

[Ofsted launches updated guidance for summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts](#)

Ofsted has today (14 September), launched [updated guidance for summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts \(MATs\)](#).

Summary evaluations look at the extent to which a MAT is delivering high quality education and improving pupils' outcomes.

The updates to this guidance ensure that summary evaluations will mirror the [education inspection framework](#), introduced in 2019, to focus on the quality of education as seen through the curriculum. It will also allow us to increase the volume of summary evaluations, and the breadth of MATs inspected, so that we gain better insight into the role of multi-academy trusts.

The evaluations have two stages. During stage 1, batched inspections of a MAT's academies are carried out, and, once all the inspection reports have been published, the stage 2 summary evaluation takes place. This is not the same as an inspection and is carried out with the consent and cooperation of the MAT being reviewed.

Ofsted will consider key information about the MAT, including inspection outcomes, discussions with MAT leaders, and survey visits to some of the academies not previously inspected in stage 1. The aim of the evaluation is to give the MAT helpful recommendations on aspects of provision that could be improved, and to recognise where the MAT is having a positive impact on the quality of education that its academies provide.

We will select a broad range of MATs for evaluations, including smaller and specialist MATs, not just those that may be a cause for concern. This is to ensure that we can gain an accurate and balanced understanding of the contribution that MATs make to the school system, highlighting areas of strength that can be shared more widely and providing insight into any weaknesses.

At the end of the summary evaluation, inspectors will offer oral feedback on their findings to the MAT's senior leaders before publishing a letter on the Ofsted reports website.

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector said:

Multi-academy trusts form a large part of our educational landscape and many decisions about the day-to-day running of an academy take place at trust level. It's important, therefore, that we have conversations with the trust about the quality of education provided across their academies.

By visiting more MATs, we will be able to gain a better understanding of their contribution to the school system. And we will be able to share valuable insights and information that can help the sector improve.

[Financial Remedy: digital process](#)

Financial remedy service has delivered a national end-to-end service for individuals and/or their legal representatives to make an application to legally end a marriage or civil partnership and resolve associated financial issues.

Personal applicants can [apply for a divorce online](#) through GOV.UK and legal representatives must now submit [applications for divorce on behalf of their clients](#) using MyHMCTS.

A further element of a fully digital divorce process is a digital process for financial remedy.

Background

The financial remedy project started in 2017 to move the process online to allow divorcing couples to resolve their associated financial matters. The aim was to create a more efficient service and enable the parties to view their cases and progress online. Consented Financial Remedy cases were taking 77 days on average from issue to final order in the year to April 2018. We involved stakeholders from the beginning, starting with an inception event with the judiciary and operational teams. It was important to ensure our stakeholders were involved with the conception and planned enhancements to move the process online. The Department for Work and Pensions and pension companies also signed up to the service.

Stage 1 of the pilot, 'Apply for a consent order (Form A, form D81)', began testing in the South West Regional Divorce Centre (RDC) in August 2018 with 5 members of the judiciary and 5 firms of solicitors.

The system was very much a basic Minimum Viable Product (MVP) to start with, with much of the manual work being completed by operations staff at the RDC; feedback from this was that it was time consuming and a more efficient service was needed.

We worked quickly to improve this and enabled the orders to be reviewed and completed digitally by both judges and case administration personnel.

With the system working well, we increased the number of solicitors using the system gradually and with that, increased the number of judges completing the

work. We also moved the administration of the work to the Courts and Tribunals Service Centre (CTSC) in Stoke.

During the implementation process, we held a weekly call with solicitors to gather feedback and ideas on improvements for the system, this helped us to tweak and improve the system. The weekly calls were minuted. With the improvements to the system, the service is now mandated and being used by solicitors nationally with over 300 judges trained.

To ensure we were gathering feedback on the system, we had a monthly call with the divorce and financial remedy stakeholders. The calls were minuted.

We also held a weekly call with the CTSC to ensure their workload was manageable and to inform them of any enhancement rollouts to the system. These calls were also minuted.

With the process starting with an MVP, there were no real problems with implementing the new process.

Impact of the actions

Through moving the consent order application online and listening to feedback we have greatly improved the timeliness. It now takes an average of 35 days from issue to final order. However, this includes cases which are referred to a judge more than once. The average time from issue to final order is now on average 7 days.

Financial Remedy Centres (FRCs) were rolled out nationally, they deal with mainly contested applications and any consent order hearings.

Examples of positive feedback from service users and tweets received from solicitors using the system:

Love a competition but can anyone beat my record? Order submitted via online @HMCTsgovuk financial remedy portal on 19 August. Approved 11 days later. thank you @ResFamilyLaw thank you HMCTS

I just want to take a moment to recognise and congratulate @HMCTsgovuk for their online divorce and financial remedy procedure – decree absolute in less than 4 months from issue of petition and 9 days to approve a FRO by consent. Truly impressive, well done!

Principal Lawyer at Slater & Gordon Lawyers, divorce lawyer and collaborative lawyer.

Further information

[HMCTS Reform projects explained](#)
[HMCTS engagement groups](#)

UK tech firms and investors brought together for landmark Treasury Conference

- Chancellor Rishi Sunak convenes landmark Treasury Connect conference in London today to bring together CEOs of the UK's biggest tech firms and investors
- New data shows government support during the pandemic lands taxpayers with stakes in high performing, high-growth firms including education platforms, healthcare companies and an energy tech company
- More than one fifth of people in the UK's biggest cities are employed in the tech sector which saw a record-breaking £11.2 billion invested last year despite the pandemic

At the first-ever Treasury Connect conference in East London, Rishi Sunak will bring together the CEOs of the UK's biggest investors and tech firms, including Funding Circle and Monzo, and lead four sessions on access to finance, Fintech, talent and life sciences.

He will also announce that government support during the pandemic through the Future Fund, which enabled UK-based firms to apply for convertible loans to support continued growth and innovation, has landed taxpayers with stakes in more than 150 high-growth firms.

These include Vaccitech PLC, which co-invented the COVID-19 vaccine with the University of Oxford and that has been supplied by AstraZeneca to 170 countries worldwide, and Century Tech, an innovative education platform that uses AI to personalise learning for children.

Speaking ahead of the Treasury Connect conference, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

I am delighted to bring some of our biggest tech firms and investors together today to celebrate UK technology and expertise at Treasury Connect. These firms have huge economic potential and will play a critical role in our future prosperity – all while creating high-skilled jobs and boosting the economy as part of our

Plan for Jobs.

The Future Fund was set up to ensure that investment keeps flowing to our most innovative businesses, and it's fantastic that taxpayers now have equity in these top-performing start-ups.

Investing in these companies has the potential to accelerate innovations that will transform UK industry, develop new medicines and strengthen our position as a science superpower.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

It's fantastic to see firms and investors from around the country coming together to celebrate this golden age in UK tech.

The tech sector has played a crucial role throughout the pandemic and these innovative firms are key to driving growth through our recovery.

We've been working tirelessly to back digital businesses with pro-innovation policies such as the Future Fund and the National Data Strategy so we can create jobs, wealth and boost people's digital skills right across the UK.

The UK's world-leading tech sector employs more than one fifth of people in the UK's biggest cities, accounting for 9% of the UK workforce. Despite the disruption caused by Covid-19, last year a record-breaking £11.2 billion was invested in the UK's tech companies.

The Government stood behind the sector during the pandemic by launching the Future Fund, in May 2020, which has supported nearly 1,200 firms, in sectors such as digital tech and life sciences, with £1 billion of investment. The scheme also helped these start-ups and innovative firms to secure funding from third party investors who had to at least match the government funding on each loan.

Latest data, released today by the British Business Bank shows some of these early investments have now turned into stakes in these high-growth firms, showing the scheme is working.

This includes healthcare company Cipher Surgical Limited which has developed products to maintain a clear view of the laparoscope used by surgeons when carrying out abdominal keyhole surgery, making operating time quicker and cost less.

Other companies that have Government stakes include Ripple Energy, a firm that allows customers to own shares of a wind farm.

Catherine Lewis La Torre, CEO, British Business Bank said:

The Future Fund helped keep investment flowing to high-growth UK businesses during the pandemic. Designed to create a bridge to an innovative company's next funding round, over £1 billion of convertible loans were issued to more than 1,000 firms. Over 150 companies have already seen this funding convert to equity as they have gone on to successfully raise further private sector capital.

The continued success of companies such as those supported by the Future Fund, will be essential in ensuring the UK retains its world leading position in science, innovation and technology.

Today's news follows the £375 million Future Fund: Breakthrough which opened for applications in July to help high-growth, R&D intensive companies bring game-changing technologies to market. In the short period of time the programme has been open for applications, there has been strong interest, with the scheme open for applications on a rolling basis to R&D intensive companies with well-established UK operations.

The Government's existing programmes to support innovative firms looking to scale up, include the Life Sciences Investment Programme and British Patient Capital's £2.5 billion 'patient capital'.

Further information

Further stakeholder reaction:

Samir Desai, CEO and Founder of Funding Circle:

The Treasury Connect conference highlights the Chancellor's ongoing commitment to the UK's world-leading tech sector, and we applaud the way HM Treasury and the British Business Bank worked with Fintechs and Banks to support small businesses during the pandemic.

We're proud of the role our technology and distribution platform played in delivering this vital support, and look forward to continuing to work with the Government to help SMEs access growth finance.

[Prime Minister to set out autumn and](#)

winter plan for Covid

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will set out the government's autumn and winter plan for managing Covid at a press conference this afternoon.



The Prime Minister will set out the government's autumn and winter plan for managing Covid at a press conference this afternoon.

This will follow a statement from the Health and Social Care Secretary to the House.

The government's autumn and winter plan will set out a renewed focus on vaccines as the first line of defence, supported by testing, public health advice, and a world-leading variant surveillance system. All evidence and data has been consistently kept under review, with today's plan representing the latest advice for controlling the virus.

In England, the number of deaths and hospitalisations has remained relatively stable over the last month. Our vaccines are highly effective, with PHE analysis suggesting that two doses led to the prevention of 24,702,000 infections and 112,300 deaths, up to the 27 August.

The government has now received the final advice from the JCVI on the booster programme. The Prime Minister and Health and Social Care Secretary will today set out how the programme will be rolled out to the most vulnerable.

The booster programme is separate to the third primary dose programme for those who are immunocompromised.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said:

The pandemic is far from over, but thanks to our phenomenal vaccine programme, new treatments and testing we are able to live with the virus without significant restrictions on our freedoms.

Today I will set out a clear plan for the autumn and winter, when the virus has a natural advantage, to protect the gains we have made.

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Government backs entrepreneurs across the UK with £600 million of Start Up Loans outside London

- Lending to small businesses outside London through the government-backed Start Up Loans scheme has passed the £600 million milestone
- the North West received the most funding outside London, and the 600 millionth pound was loaned to a woodworking business in Northern Ireland
- scheme offers loans of up to £25,000 as well as dedicated business advice and is run by the British Business Bank

The government's Start Up Loans scheme has provided £600 million in loans to businesses outside London, delivering extensive support for entrepreneurship across the UK's home nations and regions.

Loans have gone to a huge range of companies, including businesses making vegan bags in Yorkshire, bespoke wooden furniture in Northern Ireland and rum cakes in the Lake District.

Businesses and entrepreneurs in the North West of England received the most loans outside London, totalling over £94 million, with those in the South East receiving over £81 million, followed by Yorkshire & The Humber with over £68 million.

Aspiring business owners receive up to £25,000 through the Start Up Loans scheme, run by the British Business Bank, delivering support that they may have otherwise struggled to get through a commercial bank loan. The scheme also provides mentoring to those starting their business venture, and offers extensive support to women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs from ethnic minority backgrounds and the previously unemployed.

These figures reflect the UK's wide-ranging and diverse entrepreneurial spirit and highlight the success of the programme in providing support to business owners of all backgrounds, regardless of where in the country they are based or what sector they're in, as the government levels up opportunity across the UK.

Small Business Minister Paul Scully said:

There is so much creativity and dynamism across the UK, but without access to funding and support it's difficult to fully unlock the entrepreneurial spirit that makes this country great.

The Start Up Loans programme has helped a diverse range of entrepreneurs across the UK to get their business ideas off the ground, levelling up the entire country and enabling talented business leaders from all backgrounds to flourish.

The latest figures show 40% of Start Up Loans have gone to women business leaders, 20% to people from an ethnic minority background and around 35% to those who had previously been unemployed.

Recipient of the 600 millionth pound

The recipient of the 600 millionth pound from the Start Up Loans programme was Will Smith, from Comber in County Down in Northern Ireland. He took out a loan of £6,000 in January 2020 to launch Woodwork by Will – a bespoke wooden furniture company. He used the money to invest in essential machinery and a table saw.

Prior to receiving the loan, he was using a friend's machinery for some of the bigger jobs. Now that he has his own machinery, a job that would have taken 3 days can be completed in just half a day, enabling him to produce more high-quality artisan products.

Will Smith, Founder of Woodwork by Will said:

The support I have received from the British Business Bank has accelerated my business 12 months beyond where it would have been.

I found the whole process with the Bank very straightforward and would have no hesitation in recommending Start Up Loans to other entrepreneurs. I would go as far as saying that if you are serious about growth this type of investment early on is essential, provided you are determined to put the work in.

The mentoring elements would particularly suit someone who is starting their own business but doesn't necessarily have a business background. I was offered mentoring from successful entrepreneurs on areas such as marketing, legal issues and insurance that kept me on the right track from the start.

Richard Bearman, Managing Director of Start Up Loans, said:

Providing £600 million worth of funding to new businesses outside

of London is a huge milestone for the government-backed Start Up Loans programme and reflects the broad diversity and ambition of the nation's small businesses at a grass roots level across the whole country.

We have always been committed to providing support and funding to SMEs that hail from each corner of the country, particularly in areas of deprivation where people may struggle to access funding, and this milestone is tribute to that.

We are proud that our loans, mentoring and support for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs is helping to support the Build Back Better agenda and we're delighted to have been able to help Will make his dream into a reality.

Notes to editors

- figures by region are up to 31 August 2021
- the Start-Up Loans Company, part of the British Business Bank, was formed in June 2012. The Start Up Loans scheme provides personal loans for business purposes of up to £25,000 at a 6% fixed interest rate per annum and offers free dedicated mentoring and support to each business
- the primary aim of the Start Up Loans scheme is to ensure that viable start-ups and early-stage businesses have access to the finance and support they need in order to thrive. A network of delivery partner organisations support applicants in all regions and industries throughout the UK
- the funding for the Start Up Loans scheme is provided by BEIS. The Start-Up Loans Company is a subsidiary of the British Business Bank plc
- since 2012, the Start Up Loans scheme has delivered more than 87,000 loans, providing more than £779 million of funding
- in the financial year 2020/2021, the scheme provided 11,408 loans with a total value of approximately £137.2 million
- since 2012, 30% of loans went to people formerly unemployed or economically inactive. Two fifths (40%) were women and more than 1 in 5 (20.2%) of the loan recipients were people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- at Spending Review 2020, the Chancellor announced an increase in funding for the Start Up Loans programme so that it can provide 1,000 more loans in 2021/2022 than were originally funded in the March 2020 Budget
- for more information about Start Up Loans, please visit:
www.startuploans.co.uk/