

Press release: 9 women innovators get government backing for inventions with global potential

- 9 women with pioneering inventions have been awarded £50,000 each to develop and grow their business, as part of Innovate UK's Women in Innovation competition
- winners represent the next generation of world-leading female innovators
- these women are tackling some of the biggest challenges facing society as set out in the government's modern Industrial Strategy – from meeting the demands of an ageing society to developing a cleaner economy

Pioneering female inventors have been recognised today for innovations including responsive wheelchair seating and a new digital app for diabetes as part of the 2019 Women in Innovation Awards.

The Awards, announced on International Women's Day by Business Secretary Greg Clark, follows a search for female innovators who are tackling some of the biggest challenges facing society as set out in the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#).

The winners will receive £50,000 each and a year-long package of bespoke support, coaching and mentoring.

The winners being awarded funding include:

- Sheana Yu, who is developing a device built into wheelchairs where movement is monitored and air cells are automatically inflated and deflated ensuring better posture and comfort
- Debbie Wake, who is offering diabetes patients a digital health app so they can monitor and receive advice for treatments 'on the go'
- Agnes Czako, who is creating a state of the art home ventilation system to help reduce a home's heat demand, resolve damp and condensation issues and cut energy bills. It uses 'smart tech' airbricks that use a simple open and shut mechanism where the brick regulates airflow and ensures the right level of ventilation
- Fanya Ismail, who has developed a chemical process called 'sol-gel' which produces solid materials from small molecules that will make disposable coffee cups waterproof without the need to use plastic

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

I would like to congratulate all these women on developing inspiring and pioneering innovations to tackle the grand challenges we face as a society, from a new waterproof coating to cut down single use plastic, to helping us train mechanics with simulators.

This is our modern Industrial Strategy in action, backing the innovators and businesses of all sizes across the UK to grow – and develop the products, industries and sectors of tomorrow, boosting the UK economy with the skills and inventions we will need for the next generation.

Marking the outstanding contributions to innovation, Innovate UK has commissioned and installed commemorative plaques recognising each of the award holders where their innovation journey began, to inspire young innovators and communities alike.

Innovate UK Executive Chair Dr Ian Campbell said:

Innovate UK's Women in Innovation Awards address a key barrier for diversity in innovation – a lack of female role models. By recognising their achievement with purple plaques, we are making sure that our 9 newly crowned winners inspire the next generation of female innovators.

Whether it's inspiring young students showing a passion for STEM, someone with the spark of an idea, or an innovative business ready to be taken to the next level, the Women in Innovation 2019 campaign aims to drive long term, far reaching positive change.

Supporting female innovators is a key commitment of Innovate UK, and registrations for funding from female innovators on existing competitions have increased by 70% since 2016.

Previous winners have gone on to become ambassadors for Prince's Trust and develop breakthrough innovations. These include:

- Carmen Hijosa, who has created a sustainable alternative to leather using pineapple leaf fibre
- Elena Dieckmann, whose company produces novel products – such as thermal packaging – using surplus feathers from the poultry industry
- Fanzi Down, who has developed a revolutionary chocolate moulding technique by industrialising the process of displacement

This announcement comes on the first day of British Science Week 2019.

Research suggests that the proportion of UK women engaging in entrepreneurial activity is around half the level of men and that if participation was increased to equal levels, women-led SMEs could potentially contribute £180 billion to the UK economy by 2025.

2019 Women in Innovation Award Holders

- Agnes Czako of AirEx Technologies (inventor of smart technology for healthier homes)
- Alex Haslehurst of Vitruve Health (innovator in digital assessment of

patient health)

- Cintia Kimura of KG Protech (inventor of smart simulation tech to train car mechanics of the future)
- Daniela Paredes of Gravity Sketch (inventor of pioneering virtual reality transportation design tool)
- Debbie Wake of MyWay Digital Health (creator of digital innovation to support diabetes patients)
- Dolores Sanders of Total Control Pro (inventor of pioneering tech to improve small business manufacturing)
- Fanya Ismail of Sol-Gel Coatings & Advanced Materials (inventor of innovative paper coating to eradicate single-use plastic)
- Jessica Bruce (nee Leitch) of Walk 3D (pioneer of innovative 3D analysis that helps older people to walk pain-free)
- Sheana Yu of Aergo (inventor of air-powered seating to improve patients' posture)