

Helping Service Leavers to plan early and leave well

The launch of a new service from Veterans UK targets Service Leavers and their families that may need extra help and guidance transitioning from Service life. Defence Transition Services (DTS) is a team of caseworkers trained and ready to offer a full range of transition support.

The vast majority of Service Leavers make a successful transition to civilian life but a small minority (estimated to be approximately 5%) of the c.15,000 Service Personnel leaving the Armed Forces every year have a less successful transition. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has a key role to play in ensuring its Service Leavers are well prepared and supported for their transition into civilian life. The launch of DTS demonstrates the MOD's commitment to delivering on these responsibilities that were set out in the Strategy for Our Veterans.

Defence Transition Services will be available for those Service Personnel and their families who are likely to benefit from ongoing support, guidance and information before, during and after transition in partnership with those responsible for delivering in-Service welfare and transition. A new Defence Transition Referral Protocol (DTRP) is being introduced to provide a single referral point and access directly into Veterans UK for these cases. The new DTRP will also be the mechanism for accessing support from the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS), which will continue to support Veterans as it does now.

Launched as part of the Defence Holistic Transition Policy, this new service is part of a wider programme to have a single, centrally co-ordinated policy to better prepare Service Leavers and their families for their first steps on the transition journey.

Kate McCullough, Officer in Charge of Defence Transition Services, said;

We have been working hard behind the scenes to ensure all our caseworkers are up to speed and prepared to deliver this brand-new provision to Service Personnel and their families. We want DTS to become the 'go to' for Service leavers who need that extra support, whatever stage of the transition journey they may be at and we are here and ready to help and guide.

Andy Dowds, Head of Veterans UK, added;

I am delighted to announce the launch of Defence Transition Services and to welcome the Team into the Veterans UK family. We

pride ourselves on our service delivery and by working alongside our experienced Veterans Welfare Service, the DTS Team will be aiming to ensure a successful transition for every Service Leaver they support.

Further details about Defence Transition Services are available via [Help and Support for Service Leavers and their Families](#)

[Blueprint for 100 multi-million pound Town Deals revealed](#)

- [Towns Fund prospectus](#) paves the way for a new generation of Town Deals to regenerate town centres, boost businesses and improve infrastructure
- Government announcing today £16.4 million of funding to help councils access £3.6 billion Towns Fund
- Communities share their ideas through My Town campaign with over 10,000 responses in the first week alone

The blueprint for a new generation of multi-million Town Deals was announced today (1 November 2019) by Communities and Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP.

The [Towns Fund prospectus](#) provides information to councils in 100 places chosen to pioneer Town Deals – they will receive a share of £16.4 million capacity funding to kick-start their innovative plans and bring their communities together.

Each place will have the opportunity to bid for funding of up to £25 million as part of the government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund.

The funding could be used to redevelop vacant buildings and land, drive private sector investment by supporting small businesses and ensure young people have the skills they need to get good jobs. Communities will also be able to consider how they can boost their transport links and increase access to high-speed broadband.

Communities and Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

This government is committed to levelling up all parts of the country. We created the £3.6bn Towns Fund to help businesses grow, connect communities and give people the skills they need to succeed.

But no place is exactly the same. That is why we want to help local

people to decide how this investment of up to £25 million in each town can be used to help create new businesses, new jobs and new homes for generations to come.”

The announcement follows the launch of the My Town campaign, giving local people the chance to share what they love about their town and how they want to see it grow. In just one week, the campaign has drawn over 10,000 responses from across the country.

Lead councils in each place will now bring together a Town Deal Board including representatives from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to develop bespoke Town Investment Plans by summer 2020.

These plans will provide a clear vision for building on their town’s unique strengths to transform its economic growth prospects and form the basis of negotiations with the government.

Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth Rt Hon Jake Berry MP said:

We are giving local people the money and power to decide what is best for their town because they know their community’s unique strengths.

Together we can build on the billions of pounds the government has already invested in our towns and the thousands of new jobs and businesses it has delivered, to level up these places across the Northern Powerhouse and beyond.

Visit [Facebook.com/mytowncampaign](https://www.facebook.com/mytowncampaign)

See the [100 places being supported to develop Town Deals](#) .

A total of 100 places – including 45 places across the Northern Powerhouse and 30 places in the Midlands Engine – will be the pioneers of new Town Deals building on the Prime Minister’s announcement in July of an additional £1.325 billion to support towns as part of a renewed vision to level up every part of our country, which took the total value of the Towns Fund to £3.6 billion.

In due course the government will announce details of a competition for further towns beyond the initial 100 to develop plans for their own Town Deals.

The government wants to make sure that all parts of the UK can benefit from resources to boost productivity and living standards. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is in ongoing discussions with colleagues across government about how we can better support our towns in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and make sure areas throughout the UK share in the opportunities of Brexit.

Approval for new trial to prevent Group B Strep in newborn babies

Health Minister Nadine Dorries has announced today that the Group B Strep trial has been given ethical approval by the Health Research Authority in England and Health and Care Research in Wales.

Group B Strep is the most common cause of life-threatening infection in newborn babies, causing a range of serious infections including pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis.

The results of the trial will be used to inform the future of pregnancy care across the United Kingdom and could help save babies' lives.

The trial will involve 80 hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland and at least 320,000 women will take part. Recruitment will start in spring 2020.

The trial will be funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). It will look at the effectiveness of 2 different tests compared with standard care:

- a lab-based test, the Enriched Culture Medium (ECM) test at 35 to 37 weeks of pregnancy
- a 'bedside test' at the start of labour

The ECM test is currently recommended for use on high-risk groups in late pregnancy by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' clinical guidelines.

Group B Strep infections in newborn babies can usually be prevented by giving antibiotics through a vein to women during labour, which reduces the risk by up to 90%.

The UK currently does not routinely test pregnant women for Group B Strep, and instead identifies pregnant women with risk factors for their newborn developing the infection.

Research has shown:

- a 31% rise in the prevalence of Group B Strep infections in babies under 3 months old since 2000 in the UK and Ireland with 65% of the mothers of affected babies showing no risk factors
- the bacteria are present in approximately 1 in 5 pregnant women, usually causing no harm to the carrier, but may be passed unknowingly from a mother to her baby around birth
- one in 1,750 newborn babies will develop a Group B Strep infection. One in 19 of these babies will die and 1 in 14 survivors will be left with

long-term disability

Health Minister Nadine Dorries said:

Every baby deserves the best start to life, so I'm thrilled this hugely important trial has been given the green light.

This is an issue I've been closely involved with for some time and I'm determined to do everything I can to raise awareness and help protect mothers and their newborns from the devastating impact this infection can have.

We want the NHS to be the safest place in the world to give birth and this trial will be an important step in understanding if universal screening of Group B Strep can save the lives of more babies.

Jane Plumb MBE, Chief Executive of Group B Strep Support, said:

We are delighted that the GBS3 trial is progressing and has the support of the government. This major trial is comparing 2 types of testing versus a risk-factor approach. The results will drive improvements in UK and international policy and lead to fewer babies and their families suffering the trauma that Group B Strep infection can bring.

After routine testing was introduced in the United States, the rate of early-onset Group B Strep infection dropped by over 80% and is now less than half that of the UK. Were the same to happen in the UK, approximately 350 babies every year would be protected from Group B Strep infections, saving 15 babies' lives and preventing another 15 from developing life-changing disability.

£26 million to help hospitals introduce digital prescriptions

The digital prescription technology will see hospitals move away from handwritten prescriptions.

The upgrade to more efficient systems will save the NHS time and benefit patients by:

- reducing medication errors by up to 30% compared with the old paper

systems

- ensuring fast access to potentially lifesaving information on prescribed medicines
- building up a complete, single electronic record to reduce duplication of information-gathering

The successful 25 trusts include acute, mental health and community services. [View the list of trusts that will receive a share of the funding.](#)

The funding will support them to fulfil the [NHS Long Term Plan](#) commitment to introduce electronic prescribing systems across all providers.

The funding for the next year is the second wave from a £78 million pot to improve patient care by speeding up the implementation of electronic prescribing systems across the NHS over 3 years. Last year 13 other trusts received a share of £16 million.

Minister for Health Edward Argar said:

Electronic prescriptions in our hospitals will not only do away with old fashioned paper prescriptions but can help prevent avoidable and potentially catastrophic medication errors.

As part of our long term plan for the NHS we're committed to giving our hardworking staff access to modern systems which save them valuable time and make every penny of taxpayers' money count.

Following the previous funding announcement, I'm delighted to confirm the funding allocations for these 25 trusts as part of our mission to upgrade NHS hospitals with modern technology so patients get the best and safest care possible.

Matthew Gould, chief executive of NHSX, said:

Switching from paper prescriptions to digital in our hospitals will make mistakes less likely, free up staff time and ultimately improve patients' care and health.

This is part of the NHS Long Term Plan to support health service organisations to use digital technology to improve the care they can give patients, and allow staff to focus on delivering care, rather than on time-consuming processes.

- Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust: £700,000
- Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: £1,240,000
- South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: £250,000
- Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust & East Cheshire NHS Trust: £2,500,000

- Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: £1,250,000
- Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: £1,250,000
- London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust and The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: £3,000,000
- Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: £380,000
- The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust: £610,000
- Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust: £1,500,000
- Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust: £790,000
- Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust: £540,000
- Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust: £1,250,000
- 2gether NHS Foundation Trust: £460,000
- Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: £430,000
- North Bristol NHS Trust: £1,500,000
- Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust: £830,000
- Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust: £1,250,000
- Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust: £800,000
- Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust: £1,000,000
- Barking Havering Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust: £1,500,000
- Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: £1,150,000
- Barts Health NHS Trust: £900,000 – following an award of £1,700,000 in 2018 to 2019

AI: Beware the Robots

A friend applied for a job at a well-known multinational company. She was excited to receive a response within an hour, then quickly bemused by the speed at which she had been rejected. "It took me hours to write that application" she said. "How could they make a decision so fast?"

I recently sold some used goods on eBay. The next day my Facebook feed suggested I might be interested in a "private" group for buyers and sellers of a branded product I had just got rid of. A bit late I thought. And creepy..

Those of us who are not tech savvy often frame the risks associated with the use of AI as a problem of the future: after they take all of our jobs, super intelligent robots will become self-aware and either enslave the entire human race while we remain blissfully ignorant or run around town with a sawn off shotgun looking for John Connor. In contrast, corporations present a utopian vision of the future where, free from assembling IKEA furniture and other mundane tasks, humans can realise their full potential and live the lives we have always dreamed. Who is right?

Fortunately the UK is leading global research into the ethical use of AI and has already created institutions to start to address these challenges and opportunities. So we invited two experts to Australia to share UK insights and discuss the need for constructive and effective regulation of new and emerging technologies. Dr Mariarosaria Taddeo is a philosopher who co-leads

research in [digital ethics](#) with Professor Luciano Floridi at Oxford University's Internet Institute. Roger Taylor is the chair of the UK's [Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation](#). The exam question was: should we be worried about the risks of AI?

Our guests speaking to tech start-ups in Sydney

During a packed programme across Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney our experts met with government officials, industry representatives and academics. They reassured us that fears about robots taking over the world are pure science fiction: the machines are not going to turn against us – at least not without human input. However technological disruption is not “coming”, it's already here and is rapidly transforming our environment and influencing human behaviour in ways we don't fully understand. This raises some really important ethical issues that we do need to consider as a society. For example:

- There is clearly an efficiency gain in using AI to filter thousands of job applications. However if we delegate some or all stages of recruitment to AI, how can we be sure that data used by the algorithm doesn't [perpetuate unwanted bias](#) in the workforce?
- Line advertising companies use [micro-targeting](#) to tailor our internet experience to us as individuals, based on our interests and preferences. These helpful nudges enable us to cut through the white noise but at what point does persuasion become manipulation?
- Furthermore, if an algorithm is found to discriminate against protected groups, or online targeting inadvertently directs a vulnerable person towards a terrorist recruitment organisation, what will be our response?

Dr Taddeo outlining the enormous opportunity to use AI for good

These are not problems for future generations but issues many countries are grappling with right now, particularly medium sized democracies like the UK and Australia who share concerns about the use of the [internet to promote harmful content](#) or how micro-targeting is [influencing our politics](#). This is why the UK is adopting a world-leading package of online safety measures to tackle Online Harms and ensure companies take better care of our citizens online.

On the flip side, AI presents a real opportunity to do [enormous good for society](#), create high quality jobs and drive economic growth – potentially contributing an [estimated £232bn to the UK economy](#) by 2030. However, to date we have been passive in accepting AI technologies into our lives without fully exploring how it can be used to make our lives better. Without a clear

approach that informs industry partners, we may miss the chance to realise these gains.

Our guests couldn't offer a silver bullet but they left us with three issues to explore further:

- Done well, regulation can be an enabler for innovation. It can provide clarity for companies about what is acceptable in society and help to create new industries.
- Reducing the friction in data sharing will also support innovation but will need to be carefully balanced with public concerns around privacy and trust.
- Regulation needs to be developed in a local context. International collaboration is important and global guidelines are helpful: both the UK and Australia have adopted the [OECD principles](#) on AI. However it is ultimately the domestic legal, cultural and political setting that should inform the use of AI in society.

And their final thought? Now is the time to decide how we want to govern new technologies. Because when it comes to AI, humans are both the problem and the solution.