

17.11.21**Disabled BBC journalist is keynote speaker at employment charity's conference**

The BBC's Security Correspondent and bestselling author, Frank Gardner OBE, will be the keynote speaker at the Jersey Employment Trust's 20th anniversary conference in 2022.

Mr Gardner suffered life-changing injuries after being shot by terrorists in Saudi Arabia in 2004 and this year presented a BBC documentary called *Being Frank* showing his life coping with an acquired disability and what he called 'the iceberg beneath the surface'.

He said: 'People look at somebody in a wheelchair, like me, and they probably think "poor guy, I wonder if he needs a bit of help?" What they don't see is all the stuff that we have to deal with beneath the surface.'

Mr Gardner spent nine years as an investment banker in New York, London and Bahrain before switching to journalism and joining the BBC in 1995. He has reported extensively on the global 'war on terror' in Guantanamo Bay, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East.

In 2004, aged 43, he survived being shot six times at close range by Al-Qaeda terrorists in a Riyadh suburb in Saudi Arabia. Against the odds Mr Gardner survived, but his injuries were life-changing. He was paralysed from the knees down, and large parts of his intestines were removed, leaving him with a colostomy bag. The documentary *Being Frank* showed the practical issues he faces daily and it also gave him the chance to reflect on the long-lasting, often overlooked, impact of trauma.

Ten months after the shooting, he returned to work as the BBC's Security Correspondent.

He went on to write the bestselling book *Blood and Sand*, which is described as 'the poignant story of what can happen to your belief system when the culture you have embraced ends up trying to kill you'. He has since written three bestselling spy thrillers and has a fourth underway. He was awarded an OBE in 2005 for services to journalism. In 2018 he was awarded the University of Southern California's Tommy Trojan Trophy for distinguished speaking.

JET's conference, sponsored by Ogier, will be held at the L'Horizon Beach Hotel on Tuesday 1 March. The charity will present awards to employers who have gone the extra mile when supporting in the workplace people who have a disability or long-term health condition.

/continues

JET executive officer Jocelyn Jacques said she was delighted that Mr Gardner had agreed to speak. 'Our 20th anniversary conference is going to celebrate the 20 years since the Jersey Employment Trust was registered as a charity. Mr Gardner is well known for being a witty and gifted communicator, and our flagship event will be a mix of celebrating the past and looking forward to the next 20 years in supported employment.'

*A limited number of free tickets are available to employers who don't currently work with JET. If you are interested in attending, please email caroline.spencer@jet.co.je.