

## [ESFA Update: 29 July 2020](#)

Information latest information on coronavirus (COVID-19) Reminder FE teacher training grants and bursaries for 2020 to 2021 academic year Reminder July financial collection from colleges deadline Information 2019 to 2020 adult education budget (AEB) reconciliation Information supplementary bulletin to the college accounts direction and post-16 audit code of practice Information ESFA procurement opportunity launching soon for providers to access additional funding to deliver 19 to 24 adult education budget (AEB) funded traineeships Information high value courses for school and college leavers: a one year offer for 18 and 19-year-olds Information 16 to 19 tuition fund Information 16 to 19 study programme guidance for 2020 to 2021 Information version 2, ESFA adult education budget (AEB) funding and performance management rules 2020 to 2021 Information individualised learner record (ILR) funding returns guidance for 2020 to 2021 Information apprenticeship service new employer agreement Information qualification achievement rates (QARs) for 2019 to 2020

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## [Liverpool scientists receive UK aid to save lives from deadly diseases](#)

Liverpool scientists will help to identify new ways to save thousands of lives from infectious diseases with support from the UK Government announced today.

The £15.5 million funding announcement was made on a visit by UK Global Health Minister Wendy Morton to the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), where she joined international scientists and health experts in a virtual discussion on how international research can help stop the global spread of coronavirus in the coming year.

As coronavirus infections have continued to fall in the UK, parts of Africa and Asia have seen huge increases in cases in recent weeks.

The new UK aid funding for Liverpool scientists will help save lives from tuberculosis (TB) in poorer countries, focusing research on where undiagnosed infections pass the disease to vulnerable people like children and the elderly.

Amid fears that coronavirus is leading to a rise of other diseases around the world as overburdened health systems struggle to cope, UK aid will also support research into how to strengthen these health systems in the most vulnerable places, like conflict zones.

Global Health Minister Wendy Morton said:

“Coronavirus is having a devastating effect in the world’s poorest countries, threatening already fragile health systems and hampering the fight against other deadly diseases.

“Liverpool scientists are working incredibly hard with colleagues in the UK and around the world to help fight infectious diseases and save lives. Today’s global discussion reinforced the need for international co-operation on research to fight this pandemic.”

Minister Morton was joined in the virtual discussion by Professor Charlotte Watts, Chief Scientific Adviser at the Department for International Development as well as scientists from LSTM and countries like Nepal and South Africa. They discussed the different impacts coronavirus may have on developing countries, and especially how it is affecting already-fragile health systems and the fight against other deadly diseases like tuberculosis which kill millions each year.

She also spoke to scientists trialling potential UK-led coronavirus vaccines in South Africa and others analysing its long-term impact in poorer nations.

Professor David Lalloo, Director of Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, said:

“Much of our research and clinical work in recent months has been refocused onto the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK and overseas, but at LSTM we have been acutely aware of the particular impact that the virus is having in low income settings with a high burden of other disease.

“Our work has always focused on research and strengthening capacity in disease endemic countries, and we must ensure that recent advances in disease control and improving health outcomes programmes are not destroyed by the pandemic. This new UK aid funding will enable LSTM to continue address the impact of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases on some of the world’s poorest people.

“On her visit Minister Morton also met LSTM scientists working to develop new and more effective treatments for deadly snake venom and to combat Neglected Tropical Diseases like river blindness and elephantiasis, caused by parasites, that maim tens of thousands of people each year.”

The £15.5 million announced today covers:

1. £7.9 million to LSTM’s LIGHT Programme which is researching the impact of Tuberculosis and available treatments in Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically it will target where many TB infections go undiagnosed, particularly in younger men, which then lead to them infecting more vulnerable family members, including children. It will target the poorest and most vulnerable groups, like urban slum dwellers, to ensure treatments are being directed where they can save the most lives.
2. £7.6 million to LSTM’s ReBUILD FOR RESILIENCE (R4R) Programme which is

researching where international support can be given most effectively to strengthen health systems in the most fragile areas, like recent conflict-zones.

3. The UK has pledged £774 million of UK aid to the global fight against coronavirus so far, and today's announcement also brings the total current UK aid investment in Liverpool-led research into different infectious diseases to £76.9 million.

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## [Skin creams dried on fabric can lead to fire deaths](#)

Some skin creams, when dried on to fabric, can create a highly flammable combination that can cause serious injury and death, regulators warn today. This follows research showing that the risk arises, even if the creams do not contain paraffin.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has partnered with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Fire and Rescue Services and health charities in [a new campaign](#) to raise awareness of the fire risk and the precautions that need to be taken by users of skin creams.

Emollient skin creams are used by thousands of people every day to manage dry, itchy or scaly skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and ichthyosis. They are easily transferred from skin on to clothing and bedding. When fabric with dried-on cream comes into contact with a naked flame, the resulting fire burns quickly and intensely and can result in serious injury or death.

The risk increases with every application of the cream as it transfers, dries and builds up on the fabric. Some cream remains even when the items are washed, so it's important to minimise the risk in additional ways, such as removing long sleeved or loose clothing before cooking or using a safety lighter.

These creams are vital in helping to manage dry skin conditions. The creams alone are not flammable, nor are they flammable when on the body. Healthcare professionals should continue to recommend them for chronic dry skin conditions and those using them should continue to do so as directed while remaining alert to the risk of fire when dried on to fabric.

MHRA first took regulatory action on the issue in 2008, and since 2018 has recommended that labelling and product information for emollient products should include a warning about the fire hazard, with clear advice not to smoke or go near naked flames.

Since 2010, more than 50 deaths and serious injuries have been linked to the use of emollient skin creams. A review has shown that those most at risk tend to be over 60, smokers and have reduced mobility. The MHRA recommends anyone in this high-risk group, or their carers, should arrange a fire service assessment of their personal surroundings. They must exercise caution when close to naked flames or potential ignition sources (for example, lighting a cigarette).

*Sarah Branch, Director of MHRA's Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines Division said:*

We want to ensure that those who are at greatest risk, and their carers, understand the fire risk associated with the build-up of residue on clothing and bedding and take action to minimise the risk. Anyone who uses emollients and has any questions or concerns should speak to a healthcare professional, such as your pharmacist or GP. Patient safety is our highest priority. We strongly encourage anyone to report any issues with such products, or more generally with any medical device, to our [Yellow Card Scheme](#).

Rick Hylton, NFCC's Home Safety Committee Lead said:

We now know that all emollients, combined with factors such as smoking or mobility issues, pose potential fire risks and this applies to both paraffin and paraffin-free products. Washing fabrics does not fully remove this risk. This doesn't mean people shouldn't use these products but we urge people to follow the updated fire safety advice. If you use these products and smoke, don't do so when wearing clothes or bandages that may have dried on emollients. Don't smoke in bed as bedding may have residue on it and be careful around other heat sources such as gas, halogen or open fires and when cooking.

### [Safe use of emollients](#)

A version with Welsh subtitles is available [on YouTube](#)

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### **Notes to Editor**

1. Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK by ensuring they work and are acceptably safe. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
2. MHRA is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory

Agency which also includes the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). MHRA is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.

3. Emollient skin creams are not flammable on their own. They are also not flammable when on the body. Emollients contain oils and can make it easier for clothing, dressings and fabric to catch fire when they are dried on.
4. Since 2010 more than 50 deaths and serious injuries have been linked to the use of emollient skin creams. MHRA first took regulatory action in 2008 for products containing >50% paraffins. In 2018, following new evidence, the MHRA recommended that labelling and product information for a wider range of emollient products (paraffin-based and paraffin-free) should include a warning about the fire hazard, with clear advice not to smoke or go near naked flames and information about the risk of severe burn injury or death when clothing, bedding and dressings with emollients dried on them are accidentally ignited. Since then, these recommendations have been adopted and can be found on products available in the UK.
5. The research referred to in the press release came from the Forensic and Investigative Science Research Group, Anglia Ruskin University, De Montfort University and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
6. [NFCC](#) is the professional voice of the Fire and Rescue Service, representing all fire services to coordinate national work for local benefit and driving improvement across the Fire and Rescue Service. We lead on national fire service campaigns to ensure the best outcomes for those communities served by our members.

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## [Lord Chancellor's Mansion House speech to the judiciary](#)

My Lord Mayor, my Lord Chief Justice, honoured guests joining us virtually.

I would like to thank the Lord Mayor for holding this event. You have been a great friend to the law in your term so far, particularly in your support for LawTech – something I am convinced will be key to sustaining the reputation of England and Wales as an international centre of excellence.

## **Judicial independence**

That reputation is testament to the careful and considered evolution of our system over centuries – with an independent judiciary and the Rule of Law as guardians of fairness and freedom.

Upholding those abiding principles is a duty that falls to us all but, when I took my oath of office almost exactly a year ago, I made a solemn promise to respect and defend them – an oath I take extremely seriously.

Judicial freedom from political motivation or influence, including interference from Parliament or the government, is essential to the effective operation of our democracy. In my view, it is something on which there can be no compromise.

I have and always will make that plain, both at the Cabinet table and in public. I would never want judges to be appointed based on their political opinions or past. It is vital that you are able to make rulings on their merits in law alone and, as your Lord Chancellor, I will always defend you on that basis.

## **Judicial pay and pensions reform**

Your integrity is, I think, underlined by the quality of those who sit on the bench.

If we are to continue attracting the best people to join the ranks of the judiciary then we must make judicial appointment as attractive as possible.

To that end, the government is determined to get judicial remuneration right. This has been a personal priority of mine and I am pleased that we have been able to agree to put forward a set of proposals for reforming the judicial pension scheme, set out in the consultation launched last week and I aim to introduce the reformed scheme in 2022.

The government has this year accepted all the recommendations made by the Senior Salaries Review Board on judicial pay, including a 2% pay increase for all judges and a new Leadership Allowance to recognise Circuit Judges undertaking leadership posts.

I was also pleased to be able to launch a consultation on raising the mandatory retirement age for judicial office holders. I believe the time is right to review the retirement age – to ensure that we do not lose excellent judges unnecessarily.

The consultation also applies to magistrates and it is right that we look at their retirement age in line with the wider judiciary, but we are also placing a strong focus on recruiting new magistrates. Working with the Magistrate Recruitment Attraction and Steering Group, we are delivering a broad spectrum of work to recruit more magistrates from all walks of life.

As we move into a new era for the justice system, I want this work to

safeguard the excellence and expertise that exists across the judiciary – from those of you who have made the law your life’s work to those who have chosen to give back to society through service in the justice system – and strengthen it for the future.

## **Sentencing Code**

A strong judiciary also needs the right tools to do its work.

Sentencing has been a problem for far too long. Many of you will have greater experience, but it is something I recognised when I first started practising as a criminal barrister 25 years ago and then later when sitting as a Recorder in the Crown Court. The 1,300 or so pages of complicated, overlapping law made sentencing confusing and delayed the justice process.

We have already started paving the way for a new Sentencing Code, and a Bill to create one was introduced to the House of Lords in March. Bringing sentencing procedural law into a Sentencing Code will mean more clarity and ensure that hearings are much more straightforward.

This isn’t just good for the smooth running of the courts, it will mean greater transparency and give the public confidence that the law is being applied correctly. This is a long overdue change but I hope it will make a real difference for everyone working in and affected by the criminal justice system, and support you to do your jobs effectively and efficiently in future.

## **Courts response to coronavirus**

Now I would like to say something about the response of the courts to coronavirus, which allowed the wheels of justice to continue turning during the pandemic.

I want to express my gratitude to the judiciary and HMCTS staff across England and Wales, who have worked tirelessly to prioritise work and ensure essential services could continue functioning safely.

I want to pay tribute to the judicial leadership and Senior President of Tribunals and, in particular, the Lord Chief Justice for the collaborative approach taken. The fact that we have been able to work so closely together, keeping in regular contact to discuss issues and agree resolutions, has served to strengthen our collective response.

Those first few weeks were crucial. Had we not been able to triage the work and put in place arrangements quickly then the outcomes could have been very different indeed. As it is, we managed to keep at least 157 court and tribunal buildings open throughout; more than 300 court buildings are now open and, as of this week, jury trials have resumed in 57 Crown courts. What we have managed to achieve has been recognised globally and, to put it into context, in Canada jury trials do not yet even have a date for resumption.

But make no mistake, we need to do much more, particularly given the acute

restrictions on capacity that have been brought about by social distancing. This challenge is unprecedented, even if the current level of outstanding cases are not, and I am determined that we continue to work together to find creative solutions.

Whether that is the additional 'nightingale courts' I announced last week, or whether we are more imaginative about how and when we use our existing court houses. Ultimately, the continued faith of all court users, and the wider public, in our ability to deliver timely justice depends on our swift and effective action at this time of national emergency.

## **A better system for a different future**

What the response so far demonstrates is the ability of our system to adapt. It goes back to what I said at the beginning of my remarks – the success of our system is built on its ability to grow and change with the needs of our society.

In this instance, the rapid expansion of phone and video technology has enabled hearings to take place virtually while they could not happen physically.

The Lord Chief Justice has already talked about recovery, but I do just want to say something briefly on where I think we should go from here. As you know, modernising the courts was already a priority, but we are now facing a very different future and, in many ways, there will be no going back.

HMCTS has been making the Cloud Video Platform available to all criminal courts, and there are plans to provide it across other jurisdictions too. Throughout July, CVP has been made available to an increasing number of County courts. We will be rolling out further hardware to improve the quality of video hearings, and we will be finding new, increasingly efficient ways of organising video lists.

As we look beyond coronavirus, I think it's really important that we take everything we have achieved and learned during the pandemic to re-energise our reform programme – to take a fresh look at where technology can play a greater role in the justice system.

We have already seen the benefits of reform to the processes around divorce, where automation and digital working has seen the waiting times plummet. The latest published figures show that digital cases were 38 weeks quicker compared to the overall waiting times in the same period last year.

The Ministry of Justice will be looking over the next few months at just what more is possible and I hope to come forward with proposals later in the year. Ultimately, I want us to see the period ahead as not just a recovery, but a renewal for our justice system.

Judicial leadership will be key to that as the anchors that keep our system steady in the waves of change – ensuring that we never leave or lose sight of our core principles.



In the months and years ahead, I hope we can continue working collaboratively to transform the courts for the benefit of all those who use them.

Getting it right could mean a system that not only emerges intact from the crisis, but is fundamentally more efficient, more dynamic and more resilient – a smarter system for a different future.

Thank you.

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## [Homes England to build more inclusive industry that meets the needs of diverse communities](#)

Homes England has put communities at the heart of its work to improve diversity and inclusion in the housing sector as it launches its first annual [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report](#).

The government's housing agency has pledged to work with its partners to create a more inclusive industry that addresses the needs of the diverse communities it serves as part of the five objectives it will focus on over the next four years in order to become a more inclusive, equal and diverse workplace.

One of the organisation's main measures will be to set expectations of its partners by requesting diversity and inclusion commitments from panel members for all future panel procurements.

Homes England is currently developing a replacement for its Delivery Partner Panel of developers and contractors (DPP3), which is due to go live next financial year. Alongside other non-financial requirements, such as design quality, the project team is developing criteria to support greater diversity and inclusion in the industry and include these as a condition for joining the panel.

Homes England has also promised to better meet the needs of diverse communities by identifying gaps in the current market and taking steps to address them.

The agency says it will commit to making sure its services represent not just the society it serves, but the society we all want to see, and will review how well it is fulfilling its duty to create inclusive, equal access to its services, making the changes necessary to ensure this.

In a further step, Homes England hopes that by improving its methods of gathering data about the communities it works with it will be able to better

address specific housing needs.

Recruitment and the creation of a more inclusive employee experience are also on the agenda, with the organisation committing to develop a diversity and inclusion recruitment strategy and improve its mandatory diversity and inclusion training.

Olivia Scanlon, Homes England's Board Sponsor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion said: "Issuing our first equality, diversity and inclusion report is a real step forwards and demonstrates how far we've come as an agency: we've been named one of Stonewall's Top 100 employers, a Top 20 Trans Employer and have undergone significant cultural change.

"At Homes England we want to make homes happen for everyone, and we can only truly achieve that by creating a workplace— and an industry —where everyone is able to be themselves.

"Work is already ongoing to deliver positive change to our procurement process and determine how we can improve diversity and inclusion through our supply chain. This sends a clear message to our partners about our expectations of them and will ensure the homes we deliver truly fit the requirements of the people who live in them."

The document is a significant milestone for the Government's housing agency, setting out its commitment to improving equality within the organisation, the wider sector and the communities where it delivers its projects.

The report has been launched on the same day as the agency's [Gender Pay Gap Report](#), which shows Homes England is continuing to close its pay gap.

Commenting on the gender pay gap, Nick Walkley, Homes England's Chief Executive said: "The report shows lots of improvement and achievement thanks to hard work and energy of colleagues...but we can do far better and Executive are committed to doing so."

Homes England has already taken a number of steps to set an example to the housing sector on the issue of inclusion, revising its policies and processes and developing its employee networks, as well as building its wellbeing support for staff.

The agency's latest gender pay gap report shows continual improvement with its mean figure at 31 March 2020 at 16.9% and median figure 15.3%. In March 2019, the figures were 18% and 15.5% respectively.