GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Charts Path for a Healthier, Safer Virgin Islands

Release Date: 15 September, 2025



The Ministry of Health and Social Development has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing health, social protection, justice, and environmental sustainability as it presented its 2025 progress report and strategic outlook for 2026.

The update was delivered by Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, Minister for Health and Social Development, and Permanent Secretary Ms. Tasha K. Bertie, before the Premier, Cabinet, the Deputy Governor, the Attorney General, and senior officials.

This comprehensive programme of reforms is firmly aligned with the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) Goal 1: Health and Wellness – A Healthy Population, which emphasises healthy living and providing the structures for fulfilling lives.

In outlining the Ministry's vision, Minister Wheatley said, "The work we are doing is about safeguarding our people from the cradle to the grave. By strengthening our health systems, modernising social protection, and advancing environmental and justice reforms, we are laying the foundation for a Virgin Islands that is healthier, safer, and more resilient."

Meanwhile, PS Bertie stressed the importance of collaboration and governance: "One of the key lessons we've learned is the importance of early engagement – whether with the Attorney General's Chambers, stakeholders, or the public. By strengthening collaboration, investing in digitalisation, and improving governance, we are making our systems more accountable, shock responsive, and people-centred. This is how we build trust and deliver results for the people of the Virgin Islands."

Key Achievements in 2025

- Public Health Reform: Passage of the Tobacco Products Control Amendment Act 2025, regulating vaping and strengthening penalties.
- Health Promotion: Cancer Prevention Conference advanced work towards establishing a Cancer Registry, Launch of the Eat Well Guide and expansion of the BVI Moves campaign.
- Social Protection: Implementation of the Public Assistance Amendment Act 2024 and approval of a new Social Protection Policy.

- Justice and Safety: Progress on the Sexual Offences Bill and Domestic Violence Protocols, plus rollout of the 911 Computer-Aided Dispatch System.
- Environment: Updated waste management laws, draft Single-Use Plastics Ban, and proposed Container Deposit Scheme.
- Community Infrastructure: Refurbished Brewers Bay Community Centre, commenced the tendering process for the East End/Long Look Transitional Housing facility, and housing projects in Virgin Gorda and Baughers Bay.

Priorities for 2026

- Implement new public health regulations on food hygiene, indoor air quality, and water safety.
- Expand cancer screening for cervical, breast, and colon cancers.
- Finalize development on the Social Protection Bill.
- Advance construction of the East End/ Long Look Transitional Housing Facility.
- Pass the Sexual Offences Bill and related legislation.
- Strengthen environmental health regulations and update cemetery and burial laws.

Despite fiscal constraints, rising costs, and climate risks, the Ministry said its focus remains on innovation, partnerships, and resilience to ensure every Virgin Islander can live a healthy and fulfilling life.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development remains committed to improving the health and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands

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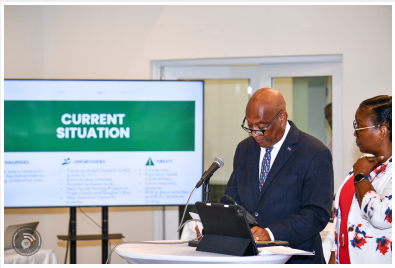
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