

[News story: Education Secretary visit to Arsenal football club](#)

Education Secretary Justine Greening today (30 January 2017) visited Arsenal football club to mark the launch of a joint reading initiative between Arsenal in the Community and the University College London's Institute of Education (IOE).

The partnership aims to raise educational achievement with access to reading programmes for more children in north London through Arsenal's [Double Club](#) initiative and the IOE's [Reading Recovery](#) literacy intervention.

Ms Greening was given a tour of the Emirates Stadium before listening to a group of 5- to 7-year-old children read.

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

It is brilliant to see literacy and sporting activities working together today with the Reading Recovery Read Aloud initiative. I loved reading as a child, and it is really important that every child can read well. That's why the curriculum now has more focus on reading and writing, while our phonics work is helping 147,000 more children to become great readers.

Playing sport is about more than just ensuring young people are healthy and happy. Sport is also great for helping children develop team-working skills, communication skills and the ability to problem-solve, which in turn make a big difference to young people being able to reach their goals.

Arsenal's Double Club is an award winning education programme for children in the local community. It uses football as the hook to make learning fun and engaging.

Jack McNicholl, Arsenal's Double Club Manager, said:

This partnership will help us reach more children in the area, and to continue to support them with their literacy development in an engaging way. We work with over 30 local schools on a weekly basis and this is fantastic opportunity to team up with UCL and the IOE to help even more children.

[Read Aloud](#), now in its third year, celebrates the success of thousands of children who have been helped to overcome literacy difficulties through the IOE's Reading Recovery programme. Throughout February, schools across the UK and Ireland will give children the opportunity to read books that are special

to them.

Reading Recovery supports 5- and 6-year-olds who are facing challenges in learning to read and write, and gives them a short, intensive catch-up with specially trained teachers. As a result, 8 out of 10 children catch up with their classmates within 6 months.

Professor Becky Frances, Director of the UCL Institute of Education, said:

Our [International Literacy Centre \(ILC\)](#) is at the forefront of improving outcomes in literacy education and has had considerable success with providing professional learning for teachers who work with children struggling with literacy. I am so pleased that the Secretary of State has shown her support of Read Aloud by attending our celebration and was able to witness first-hand how Reading Recovery has benefitted some of these children.

Both programmes aim to support pupils who are currently below the national average in reading and writing.

[News story: Troika statement on declaration of AU, IGAD and UN on South Sudan](#)

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Joint statement from UK, US and Norway welcoming the joint declaration expressing concern about continued fighting and violence in South Sudan.

The UK, US and Norway have issued the following joint statement:

The members of the Troika (Norway, UK and US) welcome the 29 January joint declaration of the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the UN, on South Sudan. It expressed deep concern about the continuing spread of fighting and the risk of inter-communal violence escalating into mass atrocities, and the dire humanitarian situation in the country. We

too call for an immediate cessation of hostilities in South Sudan.

We applaud the declaration's call for a political solution emphasizing inclusivity and an active role for the AU High Representative toward ensuring that result. We echo the commitment of the AU, IGAD, and the UN to the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), and to further strengthen and enhance international cooperation in support of the South Sudan peace process.

Further information

[News story: Accelerator Innovation Network Event](#)

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The Defence and Security Accelerator is holding an event in London on 23 February 2017 to provide information on the first Innovation Fund challenge

Suppliers attending the event will be able to hear presentations about the Innovation Fund challenge which is aimed at revolutionising the human-information relationship for Defence.

If you cannot attend the event, sign up for our [webinar](#) which will take place on 27 February 2017.

[The competition](#) is seeking new technologies, processes and ways of working to improve the way we analyse and exploit data. With the relationship between human and information at the centre of war-fighting we need Defence leaders to have access to the right information on critical issues to enable decision making that outpaces our adversaries.

The challenges of this Accelerator competition are to:

- free up personnel through the application of innovative use of machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence to maintain military advantage
- allow for the rapid and automated integration of new sensors
- improve operator cognitive capacity and greater human machine teaming

Up to £6 million is available in total across phase 1 and 2 of this Innovation Fund competition.

[News story: Presentation slides from the Accelerator Enduring Challenge launch event](#)

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A launch event for the Enduring Challenge was held for science and technology providers on 26 January 2017.

At the event in London, Harriett Baldwin MP, Minister for Defence Procurement, launched the Innovation Initiative's £6 million Accelerator Enduring Challenge, in her keynote speech.

The Enduring Challenge is run by the MOD's new Defence and Security Accelerator and will fast-track the best ideas by funding their development, matching suppliers with expert Innovation Partners, and boosting supplier access to defence. The competition will run regularly, with up to 12 rounds a year.

Enduring challenge overview

In the [opening session](#), the Accelerator's Rob Solly introduced the Accelerator and gave an overview of the Enduring Challenge and how it differs from the previously-run Centre for Defence Enterprise enduring competition.

This was followed by the Accelerator's Jim Pennycook, who explained the transition to the Accelerator and gave an overview of proof-of-concept research funding opportunities for innovative science and technology providers.

Further detail was then provided by the Accelerator's Bruce Hardie, who explained the specifics of the challenge, how the competitions would work and the practicalities of submitting a proposal.

Defence and Security perspectives

In the [second session](#), military advisers and technical experts from the security services, air, land and sea sectors gave their perspective of how the Enduring Challenge will meet the defence and security challenges.

[News story: Iraq Afghanistan Memorial to be unveiled in London](#)

The memorial honours both the UK Armed Forces and civilians who served their country in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan, and who supported them back home, from 1990-2015. Around 2,500 invited guests will attend a service of dedication from a specially conducted Drumhead on Horse Guards at 11am, to include prayers, music and readings. A small ceremony will then be held in the gardens for the unveiling itself. It will be displayed on screens on Horse Guards.

The guests will be representatives of the many groups – military and civilian – whose efforts in those countries over a 25-year period are recognised, including current Service personnel, veterans, civil servants and charity workers.

They will be joined by The Queen, other members of the Royal Family, Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon and other senior politicians.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The memorial will stand as a permanent reminder of the contribution and sacrifice that so many members of our Armed Forces, aid workers and civilian personnel made towards the security of the United Kingdom and the interests of Iraq and Afghanistan. Their efforts underline our on-going commitment to support the people of this region in building a more stable future which will help keep Britain safer and more secure.

Union Jack flag on British Military base, Crown Copyright.

The memorial commemorates the duty and service of British citizens who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way, protected our nation's interests far from the security of the UK, helped those in danger and worked to improve the lives of those in Iraq and Afghanistan. UK Citizens, from a vast breadth of organisations across Government, charities and non-governmental organisations worked tirelessly over many years to help the citizens of both

countries. Some made the ultimate sacrifice during their efforts to lay the foundations for peace and stability.

Importantly, it honours all those who worked on the humanitarian side of operations, whether in a military or civilian role including areas such as aid distribution, education, healthcare, infrastructure and governance. The memorial recognises, praises and remembers with gratitude the unstinting and selfless commitment of all those, military and civilian, who served their country in support of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The distinctive memorial has been designed by sculptor Paul Day and gives equal prominence to the civilian and military contributions. It consists of two large stone monoliths supporting a bronze medallion. The two-sided medallion has sculpted reliefs depicting the memorial's theme of "duty and service".

The memorial project is run by a board of trustees, whose chairman is former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Stirrup, and The Sun newspaper ran a fundraising appeal for the memorial. The unveiling is being organised by the MOD, on the trustees' behalf, in partnership with The Royal British Legion, which is co-hosting a reception after the service.

After the unveiling, the public will be freely able to visit the Iraq Afghanistan Memorial in the Victoria Embankment Gardens.