

Sixteen colleges to benefit from next phase of fund to transform facilities

Sixteen colleges across England are set to be the next to benefit from the government's £1.5 billion [FE Capital Transformation Fund](#), Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan announced today (8 April).

The fund was first launched in September 2020 by the Prime Minister to rebuild and transform college estates and create modern, fit-for-purpose spaces that meet the needs of students and the communities they serve.

The first phase of the fund was [launched in September 2020, with an initial £200 million allocated to all colleges](#) so they could undertake immediate remedial work to refurbish their buildings.

Following this, in January 2021, [a second phase was launched](#) where all colleges were invited to bid for additional funding to help upgrade their campuses. Bids are now being considered by Department for Education (DfE) with funding expected to be awarded this Autumn.

This third and final phase will involve the DfE working in partnership with the 16 colleges announced today to fund projects that will ensure they are excellent places to learn, and so more people can gain the skills that they need to secure great jobs.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan said:

It is fantastic news that we are launching the next phase of this transformation programme, working with a small number of colleges that are some of the most in need of support to upgrade and revitalise their estates.

As we recover from the pandemic, it is vital our colleges continue to be great places to learn with excellent facilities.

Our priority is making sure every student receives high quality education and training, no matter where they live, so they can gain the skills they need to progress into work and help the economy to rebuild and grow.

This significant investment forms part of the government's landmark reforms – through the Skills for Jobs [White Paper](#) – that will transform further and technical education and deliver the skilled workforce employers and the economy need, helping to level up skills and opportunities for more people across the country.

The reforms build on the action already underway to transform the post-16 landscape. This includes rolling out T Level qualifications, establishing a

network of Institutes of Technology, and through the new Lifetime Skills Guarantee making sure everyone, no matter where they live or their background, can gain the skills they need to progress in work at any stage of their lives.

The 16 colleges to benefit from third phase of the FE Capital Transformation Fund are as follows:

- Beacon Centre, Blackburn College;
- Lansdowne Site, Bournemouth & Poole College;
- Brooksby Melton College, SMB Group;
- Ashington Campus, Education Partnership North East (Northumberland College);
- St Austell Campus, Cornwall College;
- Houghall Campus, East Durham College;
- Rochdale site, Hopwood Hall College;
- Isle of Wight College;
- Great Yarmouth Campus, East Coast College;
- Stafford site, Newcastle & Stafford College Group;
- North Lindsey College, DN College Group;
- Merrist Wood College, Activate Learning;
- Strode College;
- Parsons Walk, Wigan & Leigh College;
- Yeovil College;
- Stanmore College.

National welcome for Hong Kong arrivals

- Hong Kong BN(0) status holders and their families who settle in the United Kingdom will receive £43 million dedicated support package
- 12 welcome hubs will help families and individuals access housing, education, and employment to build a life in the UK
- Funding for councils to provide additional help for new arrivals where needed, including support with housing costs and learning English
- Schools to receive dedicated Hong Kong educational resources to teach pupils about historic Hong Kong-British connection

British National (Overseas) families coming to the United Kingdom on the Hong Kong BN(0) route will benefit from a dedicated package of support to help them settle successfully into life in the UK, the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick announced today (8 April 2021).

Backed by over £43 million, the Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Integration Programme will help status holders access housing, work and

educational support to ensure they are able to quickly integrate and contribute to their newfound communities.

The move delivers on the UK's historic and moral commitment to the people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up BN(0) status in 1997. It provides them with a pathway to live in the UK should they choose to do so. BN(0) status holders have had their rights and freedoms restricted by the National Security Legislation imposed by the Chinese government and it is right that we change the entitlements in the UK which are attached to their status.

Councils in England, who are already playing a key role to ensure BN(0) status holders are warmly welcomed and supported, will benefit from £30.7 million to provide targeted support for new arrivals, covering additional English language and support with housing costs for those who need it. As the areas of support covered by these funds are both devolved policies, £5.8 million will be provided to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to deliver similar activity.

A further £5 million will be used to establish 12 virtual welcome hubs across every region in England, and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to co-ordinate support and give practical advice and assistance in applying for school places, registering with GPs and even setting up businesses.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

I want to extend a warm welcome to Hong Kongers arriving in the UK and reaffirm that this government is doing everything in its power to ensure your success and happiness here.

This programme will ensure British National (Overseas) status holders and their families have the very best start as soon as they arrive, and support to help them find a home, schools for their children, opportunity and prosperity.

We are a champion of freedom and democracy and will live up to our responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong, so that these families will come to find the UK a place they can call home.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

We promised to uphold freedom for the people of Hong Kong, which is why I am proud that we have been able to support so many people when they have needed our help.

It's an unprecedented and generous scheme and there is no other visa in the world of this nature. We are working hard to successfully resettle people here and recognise there is nothing more difficult than leaving your home to rebuild a life in a new country.

I know communities up and down our country will welcome new arrivals with open arms and support them to build a new life in the UK.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

This is another important step in our support for BNOs to help them integrate and contribute to UK society.

It reflects our commitment to the people of Hong Kong – and those who have now chosen to start a new life here.

Dr Krish Kandiah, Founder of UKHK.org said:

The arrival of Hong Kongers will enrich the UK immensely and help thousands of people live in freedom.

All of us – neighbours, colleagues, fellow students, businesses – have important roles to play in making Hong Kongers feel welcome and to help their integration into British society. But government support is critical. That's the clear lesson from past migrations. So it is great to see the government follow through on its commitment to help Hong Kongers successfully settle in the UK with an early package of assistance.

Today's package also includes:

- 12 'virtual' welcome hubs for new arrivals with funding for projects like local helplines, community led activities such as buddying up with other families, and English language support if needed, ensuring that people feel at home in their new community.
- A £986,000 national Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) grant scheme will fund national projects that support BN(0) status holders in areas such as employment, mental health and wellbeing to help build community cohesion.
- As a part of the VCSE fund, MHCLG will develop dedicated Hong Kong educational resources for schools so that they can teach young people about our historic connection and commitment to Hong Kong and its people and, celebrate the contribution of the Hong Kong-British and Chinese-British Diaspora to the UK.
- Dedicated advice for BN(0)s and a [comprehensive welcome pack](#) to help BN(0) families navigate the move. This includes information on how to access public services, registering to vote and opening a bank account, pointing to local amenities like libraries and leisure centres and promoting the UK's rich cultural, arts and music events, all translated into Cantonese.

To help drive integration work across government, the Communities Secretary

has established an Inter-Ministerial Group that will consider issues such as access to public services, opportunities and safety for new arrivals across all four nations.

The UK's offer of bespoke immigration route BN(0) status holders follows the Chinese government's imposition of the National Security Law in Hong Kong last year.

Today's package shows the UK will not look the other way on Hong Kong, and that this government will deliver on its historic responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong.

Following China's imposition of the National Security Law on the people of Hong Kong in July 2020, the UK government has introduced a new immigration route for Hong Kong British National (Overseas) status holders, providing the opportunity for them and their family members to live, work and study in the UK.

As of 19 March 2021, approximately 27,000 BN(0) status holders and their family members have applied for a visa since January – this number reflects applications rather than visa holders. More information will be released on how many visas have been granted in the next quarterly migration statistics release on 27 May. The number of applications is based on internal Home Office management data.

The government's impact assessment in October estimated that between 123,000 and 153,000 BN(0) status holders and their dependants could take up the route in its first year, with between 258,000 and 322,000 over 5 years – these numbers are estimates and may change.

See [more information on the BN\(0\) Visa route](#).

The 12 welcome hubs will be delivered through the existing Strategic Migration Partnerships, and in England will work with local authorities, voluntary community and social enterprises. The 12 hubs will work with local authorities and VCSE groups to provide face-to-face support where needed.

Resources will be made available to local authorities including [FAQs](#) and lessons learned from other integration programmes to share best practice from across the UK.

£5.8 million will be provided to the devolved administrations through the Barnett formula and MHCLG will work closely with the devolved administrations and with the Strategic Migration Partnerships.

Cross-Ministerial group will be set up to drive integration work across government.

Additional quote

Daniel Korski, Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers and Vice-President of the Jewish Leadership Council said:

I believe the new arrivals from Hong Kong have so much to offer our nation at this critical time. Our children will thrive studying alongside new Hong Kong classmates. Our businesses will benefit with fresh talent from Hong Kong. And our communities will be enriched by our new Hong Kong neighbours.

The government's generous investment in a National Welcome to Hong Kong new arrivals is a significant and positive commitment. It not only sends a strong message of support to those arriving from Hong Kong, it also encourages the many civil society groups, community associations, churches and other faith communities who have been actively involved in offering practical and emotional support to the new arrivals as they make the UK their home.

[Statement on AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine following MHRA update](#)

News story

The Government's statement following updated advice from the UK's medicines regulator



A Government spokesperson said:

“The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is safe, effective and has already saved thousands of lives. “As the MHRA – the UK’s independent regulator – and the JCVI have said, the benefits of the vaccine far outweigh the risks for the vast majority of adults.

“Everybody who has already had a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine should receive a second dose of the same brand, irrespective of age, except for the very small number of people who experienced blood clots with low platelet counts from their first vaccination.

“The government will follow today’s updated advice, which sets out that, as a precaution, it is preferable for people under the age of 30 with no underlying health conditions to be offered an alternative vaccine where possible once they are eligible.

“When people are called forward, they should get their jab. Vaccines are the best way out of this pandemic and provide strong protection against Covid-19.

“We are very grateful for the work of our world-leading regulator and our expert advisors as they continue to address this issue.

“More than 37 million jabs overall have already been administered, and we are on track to offer jabs to all over 50s by 15 April and all adults by the end of July.”

Background

- Public Health England (PHE) analysis indicates that the COVID-19 vaccination programme prevented 6,100 deaths in those aged 70 and older in England up to the end of February.
- All safety reports are rigorously investigated and anyone with unexpected symptoms should speak with a healthcare professional.
- All medicines have a risk of side effects.

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[GFSL installs new accommodation pods for 120 residents at HMP Ford](#)

Work began in December to upgrade residents’ living conditions by installing 80 new self contained units, or pods. Now complete, they offer a much more comfort and privacy; each having a living area, bed, desk, WC and shower unit.

A team of 10 workers expertly winched the 2.5 tonne pods into place on a newly levelled field at Ford. They replace 20 smaller billets, mostly prefabricated, which were demolished – meaning they’ll be ready for occupancy by 26 April 2021.

Project Manager, Terry Coston explains,

This is a vast improvement on the previous accommodation. The residents will have much better living conditions, with more comfort, decency and privacy.

For example, each resident will have their own door key and use of a nearby kitchenette, pin phone room with 5 lines, and laundry.

About HMP Ford: some background

HMP Ford is located near Arundel in West Sussex, on a former airfield. It played a highly strategic role as a squadron base during WW1 and later became RAF Ford Airfield, again playing major military roles in the D Day landings.

Today, HMP Ford is an open prison committed to providing a safe and educational environment. Ford residents all have under 2 years left to serve on their sentence so the focus is on resettlement and on men learning new skills to help them on release.

All residents are expected to work as they would out in the community. Work opportunities inside prison include painting and decorating, carpentry, engineering, cleaning and call centre work. Some residents enjoy work in nearby nurseries growing flowers and vegetables which are sold in the Ford farm shop (re-opening to public shortly).

Work outside the prison is either supported through community service placements, work experience or paid work. Education provision includes a range of courses offered by [The Chichester College](#).

[UK regulator confirms that people should continue to receive the COVID-19 vaccine AstraZeneca](#)

Today the UK regulator, following a rigorous scientific review of all the available data, said that the available evidence does not suggest that blood clots in veins (venous thromboembolism) are caused by COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca. This follows a detailed review of report cases as well as data from hospital admissions and GP records. This has been confirmed by the Government's independent advisory group, the Commission on Human Medicines, whose expert scientists and clinicians have also reviewed the available data.

A further, detailed review into five UK reports of a very rare and specific type of blood clot in the cerebral veins (sinus vein thrombosis) occurring together with lowered platelets (thrombocytopenia) is ongoing. This has been

reported in less than 1 in a million people vaccinated so far in the UK, and can also occur naturally – a causal association with the vaccine has not been established.

The MHRA's advice remains that the benefits of the vaccines against COVID-19 continue to outweigh any risks and that the public should continue to get their vaccine when invited to do so.

Dr June Raine, MHRA Chief Executive, said:

We continually monitor safety during use of all a vaccines to protect the public, and to ensure the benefits continue to outweigh the risks.

Our thorough and careful review, alongside the critical assessment of leading, independent scientists, shows that there is no evidence that that blood clots in veins is occurring more than would be expected in the absence of vaccination, for either vaccine.

We have received a very small number of reports of an extremely rare form of blood clot in the cerebral veins (sinus vein thrombosis, or CSVT) occurring together with lowered platelets soon after vaccination. This type of blood clot can occur naturally in people who have not been vaccinated, as well as in those suffering from COVID-19.

Given the extremely rare rate of occurrence of these CSVT events among the 11 million people vaccinated, and as a link to the vaccine is unproven, the benefits of the vaccine in preventing COVID-19, with its associated risk of hospitalisation and death, continue to outweigh the risks of potential side effects.

You should therefore continue to get your jab when it is your turn.

While we continue to investigate these cases, as a precautionary measure we would advise anyone with a headache that lasts for more than 4 days after vaccination, or bruising beyond the site of vaccination after a few days, to seek medical attention.

However, please remember that mild flu-like symptoms remain one of the most common side effects of any COVID-19 vaccine, including

headache, chills and fever. These generally appear within a few hours and resolve within a day or two, but not everyone gets them.

We will continue to robustly monitor all the data we have on this extremely rare possible side effect.

Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed, Chair of the Commission on Human Medicines, said:

The independent [COVID-19 Expert Working Group](#) of the Commission on Human Medicines, together with leading haematologists, conducted a rigorous analysis of all available evidence regarding reports of blood clots (thromboembolic events) and COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca.

Our review has found that the available evidence does not suggest that blood clots are caused by COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca.

We have been closely reviewing all reports of blood clots in the vein (venous thromboembolism, or VTE) following vaccination. There is no evidence either that VTE is occurring more often in people who have received the vaccine than in people who have not, for either vaccine.

However, we will continue to closely monitor the reports where cerebral sinus venous thrombosis has occurred in conjunction with lowered platelets to understand whether there is any potential association. This type of blood clot can rarely occur naturally in unvaccinated people as well as in people with COVID-19 disease. In the UK, 5 possible cases of this have been reported to us so far, after 11 million doses of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca.

Further work with expert haematologists is under way to further understand the nature of these cases and whether there is a causal association with any of the vaccines. Given the extremely rare rate of occurrence of these events, the benefits of the AstraZeneca COVID vaccine, with the latest data suggesting an 80% reduction in hospitalisation and death from COVID disease, far outweigh any possible risks of the vaccine in the risk groups currently targeted in the UK.

Notes to Editor

- The British Society for Haematology has [issued guidance](#) on thrombosis and thrombocytopenia possibly occurring after vaccination with COVID-19 vaccines. This includes information on presentation and typical laboratory features, and treatment recommendations. The guidance also includes advice on recommended investigations for possible cases.
- The action taken by some countries to temporarily pause the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine has been based mainly on isolated reports of cerebral sinus vein thrombosis occurring together with thrombocytopenia (lowered platelets) shortly after vaccination. This type of thrombosis can also occur naturally in the absence of vaccination, can occur in association with COVID disease and is extremely rare, and a causal association with the vaccine has not been established. The reporting rate of this following vaccination in Germany has been 4 per million doses of the vaccine. In the UK, 5 possible cases of this form of blood clot with low platelets have so far been reported after 11 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.
- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency ('the agency') has three centres. The MHRA, the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). The agency is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
- The [COVID-19 Vaccines Benefit Risk Expert Working Group](#) of the Commission on Human Medicines is formed from 27 experts from outside of the MHRA, including virologists, epidemiologists, immunologists and toxicologists.
- The MHRA encourages anyone to report any suspicion or concern they have beyond the known, mild side effects on the [Coronavirus Yellow Card site](#). Reporters do not need to be sure of a link between a vaccine and a suspected side effect but are still encouraged to report.
- For more information on COVID-19 vaccine adverse reactions, see the MHRA's [weekly report](#)