

[News story: Office for Disability Issues announces its new regional stakeholder network](#)



The regional stakeholder network will create face-to-face forums for local organisations and individuals in 9 regions across England. These will provide a channel for disabled people and their organisations to share their views and experiences about policies and services that affect them and will complement stakeholder relationships that already exist across government.

The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) is also exploring using online tools and other accessible formats to provide even more opportunities for people to share their views beyond the regional stakeholder network.

ODI will be publishing more information about how to join the regional stakeholder network shortly.

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[Press release: Disability champions set to open industry doors](#)

The champions will use their influential status as leaders in their industries to promote the benefits of being inclusive to disabled people across 6 new areas: fashion, technology, countryside and heritage, website accessibility, food and drink and product design.

Poor access can restrict many areas of disabled people's lives, from online shopping to enjoying the country's natural beauty.

The new champions will join the existing 14 champions who are already driving

improvements to the accessibility of services and facilities in a range of sectors, including banking, music and tourism.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Sarah Newton said:

There are nearly 14 million disabled people living in the UK. By showing other businesses the importance of making disabled customers a priority, our new champions will ensure disabled people aren't missing out on experiences and services which many take for granted.

The existing champions have already made significant progress in breaking down the barriers faced by disabled consumers.

The music champion Suzanne Bull has launched a new industry taskforce aimed at improving the experience for deaf and disabled customers when booking tickets for live music events.

Johnny Timpson is the disability champion for the insurance industry and Industry Affairs Manager at Scottish Widows. He is bringing together representatives from the insurance industry, regulatory bodies and charities for the first time to look at how to make the industry more transparent and inclusive.

Insurance Champion Johnny Timpson said:

Walking the talk on diversity is essential for the insurance sector, and my champion role enables me to work with the industry to improve access to affordable insurance for disabled consumers.

Becoming a champion has allowed me to bring key players to the table to agree on a clear set of actions for making the insurance industry more inclusive.

The disability champions are just one of the ways the government is ensuring that disabled people can participate fully in society. A whole range of support is on offer to support those disabled people who want to work to find a job that is right for them.

Applications from disabled people are particularly welcome, but it is not essential to have a lived experience of disability.

The 14 existing disability champions are:

- advertising – Sam Phillips, CMO at Omnicom Media Group
- airports – Michael Connolly, Regional Training and Standards Manager at OCS Ltd
- arts and culture – Andrew Miller, National Council Member for the Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales

- banking – Trudie Hills, Disability Manager, Lloyds Bank
- buses – Jane Cole, Managing Director at Blackpool Transport Services
- gaming – Dr Jo Twist OBE, CEO of UKIE
- hotels – Robin Sheppard, Chairman of Bespoke Hotels
- insurance – Johnny Timpson, Financial Protection Technical & Industry Affairs Manager, Scottish Widows
- leisure – Huw Edwards, Public Affairs Director at UKActive
- media – Dan Brooke, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer at Channel 4
- music – Suzanne Bull MBE, CEO of Attitude is Everything
- rail – Stephen Brookes OBE, Member of Rail Delivery Group’s governance group and Non-Executive Director of Blackpool Transport
- retail – Samantha Sen, Head of Policy and Campaigns at Revo (Interim)
- tourism – Chris Veitch, co-founder of Access New Business

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[Press release: Disability champions set to open industry doors](#)

On International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December) the government is announcing that it will be recruiting 6 new disability champions to help tackle the issues disabled people face as consumers.

[News story: Work with Israeli businesses on innovative ideas: new funding](#)

Israel is increasingly challenging Silicon Valley in the high-tech space, with a [2018 report](#) showing Tel Aviv to have more start ups per capita than anywhere else in the world. It also performs well for global connectedness and product development.

Closer collaboration on innovation projects will create opportunities for both the UK and Israel to boost capabilities and take advantage of international markets.

In a new funding competition, there is up to £1 million available for UK businesses to develop game-changing innovations in partnership with Israeli companies.

The funding comes under the [EUREKA](#) programme, an inter-governmental network that encourages international research and development of innovative business products and ideas.

UK involvement in projects will be funded by Innovate UK, with Israeli involvement by the [Israel Innovation Authority](#). The countries are committed to collaborating to develop new technologies and take advantage of global opportunities.

Funding supports innovation in any area

Projects in this competition can be from any technology or market area. They must:

- be based on clear, game-changing ideas that could lead to new products, processes or services
- have a deliverable business plan
- demonstrate good working structures and awareness of risks
- show good value for money
- have significant potential and improve productivity for both the UK and Israeli economies
- benefit and create growth for the businesses involved in the project

Importantly, any product, process or service being developed should be applicable to a large global market.

Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 27 February 2019
- projects must be led by a UK business of any size working with at least 1 business in Israel, which must be separate, non-linked legal entity
- each partner must carry out the majority of its funded work in the country from which it receives funding
- we expect project costs on the UK side to be between £200,000 and £250,000 and to last up to 24 months
- businesses could attract up to 70% of their project costs

[New pilot schemes to support migrants](#)

at risk of detention

A new pilot scheme to manage vulnerable women in the community, when they would otherwise be liable for immigration detention, has been announced by the Immigration Minister today (Monday 3 December).

Working in partnership with Action Foundation, a charity which provides support to asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, the first phase began today and will see up to 21 women supported in the community who would otherwise be detained at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre.

The pilot, called Action Access, will last 2 years and will support up to 50 women during that time.

Developing alternatives to detention for those who are vulnerable is part of the government's response to Stephen Shaw's second review into the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons.

Immigration Minister, Caroline Nokes, said:

Immigration detention plays a necessary role in our immigration system, but it must be used only when absolutely necessary. We are committed to ensuring that detention is fair and humane and that it protects those who are vulnerable.

I'm pleased to see the launch of our first pilot scheme, which will provide valuable community support and personal stability to a number of women at risk of detention while their case is resolved, and delivers on our commitment to deliver Stephen Shaw's recommendations.

Julian Prior, CEO of Action Foundation, said:

For many years we have successfully supported some of the most vulnerable people at the end of their asylum claim to avoid destitution, and provide the stability and help they need to make some informed choices about their future.

We are very pleased to use this opportunity to increase our work in this area by supporting women who would otherwise be detained through this new pilot called Action Access.

The Home Office has partnered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to work with charities, faith groups and local communities to develop a number of pilot schemes that will provide support to a wide range of migrants in the community, including both men and women.

These further pilot schemes will begin in the New Year and will run for 2 years.

The Home Office will use these pilots to understand how it can best support different groups of migrants at risk of immigration detention to resolve their cases within the community, whether that is confirming their status in the UK or returning to their home country.

If these pilot schemes are successful, the Home Office will explore how it can implement this approach on a larger scale.

Matthew Saltmarsh, Acting Representative for UNHCR UK, said:

We welcome the recent decline in the use of immigration detention in the UK and encourage the government to continue this positive trend. This pilot – to manage vulnerable women in the community, when they might otherwise be detained – is an important first step.

UNHCR will continue to bring international best practice experience to the development of alternatives to immigration detention in the UK, and we are fully committed to advising the government on rolling out future pilots in the hope that further reductions in immigration detention will follow.