



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Ashley Dalton MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Public Health and Prevention*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

The Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith KC
Chair of the House of Lord International Agreements Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW
By email to: HLINTLAGREEMENTS@parliament.uk

14 July 2025

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

In response to your letter, received 14 May, I committed to updating you once a decision had been made in relation to the targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR).

I would therefore like to update you, and the International Affairs Committee, that the UK Government has accepted the amendments to the IHR.

The IHRs are an important, legally binding technical framework that helps to prevent and protect against the international spread of disease. As you are aware, amendments to the IHR were agreed by countries at the World Health Assembly (WHA) that took place from 27 May to 1 June 2024. The amendments aimed to reflect lessons learned from recent global health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, including by improving information sharing and collaboration for public health emergency response. On 19 September 2024, the World Health Organization's (WHO) Director General formally notified all states parties of the official amendments adopted by the WHA. From this date of notification, the UK had 10 months to complete the domestic review of IHR amendments and then notify the WHO Director General on whether the UK wish to reject or reserve on any or all the amendments by 19 July 2025. The amendments – of which all are adopted - will come into force for the UK in September 2025.

Department of Health and Social Care officials led work across Government to confirm the implications of the amendments for the UK. Officials also worked with their counterparts in the Devolved Administrations and in our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, to ensure that all relevant territories are considered. The UK provided representation and consultation throughout the amendment negotiation process to advocate for UK priorities and protect UK interests. In addition to this, analysis of the final agreed amendments was important to understand the domestic implications and any action the UK would need to take to be compliant. This was a thorough process conducted across the whole UK member state territory. This analysis concluded that the amendments are in the national interest of the UK and informed the decision to accept all of the amendments. Details of the action needed for UK compliance are set out below. Acceptance of, and compliance with, the amendments does not impact the UK right to make domestic decisions on national measures concerning public health.

The amendments are either:

1. new and/or amended obligations for the WHO
2. new and/or amended obligations for WHO States Parties, or

3. grammatical or wording changes for consistency.

The analysis found that where the amendments placed new obligations on the UK and other member states, the UK is already compliant with all but three areas. To be compliant with these amendments, the UK will:

- Designate the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) as the National IHR Authority to oversee overall implementation of the IHR and ensure coordination within the UK. This will facilitate greater coordination across the UK on IHR implementation.
- Factor the new tier of alert 'Pandemic Emergency' into domestic pandemic preparedness planning across Government, Devolved Governments, Crown Dependencies and the UK Overseas Territories. This tier is intended to make States Parties aware of a developing infectious disease which has or has to the potential to have wide geographical spread and requires rapid international response. The WHO Director General can issue temporary or standing recommendations to provide non-binding advice on how States Parties may respond. Any recommendations would not impact the UK's right to make domestic decisions on national measures concerning public health. Factoring this tier into domestic planning will allow the UK to prepare for and respond to such events.
- Provide representation for the UK on the WHO member state-led IHR Implementation Committee and provide representation (as required) on the Technical Sub-committee of the Implementation Committee. This committee aims to promote and support the exchange of best practice and cooperation among Member States, to improve global IHR implementation. It is an opportunity to collaborate and share UK technical expertise.

Yours sincerely,



ASHLEY DALTON MP