

[News story: £170m competition launched for new Institutes of Technology](#)

Employers, education and training providers can now apply for a share of £170m to establish prestigious new Institutes of Technology (IoTs), which will specialise in delivering the higher level technical skills that employers need.

Today (15 December) the Department for Education has opened the application window for employers, Higher Education and Further Education providers to apply for multimillion-pound capital funding, as outlined by the Education Secretary at last month's [Skills Summit](#).

IoTs will see businesses and education and training providers working together to deliver provision to learners that is highly sought after by employers, in technical disciplines, particularly STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths).

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

Institutes of technology will play a vital role driving our skills revolution with business and unlocking the potential of our country's young people through better technical education. By bridging the country's skills gaps, these new institutions will drive growth and widen opportunity.

This Government continues to invest in developing our homegrown talent so British business has the skills it needs and so that young people can get the opportunities they want.

These new institutions will help tackle the skills gap at a local, regional and national level and extend opportunity to thousands of people.

IoTs are just one of the skills reforms outlined by the Secretary of State on the 30 November at the Department for Education's [Skills Summit](#) which brought together education experts and some of the country's top employers to forge a new alliance to deliver a skills revolution.

Today we can confirm our aim to achieve a network of IoTs across the country. We expect the first IoTs will be open in 2019.

To apply register [here](#)

Press release: North London rapist to spend longer in prison

On 20 February 2012, Michael Adjei, 24, who was 19 at the time, attacked the 18 year old victim in the early hours of the morning when she was walking alone to her friend's house after a night out. The victim was approaching the front door when Adjei jumped on her from behind causing her to fall sideways between 2 parked cars and hit her face.

Adjei then kneeled on top of the victim and forced her to perform oral sex on him after which he made several attempts to forcibly remove her leggings to rape her again. The victim resisted and the offender eventually ran off with the victim's handbag after noticing a pedestrian was approaching.

Adjei also slammed the victims head on the ground, pulled at her arms and legs and grabbed her by the throat. The victim had swelling to her face, scratches to her neck, chest and knees and injuries to her breasts and buttocks as a result of the incident. The attack was witnessed by 2 residents who looked out of their bedroom windows when they heard the victim's shouting.

Adjei was convicted of rape and theft at Wood Green Crown Court in October this year. He was originally sentenced to 5 years in prison. The Court of Appeal has today increased his sentence to 7 years.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General, who referred the original sentence to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient said:

"This was a violent attack that left both physical and emotional trauma, and crimes of this nature must be suitably sentenced.

"I am pleased the Court has seen fit to increase this sentence – the increased sentence better reflects the seriousness of this offending and the lasting impact it has had on the victim."

News story: The second International Fintech Conference confirmed for March 2018

Following the success of the first conference in 2017, the second annual International Fintech Conference has today (15 December 2017) been confirmed for 22 March 2018 in London.

Over 100 Fintech firms and over 400 investors attended the first conference in 2017, which resulted in over £5 million worth of investment into the UK Fintech sector.

Previous speakers include the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Governor of the Bank of England.

The Conference will bring together international investors and UK Fintech firms alongside leading industry figures, regulators and policymakers for a day-long programme of talks and pitches promoting the opportunities for global investment in the UK Fintech sector.

The UK Fintech sector contributes £6.6 billion annually to the UK economy, and employs over 60,000 people across 1,600 companies. In the first three quarters of this year the sector received a record £2.1 billion investment.

The Conference will be a highlight event as part of UK Fintech Week 2018, which will take place from 19-23 March. There will be a variety of events taking place up and down the country in recognition of the Fintech sector, beginning with [Innovate Finance's Global Summit](#) in the historic Guildhall on 19th-20th March.

[News story: Centenary Cities: 100 years of votes for women](#)

Seven areas across England will benefit from a share of £1.2 million to fund projects in 2018 to mark 100 years since women were first allowed to vote, Minister for Women and Equalities Anne Milton has confirmed today (15 December).

To mark this milestone the government's 'Centenary Cities' – Bolton, Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, London, Manchester and Nottingham – will all host a range of exciting projects to celebrate as well as remember those individuals who helped to make this happen.

Every area was chosen for its strong link to the women's suffrage movement, from Manchester's proud history as the home of the Pankhurst's suffragette campaign to lesser known local heroes like Leicester's shoe factory worker Alice Hawkins who was jailed five times in the fight for women's votes.

The 'Centenary Cities' programme forms part of the government's wider plans to promote this pivotal moment in history, including the addition of the first female statue in Parliament Square – Millicent Fawcett – due to be unveiled in 2018.

The initiatives and commemorations that will take place across the country

next year also aim to help inspire and educate young people about UK democracy and its importance, as well as encourage more women to get into political and public life.

Minister for Women and Equalities Anne Milton said:

Less than 100 years ago, women could not vote and could not stand as candidates for Parliament. By remembering and celebrating those individuals who fought to get the right to vote we are continuing to push for all our political institutions to reflect women's representation in society.

I want to congratulate all seven of our 'Centenary Cities' that have been recognised for their proud connection to the suffrage movement and look forward to hearing more about the projects they are planning next year.

Press release: Abstraction reform: further moves made towards Green Brexit

Access to clean and safe water supplies is essential for people and the environment, however increasing demand for water is putting pressure on supplies.

Latest data shows that five per cent of surface water bodies and 15 per cent of groundwater bodies are at risk from increasing water use by current abstraction licence holders that could damage the environment.

Today's new [abstraction reform plan](#) will improve better access to water by:

- Preventing unsustainable abstraction by reviewing existing licences and introducing more controls to protect rivers, lakes and groundwater.
- Developing a strong focus on catchment areas for water bodies to encourage more partnership working between [the Environment Agency](#), abstractors and catchment groups to protect and enhance the environment and improve access to water.
- Modernising the abstraction service to allow online applications for licences and bring water resources regulations in line with other

environmental permitting regulations.

Environment Minister, Thérèse Coffey said:

The abstraction licencing system is in clear need of reform and I am very pleased to set out how we will do this in our plan. I believe our approach will work for all parties and, most importantly, will protect our precious water supplies.

Our ambition is to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and we will keep building on our successes by enhancing our environmental standards and delivering a Green Brexit.

Making sure that abstraction is sustainable and contributes to healthy water bodies that are able to provide good support to fish and other aquatic life is at the heart of these plans.

While good progress has been made in recent years, the plan emphasises the importance of the Environment Agency, the water industry and other stakeholders working in partnership at a catchment level to improve and protect the environment and improve access to water.

From January 2018 the Environment Agency will begin to regulate around 5,000 water users that have historically been exempt from regulation. This will create a fairer system and help protect the environment.

The Environment Agency's work to address unsustainable abstraction should see around 90 per cent of surface water bodies and 77 per cent of groundwater bodies meet the required standards by 2021.

Notes to editors:

- The Environment Agency will produce updated abstraction licensing strategies that detail the solutions to environmental issues in local areas around rivers and groundwaters and set out approaches to help abstractors access the water they need.
- Since 2008 the Environment Agency has made changes to over 270 abstraction licences to prevent over 30 billion litres of water per year being removed from the environment where abstraction is unsustainable.
- In the New Year, the Environment Agency will begin piloting and testing a digital system for handling licence applications and data reporting. Modernising these services will improve the user experience as well as supporting reforms to better protect the environment and improve access to water.

- A report will be made to Parliament by May 2019 on the progress made on abstraction reform.