

Press release: Parole Board Chief Executive's Blog – 2nd Edition – September 2018

It has been another busy few months here at the Parole Board and it doesn't seem to be easing up any time soon.

Welcome to our new Chair

First of all, some good news – [our new Chair has been appointed](#). Caroline Corby is now here on a permanent basis, which I think will be great for the Board after a period of significant scrutiny. She brings lots of experience and will provide the leadership we need. We can now focus on making the most of the reforms that are happening to make the Board more effective than ever before.

Office Move to Canary Wharf

We [have also moved offices](#) to a new Government hub in Canary Wharf, alongside other independent bodies, such as the HM Inspectorate of Prisons. As anyone who has moved house will know, this is never an easy task! But the team were fantastic in getting us organised, packed and getting us in with no disruption to our work. We are now in our new modern workspace and I think it reaffirms our independence by being out of the Ministry of Justice HQ building.

Speaking about the Board

I have been out and about again over the past few months speaking about the work of the Board. This included giving a speech at the Criminal Justice Management conference on where we are and where we want to be in the future. Talking at these events shows to me just how far we have come over the last few months, and how it is crucial that we bring people along on this journey with us.

Reducing deferrals and adjournments

There is a lot of ongoing work to reduce deferrals and adjournments. While some deferrals are unavoidable, I believe it is fundamentally unfair that prisoners have their parole review delayed for reasons out of their control. There are many pilot projects at different prisons across the country to see where delays are coming from and looking at solutions to ensure that hearings are concluded fairly and effectively. I am confident that along with HMPPS officials and prisoners' legal representatives, we will find effective ways to reduce deferrals and adjournments and start using these ideas more widely across the prison estate.

Increasing diversity

I am also reflecting on the work needed to improve the diversity of our members – I think it is crucial that they represent all parts of the community they serve.

As highlighted in [David Lammy's outstanding report](#), there is significant over-representation of BAME in the prison population, with over a quarter of the prison population from minority backgrounds. Therefore, it is vital that the membership of the Board is as diverse as possible – to help build public and prisoner confidence that we treat all people fairly, regardless of their background. It was depressing to hear from a young black prisoner serving a long sentence that he had never seen a black Parole Board Member. We must do better.

I know there are some outstanding potential members out there from a range of backgrounds and I want to find ways of encouraging more of them to join us – feel free to email me with ideas: CEO@paroleboard.gov.uk.

[News story: Digital tech to tackle healthcare challenges: apply for funding](#)

There is up to £9 million for businesses with ideas to develop novel digital technology solutions for healthcare challenges.

Funding is provided by [UK Research and Innovation](#) and delivered by Innovate UK.

Accelerating the development of digital innovations

Advancing new and novel digital technologies could significantly improve outcomes for patients, and provide cost benefits for healthcare providers.

The digital health technology catalyst aims to accelerate the development of digital health innovations and grow the sector.

Health-tech firm [FundamentalVR](#) has previously received funding through the catalyst. The company is leading a project to develop a VR surgical training platform for students to practice and gain confidence before operating on people.

[ISCF Winners. Medicines Manufacturing – FundamentalVR](#)

This competition is part of the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) to deliver

leading-edge healthcare in the UK. This £181 million fund will transform how we develop and manufacture medicines and other healthcare products, such as digital technologies, to get the right drugs and treatments to patients when they need them.

Improving on the current system

We are looking for projects that span a variety of technologies, markets and healthcare needs and improve on the current health and care system.

There are 2 competitions that businesses can apply into, depending on the stage of their project:

- up to £1 million for feasibility studies
- up to £8 million for collaborative research and development

Technologies you could look at include:

- virtual and augmented reality
- artificial intelligence and machine learning
- the Internet of Things
- data analytics and security

Your idea could be for use in a clinical or non-clinical setting. This could include digital technologies to:

- support clinical decision-making
- improve access to healthcare, support treatment compliance or patient-led management
- improve the patient experience from disease prevention through to diagnosis, treatment, recovery and long-term care
- overcome privacy challenges with managing, sharing and exploiting data
- create significant improvements in quality, speed, costs and outcomes

Feasibility studies competition information

- the competition is open and the deadline for applications is midday on 31 October 2018
- to lead a project, you'll need to be a UK-based small or medium-sized business (SME)
- SMEs can work alone or collaborate with others, including businesses, NHS organisations, universities, research and technology organisations, public sector organisations or charities
- your project can last up to 12 months and have total costs of between £50,000 and £75,000
- businesses could get up to 70% of their project costs
- projects must start by 1 April 2019

Collaborative research and development competition

information

- the competition is open and the deadline for applications is midday on 31 October 2018
 - to lead a project, you'll need to be a UK-based SME
 - you will need to collaborate with others, including businesses, NHS organisations, universities, research and technology organisations, public sector organisations or charities
 - your project can last up to 24 months and have total costs of between £300,000 and £1 million
 - businesses could get up to 70% of their project costs
 - applicants that meet a quality threshold will be invited to interview from 7 to 11 January 2019
 - projects must start by 1 April 2019
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[Collection: Environment statistics](#)

Working with our Defra group partner organisations: Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Natural England we produce a wide range of statistics that provide information on our relationship with and impact on the environment around us.

[Our products](#)

[Our partners within Defra group](#)

[Other sources of information](#)

[Developing our portfolio](#)

Our Products

Environmental Quality

- [air quality and emissions statistics](#)
- [UK carbon footprint](#)
- [Environmental Protection Expenditure](#)
- [waste and recycling statistics](#)
- [Digest of waste and resources statistics](#)
- [water quality and abstraction statistics](#)

Natural Environment

- [biodiversity and wildlife statistics](#)
- [natural environment statistics](#)

Cross cutting statistics

- [sustainable development indicators](#)
- [funding for flooding and coastal erosion](#)

Our partners within Defra group

- [Environment Agency \(EA\)](#)
- [Forestry Commission](#)
- [Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(JNCC\)](#)
- [Natural England \(NE\)](#)

Other sources of information

- [Welsh government](#)
- [Scottish government](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#)

Developing our portfolio

Our environmental portfolio of official statistics is large (around 60 different products) and diverse. As for the Defra Group portfolio as a whole, we will continue to invest in developing our understanding of user needs and therefore to find the best balance between compendiums of environmental statistics, regular statistical releases on specific topic and supporting data releases.

One key driver of the way that the portfolio will evolve will be the progress reporting now in development for the [Government's 25 year plan](#). Looking further to the future, we believe that technological development can bring radical change to what we measure and how we measure it and we will continue to track the potential of environmental monitoring approaches from Earth observation to e-dna.

[News story: Package of measures unveiled to boost apprenticeships](#)

The government today (1 October 2018) announced a package of reforms to ensure the Apprenticeship Levy provides people with the skills they need to succeed.

The changes are aimed at providing flexibility for businesses so they can take full advantage of the benefits of employing apprentices, and to help as many people as possible find the right training to equip them for the new

economy.

An extra £90 million of government funding will enable employers to invest a quarter of their apprenticeship funds on people working for businesses in their supply chain – boosting the number able to benefit from high-quality apprenticeship training.

A further £5 million was announced for the Institute for Apprenticeships to introduce new standards and updating existing ones so that more courses can be offered – meaning more choice for those considering their training options. The government will discontinue the old frameworks so that all new apprenticeships will be on the same higher-quality standards by the start of the 2020/21 academic year.

The government has worked closely with business groups to ensure the Apprenticeship Levy works for employers who are at the heart of delivering this move to world-leading training.

In the coming weeks, the government will set out a process to seek views on the operation of the levy after 2020 to ensure it supports the development of the skilled workforce businesses need for the new economy.

Further Information

- the apprenticeship levy is making good progress – with 1.41 million apprenticeships started since May 2015. There were 119,500 starts reported in the first three quarters of 2017/18, more than ten-times higher than the same period the previous year
- the government is also establishing a National Retraining Scheme – during this Parliament – to support adults across the country and equip the workforce with the skills needed for the new economy. While this scheme is developed, the government is also funding additional projects including £30m to test the use of AI and innovative Edtech, and £34m for construction skills funding

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