[Press release: PHE publish investigative report on increasing crack use](#)

Public Health England (PHE) and the Home Office have today, Monday 25 March 2019, published a summary of findings from the [Increase in crack cocaine use inquiry](#), an investigative report on crack cocaine use in 6 areas of England.

This publication follows evidence reported in the [2018 Serious Violence Strategy](#), that drugs have been an important driver of the increase in serious violence in England and Wales since 2014.

Key findings from the 'Increase in crack cocaine use inquiry' include:

- the majority of people using crack were observed to be existing heroin users, often with co-occurring mental health problems and at risk of being homeless
- the rise in crack use is likely to be caused by increased availability (linked to a surge in global production of cocaine), affordability and aggressive 'marketing' by dealers
- changes in attitudes and stigma associated with crack use, and a reduced focus by police on drug dealing
- clear evidence of 'county lines' operations — but this varied across different areas

The latest comprehensive [prevalence estimates by Liverpool University](#) — published today alongside this report — show that while there was a sharp rise in crack use between 2011 to 2012 and 2014 to 2015, it has now levelled, but remains much higher than previously.

However, figures for overall use of crack as well as heroin between 2014 and 2015 and 2016 and 2017 have increased by 4.4%.

Rosanna O'Connor, Director for Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Justice at PHE said:

> This report will come as no surprise to those working on the frontline, who will have seen first-hand this surge in crack use in their communities.
>
> Local areas, more than ever, need to continue to invest in effective drug services if we are to stop the creep of this highly addictive drug into the wider community and people's lives being torn apart.
>
> Treatment is cost-effective with every £1 spent yielding a £2.50 saving on the social costs, including reducing crime. Services need to reach out to crack users and offer more attractive and tailored

support to meet their specific needs.

And more needs to be done to improve the links from the criminal justice system into treatment services, for example through greater availability of arrest referral schemes and improved monitoring of drug rehabilitation requirements.

Victoria Atkins, Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability said:

The government is committed to tackling the illicit drugs trade, protecting the most vulnerable and helping those with drug dependency to recover.

The Home Secretary also recently appointed Professor Dame Carol Black to carry out a major review of drug misuse, including the workings of the illicit market.

The data and this inquiry indicate that the upward trend began to develop several years ago around 2013.

This investigation has identified several factors which may have influenced the rise in crack use, including:

- a surge in global production of cocaine since 2013
- increased availability and affordability of crack
- aggressive "marketing" of the drug by dealers

Organised crime groups are using sophisticated techniques to aggressively market crack in large cities, as well as towns and seaside locations. They are largely exploiting existing demand by targeting existing heroin users, but some participants suggested that dealers are also opening up new markets, with a different group of first time younger users.

There was clear evidence of 'out of town' dealers from criminal groups based in cities such as London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham infiltrating local markets. However, the impact of these county lines operations varied between areas.

Other reported factors contributing to the increase were changes in the stigma about crack, as well a reduced police focus on targeting drug dealing.

The findings support existing evidence, including [information from the National Crime Agency](#), about the expansion of 'county lines' activity in recent years. There was a widespread view among all interviewed that county lines groups were much more likely than local groups to engage in serious violence, and to exploit vulnerable young people and drug users.

The participants were largely unanimous that the increases are primarily among existing heroin users, but there have also been suggestions of a new 'hidden' group of crack users who are not using heroin and who have not

engaged with treatment services. Research is needed to explore the demographics of this group and what is leading or causing them to use crack.

Background

The 'Increase in crack cocaine use inquiry' is based on interviews conducted with 3 groups of people at the frontline of drug use – specialist drug workers, drug users and local police – and reports on their perceptions of recent developments in crack use.

The report focused on 6 areas which had seen the largest increases in people starting treatment for crack cocaine and as such the findings might not be representative of the broader national picture.

The [United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime](#) reported that global opium production increased by 65% in 2017.

[News story: DASA Download: Flexibility in innovation funding](#)

Gabriella Cox – Open Call Competition Lead

Gabriella joined the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) in December 2018. She has been looking at how DASA operates and will be implementing positive change to achieve operational effectiveness, meeting the needs of our stakeholders.

Innovating in innovation

I firmly believe that if you work in innovation, you need to deliver innovation.

At DASA, we need to be innovative in our own processes, remaining agile to our stakeholders' needs to ensure that we are harnessing the most innovative ideas. As the 'go-to' organisation in Government for innovation across Defence & Security, we also need to be one step ahead if we are to provide our government customers with the very best defence and security solutions.

In my first few months, I have been keen to get out and meet as many of our stakeholders as possible. I have been listening to the views of our government customers, our own regionally based Innovation Partners, our current suppliers and potential innovators, from micros to primes, and understanding from them what works well currently and what we need to improve.

What works well, I am told, is the pace at which we work, our understanding of the market place and our ability to take our innovators on a journey; establishing a path to development, seeking opportunities and introducing our innovators to wider potential customers. What perhaps is not working quite so well, are the inconsistencies in the funding levels and flexibility within the process to adapt proposals between sectors. I am also told that some ideas are not submitted due to the funding levels being too low and the anticipated funding success rate.

The 'Open' competition call was set up to encourage anyone with a good idea that has potential to solve defence and/or security challenges to apply for funding, so I hope that the following changes will bring clarity, consistency and new opportunities to stimulate further innovation.

Increasing funding limit

With immediate effect, in the Emerging Innovations category, there will be a new guidance band of between £50,000 and £100,000. In the Rapid Impact category, there will be a new guidance band of between £100,000 – £350,000. The crucial word here is 'guidance', we need to work to a limit, but that limit will not stop us from developing a great idea if the cost of funding goes over that number.

Deadlines – de-conflicting with holidays

Finally, we are implementing alternative deadlines for calls – which will no longer be based around the end of the holiday season or school holidays. This will be easier for suppliers to ensure they have the time to get quality proposals in before assessment deadlines and can get hold of our DASA innovation partners should they have any issues. However, it will not necessarily be as easy for our assessors who may similarly not have availability during the holidays. We are keen to make it easier for the innovator, even if it means we have to adapt the way we work internally.

Removing barriers to innovation

The pace of technology change is progressing at an alarming rate so if we don't move quickly, we can't keep up with current innovation, so we need to make it as easy as possible for innovators to apply for funding. We don't want our processes to put potential innovators off from applying through us.

And, I am not alone in my thinking; my colleagues are equally keen to remove barriers to innovation and exploitation as a key DASA objective for 2019.

I believe these changes will remove uncertainty and encourage more, new innovators to approach DASA. To be absolutely clear, if government needs the innovation, we will fund it.

About Gabriella

Gabriella leads on the Open Call Competition for DASA. Gabriella is also a trustee for charity Off The Record, leading their digital strategy. Gabriella was previously the Sector Lead for Digital for Enterprise Europe Network, sitting on the EEN worldwide sector group for ICT, the worldwide sub group for Immersive Technology and the Sector Group for Women Entrepreneurship. Gabriella has worked at an array of organisations; from the small, working as project manager at a bespoke software development company in Liverpool; to the large, working at the Department for International Trade as an adviser in Belgium.

[Press release: Guidance for businesses to register on new UK IT service for chemical regulation](#)

The UK government has today (25 March) published [further guidance](#) to businesses on the future of the UK's chemical regulation.

If the UK leaves the EU without a deal, UK businesses that manufacture or import chemicals will have to register under UK REACH.

The new guidance explains the specific steps a business must take to register a chemical online under UK REACH.

UK REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) will replace EU REACH in the UK, and will require businesses to demonstrate how a chemical can be safely used with minimal risk to human health or the environment.

The chemicals sector is the UK's second biggest manufacturing industry, employing around 95,000 people in the UK and a further 175,000 in industries that rely on chemicals. A 'no deal' would mean that a range of businesses would be unable to import chemicals directly from the European Economic Area (EEA) opening account on UK REACH IT. Sectors that rely on chemicals include the motor manufacturing, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, construction and cleaning products industries.

Launching on EU Exit day, the new online system will allow:

- Businesses that have existing UK-held REACH registrations to validate their registrations ('grandfathering')
- Businesses that import chemicals from the EEA to submit downstream user import notifications
- Business to register new substance registrations or PPORD notifications

(Product and Process Orientated Research and Development)

In order to minimise disruption to in the event of a no-deal Brexit, businesses that currently hold a REACH registration are encouraged to access their ECHA REACH-IT account and ensure that all the information relating to their business is downloaded. Information required to comply with UK REACH includes registration confirmation documents and ECHA decisions.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

> Delivering a negotiated deal with the EU remains the government's top priority, but it is the job of a responsible Government to ensure we are prepared for all scenarios, including no deal.
>
> It is not just chemicals producers that could be affected by this change so I encourage all businesses that use chemicals to read the guidance on the HSE website and check the actions they need to take.

Under the new requirements, if the UK leaves the EU without a deal:

- UK businesses that manufacture a chemical (those currently registered to EU REACH) will need to validate their existing registration with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) within 120 days of the UK leaving the EU.
- UK businesses that import a chemical substance from the EU will need to notify HSE within 180 days of the UK leaving the EU.
- UK businesses that export chemicals to the EU will need to have an EU REACH registration in place once the UK leaves the EU.

In addition, more technical information will need to be submitted by businesses to HSE within two years of EU Exit. The requirements are part of the government's commitment to maintain environmental standards after we leave the EU.

Businesses that may be affected should read the latest guidance on requirements for using chemicals after the UK leaves the EU.

Speech: Chris Skidmore: A STEP further for students

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to be here today at my first Wonkhe event and to be speaking at this fantastic venue – the Royal Institution.

I'm delighted to be speaking at this 'Secret Lives of Students' event this

morning, which seeks to do something really important — and that is to rethink the student experience using the latest data. After all, if universities aren't here for students, who are they here for?

Now, of course, I recognise the immense contribution our universities and colleges make to society — including performing ground-breaking research, regenerating local communities, attracting businesses, and boosting economic growth. But at the heart of all these wider benefits must be the students. After all, students are the lifeblood of our universities and colleges, and their campuses and communities. And they are the researchers, the employees, the residents, and the taxpayers of the future.

So, if you take students out the equation, then you take away the very reason behind our universities' existence. This is why it is essential we don't lose sight of the needs and expectations of students as we seek to build on the first-rate reputation of our higher education sector.

Students matter to universities. So, by that logic, what matters to students should also matter to university leaders and policymakers. But I know as well as you do that no two students are the same. Not all students go to university straight out of A-Levels at age 18; not all students have the same level of support behind them; and not all students look to go to a certain type of university, to study a certain type of course, with the same type of graduate outcomes at the end of it.

A diverse student body nevertheless means there will be lots of different student experiences on campus. So, since becoming Universities Minister almost four months ago, I have made it a personal mission of mine to go out and see for myself what providers are doing to meet the needs of different types of students at every stage in their student journey. I prefer to think of these stages as STEPs to mark the three distinct phases in the student lifecycle — Student Transition, Experience and Progression.

The Office for Students already requires providers of higher education to have access and participation plans in place to detail how they intend to ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups are able to enter university and succeed. These plans are ambitious and map out a vision for progress over a five-year period. But today I challenge providers to go further again, and think about how they could improve the student journey for all students in each one of these individual STEPs — looking first at Student Transition, then at the university Experience, and finally at Progression.

My intention behind this three STEP approach is to get providers thinking more broadly about what good access, participation and outcomes mean for all students at every stage in the student lifecycle. So, to give you an idea of the kinds of issues I want providers to be thinking about in each of these STEPs, let me start by focusing on the theme of student transition.

Student Transition

It's safe to say the transition to higher education can be a daunting one — not just for students leaving home and starting to live independently, but also for students choosing to stay on in the family home and, perhaps, beginning to juggle work and family life with the demands of being a student. I want every student to feel supported at the start of their journey into higher education, and I was pleased to help launch the Education Transition Network earlier this month, which will look at ways to help students deal with the challenges that may arise when starting university. I am delighted that so many prominent sector bodies have joined the so-called Transitions Taskforce and I look forward to seeing what emerges from its meeting on 1st April next week.

Yet, we can't assume all students will face the same challenges when going to university, and more needs to be done to think about how different people may find the initial weeks of being a student. Universities know the types of students they attract better than anyone else and should be well-placed to design appropriate welcome initiatives that will help new students settle in. What better way to do so than to use existing students as mentors or 'buddies', as already happens at the University of Portsmouth — where current students support others during the settling-in process.

I also want to providers to be thinking seriously about meeting the specific needs of international students. As Universities Minister, I'm delighted we currently have around 460,000 international students enrolled at universities and colleges across the country, and many of you may have seen the International Education Strategy we released just last weekend, in which we stated our ambition to increase this number by more than 30% by 2030. To help us achieve this goal, UK universities have a duty to prove themselves as places that international students want to come to and stay at, and there's no better way to do this than showing we are ready to support them settling into their new life in the UK. I am pleased to see providers like Queen's University Belfast already thinking about the little things — like an airport 'Meet and Greet' service and pre-arrival FAQs — and I want to see all universities which aspire to take on a greater international student presence offering tailored advice and assistance.

Some transitions will always require specialist support — such as those for students deciding to go into higher education directly from care. For me, the most shocking statistics I've encountered in my role as Universities Minister to date are that only 6% of care leavers go on to higher education and, of these, over half will drop out before completing their course. I desperately want to improve these statistics and I'm pleased to have launched the Higher Education Principles alongside my colleague Nadim Zahawi earlier this month, which set out what we expect higher education providers to be doing to tend to the needs of care leaver students.

But the transition to university is not the only transition I want providers to be thinking about in the first part of this STEP approach. Students face several significant transition moments throughout their student journey, with

the transition from first-year into second and third year being, for some, harder than the initial leap of going to university. The University of the Creative Arts is just one institution that is already thinking about how best to help students deal with this 'mid-point' transition by hosting a "ReFreshers Week" at the start of second term each year. This helps support students' wellbeing and aid a better student experience at a particularly difficult and challenging time of a year.

The second year of study is also the year when students tend to live off campus in the private rental market and may experience issues with landlords. Some of these issues can get so bad that they may take their toll on their study. Private landlords must stop exploiting students and face justice when they are failing tenants — especially when they leave students living in squalid conditions. That is why I'm pleased new milestone regulations came into force last week on 20th March, which give students and renters across the country greater protections and rights if there are serious defects in accommodation.

Landlords need to face up to their responsibilities to provide safe, suitable and affordable accommodation to students. And providers, too, need to be thinking seriously about how they can help empower students to choose accommodation in the private sector wisely. Students' time at university should be seen as some of the best days of their lives and yet I have heard appalling stories of students living in terrible conditions, which can affect their studies and even their mental health. While there are many landlords who do take their responsibilities seriously, for too long rogue private landlords have been exploiting vulnerable students by failing to provide even basic standards of living.

Now the time is up for these landlords making a profit from shoddy accommodation. These new regulations make landlords more accountable, helping to improve standards, and students should use their powers to make sure landlords face justice where they're not fulfilling their responsibilities. I also welcome the codes of good practice created by UUK and UniPol, which can help direct students to those landlords who are already adhering to the good standards we expect. I've already spoken to the students' union at the University of Leeds to see some of the pioneering work they are taking forward in this respect.

I also want providers to think carefully about whom they choose to partner with in the purpose-built student accommodation market. Student accommodation isn't cheap, and I am keen to make sure these costs can be justified and that the profits are going back to benefit students or local communities — whether that be by investing in services to enhance the wider student experience or to promote social mobility and widening participation.

To this end, I am pleased to announce I will be working closely with Nick Petford at the University of Northampton to look at ways in which universities can ensure they are embedding social values in their decisions to contract out services. We want to encourage all providers to consider how they are delivering social value through their procurement practices, as well as being recognised for the wider contribution many are making in their local

communities. Under no circumstances is it acceptable to make crude profit from students. And I want to see providers proactively working with partners which give something back to students and wider society.

And there's one more transition moment I want to raise this morning — and that is the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study, for those students choosing to stay on for Masters degrees or PhDs. For some, the transition from taught courses to research degrees can test self-discipline and motivation whilst, for others, the added pressure to publish and submit multiple grant proposals can leave students feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. For lab-based PhD students, the transition to doctoral-level may even feel like a quasi-transition to employment, with students working in competitive research teams under dedicated supervisors, yet without the pay or benefits to justify the long hours and multiple demands on their time. Some providers, like Cranfield University which I visited the other week, are purely postgraduate institutions and are well set-up to cater for the specific needs of the postgraduate student population. However, for providers offering the broad sweep of undergraduate courses through to postgraduate degrees, I want to see due care and attention being paid to supporting postgraduates, to ensure these students are not overlooked and are offered the specialist support appropriate to their stage in the student journey.

I want universities to be considering the concept of student transition from all these angles and more, and to ensure that no student is ever left out of their thinking.

Experience at university

The second phase in my STEP approach is all about ensuring students have the best experience possible while in higher education. This involves providers thinking about how they are going to create truly inclusive communities and provide different students with the tailored support they need.

Of course, it is clear from the outset that some students will require more assistance than others — such as students with a registered disability. As part of this government's commitment to bringing down barriers to access and participation, disabled students can already access Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) to help them with any extra costs they may incur — for things like specialist equipment, personal support or non-medical helpers. Although research shows that students receiving DSAs feel more confident about completing their course and passing, this is never going to be enough on its own and universities need to accommodate disabled students' needs.

I know some universities are already doing a fantastic job on this. In January, I went to Brunel University where one wheelchair-using student told me that his quality of life on campus was so good, thanks to his specially-designed accommodation, that it persuaded him to live in university halls all year round and to stay on for his Masters and PhD. But I know life is not like that at every university, and some institutions unfortunately remain out of bounds for students with physical disabilities because they know there is just no way they will be able to live comfortably and get around. I think

that's a tragedy. We need to be doing more to improve accessibility on campus for every student.

And it is important to remember that not all disabilities are visible. There are plenty students in our universities and colleges struggling with hidden disabilities like poor mental health and anxiety. Earlier this month, I met students at King's College London who are battling these very issues. They told me just some of the things that would have made their experiences at university a lot easier – things like shorter waiting times for support; crucially, continuity of care between universities and GP practices both at home and during term-time; and dedicated training for university staff and students, so the whole university community knows how to spot someone suffering with poor mental health and point them in the right direction for support.

I can assure you I have listened to these students' asks and am determined to find solutions. I intend to get the ball rolling by meeting Minister Jackie Doyle-Price – my colleague in the Department of Health – to begin to explore ways in which we could improve the provision of student mental health even further, particularly around the continuation of care during term and out of term.

I also remain highly supportive of the development of Mental Health Charter, being led by the charity Student Minds, to ensure providers are doing everything they can to make UK higher education a pleasant environment in which to study and work. I encourage everyone in this room today to engage with Student Minds and tell them about your experiences and ideas via their online survey. This is everyone's chance to shape the future of university mental health support and help future generations of students get the help they deserve.

Ensuring everyone gets the best student experience possible is nevertheless about much more than just providing support; it's about removing any nasty hidden surprises which could cause worry or concern for students part-way through a course. I know the NUS has been campaigning for some time against hidden course costs, and I welcome its report last week calling for transparency from providers. I know Coventry University already includes in its online materials the full fee for undergraduate courses, inclusive of any fees for mandatory visits and trips, core textbooks and software, and placement or study abroad fees. Communicating the true costs of study clearly and upfront in this way helps ensure students are not faced with making any unexpected payments further down the line, which could affect their outcomes or progression.

The current regulatory framework also gives students firm grounds for complaint. The Competition and Markets Authority has set this out very clearly in guidance to the sector as part of providers' consumer obligations to students. The Office for Students' regulatory framework also tells approved providers that it expects them to take into account relevant guidance on consumer law when developing their policies and procedures. These are the protections students can rightly expect under our new approach to higher education.

As such, I want students to know that, if grievances arise and are not properly dealt with by their institutions, they can always turn to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). It's right that, in the first instance, responsibility for dealing with complaints should sit with the higher education provider in question. However, the OIA offers a free service for students and reviews most complaints from students about things a provider has done, or has failed to do. That could include consumer issues but also wider issues, such as if they experience discrimination, harassment or sexual misconduct on campus at any point in their course — something which I also want to see providers making serious provisions to tackle as they consider the different STEPs in the student experience.

Students' interests must always come first. This is why the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 introduced Student Protection Plans from the current academic year to safeguard students should a course, campus or university close. These Plans exist to minimise risk and worry for students, so that they know their interests will be protected whatever happens during their studies. But it was extremely eye-opening for me to see that very few students are aware these Protections Plans exist. A recent pamphlet published by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) revealed that 89% of students do not know what Student Protection Plans are and that 93% have not seen their own university's Plan. This is unacceptable and a missed opportunity by the sector to reassure students that it has their best interests at heart. I want to see providers doing much more to raise the prominence and accessibility of these Plans, so that every student knows their specific student journey is secure. Responsibility nonetheless cuts both ways. And as much as we, the government, and the sector have a duty to look out for students' interests, students too have a responsibility to play their part in maintaining the integrity and high standards of our world-class university system.

Students, too, must recognise their duty not to undermine the system by cheating or turning to essay mills. We can protect you, only so long as you are willing to protect yourselves. That is why the Secretary of State announced measures just last week to 'beat the cheats' — not just by calling for tech giants to stop advertising or processing payments for essay mills online, but by asking providers to consider 'honour codes', which would see students sign a pledge not to use essay-writing services for their own assignments. It is right that providers treat any incidences of dishonesty from students severely, as we all have a role to play in upholding the quality of our degrees and ensuring they hold their value in years to come.

Progression and successful outcomes

And that takes me on nicely to look at the third and final point of my STEP approach to the student experience, which has to do with progression and ensuring successful graduate outcomes — as students make their way from university life into the wider world of work.

The higher education sector — perhaps more than any other sector — is lucky to have a wealth of data continually being published about it. We have data

about admissions from UCAS; data about students, qualifications and staff from HESA; and we also have government data. This includes the LEO data, which can be used to look at the employment and earnings of graduates up to ten years after graduation. In my first speech as Universities Minister, I committed to working with officials, as well as the Data Advisory Committee I have just set up, to better understand these datasets and ensure they are being used in the best possible way to inform policy.

But these publications are publicly available, and I want to see providers making good use of them to inform internal policies and to find solutions that work for them and their own student bodies. Government and data providers usually publish data in its aggregated, national form. But I know as well as you do that local problems require local solutions. So, taking the time to delve into this data could help providers tackle disparities in graduate outcomes within their own student communities.

I know many providers are also already collecting their own data, as more and more institutions turn to learning analytics to tell us more about the typical student lifestyle and act as early warning systems for students who, perhaps, are not engaging as much as they should be and may benefit from added support. I was highly impressed on my recent visit to Nottingham Trent University to see how its widening participation team is making use of in-house student engagement data, as well as national datasets, not just to enable students to have better experiences while at university, but also to have better access to graduate jobs when they leave. Thanks to the team taking the time to understand what it is that different student groups need, the university has ensured its high graduate employment figures are broadly the same for all students, regardless of economic or ethnic background.

Yet, we must not forget that no amount of data can overrule personal choice or motivations when it comes to students' eventual choice of career after graduation, as well as eventual location. Higher education providers and policymakers need to be empowering students to make the decision that is right for them. This involves giving students as much information as possible in an easily accessible way. Not all students will want to work in London; not all students will prioritise a high-paying career; and not all students will even know what career they would like to embark on in the first place. This is why we launched the Open Data Competition last year – in an effort to give students all the information they need when thinking about course choices and future career prospects. I'm excited that next week I get to reveal the two winning digital tools from this competition, and I hope that all students will find them useful when weighing up their options for further study and work.

At the end of the day, as Universities Minister, I am keen that graduates from our universities are empowered to be the best they can be. And if our students are to go out into the wider world and make a positive difference to society with their professionalism, compassion, convictions and leadership, then we need to be displaying those values to them now through our own approach to their higher education. Only by enhancing the student experience from transition right through to progression for all student groups, and at all institutions, will we get one STEP closer to achieving that ambition.

Thank you very much. And I'm happy to take your questions.

[News story: Monitoring housing for better health: apply for funding](#)

£1.25 million is available to monitor housing conditions in York and Leeds (pictured).

Housing in the UK is among the [least energy efficient in western Europe](#). Although houses in England are recommended to be [at least 18°C at all times](#), many households do not meet this standard, leaving the inhabitants at risk of ill health.

£1.25 million is available through an Innovate UK Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) competition for projects that can help Leeds and York local councils improve domestic heat and energy monitoring. Funding is provided by the GovTech Catalyst.

Focus on Leeds and York

The competition aims to develop non-intrusive ways to monitor a household's environmental condition. Successful projects will work with [Leeds City Council](#) and the [City of York Council](#), as well as other local organisations and tenants.

Proposed heat and energy monitoring solutions must suit the different types of homes in Leeds and York, including high rise tower blocks, and take into account a variety of tenants.

Projects must:

- provide reporting and predictive modelling
- improve the health and wellbeing of council tenants
- enable tenants to make environmental and lifestyle changes to improve the condition of their home

A 2-phase competition

The competition will comprise 2 phases.

In the first phase, around 5 research and development contracts are expected to be awarded, with projects lasting up to 3 months. A total of £250,000 including VAT has been allocated to this phase.

2 successful applicants from phase 1 will be awarded R&D contracts in the second phase. Up to £500,000 including VAT will be allocated to each contract to develop a prototype and begin field testing. Phase 2 projects can last up to 12 months.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 1 April 2019 and the deadline for registration is at midday on 8 May 2019
- organisations of any size are eligible to apply
- up to £250,000 including VAT is available in this phase
- a briefing event will be [held in Leeds on 11 April 2019](#)

Published 25 March 2019
Last updated 1 April 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 1 April 2019 Wording in summary amended to reflect that the aim is to monitor environmental conditions in the home.
2. 25 March 2019 First published.