

Over 300,000 homes sold with Help to Buy

Sam Legg, 19, from Asfordby, bought the 300,000th Help to Buy home and is now urging others to join the government scheme.

The [official Help to Buy statistics](#) released today (13 May 2021) reveal:

- 313,043 households have now bought a home with the support of the Help to Buy: Equity Loan Scheme since its launch in 2013
- In the 3 months up to December 2020, there were 21,026 completions, the highest quarterly annual total ever and 40% higher than the same period in 2019
- Most of the home purchases in the Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme were made by first-time buyers, accounting for 257,520 (82%) of total purchases

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Helping people get a foot on the housing ladder is central to the mission of this government.

Today's figures show over 300,000 homes have been sold through our Help to Buy scheme which hugely benefits first time buyers. Alongside other measures such as the stamp duty cut and new mortgage guarantee scheme, Help to Buy will continue to help more and more people to have a home that is truly their own.

Chair of Homes England Peter Freeman said:

Today's milestone underlines how successful the scheme has been in helping people buy their own home. With the original Help to Buy scheme, and the new scheme aimed specifically at first time buyers, we look forward to helping more people like Sam achieve their dream of home ownership.

Sam Legg is Help to Buy's 300,000th customer having recently bought his first home in Asfordby, Leicestershire living with his girlfriend Megan and dog Del Boy.

Sam, who works as a farmer locally, said:

I am very happy to have bought my first home which would not have been possible without Help to Buy. The whole process went very smoothly, and I hope many more people can be helped to buy their

first home in the same way.

The new Help to Buy: Equity Loan for first time buyers started on 1 April and will continue to increase the supply of new homes over the next two years and help thousands more people own their home.

The government recently announced a further two-month extension for Help to Buy customers following delays caused by the pandemic. The extension will run to 31 May, allowing homebuilders to complete the build and buyers to legally complete their purchase.

Purchasers can borrow up to 20% of the cost of a new build (40% in London), funding the balance via a mortgage and repaying the loan when they sell.

Market Exploration: High Consequence Infectious Disease Medical Evacuation

Summary

On behalf of the United Kingdom (UK) Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Royal Air Force (RAF), the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) is running a Market Exploration to understand the current market of capabilities and technologies related to High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) in order to identify, develop and deliver an enhanced capability for Defence. The Market Exploration will provide knowledge of what potential solutions already exist, novel solutions in development and areas that may require further investment by MOD.

Whilst potentially successful technologies and concepts may be exploited within a future acquisition programme, please note that this request for information is not a commitment to subsequently launch a formal DASA competition.

Background

The Deployable Air Isolator Team, is a joint Department of Health and Social Care and MOD asset and can transport patients with possible or confirmed HCID. The current Air Transportable Isolator (shown above and detailed within [CDC Paper](#) published in Jan 19), provides the capability for strategic [\[1\]](#) Aeromedical Evacuation (AE) of a patient with a HCID (please note that at the time of launch COVID-19 is not considered an HCID, so this is not a COVID-19-specific requirement) [\[2\]](#) .

HCIDs are divided into contact and airborne groups; contact HCIDs spread by

contact with an infected patient or by indirect contact with contaminated materials. Airborne HCIDs are spread by respiratory droplets or aerosol transmission, in addition to contact routes of transmission. The Public Health England list of HCID is at this link: [UK Gov HCID guidance](#).

Medical Capability (Air) are leading the review of future capability options, which can in part or as a whole, transfer patients from a point of infection/exposure (or confirmation of infection) anywhere in the world to a UK-based dedicated Specialist Medical Treatment Facility (MTF). We are seeking additional capability to facilitate the AE of patients with airborne and/or contact HCID. The new capability, or systems within it, should facilitate both strategic and tactical [3] AE, thus enabling the movement of HCID patients throughout the Operational Patient Care Pathway (OPCP), as shown below:

Figure 1- Operational Patient Care Pathway. The technology should be suitable for use on the Tactical Aeromed, Strategic Aeromed and Air Transportable Isolator pathways on the diagram. Extract from Joint Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Briefing.

Enhancements to the current capability must take into account the constraints and environmental challenges that air (fixed wing and rotary) and vehicular platforms bring in terms of; options for ruggedization [4] , for maintaining patient comfort, prevention of aircraft/support personnel contamination, communications, access for treatment during transportation, extended transit times and space limitations. The technology should be suitable for use on the Tactical Aeromed, Strategic Aeromed and Air Transportable Isolator pathways on the diagram.

Essential requirements

- system can transfer patients with a confirmed, or suspected, HCID (airborne and/or contact HCID)
- system can as a whole or in part be used strategically and tactically
- the system allows for access for treatment
- the system will prevent, so far as is reasonably possible, contamination of aircraft and support personnel

What we want

We are particularly interested in capabilities, technologies, initiatives and novel approaches which, in part or as a whole, can transfer HCID patients through the OPCP from a point of infection (or confirmation of) to a UK Role 4 [5] hospital or dedicated specialist centre. This will enable strategic MEDEVAC (from an operational theatre) and tactical MEDEVAC (within a theatre of operations and at the most advanced units or elements of the OPCP).

Evidence of trials of operational use for capabilities or technologies will be welcomed in the Market Exploration. Novel initiatives and approaches, new technologies and extant capabilities will be considered.

What we don't want

We are not interested in literature reviews, paper-based studies, consultancy, non-technical solutions or marginal improvements to existing capabilities.

This is not a competition; therefore, we are not asking for costed proposals at this stage. This is a market engagement request as an information exercise; we do not commit to subsequently launching a formal DASA competition.

How to submit a Market Exploration Submission to DASA

Responses to this Market Exploration must be submitted via the DASA submission service, for which you will need to register. We recommend you use a Google Chrome browser to access the [DASA submission service](#).

You will be asked for a title and short summary of your innovation, along with questions related to your organisation, your idea and technology maturity. We are seeking to understand what and how much further development is required for a complete solution to meet requirements, or whether a combination of separate solutions is required. The information you provide will assist in developing a statement of requirements for potential future activities.

Submissions must be submitted by midday on Thursday 24th June 2021. Unfortunately we are unable to accept any submissions after this point.

Please only provide details of one product/capability per submission. If you have a number of potential solutions, then please submit multiple forms.

If you have any questions, then please email accelerator@dstl.gov.uk with "HCID AE Market Exploration" in the subject line.

How we use your information

Information you provide to us in a Market Exploration Submission, that is not already available to us from other sources, will be handled in-confidence. By submitting a Market Exploration Submission, you are giving us permission to keep and use the information for our internal purposes and to provide the information onwards, in-confidence, within UK Government. The Defence and Security Accelerator will not use or disclose the information for any other purpose, without first requesting permission to do so.

[1] Strategic AE is the movement of patients from a theatre of operations to a Role 4 medical treatment facility (MTF) in the UK or a Partner Nation Role 4 equivalent. Defined as the phase of MEDEVAC that provides air transport for patients from a MTF within an area of operations to a MTF outside the areas of operations.

[2] As of 19 March 2020 public [health bodies](#) in the UK determined that COVID-19 is no longer considered to be a high consequence infectious disease (HCID) in the UK.

[3] Tactical MEDEVAC is the movement of patients between deployed medical treatment facilities, within the theatre of operations.

[4] To withstand aircraft vibrations.

[5] A Role 4 MTF offers the full spectrum of definitive medical care that cannot be deployed to a Theatre of Operations or will be too time consuming to be conducted in Theatre. Role 4 MTFs normally provide definitive care, specialist surgical and medical procedures, reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation.

[Animals to be formally recognised as sentient beings in domestic law](#)

- Government introduces Bill to formally recognise animals as sentient beings
- Animal Sentience Committee will put animal sentience at heart of government policy
- Bill introduced as part of government's first of a kind [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#)

Vertebrate animals will be recognised as sentient beings for the first time in UK law thanks to the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill, introduced in Parliament today.

The legislation will also ensure that animal sentience is taken into account when developing policy across Government through the creation of a Animal Sentience Committee which will be made up of animal experts from within the field.

By enshrining sentience in domestic law in this way, any new legislation will have to take into account the fact that animals can experience feelings such as pain or joy. The Bill will underpin the Government's [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#), which launched yesterday and sets out the government's plans to improve standards and eradicate cruel practices for animals both domestically and internationally.

The Bill's introduction, fulfilling a key Manifesto commitment, will further the UK's position as a world-leader on animal welfare. Now that we have left the EU we have the opportunity to remake laws and go further to promote animal welfare by making sure that all Government departments properly consider animal sentience when designing policy, covering all vertebrate

animals from farm to forest.

The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill will:

- formally recognise animals as sentient beings in domestic law
- establish an Animal Sentience Committee made up of experts to ensure cross departmental government policy considers animal sentience
- ensure Government Ministers update parliament on recommendations made by the Animal Sentience Committee

Launching the Bill, Animal Welfare minister Lord Goldsmith said:

The UK has always led the way on animal welfare and now that we've left the EU we are free to drive for the highest standards of animal welfare anywhere in the world.

Formally recognising in law that animals are sentient and experience feelings in the same way humans do is just the first step in our flagship Action Plan for Animal Welfare which will further transform the lives of animals in this country and strengthen our position as a global leader.

Claire Bass, Executive Director of Humane Society International/UK said:

45 of the UK's most respected animal protection organisations have been united in calling for this Bill, which recognises that animals have the ability to experience feelings, including pain, joy and fear, and that their emotions and welfare deserve consideration and protection when laws are made.

The formation of an Animal Sentience Committee is a very welcome step; it must though be designed with the right expertise, independence, resourcing and access to information to enable it to provide robust and constructive scrutiny. We hope that it will support government's delivery of a progressive welfare strategy built on respect for the needs of sentient animals, who enrich and improve our lives in so many ways.

James West, Senior Policy Manager, Compassion in World Farming, said:

Compassion in World Farming warmly welcome today's publication of legislation that recognises animals as sentient beings – capable of experiencing joy, pain and suffering. We applaud this initiative that will apply to policies being developed across all UK Government departments.

We look forward to the newly established Committee being effective in ensuring that Ministers pay all due regard to animal sentience when formulating and implementing policy. As a nation of animal lovers, we should not expect anything less than granting sentient beings the legal recognition they unequivocally deserve.

The UK has a long history of improving the lives of animals, being the first country in the world to pass legislation to protect animals in 1822 with the Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act and later the landmark Protection of Animals Act in 1911.

The Government has continued to uphold this tradition of high welfare standards over the years through many reforms, ranging from banning the use of battery cages for laying hens and introducing compulsory CCTV in slaughter houses and most recently [raising the maximum sentence](#) for animal cruelty from six months to five years.

[DE&S launches new Strategy](#)

We have launched our new strategy outlining our ambitions for 2025 with a focus on delivering through people, technology and innovation.

DE&S 2025 is our response to the Government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. It sets the course for a significant evolution in how we procure and support military equipment solutions for this Information Age.

Our strategy builds on our strong track record of delivering complex acquisition programmes for the UK's Armed Forces. Since 2014 we have delivered over 4,500 contract awards, worth more than £47 billion and managed 80 per cent of the UK's biggest and most complicated defence programmes. We continue to play a major role in the prosperity of the UK by spending £8 billion every year on UK contracts and through this, support more than 88,000 jobs.

Our new strategy will ensure we are best placed to help Defence deliver its future integrated force, and support wider Government priorities, from creating jobs and levelling up prosperity, to driving environmental change.

Chief Executive, Sir Simon Bollom said:

There is a demand from our military clients for greater pace and agility and our role is to meet their needs – now and into the future.

The publication of the Integrated Review and the new investment that this brings provides an opportunity for us to seize the moment and deliver a further step-change in our performance in line with the new Defence Command Paper and priorities. This strategy provides us with the focus to raise our ambitions and deliver for our Armed Forces and wider society

Delivering the strategy

We will deliver the strategy by focusing on five priority areas. Through these, we will ensure we can provide the Armed Forces with some of the most advanced technology equipment needed to maintain their operational advantage.

1. Pace and agility for our clients – We will improve our ability to deliver performance and solutions at pace with increased availability, fast response to our clients' priorities, and a focus on safety, security and better integration of systems.
2. Value to the taxpayer and society – We will make our investments go further to support defence and national priorities. We will deliver value for the Armed Forces and support government net zero and social value targets.
3. Delivery through people – We will support a diverse and professional workforce that is empowered and equipped to deliver excellence. We will provide access to the right learning and development, invest in our leadership and embed our new set of values.
4. Accelerated digital solutions – We will drive digital solutions for business and battlespace advantage. We will apply delivery enhancing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data science, open capability centres of expertise and launch innovative communities of interest.
5. Delivery through partners – We will attract and work at pace with diverse, resilient and innovative suppliers and partners. We will implement the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, secure our supply chains, support international partnerships and exports and protect our capabilities.

Krishna Dhanak, Director Corporate Strategy and Operations, added:

The Integrated Review calls for our acquisition and procurement to be more agile and responsive to the changing nature of operations and industry, and for our capabilities to be more persistently engaged – on task, on time, and deployed for longer.

Our strategy ensures we rise to this challenge by focusing on embracing innovative and emerging technology to deliver safe and secure integrated capabilities, and even greater value for our clients. It also recognises that our people and our partners are instrumental to success. We will work in collaboration and at increasing pace to help deliver one of the most integrated, digital and agile Armed Forces in the world.

Find out more about the [DE&S 2025 Strategy and Key Performance Indicators](#).

[OSCE group of friends on safety of journalists: joint statement](#)

Madam Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the informal OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists, composed of the following participating States: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

I would like to welcome the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) and thank Ms Ribeiro for her report to the Permanent Council, and for keeping the topic of the safety of journalists high on her agenda, and the agenda of the Permanent Council.

We [agreed in Milan in 2018](#) that the work of journalists can put them, and their family members, at risk of violence, harassment and intimidation, and resolved to take action as participating States to enhance the safety of journalists.

Unfortunately, Ms Ribeiro's report highlights that not all participating States, have lived up to our common OSCE commitments. Journalists and other media actors in some participating States in our region continue to face killing, torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest, detention and expulsion, intimidation, harassment, and threats.

In her report, Ms Ribeiro stated that journalism is becoming an ever more dangerous profession. She highlighted her shock at two killings of journalists since she took office. In her first five months, she has addressed 22 cases of abuse, harassment and violence against media workers reporting on public gatherings. It is clear that our words of 2018 have not translated into reality. Far from it.

Madam Chair,

Independent media is a cornerstone of free and open societies, and helps safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms. Journalists and other media actors play an important role in covering elections, informing the public about candidates and their political platforms, and helping to expose a wide audience to important political debates. As Ms Ribeiro said last week, on World Press Freedom Day: “our democracies depend on a thriving and pluralistic media landscape”.

Ensuring the safety of journalists helps to strengthen our democracies. Unfortunately, as we have seen across the OSCE region including in Belarus, the reverse is also true. All forms of attacks on journalists, whether committed by the authorities or by others under a cloak of impunity, only serve to undermine democracy.

We therefore call on participating States to put into practice our shared human dimension commitments, including the Milan Decision of 2018. We call for the immediate release of journalists and other media actors who have been arbitrarily detained, and to hold accountable those responsible for attacks on journalists and other media actors.

Madam Chair,

The Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists remains committed to supporting the RFoM in her important work. We agree with the RFoM’s assertion that silencing women journalists constitutes an attack on democracy itself and strongly support the RFoM’s work on the Safety of Female Journalists Online, including the SOFJO resource guide.

Women journalists face additional and gender-specific pressures in their efforts to conduct investigative reporting, and gender-based violence and abuse and gendered disinformation are some of the tools used to silence them. The result is, unfortunately but understandably, often self-censorship.

Self-censorship is also increasing in a number of participating States where journalists, media workers and editors are subjected to pressure, threats and harassment online. Freedom of the media is suffering as a result. It is all part of the “bleak picture” described by the RFoM in her report.

Against such a sobering backdrop, the Group of Friends remains committed to continuing our work with other participating States, and the RFoM, to help us all achieve our common goals on the safety of journalists.

Thank you Madam Chair.