also characteristic of the man.

Coltrane recalled that during the filming of [Ocean’s Twelve](#) (2004), he found himself sitting at a table with George Clooney, Matt Damon and Brad Pitt. “These are about the three most successful, most beautiful actors in the world at the moment. And here am I. A fat boy from Rutherglen ... What the fuck am I doing here?”

The fat boy from Rutherglen also had a splendidly eviscerating wit, useful for rebuffing questions premised on his girth. Once, he was telling an interviewer how he was trying to raise money for a film about Laurel and Hardy. Who would you play, his interlocutor asked? “I’d be playing the wee one with the funny hair, like yourself,” snapped back Coltrane.



Coltrane as Fitz in ITV’s Cracker, 2006. Photograph: ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

It was easy to confuse the big man with his big roles. In the 1990s ITV crime drama *Cracker*, scripted by Jimmy McGovern, for which Coltrane won the best actor Bafta three years in succession, he played Dr Eddie “Fitz” Fitzgerald, an obese, alcoholic, foul-mouthed, sarcastic, yet cerebral criminal psychologist. “I drink too much, I smoke too much, I gamble too much. I am too much,” Coltrane’s Fitz shouted in one episode. That self-description seemed to fit actor as much as character. True, smoking and gambling were not Coltrane’s vices, but alcohol was: “Booze is my undoing,” he said once. “I can drink a gallon of beer and not feel the least bit drunk.” And Coltrane was regularly written up as just too much, dominating conversations with anecdotes and funny voices rather than listening.

There could also be too little of the big man. When, for instance, he fulfilled his manifest destiny and played the boozy, libidinous, life force Falstaff in Kenneth Branagh’s 1989 film of [Henry V](#), the critics felt short-changed. “Mr Coltrane is not on the screen long enough to create any true idea of Falstaff’s magnificence,” decided the [New York Times](#). “Instead, he simply looks like a woozy Santa Claus.”

He could also erase himself exasperatingly: once in 2012, after disclosing to an interviewer that he was diabetic and had lost four and a half stone in order that a leg operation could proceed, he turned tight-lipped. How did he lose weight? “I just stopped eating for a while.” Seriously, how did he manage it, pursued his interviewer. “No, no, no! I don’t want to talk about this in the press!”

Born Anthony McMillan in Rutherglen, near Glasgow, he changed his name, on becoming an actor, in honour of the great jazz saxophonist John Coltrane. His mother, Jean Ross, was a pianist and teacher, and his father, Ian, a GP who also worked as a police surgeon. His son recalled that Dr McMillan “used to spend all weekend stitching up knife victims”. Their son attended Glenalmond college, an independent school in Perthshire, often described as Scotland’s equivalent to Eton. “It was a very strict school and I didn’t respond well to discipline.” Indeed, he was nearly expelled for hanging prefects’ gowns from the school clocktower, but also played for the school’s rugby team, captained the debating team and won prizes for his art.

At Glasgow School of Art (1968-72), he was nicknamed Lord Fauntleroy for the posh accent he quickly repressed. Contemporaries included the poet Liz Lochhead and TV presenter Muriel Gray. He soon became known as Red Robbie for his involvement with radical causes. In 1971, he supported the campaign by workers to keep the Glasgow shipyards open. “I believe I showed a pornographic movie and charged people five shillings to look at it and gave the money to Upper Clyde shipbuilders.”



Coltrane as Hagrid in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, 2002.
Photograph: Warner Bros/Allstar

To his lasting regret, he never became a painter. In 2014, when invited back to art school to open the Reid Building, Coltrane said: “I wanted to paint like the painters who really moved me, who made me want to weep about humanity. Titian, Rembrandt. But I looked at my diploma show and felt a terrible disappointment when I realised all the things that were in my head were not on the canvas. I felt there was something wrong with my hands. That was a heartbreaking day.”

At art school he had started acting. Lochhead saw him in [Harold Pinter](#)’s The Dumb Waiter and recalled his performance as “fantastic ... bloody terrifying”. His memory was different: “I threw up every night before going on stage.” He went on to study art for another year, at the Moray House

College of Education, Edinburgh, and acting became his vocation: “One day, [the renowned Scottish actors] Bill Paterson and Alex Norton came to me and said ‘Are you just going to carry on showing off in pubs, or are you going to take this seriously?’ and they sent me to the Traverse theatre”. His first success was in John Byrne’s trilogy *The Slab Boys* (1979), about a group of young working-class Scots in the 1960s.

Coltrane came to British TV viewers’ attention in a string of 1980s sketch shows, including *A Kick Up the 80s* and *Laugh? I Nearly Paid My Licence Fee*, working alongside Emma Thompson, Hugh Laurie, Ben Elton, Stephen Fry and [Rik Mayall](#). He went on to become a fixture of TV comedy, starring in *Blackadder* and several films in the *Comic Strip Presents* series.

He was particularly fine as the butt of *Blackadder*’s wit as an [increasingly apoplectic Dr Samuel Johnson](#) in a 1987 episode. “Here it is, sir. The very cornerstone of English scholarship,” the doctor declared to *Blackadder*, brandishing the manuscript of his recently completed dictionary. “This book, sir, contains every word in our beloved language.”



Coltrane with Pierce Brosnan as 007 in *The World Is Not Enough*, 1999.
Photograph: Keith Hamshire/Inactive/Getty Images

“Well, in that case, sir,” retorted Blackadder, “I hope you will not object if I also offer the Doctor my most enthusiastic contrafibularities.”

He was better yet at the difficult task of playing [Charles Bronson](#) playing Ken Livingstone in the Comic Strip Presents ... [GLC: The Carnage Continues](#) (1990). After preventing the Tories from flooding south London to turn it into a yacht club, Coltrane’s Livingstone strives to thwart [Margaret Thatcher](#) from beheading the Prince of Wales and taking over the kingdom.

Coltrane’s success had downsides. “I’d been broke for a long time and suddenly I had enough money in the bank not to worry if I could afford to eat out or drink a whole bottle of whisky and suddenly I was famous. It went to my head. It only lasted for 15 years.” His friend the actor [John Sessions](#) once said that Coltrane had a “strong self-destructive streak ... a deep, driving melancholy”.

In the late 1980s, nearing 40, he met Rhona Gemmell. They had a son and daughter and married in 1999, but split up four years later.

The funny man went straight in 1987, when he starred opposite Thompson in Tutti Frutti, a six-part drama by Byrne about a faded Scots rock’n’roll band called the Majestics, newly fronted by the dead singer’s brother, Danny McGlone (Coltrane), who has a romance with a former classmate, Suzi Kettles (Thompson). Danny proves his fondness for Suzi at one point by taking a drill to the teeth of her estranged husband, a dentist. The performance earned him his first Bafta nomination.

Though his subsequent performances in Cracker (1993-96, plus a 2006 revival episode) won awards and critical plaudits, it was the cheesy British film comedies such as Nuns on the Run (1990) and The Pope Must Die (1991) that made Coltrane a movie star. He also appeared in two consecutive James Bond films, GoldenEye (1995) and The World Is Not Enough (1999). In 2000, he came sixth in a UK [poll](#) to find the “most famous Scot”, behind the Loch Ness monster, Robbie Burns, Sean Connery, Robert the Bruce and William Wallace.



In Tutti Frutti, 1987. Photograph: Ronald Grant

In 2001, though, Coltrane's celebrity status went global when he was cast as Hagrid, the half-giant gamekeeper of Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry in the [first film adaptation of JK Rowling's Harry Potter novels](#), reportedly at Rowling's insistence. The 6ft 1in actor had to adjust to the novelty of being looked up to by adoring small fans. "Kids come up to you and they go: 'Would you like to sign my book?' with those big doe eyes. And it's a serious responsibility." In 2006 he was appointed OBE.

Coltrane had a passion for classic cars, which he indulged in two travelogues. For Coltrane in a Cadillac (1993) he drove from Los Angeles to New York in a convertible; in 1997 he drove from London to Glasgow in an open-top Jaguar for Robbie Coltrane's B-Road Britain.

When, in 2009, Coltrane hung up Hagrid's beard for the last time, after filming [Harry Potter](#) and the Deathly Hallows part 2, the eighth and final adaptation from Rowling's books, it was with regret. He went on to star in David Pirie's well-received cop drama Murderland (2009) and in the last episodes of the US sitcom Frasier.

He memorably captured the years when entertainment crashed into investigations of sexual abuse as the veteran comedian Paul Finchley in the

Channel 4 drama series *National Treasure*, written by Jack Thorne, with Julie Walters as his wife and Andrea Riseborough as his troubled daughter. Times and attitudes had moved on: again there was a crumpled vulnerability as Finchley failed to come to terms with what was happening to him. In 2020, Coltrane appeared in Sky Arts' *Urban Myths* series as Orson Welles in Norwich.

He is survived by his son, Spencer, daughter, Alice, and sister, Annie.

Robbie Coltrane (Anthony Robert McMillan), actor, born 30 March 1950, died 14 October 2022

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2022.10.15 - Spotlight

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Love Island winner Ekin-Su on sex, spin-offs and surgery: 'I've not had anything major done. OK, apart from the boobs'

[Zoe Williams](#)



Ekin-Su Cülcüloğlu: 'I went in there knowing I didn't need it. If it doesn't work or I'm booted off, fine.' Composite: Portrait: Simon Webb. Digital illustration: Lisa Sheehan/The Guardian

She sashayed into the villa as just another bombshell, but stole the show. Now she's got a £1m fashion deal, TV gigs – and a hot Italian boyfriend. Has Ekin-Su Cülcüloğlu raised the bar for reality TV?



[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Sat 15 Oct 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 15 Oct 2022 02.01 EDT

During the audition process for Love Island, the producers ask potential contestants to draw their ideal partner. [Ekin-Su Cülcüloğlu](#), who won the latest season, along with her boyfriend Davide Sanclimenti, tells me what she drew. “I didn’t draw someone with a six-pack,” she says. “I just drew a stick man. I put stuff which was not based on the looks – which is really weird because I’ve ended up with someone who cares about his appearance. I put: cultured, family-oriented, loyal, confident, not cocky. Someone who works out and prioritises that; someone strong, my age.” (She’s 28, as is Sanclimenti.) “The producers said: ‘That’s really mature, because most people come in here saying, “I want a man who’s 5ft 10, big willy, someone who can carry me, tall, dark and handsome.” Really basic.’”

We are sitting in her PR firm’s office in Covent Garden, London, and she looks ready for anything – a club, the gym, a red carpet maybe – except perhaps a normal Wednesday morning. It’s not that she’s especially made up or even dressed up: bra top, leggings, cardigan. Rather, it’s the peculiar [Love Island](#) cocktail of perfection and enhancement; innate gorgeousness plumped with fillers so that all its stars, Cülcüloğlu in particular, look like humans who have been put through a filter, the Instagram version of real life. On

screen, she's very bombshell: big hair, big lips, pneumatic. In real life, she looks wider-eyed, more Disney princess.



Winning this year's Love Island with Davide Sanclimenti. Photograph: Matt Frost/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

Born in London to Turkish parents, Cülcüloğlu was living in Istanbul, dividing her time between there and Essex, working as an actor, and hoping to star in a film about the Ottoman empire, when the call of destiny came. Whether you've seen it or not, you presumably know the principle of [Love Island](#), but for those at the back, 10 improbably good-looking people in their 20s, five men, five women, are taken to a villa to share five double beds in a constantly surveilled dormitory. New people arrive throughout the series, to drive a wedge between existing couples, or pair off with another new arrival – Cülcüloğlu entered as one of these “bombshells” on day three. You cannot be single for long on Love Island, which is possibly its most brutal and atavistic aspect: without the warmth of a mate, you will perish. During the day, they do challenges, which often seem contrived unless the contestants really bring their A-game, and sometimes they go on dates. This year, the public got to vote three days before the start on who should be coupled with whom, so they started off in pairs not of their own choosing. It's like dropping rats into a cage by their tails.

Cülcüloğlu was not only a fan favourite, but became people's favourite contestant of all time. [New York magazine called her](#) "the best reality-TV star the world has ever seen AND a total sweetie pie", which nails the mood. She has an idiosyncratic sense of humour, sometimes surreal, sometimes bathetic, sometimes so straight-talking you can't not laugh. She talks a good game about being a hard arse (indeed, her opening self-introduction featured the immortal line: "I'm not here to make seasonal girlfriends"), and then completely capsizes all that with her warmth. What looks at first like arrogance is actually a very post-pandemic brand of empowerment, and her self-love is endearing and fun to watch, like a labrador with a ball machine on TikTok. The drama she creates is knowing rather than histrionic.

Love Island completed its eighth season this summer, and Cülcüloğlu is widely credited for the fact that the show, in defiance of reality TV convention, is somehow getting better not worse. She has walked out of the villa with a spin-off travel show for ITV2, visiting Italy and Turkey with Sanclimenti; the realistic prospect of a career in TV; a million-pound ambassador deal with the fashion label Oh Polly (thought to be the [biggest deal of any Love Island contestant](#)); and 3.2 million followers on Instagram. "I had 350 on Instagram already," she says. "I went in there knowing that I didn't need it, I could leave in the first week or the second week. I had the mentality of, if it doesn't work or I'm booted off, fine." She looks at me beadily, as if to appraise whether or not I'm young enough to know what "350" means and decides, on balance, probably not – "350,000", she clarifies. When I meet her, she's at the peak of her post-Island fame: she hasn't had one day off since leaving the villa in August, has been to New York, LA. She is heading back to Italy the day after we meet, and a week later announces she is to appear on the next Dancing on Ice.



On the catwalk at the launch of her fashion line at New York fashion week in September 2022. Photograph: Stephen Lovekin/Shutterstock

Oh, and let's not forget that she found *love*, which is what she was looking for. There's a question mark over the romantic sincerity of any Love Island couple, given that there's a cash reward for whoever falls in love the best, and the relationships aren't always the most durable, although, caveat, there are now as many Love Island babies – as in, children born to pairs of former contestants – as there have been seasons.

But fans and critics immediately remarked that Cülcüloğlu really seemed to mean it – that there was nothing confected about her feelings for Sanclimenti, and no underlying, cynical self, just in it for the screen time. Better still, they were constantly fighting, falling in love, falling out of love, falling back in again, in a way that appeared to be romcom real, because (apparently) it was. “Sometimes, Davide would say, ‘I don’t want to do this show any more, I don’t want to see Ekin.’ And I would say the same. You know: ‘I can’t stand this guy.’ We have pride, I’m not walking to him first, he’s not walking to me first.”

When you're in there, you don't have your phone. When you meet someone, there's nothing to distract you. You're just with your emotions

She famously got off with someone else, Jay, and then lied about it, prompting a mad soliloquy from Sanclimenti which ended in an analogy between Cülcüloğlu and a knock-off handbag. She is never more magnificent than in combat, and she knows it. “People said: ‘You spoke out about how you felt when things were going wrong, and most of the girls in there couldn’t.’” Most of the boys in there couldn’t, either. Anyway, she has no regrets. “Davide was very hard work at first. He was very closed. We would try and get to know each other, I’d get one-word answers. I thought, ‘What’s going on? This is Love Island. I’m gonna have to try someone else.’”

So sure, she’s a romantic, but quite a pragmatic one. “I was just thinking, ‘You know what? I’ve had shit luck with boys. I’ll try Tinder, Bumble and Love Island.’” This makes me laugh; the scale is all out of whack, it’s like saying: “You know what? I need a lift, I’ll try Uber, Bolt and Lewis Hamilton.” Love Island is, of course, a dating option only for the beauty elite, but Cülcüloğlu never acknowledges her considerable beauty, and is very insistent on this point. A lot of stories start: “The director saw me sitting on my own, I caught his attention somehow, I don’t know why”; or, “A music producer filmed me on his phone, and said: ‘Who’s this girl?’ It made no sense.” When she was doing a drama degree at the University of Central Lancashire, one of the tutors told her she was very funny, without knowing it, as if it were an accident. I don’t think it’s at all accidental.



Ekin-Su wears dress, nadinemerabi.com. Styling: Melanie Wilkinson. Hair: Harold Casey. Makeup: Krystal. Set design: Andie Redman. Photograph: Simon Webb/The Guardian

The insistent question of the enterprise, certainly to the middle-aged viewer, especially in the case of someone who already has a career, is this: why would you go on Love Island in the first place? Who would ever submit their entire private self to the public domain like this? It's not even, in essence, a question about sex, although the spectacle of people stripped to their pants, sharing a bed with a stranger and 360-degree camera coverage, certainly has voyeuristic charge, even for the contestants themselves, who are constantly monitoring one another's antics. It's a question about the self: if every emotion, at its most fragile incipience, is immediately visible to the whole world, who could withstand that? And what's left of you afterwards?

Digital natives don't find this anything like as confusing as their elders. You could argue that their line between public and private has already been so corroded by the realities of their online existence that the distinction no longer troubles them. Or you could argue that their lifelong immersion in social media has made them much more sophisticated in their self-fashioning, so they know instinctively what's real and what's for Instagram. It's also useful to take a longer view, since it's not historically unprecedented, this constant performance of the intimate: in their

declarations, their violent emotions, their sudden changes of heart, the contestants are a lot like Renaissance courtiers, except none of it rhymes.

Cülcüloğlu's motivation, as she characterises it, was almost anthropological. "If Love Island wasn't a show, I would be on there regardless, because of the experiment itself," she says. "You don't understand – when you're in there, you are isolated 10 days before, you don't have your phone. They're training you to forget the outside world. When you meet someone, there's nothing around you to distract you. You have no idea of the time, you don't know the date. You're just with your emotions."

The experience of meeting Cülcüloğlu is a lot like that of being on Love Island with her: on screen, we saw her immediately get everyone's backs up – well, those of the other women – just by being so confident. She is completely unabashed about her qualities, describing a childhood that was one triumph after another: "My mum and dad knew there was something special in me, knew there was a performance side"; "I got a distinction in all my exams, I could have been a ballerina. My ballet teacher used to say to me: 'You've got very good feet for ballet'"; "When we did school plays, the teacher would always know I was the girl who could sing, act, dance – I'd get the main role. Like if there was a Romeo and Juliet, I'd be Juliet"; "My music teacher used to say that I've got good music ears." But then gradually you start to fall for her – it's some combination of life force and generosity. She goes to a lot of trouble to make you laugh, and once you've surrendered to that, you no longer mind hearing about her great ears, feet, performances and GCSEs.

She whizzes through her childhood, achievement by achievement, sailing through school and a performing arts sixth form, doing brilliantly at university, signing up to an agent in Manchester and getting little adverts, but nothing major. She came to London in her early 20s to get an entry-level job in finance. "I'd split up with my boyfriend, actually one of my true loves. He cheated on me. I was in a very strange state, I felt lost. My parents were divorcing at the time. I didn't know what to do. My family aren't wealthy. We're just normal people, average class. I had to make money, I couldn't leave uni and do what everyone else does, go travelling, partying."



In the Turkish soap opera *Kuzey Yıldızı İlk Aşk* (North Star First Love)

In 2020, unhappy in office life, she moved to Istanbul; she was talent-spotted in the audience of a theatre, and was building a career on stage and screen in Turkey, appearing in the soap opera *Kuzey Yıldızı İlk Aşk* (North Star First Love), when the pandemic hit. “I was stuck in my flat for a year in Istanbul, couldn’t leave. No family, no friends. It was very strict out there – if you left your flat you would get a fine. Everything was closed.” It’s the kind of Covid experience that could break a lot of people, but Cülcüloğlu says, “I saw a lot of my friends on Zoom, and everyone was getting absolutely pissed. And I thought: ‘They’re losing their mental health.’”

That’s really not where I was expecting the story to go, but anyway. “So I took the opportunity to read books about self growth, psychology, the human brain. Why we feel sad, why we overthink. I really got into it, like it was my job. I started to do gym at home. I ordered these dumbbells, a treadmill. I was doing workouts, talking to myself in the mirror. I became my own friend. That’s when I realised I don’t need anyone. It’s really weird. I didn’t go crazy, I promise, I was just very independent.”

Self-reliance is a trait probably common to a lot of Love Island contestants. You could not submit to the endless judgment of others if you didn’t have steel at your core. But it can go either way: Molly-Mae Hague, a 2019

runner-up along with boxer Tommy Fury, quickly became a symbol of “[girlboss](#)” culture, with a reputation for empire building. Hague got a lot of flak for [saying that everyone has the same 24 hours](#) in a day, the implication being that people who didn’t hit gold weren’t digging hard enough. “If you’re homeless, just buy a home,” was how one detractor summarised it.

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We have our mics on 24 hours. There’s a mic on the bed. There’s cameras everywhere. You cannot fake it in there. After two days, your mask falls off

But that’s not Cülcüloğlu’s variant. She sees her resilience more as a quality built through 2020’s adversity. “You face your emotions when everything stops. You can go one way or another way. You could just give up and be an alcoholic and let yourself go and just blame the world for everything. Or you could think, ‘This is going to be over soon. The world’s not going to stop. People need their jobs. We’re going to get back to normality. I’m going to make the most of this moment.’”

She is, in other words, a toughie, which surely everyone in this mad petri dish of a show has to be. One of the strangest things about Love Island is the sight of them all wearing their microphones, whatever else they’re wearing. They may be in a bikini, indeed they’re always in a bikini, and there will still be this contraption strapped to their waists. It’s like a metaphor for how completely they’ve absorbed the artifice of the situation, that the

surveillance is part of the body, needn't even be hidden under clothes. But that isn't the half of it. "We wake up, we go to bed, we don't know what time, it could be 4am, 5am. The lights go off. We have our mics on 24 hours. If you take the mic off, there's a mic on the bed. There's a mic everywhere. There's cameras everywhere. You cannot fake it in there. After two days, your mask falls off. People hear you all the time." It sounds terrifying, dystopian, an exercise in how to break people. And contestants do walk off, though maybe not as often as you would expect (two people left voluntarily this season, including one in the first few days).

The show now prides itself on its pastoral care, but that's the product of a [complex and tragic past](#): two contestants, one presenter – [Caroline Flack](#) – and the [boyfriend of one contestant](#) have died by suicide since the current incarnation of the show launched in 2015. You can't draw straight lines on causality, but whatever producers can do to stabilise such a febrile scenario of their own making, Love Island's producers now do. "You are looked after like a baby," Cülcüloğlu says. "If I cut my finger, a medical team would be there in two minutes. With a plaster and a paracetamol. It's ridiculous. I think it's extreme care. Every day, you'd have a Zoom call for an hour with a psych, you explain how you feel, how your day is, any problems. It's all confidential, you take your mic off."



Ekin-Su wears dress, houseofcb.com. Portrait: Simon Webb. Digital illustration: Lisa Sheehan

One time, early on, the other girls just came out and told her they didn't like her (this shades into managed reality, since surely nobody ever does this in real life?). "I went into the Zoom and burst into tears. I didn't understand. I was just being myself. And the counsellor said: 'Ekin, you're being very strong. Sometimes that can intimidate people.'"

Sometimes the situations on Love Island are so conveniently symmetrical or fairytale – betrayals, denouements, rivalries, passion, played out at the most apposite time – that they feel almost scripted, but she insists nothing is. They're structured only in so far as contestants have these challenges, like party games for toddlers, except with snogging. Other than those and the dates, "The only time the producer would say something is if you're sitting on a beanbag doing absolutely fuck all. It's a show. No one wants to watch someone on a bean bag."

Cülcüloğlu seemed to be doing a lot of the heavy lifting in terms of "bringing the drama", which is what she promised to do from the start, "because I bring drama naturally in life. Whenever I'm out with friends, something happens, and I'm always involved or I cause it." One moment in particular stood out, where she competed with a Brazilian woman, Nathalia Campos, to make the best pancakes. It was such an anodyne thing, it could have looked like crap Bake Off, except they were so completely horrible to each other, it was electrifying – and Cülcüloğlu, I have to say, started it. The producers must have really appreciated that, I suggest. "No," she says, "I'm going to change what you've just said." Bold. "They wanted us to be nice, right? There are scenes in that that aren't shown. I was swearing. I chased her around with a wooden spoon. Actually a spatula. That was real. I was very angry, but it wasn't shown because it's a PG show. I've got a really fiery side when people annoy me." It's the reverse of what I expected: I'd figured they'd edited out all the bits where she was calm.

I'm getting rid of the highlights. Whatever lip filler I have, I'm going to dissolve. I didn't like the fake look. I think natural beauty is a lot prettier

It's not a controversy so much as a talking point, but another sense in which Love Island is considered a problematic social influence is for the unattainable beauty standard it sets, and how unashamedly fake it all is, establishing a norm in which anyone who doesn't look one Barbie way is just not spending or trying hard enough. Has the taboo around having cosmetic work completely vanished, for this generation? "People now realise you can't lie," she says. "Nobody's stupid, it just makes you look fake if you say, 'I haven't had anything done,' when you clearly have." Even though it's normalised, when Cülcüloğlu watched the show back, she decided she would "strip down", she says: "get rid of the blond highlights, go back to my natural colour – I'm getting it dyed this afternoon. Whatever lip filler I have, I'm going to dissolve. I didn't like the fake look. I think natural beauty is a lot prettier. I've not had anything major done to myself, right? OK, apart from the boobs."

At what point with Love Island does reality TV become merely porn with incompetent camera angles? Whether or not you think porn is bad in and of itself, you'd probably agree that people should enter into it willingly and openly, and not be led down a complicated path via a series of semi-clad challenges.

But here's the thing: "No one had sex this year," Cülcüloğlu says. Seriously? "I'll tell you why. It's a new villa. There is this much space [she indicates about 10 inches] between the beds. Who was going to have sex when there's cameras everywhere? People were doing things towards the end, like blow drying. That was real" – she has defaulted to the "code" contestants used during the show to describe sexual acts – "but no one actually had their salon open. Even when I left the villa with Davide, we couldn't really relax. The time wasn't right." So, wait, they got into this entire relationship, which is now also a TV double-act, inked the contract on the travel show, declared love in an amphitheatre in front of two troubadours, and had more fights than some people have had in a 20-year marriage, before they'd even shagged? "Yeah," she says, looking at me as if to say, "What of it?"



Ekin-Su and Davide were serenaded by tenor Alfie Boe in an ampitheatre on their final Love Island date. Photograph: ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

If you can't judge Love Island by the success of its couples as they leave the show (which you really can't; people in their 20s split up the whole time), it is still reasonable to ask, what are those relationships like, forged in this bizarre way? She seems to really like Sanclimenti, at least: "If you look at him, you think, 'Oh, what a handsome guy he is.' But deep down he's got such a soft love. He's got a very pure heart."

She is not being schmaltzy. She tells it to me straight: "A relationship is about prioritising each other, not being wrapped around a man: being your own independent woman, being able to say, 'I don't need you. I want you to add happiness to my life. If you're not, then goodbye.'"

When the winning couple left the villa, they stayed briefly at a hotel before they went home. What was that first night like? "Davide went, 'Is there a camera here? Are they filming us now?' We looked around the room for cameras. We were so paranoid. We were so used to the things, you think they're everywhere." They went straight into filming the travel show. "I didn't realise how real reality was," Cülcüloğlu says. "Every minute, they're filming us. We're a real couple, every married couple argues. You don't have privacy. They were with us every day." I initially wondered what the

relationship would feel like, without cameras on it, but maybe the better question is, will there ever be a relationship that doesn't have cameras on it?

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Blind date: ‘My trousers were a bit tight for such a warm night’



Composite: Jim Wileman

Laura, 38, playwright, meets Tom, 47, job in transition

Sat 15 Oct 2022 01.00 EDT



Laura on Tom

What were you hoping for?

Good food, easy conversation, a belly laugh if possible. Absolute worst case would make my Edinburgh Fringe show for next year.

First impressions?

Smiley, friendly, smart.

What did you talk about?

All sorts of things, from theatre to therapy, education to cheese.

Any awkward moments?

Not really, just an early panic that I'd turned up at the wrong restaurant (I hadn't).

Good table manners?

I'm not too fussed about table manners but we shared food without fighting.

Best thing about Tom?

His openness.

Would you introduce Tom to your friends?

He knows one of my friends already!

Describe Tom in three words.

Joyful, warm-hearted, curious.

What do you think Tom made of you?

I'll wait to hear – hopefully just that I'm not a total c***.

Did you go on somewhere?

We had some wine in the courtyard.

And ... did you kiss?

A light peck goodbye.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

I would've ordered a negroni.

Marks out of 10?

This feels mean – I'll just say gold star.

Would you meet again?

Sure. There's more wine to drink.

Q&A

Want to be in Blind date?

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of

person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.



Tom on Laura

What were you hoping for?

Good food, good chat, the crackle of attraction.

First impressions?

Warm, friendly, great smile.

What did you talk about?

All sorts: our jobs, dating, family, theatre, the surrealness of what we were doing.

Any awkward moments?

No, not really. Some very lovely comfortable silences, actually. Laura held conversation well.

Good table manners?

Exemplary: slow and considered eating. I had to check my desire to wolf down food.

Best thing about Laura?

Self knowledge.

Would you introduce Laura to your friends?

Absolutely yes.

Describe Laura in three words.

Engaging, honest, fair.

What do you think Laura made of you?

That's hard. I think she thought I was good company.

Did you go on somewhere?

It was a balmy evening and I walked her home, we had a drink in her courtyard, talked and giggled.

And ... did you kiss?

A non-lingering kiss at the end of the evening.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

My trousers. They were a bit tight on a warm night.

Marks out of 10?

Not doing this number rating thing.

Would you meet again?

We swapped numbers and have messaged. She was off to Edinburgh for the month with her show so... I wonder how long that drive is? I suppose we'll see what happens when she's back.

Tom and Laura ate at [Salumi](#), Plymouth. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Cheap, delicious - and only three years out of date: my week of eating food past its best-before

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/15/cheap-delicious-and-only-three-years-out-of-date-my-week-of-eating-food-past-its-best-before>

[The watcher](#)Television & radio

Aldi's Next Big Thing: it's Dragons' Den with no tension or drama – so why am I hooked?

If you find MasterChef too high-octane, this might just be the low-stakes TV you've been hunting for



From left: Chris Bavin, Anita Rani and Julie Ashfield. Photograph: Aldi

[Joel Golby](#)

Sat 15 Oct 2022 02.01 EDT

Thousands of people in the UK, like me, are part of a sordid and secret society. My family do not know about my participation in this community, and neither do my friends. To them I am a normal person, who smiles and nods and holds conversations. And then I go home and – I can barely bring

myself to say. I ... debase myself by watching loads of clips of Dragons' Den on YouTube.

The DDYTUK (Dragons' Den YouTube UK) community is made up of people who once innocently watched a Dragons' Den clip on YouTube, and thought that would be the end of it. But then it gets its claws in you. Each clip is the same: between nine and 11 minutes long, and encompasses a pitch in its entirety. The ride up the lift; the "Hello, Dragons"; the smile and awkward cough; the two-minute spiel and five-minute interrogation; the bit where Duncan Bannatyne turns completely sideways for some reason; the offers. Somehow, over the course of this, you become deeply attached to the success or failure of a product, and when you move out into the real world and see it on shelves, you feel a pang of support. There is a little noise buried deep within the Dragons' Den ambient soundtrack – a chirruping little bip-boop – that comes feverishly to me in my dreams.

I was reminded of this when watching Aldi's Next Big Thing, which is a bit like Dragons' Den – or that Apprentice task where they pitch to supermarkets – just without the good bits, like the drama and the tension and the reason at all to care. The format is this: it's all right to like [Aldi](#) now because every year a newspaper finds itself surprised to declare that they have the best Christmas pudding or a really good sub-£10 red. Aldi, as a result, is constantly buying up huge orders of new products to put in their almost 1,000 British stores. But how do they find them? Well, budding food entrepreneurs come to their HQ and pitch. And Aldi tastes each one and goes: "Is there any way you could make this pie for 69p?" And they go: no not really. And Aldi goes: thank you for your time.

This is what I understood from Aldi's Next Big Thing (Channel 4, Thursday, 8pm), anyway, which is a programme that almost but doesn't really show the process of taking a really nice cake someone makes at home and turning it into 100,000 units sitting in a truck. This might be because the show is all over the place. The first half is aiming for early MasterChef-round high drama, where six cooks are invited to a windowless room to prepare a tray of food for three judges (Aldi's Julie Ashfield, presenter Anita Rani and that clone of Gregg Wallace the US army made in a lab, Chris Bavin), but always falls short. When the trays emerge, contestants are encouraged to tell a story,

which usually means they bring a framed picture of their family out and start crying. Then Julie Ashfield tastes all the food, asks whether it would make sense to freeze it and whether they can make a million versions of it by next week, and sends them home when they say no.

The second half of the show is more interesting. The two contestants who survived the crying-and-serving-things-on-a-tray stage are sent back to their home base to try to figure out the logistics of making their handmade meals in a huge factory run by machines. They sometimes have to redesign their packaging to make it more supermarket-friendly, for instance, and the insight into that process is actually quite intriguing. Essentially, the best part of this show is watching someone optimise their recipe for a ready meal. The rest of it is very tired TV I've seen dozens of times before.

But by episode two ... I found myself oddly absorbed. I have been trying to figure out why, and I think it's because there is an absolute absence of peril. When Aldi's Next Big Thing is good, it taps into the ambient sort-of-interestingness of Inside the Factory, where Gregg Wallace just wears a hairnet and occasionally says "Wow". Watching someone work out a kink with the dryness of a chicken pie was bizarrely worth the 40 minutes of nothing that led up to it. If you are afraid of joining the DDYTUK community because you find the fact that things actually happen in Dragons' Den too intense, I have an unlikely solution for you. An hour of watching Aldi figure out if they want to sell this cake or not might just be the low-stakes TV you've been looking for.

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2022.10.15 - Opinion

- The markets have taken back control: so much for Truss's Brexit delusion of sovereignty
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OpinionLiz Truss

The markets have taken back control: so much for Truss's Brexit delusion of sovereignty

Jonathan Freedland



This is the biggest humiliation of Britain since Suez, a reminder that no government can ignore reality



‘Liz Truss is finished, a hollow husk of a prime minister.’ Photograph: Sean Smith/The Guardian

Fri 14 Oct 2022 11.55 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 16.29 EDT

Hard to believe now, when we’re in the middle of the maelstrom, but one day this too will be the past. And when it is, when we’re out of the hourly psychodrama – no longer staring at the screen, watching Kwasi Kwarteng’s plane do an actual U-turn in the sky en route to his [being fired](#) on touchdown, for the crime of doing what his boss wanted him to do – it may not look all that complicated.

Historians will look back and see a point of origin to the current madness, one that explains how a new prime minister could see her administration fall apart in a matter of weeks, even if we struggle to name that cause out loud right now. When the textbooks of the future come to the chapter we are living through, in the autumn of 2022, they will start with the summer of 2016: [Brexit](#) and the specific delusion that drove it.

They will point to the obvious impact of Britain’s decision to leave the European Union, and the role that played in upending a country once renowned for its stability. They might begin with the basics. Exit, they will write, shrank the UK economy thanks to a [5.2% fall in GDP](#), a 13.7% fall in

investment and a similar drop in the trade in goods. That self-inflicted contraction helps explain why Britain felt international shocks – surging inflation, for example – harder than most. If your economy is smaller, you either have to tax people more to pay for the services they expect, or you cut those services, or you borrow. There are no other ways out.

Unless you resort to magical thinking. Which brings us to the second causal connection between the craziness of now and the turning point of 2016. Brexit broke the link between governance and reason, between policy and evidence. Until Brexit, politicians only rarely got away with defying the empirical facts or elementary logic. But in 2016 they pretended that a country could weaken its trading ties to its nearest neighbours and get richer, which is like saying you can step in a bath of ice and get warmer. Once the taboo on magical thinking was broken, once fantasy became a Conservative habit, Trussonomics became inevitable – smilingly insisting that you could cut taxes for the richest, make [“absolutely” no cuts to public services](#) and control borrowing, all at the same time.

But there is a less obvious way in which Brexit made the current great unravelling a political death foretold. It turns on the idea that powered the urge to leave the EU more than any other: call it the sovereignty delusion.

The leavers’ slogan, “Take back control”, urged Britons to shake off the constraints of Brussels and become a proud, sovereign nation once more – a nation that, alone, would decide its fate. After Brexit, they promised, Britain would be the sole master of its destiny, unburdened by the need to consult or even accommodate anyone else.

The three weeks since Kwarteng [delivered his mini-budget](#) have seen the shattering of that delusion. For Truss and her now ex-chancellor were given the rudest of reminders that in our interdependent world there is no such thing as pure, untrammelled sovereignty. No government can do what the hell it likes, heedless of others. In this case, the restraint on sovereignty was not the EU: it was the money markets. But their verdict was as binding as any Brussels edict; in fact it was more so. They ordered the removal of a chancellor after just 38 days in office and the cancellation of the government’s economic strategy. It is the financial markets that have taken back control.

None of these events should be a surprise. There were plenty who warned this would happen, not least Truss's summer opponent, Rishi Sunak. But Truss and Kwarteng went ahead anyway, issuing their proclamations as if they were the sole actors on the stage, oblivious to the fact that you can't just announce £43bn of unfunded tax cuts without those whom you expect to lend you the money expressing a view – in this case by triggering an instant spike in the cost of borrowing. You cannot simply bypass the official spending scrutineer, the Office for Budget Responsibility, without the markets concluding that you've become unpredictable and, therefore unreliable, a bad risk.

As remainers were mocked for pointing out six long years ago, there is no such thing as unfettered sovereignty in the 21st century: every country has to accommodate its neighbours, the global economy, reality. But the leavers, and their zealous convert Truss, refused to hear it. When Sunak tried to spell out these rudimentary facts, Conservative party members thought he was being a spoilsport. The Treasury permanent secretary, Tom Scholar, was seen as the embodiment of such boring, reality-based thinking, and so [Truss fired him](#).

This week Sanjay Raja, chief UK economist of Deutsche Bank, [told a Commons committee](#) that Britain was facing a unique form of trade shock: "We haven't seen this kind of trade deficit since 1955, since national account records began." It was odd, because I too had been thinking about the mid-1950s, specifically the Suez crisis of 1956. The failure of that military adventure is now seen as the moment when a bucket of cold reality was thrown into Britain's face, a humiliation that stripped the country of its imperial delusions, forcing it to accept that it was no longer a global superpower that could act alone. For a while, Britain learned that lesson: just five years after Suez, the country was knocking on Europe's door, asking to join the club.

But some, especially in the Conservative party, never shook off the old delusion. By 2016, it was back, the Tories high on Brexit talk of a global Britain once again sailing the world's oceans, free of the constraining hand of the EU, ready to return to its rightful grandeur. The Tories have been breathing those fumes for six years, and the Truss-Kwarteng mini-budget

was the result: the Suez of economic policy, a disastrous act of imagined imperial sovereignty.

As several economists have noted, Truss was acting as if Britain were the US, issuer of the [world's reserve currency](#), with markets falling over themselves to lend it money. Like Anthony Eden before her, she could not accept that Britain's place is not what it was: it can never be sovereign like a king in a fairytale, able to bend the world to his will. That kind of sovereignty was always a fantasy, one that both fed Brexit and was fed by it.

Now she has had to make a concession to reality, laying down the political life of her friend and abandoning what had been a signature policy. She is not in charge of events; she is not even in charge of her own government. Jeremy Hunt was an appointment forced on her. Her demeanour in her afternoon press conference on Friday – shell-shocked, brittle – suggested she has not absorbed the full meaning of what has just happened.

She is finished, a hollow husk of a prime minister. But this is bigger than that. The Brexit bubble has burst. The country has seen that the Tory hallucination of an island able to command the tides was no more than a fever dream, and a dangerous one at that. We can pronounce Trussonomics dead. Bring on the day we can say the same of the delusion that spawned it.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

[Opinion](#)[Relationships](#)

My partner cheated on me on Strictly, but it took another heartbreak for me to quit toxic love

[Rebecca Humphries](#)



One relationship ended publicly, then I fell for another broken-bird boy. I had to acknowledge what these situations had in common



Rebecca Humphries: ‘To truly be rid of toxic love involves a long, hard look in the mirror.’ Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer

Sat 15 Oct 2022 04.00 EDT

For some people, heartbreak looks like inhaling a chest freezer’s worth of Ben & Jerry’s, sitting saucer-eyed in the bath like a sad frog, or screaming your way through Alanis Morissette’s entire back catalogue.

For me, heartbreak looked like a flight from Los Angeles to New York in March after yet another “romantic estrangement”. We started experiencing turbulence somewhere over Nebraska. The plane lurched, lights flickered, and a bowel-emptying plunge took those who had not belted up out of their seats. Masks dropped, adults prayed and children screamed bloody murder. Me? I just sat staring straight ahead, uncaring. My heart had been ripped out a couple of days earlier. I was already dead.

This feeling has happened to me once before, publicly, in 2018 when my boyfriend at the time was papped kissing his dance partner from the television show *Strictly Come Dancing* – on my birthday. After I put a [statement](#) out detailing his gaslighting behaviour, news of other affairs came out publicly, too. For a brief while, I was one half of the poster couple for

toxic love. I hadn't even known that love shouldn't look like it did for us, that an insidious loss of joy, opinion and confidence wasn't what was required of me. I just thought relationships took work and compromise, and weren't always plain sailing, and a whole host of other unhelpful soundbites I had filed away over the years to justify the daily pain.

Here's something else about toxicity – once you know about it, you see it everywhere. After I left him, my eyes were open to the toxic messages rammed into pop culture. Ever since I was capable of conscious thought, Disney and Jane Austen and Julia Roberts films have all made it clear that my mission was to shed parts of my life in order to step into a man's. Add to that the fact the only women I had ever seen fall in love or have sex in films growing up were thin and beautiful (unless they're shamed for being “chunky” like Martine McCutcheon in *Love Actually* or Renée Zellweger in *Bridget Jones's Diary*). The only emotional abuse victims I had ever seen on screen were portrayed as submissive, terrified Little-Mo-from-EastEnders types and nothing like me at all, and the only perpetrators were snarling domestic terrorists. No wonder I couldn't recognise toxicity when it was right in front of me. No wonder I felt lucky to be loved in whatever form it took.

In the two years after the *Strictly* incident, I worked very hard pulling out of my body the sticky, tar-like residue that gaslighting leaves you with. I met someone new. Someone sensitive, kind, thoughtful. We were ecstatically happy. We moved in together, then we moved to LA, and two weeks after arriving in the US he broke up with me. Two days later my shattered heart was being thrown about 30,000 feet over Nebraska.

But my heartbreak hadn't come from being dumped. It had come from the inescapable knowledge that, though they had been very different men, I had behaved the same in both relationships. I had shrunk myself to tiptoe around their difficulties. I had prioritised their needs to the point where I couldn't remember what mine were. I had exhausted myself watering a plant that was already crispy and brown, kidding myself it wasn't dead.

The heartbreak came from knowing I would never be rid of toxic love – ever – if I didn't acknowledge that the only thing all the toxic situations in my

life had in common was me. The difficulty with quitting toxic love is that to truly be rid of it involves a long, hard look in the mirror. And for those of us who are self-critical enough as it is, looking in the mirror can feel much more difficult than repeating the same mistakes until we die.

How has the healing journey been? Godawful, excruciating, exhausting. Was it the right thing to turn it around on myself? Absolutely. It's not self-blame, it's taking responsibility. The moment you accept that the only thing you have any control over is yourself, that's when you start creating healthy boundaries instead of pompous ultimatums, and checking in with your own emotional needs instead of believing yourself more desirable if they don't exist. When you face up to the fact you've been wafting around picking up broken-bird boys and nursing them back to health, like a Disney-princess Florence Nightingale, because it distracts from the real broken mess – yourself – that's when you can expect something to change.

Healing involves a huge amount of discomfort, but refusing to heal? You might as well sit and wait for the plane to go down.

- Rebecca Humphries is an actor and author of [Why Did You Stay?](#)
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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The politics sketchConservatives

Kamikwasi takes Librium Liz's offer to consciously uncouple from train wreck

John Crace



Decision to sack chancellor for bonkers mini-budget to restore her credibility was futile. PM and Tories are a laughing stock



Even the Telegraph, usually a safe port in a storm, didn't hold back at Liz Truss's press conference. Photograph: Carlos Jasso/EPA

Fri 14 Oct 2022 13.08 EDT

On Thursday afternoon, [Kwasi Kwarteng](#) told reporters in New York he wasn't going anywhere. As an expression of physical intent it turned out to be well wide of the mark. The chancellor was back in the UK a day early on Friday morning. But as a statement of existential despair it was spot on. Kamikwasi is going nowhere.

His political career is finished. His credibility trashed. Destined to become a pub quiz question as the shortest-serving chancellor who didn't die in office. Still, at least he got a lot done in his 38 days. Forced the Bank of England into a £65bn bailout of pension funds. And increased everyone's mortgages. Nice work if you can get it.

After landing at Heathrow, Kwarteng took his last ride in a ministerial Range Rover back to Downing Street for [Liz Truss](#) to administer the last rites. The prime minister having apparently switched sides to the "anti-growth coalition" and decided to sack her pro-growth chancellor. It turns out

there are limits to how unpopular Librium Liz is prepared to be. She hasn't seen anything yet.

Their conversation must have been awkward. Not to mention surreal. "I'm going to have to sack you for doing all the things we agreed in the mini-budget: I just can't tolerate that level of loyalty from my chancellor. Imagine if every minister did exactly what I wanted. What kind of state would the country be in? Surely you must have realised I was bat-shit crazy and not to be trusted. But anyway, I'm demanding of you a futile gesture. If you resign then suddenly my credibility will be restored. People will begin to realise I know exactly what I'm doing."



After landing at Heathrow, Kwasi Kwarteng took his last ride in a ministerial Range Rover back to Downing Street. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

The exchange of letters was equally bizarre. Kamikwasi's letter was a model of restrained politeness. With an undercurrent of passive-aggression. Understandable in the circumstances. "Your success is the country's success," he wrote. Twisting the dagger. Shame about the financial markets and all that, but you live and learn. And people shouldn't have bought houses they couldn't afford. Kwarteng went on. No one could have predicted

that things would get worse after 23 September. Just mad. Still no understanding that it was his budget that created the chaos.

Librium Liz's reply was no more grounded in reality. She began by praising him. As if crashing the economy was a tremendous achievement. Then she wrote that she respected his decision to resign. Hang on. He didn't have a choice. You just sacked him, so he could hardly have remained in office. It made it look as if she wasn't sure exactly who had sacked who. Maybe it had been a conscious uncoupling. Gwynnie would have been proud.

Then came the press conference. If you can call something that lasted eight minutes that. Best to call it for what it was. A train wreck. Beyond awful. More like a short suicide note. One that radiated anxiety and insecurity. One that screamed Truss wasn't up to the job. Never had been. Never would be. The Tory members had signed their own death warrant for the next election by making her leader. It had been obvious to everyone else she would be a disaster. And she hadn't let us down.

Truss opened the train wreck with a brief statement. She sounded even more robotic and disconnected than usual. Out of touch with herself. Out of touch with her party. Out of touch with the country. It would have been kinder if her minders had put her out of her misery and pressed the off button. It was excruciating to watch. A postcard from the edge. A tacit admission she was incapable of being prime minister.

Librium Liz then regressed to her childhood. The grinding middle-class poverty of being brought up in a nice area of Leeds. Previous Tory governments of which she had been part had let the country down. She was still committed to growth. She would do everything all over again in a heartbeat if given the chance.

Her one fault had been to try to do everything too quickly. So she was going to do yet another U-turn on her budget and increase corporation tax after all. And hopefully that would do. But if the markets were still unimpressed then she still had some other unfunded tax cuts she could reverse. And to prove she was serious, she had appointed [Jeremy Hunt](#) as the new chancellor. Quite what was in it for Hunt was less clear. His economics are not that

much different to Kamikwasi's so perhaps he's just hoping to break his predecessor's record for length of time in office. A race to the bottom.



Is Jeremy Hunt hoping to break his predecessor's record for length of time in office? Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

It was all bonkers. Delusional. As if Truss still didn't quite understand the seriousness of the situation. She also looked terrible. Washed out. There was a part of her that was terrified: a part she was struggling to suppress. She could barely even read out the names of the four journalists to whom she was prepared to grant a question. First up was the Telegraph. Usually a safe port in a storm. Not this time. Could she say why she should stay as prime minister and her chancellor should go? It was a joint project after all.

"I took decisive action," she stumbled. Seemingly unaware that her decisive action had caused the chaos in the first place. Everything since had been reactive and defensive. Her voice petered out. Next she turned to Harry Cole of the Sun. But even her authorised biographer didn't give her a break. Perhaps he's already rewriting the final chapter. He too wanted to know why she wasn't also resigning. There was a long pause before she mumbled nonsense about decisive action. Her artificial stupidity needed a reboot.

There were two final questions that went unanswered before Librium Liz dashed for the exit. Journalists left in the room were shell-shocked. Unable to process the shambles. It was the Trussterfuck of all Trussterfucks. There was literally no point to her premiership. All her leadership promises had unravelled. All that was left was to implement someone else's plan. Anyone's. She was a laughing stock. The Tories were a laughing stock. Give it a week or two and she would be gone. This press conference had merely been the Chronicle of a Death Foretold.

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Why does my face look like a disco ball when I put on makeup? Edith Pritchett cartoon

[Edith Pritchett](#)

Sat 15 Oct 2022 01.01 EDTLast modified on Sat 15 Oct 2022 01.25 EDT

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[Daphne Caruana Galizia](#)

Two brothers jailed after admitting murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia

George and Alfred Degiorgio both given 40-year sentences for killing of Maltese journalist in 2017 car bombing



Daphne Caruana Galizia, a Maltese investigative journalist, had written extensively about suspected corruption in political and business circles. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Juliette Garside](#)

[@JulietteGarside](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 16.47 EDTFirst published on Fri 14 Oct 2022 13.27 EDT

Two brothers charged with the car-bomb assassination of the Maltese journalist [Daphne Caruana Galizia](#) have both been sentenced to 40 years in prison, after dramatically pleading guilty to her murder on the first day of their trial.

Caruana Galizia, who had investigated political corruption in the European Union's smallest member state, died in an explosion that destroyed her car as she drove away from home on [16 October 2017](#).

George Degiorgio, 59, and Alfred Degiorgio, 57, were given 40-year prison terms, meaning three of the seven men so far accused of conspiring to commit the murder have now been convicted.

The trial in Valletta's central court, which has drawn international attention, began on Friday morning with both men denying all six charges laid against them, including wilful homicide, causing a fatal explosion, illegally possessing explosives and criminal conspiracy.

In an unexpected twist, after an extended midday break that followed a morning during which the prosecution set out its case, the brothers were ushered into the courtroom and asked to re-enter their pleas, the Times of [Malta](#) reported.



Mandy Mallia lights candles at a memorial to her sister Daphne Caruana Galizia in Valletta on Friday. Photograph: AP

George Degiorgio stood before the judge, who asked him again: “How do you plead?”

In front of Caruana Galizia's three sons and her husband, he replied: "Guilty."

Alfred Degiorgio, who uses a wheelchair and is under medical supervision after going on hunger strike to protest against the prosecution, entered the same plea.

The judge told the court the two men had been examined by a doctor and a psychiatrist beforehand, to verify they were of sound mind and understood the implications of changing their legal position.

In proceedings that were being monitored by an array of international observers, with members from press and free speech groups including Reporters without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Article 19 seated on the benches, the brothers were each sentenced to four decades, although time served is likely to be reduced if they can show good behaviour.

Their accomplice Vincent Muscat, a member of the gang that planted the bomb, avoided a trial after earlier changing his plea to guilty and providing evidence for the prosecution. Muscat is [serving a 15-year sentence](#).

Daphne's son Paul Caruana Galizia was the first family member to respond publicly. He tweeted: "A break in the clouds."

A break in the clouds.

Guilty: Degiorgio brothers admit killing Daphne in sensational turnaround <https://t.co/uIrRkbkWd0>

— Paul Caruana Galizia (@pcaruanagalizia) [October 14, 2022](#)

During a series of heated exchanges, George Degiorgio asked to address his victim's family but was reportedly shouted down and left the courtroom. His brother then rose from his wheelchair and spoke to Caruana Galizia's widower, telling him: "Now you will know the whole truth, whoever was involved either way."

The brothers had unsuccessfully tried to negotiate a pardon in exchange for naming bigger alleged conspirators, including a former minister whose identity has not been revealed.

Prosecutors alleged they were hired to carry out a contract killing, paid for by a top Maltese businessman with government ties. That businessman, Yorgen Fenech, has been charged and will be tried separately.

Fenech was indicted in 2019 for alleged complicity in the killing, by either ordering or instigating the commission of the crime, inciting another to commit the crime or by promising to give a reward after the fact. He was also indicted for conspiracy to commit murder. Fenech has entered not guilty pleas to all charges. No date has been set for his trial.

A self-confessed middleman, the taxi driver Melvin Theuma, was granted a presidential pardon in 2019 in exchange for testimony against Fenech and the other alleged plotters. Two men, Jamie Vella and Robert Agius, have been charged with supplying the bomb, but their trial has not yet begun.

The case had taken years to reach trial, delayed by attempts from the defendants to have proceedings dismissed. They had requested presidential pardons, filed constitutional objections and objected on fair trial grounds. They had complained of being unable to find their own counsel and protested about having to rely on legal aid lawyers, saying it was a breach of their rights.

A well-known newspaper columnist and magazine publisher, Caruana Galizia, 53, had also made a name as Malta's foremost investigative journalist, publishing her findings on her website, Running Commentary. She reported extensively on suspected corruption in political and business circles in the Mediterranean island nation, an attractive financial haven.

Among her targets were senior members of the government of the then prime minister, Joseph Muscat, whom she accused of having set up offshore companies in tax havens days after entering office. But she also targeted the opposition. When she was killed she had become a target for online and political attacks, was facing more than 40 libel suits and her bank accounts had been frozen.

The bomb had been placed under the driver's seat and the explosion was powerful enough to send the car off the road and into a field.

The 2019 arrest of Fenech, the heir to a property empire with connections to senior government officials, prompted a series of mass protests in the country, eventually [forcing Muscat to resign](#).

The European parliament president, Roberta Metsola, a Maltese politician who has supported the Caruana Galizia family's long struggle to secure prosecutions and political reforms, said the fight must continue. "This is not justice," she said. "Now for those who ordered and paid for it, those who protected them and those who spent years doing everything imaginable to try to cover it up."

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[Rupert Murdoch](#)

Rupert Murdoch considering merging Fox and News Corp once again

Merger would combine Fox News and TMZ with newspaper and online news operations, almost a decade after they split



Rupert Murdoch divided his media empire in 2013. Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

[Dominic Rushe](#) and agencies

Fri 14 Oct 2022 21.01 EDTLast modified on Sat 15 Oct 2022 15.11 EDT

The two parts of Rupert Murdoch's media empire are discussing a merger nearly a decade after they split.

The merger would combine Murdoch's [Fox News](#) and TMZ assets with News Corp's newspaper and online news operations, including the Times and the Sun in the UK, the Wall Street Journal and New York Post in the US, and the Australian.

In a press release, News Corp confirmed that following instructions from Murdoch and the Murdoch Family Trust, the companies have formed a special committee “composed of independent and disinterested members of the board” to begin exploring a potential combination.

The Murdoch-owned Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that the News Corp chief executive, Robert Thomson, had informed staff about the potential merger.

“At News Corp, we are constantly pursuing ways to enhance our performance and expand our businesses, and the upheaval in media presents both challenges and opportunities,” he wrote in a memo. “However, I would like to stress that the Special Committee has not made any determination at this time, and there can be no certainty that any transaction will result from its evaluation.”

After years of expansion globally, Murdoch [split his empire in 2013](#), placing the print business in a newly created public entity, News Corp, and the TV and entertainment under 21st Century Fox.

Murdoch said at the time that his vast media holdings had become “increasingly complex” and that a new structure would simplify operations. The split also shielded Fox’s entertainment assets from any potential financial fallout from a phone hacking scandal involving the media conglomerate’s now-defunct News of the World publication in the UK.

The thinking at the time was that separating the companies ultimately would generate value for shareholders, according to one person familiar with the decision-making. That vision was realized as Fox sold the bulk of its film and television assets [to Walt Disney for \\$71bn](#) in 2019.

The sale left Fox focused on live events such as news and sports, rather than “disruptable” scripted entertainment content on the streaming platforms, Wall Street analysts observed at the time.

The major streaming services, however, have begun breaching the protective moat. Apple and Amazon, two technology giants with deep financial

resources, have begun bidding for sports, securing rights to stream Major League Baseball, soccer and football games.

Fox recently renewed a long-term deal with the NFL to continue broadcasting Sunday afternoon games, but relinquished Thursday Night Football to Amazon.

Reuniting Fox and News Corp would give the combined companies greater scale to compete, and complement their assets, the person familiar with the proposal said. The combined companies would have about \$24bn in revenue.

Murdoch, 91, currently has near-controlling stakes in both the companies. His son Lachlan Murdoch is chairman and CEO of Fox Corp. Companies that adopt such arrangements typically make subsequent mergers subject to approval by a majority of shareholders not affiliated with their controlling shareholder, though it's not clear whether this will be the case in this instance.

As of market-close on Friday, News Corp had a market cap of \$9.31bn and Fox Corp was \$16.84bn. News Corp shares surged 5% and Fox rose about 1% in after-market trade.

Reuters contributed to this story

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[Joe Biden](#)

Iran protests: Joe Biden says US stands with ‘brave women’ after Mahsa Amini death

President tells demonstrators that Iran’s protests ‘awakened something that I don’t think will be quieted for a long, long time’



Joe Biden told protesters holding ‘Free Iran’ signs at a California college that ‘we stand with the citizens, the brave women of Iran’. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse

Fri 14 Oct 2022 21.39 EDT

Joe Biden has said he is “stunned” by the mass protests in Iran and that the US stands with that country’s “brave women”.

The US president said at a college in Irvine, California, during an address to a group of protesters holding “Free Iran” signs: “I want you to know that we stand with the citizens, the brave women of [Iran](#).”

Biden said: “It stunned me what it awakened in Iran. It awakened something that I don’t think will be quieted for a long, long time.”

Iran has seen its biggest wave of demonstrations in years after the [death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini](#) following her arrest by the morality police. More than 100 people have been killed since, according to Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights.

The unrest has continued despite what Amnesty International called an “unrelenting brutal crackdown” that included an “all-out attack on child protesters”, leading to the deaths of at least 23 minors.

Biden spoke briefly about the Iran protests ahead of a speech on lowering costs for American families in Irvine, near Los Angeles, which has a large Persian community.

“Women all over the world are being persecuted in various ways, but they should be able to wear in God’s name what they want to wear,” the president said.

Iran “has to end the violence against its own citizens simply exercising their fundamental rights”.

Biden told the local Persian community: “I want to thank you all for speaking out.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/15/iran-protests-joe-biden-says-us-stands-with-brave-women-after-mahsa-amini-death>

[Movies](#)

Iran bans director Mani Haghighi from attending London film festival

The Subtraction director had his passport confiscated by Iranian authorities and was prevented from boarding his flight to the UK, allegedly with no reason given



Mani Haghighi speaking from Tehran after being prevented from attending the London film festival. Photograph: BBC

[Andrew Pulver](#)

[@Andrew_Pulver](#)

Fri 14 Oct 2022 11.50 EDTLast modified on Fri 14 Oct 2022 11.57 EDT

Iranian film-maker Mani Haghighi has been banned from leaving the country and had his passport confiscated after attempting to travel to London, where his latest film Subtraction is screening at the [London film festival](#).

[In a video statement](#), Haghighi said: “I was prevented by the Iranian authorities from boarding my flight to London on Friday. They gave me no reasonable explanation for this utterly rude behaviour.”

A spokesperson for the film festival added: “Mani Haghighi ... was turned away by authorities in [Iran](#) and has his passport confiscated. He has returned to his home in Tehran.”

The regime is banning well known artists who spoke out in favor of Mahsa Amini protests from leaving Iran. Passports confiscated at airport both at arrival & departure. Filmmaker Mani Haghighi was suppose to be in London for screening of his film, he sent this msg: [#MahsaAmini pic.twitter.com/aB7ZYrd3uy](#)

— Bahman Kalbasi (@BahmanKalbasi) [October 14, 2022](#)

In his statement, Haghighi connected the authorities’ actions with his statement in support of the [widespread protests across the country](#). “A couple of weeks ago I recorded an Instagram video in which I criticised Iran’s mandatory hijab laws, and the crackdown on the youth that are protesting it and so many other instances of injustice in their lives. Perhaps the authorities thought that by keeping me here they could keep a closer eye on me, threaten me and shut me up? Well the very fact that I am talking to you in this video right now undermines that plan.”

He added: “Let me tell you that being here in Tehran right now is one of the greatest joys of my life. I cannot put into words the joy and the honour of being able to witness at first hand this great moment in history, and I would rather be here than anywhere else in the world right now. So if this is a punishment for what I’ve done then by all means bring it on. Let me end this with the three words that have given Iranians so much joy and courage in the last few weeks: women, life, freedom.”

Subtraction is due to screen in London on Saturday and [is described by Variety](#) as a thriller “set in downtown Tehran”, about a driving instructor

who sees her husband going into a woman's flat at a time when he says he was out of town.

The action against Haghighi is the latest in Iran's harassment of its country's film-makers. In July, award-winning director Jafar Panahi [received a six year jail sentence](#) following his attempt to find information about fellow film-makers Mohammad Rasoulof and Mostafa Aleshamd, who had been detained earlier.

On Monday the London film festival [staged a protest](#) in support of the jailed Iranian directors, as well as film-makers imprisoned in other parts of the world, attended by Citizenfour director Laura Poitras, and festival director Tricia Tuttle among others.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/oct/14/iran-bans-director-mani-haghighi-from-attending-london-film-festival>

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