

£5.4 million to help colleges upskill the country

Colleges across the country will soon benefit from a cash injection to boost standards so more people can access high quality education and training and get the skills they need to progress, Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan announced today (23 July).

[20 applications](#) have been successful and will receive a total of £5.4 million from the College Collaboration Fund (CCF) between them.

The fund, [which builds on the strengths of the Strategic College Improvement Fund](#), will see groups of colleges collaborating to share good practice, knowledge and experience to drive up the standard of education and training on offer to their local communities. This will include specific support to develop high quality digital content to provide improved remote and blended learning, to make sure students affected by coronavirus can catch-up on lost learning hours and also to prevent young people from becoming NEET (not in education employment or training).

Gillian Keegan, Apprenticeships and Skills Minister said:

I'm delighted to announce the 20 applications that have been successful in securing funding from the College Collaboration Fund.

Now more than ever, it's vital that colleges can support their students to gain the skills they need to progress and employers and our economy need to grow. This fund will help colleges work together, to develop cutting edge digital approaches to online learning, to overcome new challenges and continue to deliver high quality education and training for the communities they serve.

The past few months have been a challenging time for the sector, but they have gone above and beyond to support their students. This additional funding will help to support further collaborative work as we move forward. I look forward to hearing more about their progress and wish them all the best.

David Corke, Association of Colleges' Director of Education & Skills Policy said:

The fund is very welcome in the context of the pandemic and the need for the college sector to navigate unprecedented rates of change to every aspect of their work has never been more important. The grants will help support collaboration and the sharing of innovative good practice in the college sector. Importantly, developing digital content, providing catch up support, engaging

vulnerable learners and addressing mental health and wellbeing will all be vital ways colleges will use this money to support students to transition into college or their next academic year.

The fund will play an important role alongside [the Government's National Leaders of Further Education programme](#), which is also designed to help boost standards throughout the further education sector. The programme sees a team of high-performing college leaders working together to share knowledge and expertise to provide specialist help to colleges across the country that need support to improve.

In response to [an independent review carried out by Dame Mary Ney](#), which looked at how the Government monitors colleges' finances and financial management, the Department for Education recently set out proposals to strengthen relationships with colleges and promote better planning to make sure communities get the skills they need. The CCF will support this work by enabling the sector to take ownership and help develop a culture of learning and sector led improvement.

The announcement follows the [Education Secretary's FE speech](#) where he pledged to publish a White Paper this autumn that will set out plans to build a high quality further education system that will provide the skills that individuals, employers and the economy need to grow.

[Scottish home for Poseidon fleet reaches major milestone](#)

DE&S, the MOD's procurement arm, will take control of the £100 million strategic facility at RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland.

Clocking in at over 33,000 square metres, the facility includes a three-bay hangar and accommodation for two squadrons, as well as state-of-the-art training equipment and facilities for those working on the fleet of nine Poseidon aircraft.

Designed and built by Boeing Defence UK (BDUK) and local construction partner Robertson, more than 300 employees worked on the building at Lossiemouth during the peak of the two-year project.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

The new Poseidon fleet will reassert the UK in the maritime patrol arena. It will play an invaluable role in our national security for decades to come. The state-of-the-art Lossiemouth facility provides

the fleet with an ideal base while helping to create and sustain jobs in Scotland.

Once operational in the autumn, the facility will be the workplace for 470 additional military and civilian personnel, taking the total number of people working out of the coastal base to about 2,200.

Michelle Sanders, P-8A Poseidon team leader at DE&S, said:

The new strategic facility at RAF Lossiemouth is a great example of successful delivery through co-operative working. DE&S, Boeing Defence UK and Robertson have worked closely since the project began in early 2018 and here we are, just over two years later, taking delivery of this splendid new building. The focus of our work now shifts to preparing it for handover to the RAF later this year.

The first RAF Poseidon – named Pride of Moray – arrived from the USA and touched down at Kinloss Airfield in February 2020, followed by the second – named City of Elgin – in March. Both aircraft are currently flying from Kinloss until the Lossiemouth facility and runway are formally opened.

RAF Air Cdre Richard Barrow said:

The strategic facility at RAF Lossiemouth is going to be an outstanding working environment optimised to support the RAF's new Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft.

But, more than that, it is going to be the home of our new capability where our crews, engineers, mission support staff and contractors will work together to deliver this essential Defence output.

Delivered by Defence Equipment and Support and Boeing Defence UK, the project has progressed at impressive speed and will deliver exactly what we need in time to meet the arrival of our new aircraft at RAF Lossiemouth in the autumn.

Terence Bulloch, the third aircraft in the fleet, is named after the highest-scoring pilot in Coastal Command during the Second World War. It has completed the painting stage and is having its mission equipment fitted at the Boeing Defence facility in Seattle.

Anna Keeling, managing director of Boeing Defence UK, said:

We are incredibly proud to be handing over this state-of-the-art facility to DE&S after two years of hard work and investment, and we are excited to begin a new phase of Boeing's partnership at RAF

Lossiemouth.

It's a further sign of our more than 80-year commitment to the UK and we could not have done it without the support of the local Morayshire community, both on and off base.

In the coming months, DE&S will oversee the installation of computers, audio-visual technology and the IT network to ensure the facility meets the RAF's requirements.

Simulators and training devices for the Poseidon air and ground crews will be delivered and their installation will begin, while a separate ground support equipment (GSE) hangar will also be built by Robertson.

All nine Poseidon aircraft, which are based on the Boeing 737 Next-Generation airliner, are expected to be in the UK by the end of 2021.

UK Government minister for Scotland David Duguid said:

This new £100 million strategic facility at RAF Lossiemouth is a further investment from the UK Government in the area's economy, and demonstrates the important role Scotland plays in our defence network.

We look forward to seeing the facility put to good use playing an essential role in our national security and creating sustainable jobs for the future of the area.

[Valuation Office Agency \(VOA\) Chief Executive to take up new role at Ofcom](#)

News story

Melissa Tatton will take up a new role as Interim Group Director, Corporate, at the UK's communications regulator in September.



Chief Executive of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and Tax Assurance Commissioner for HMRC, Melissa Tatton, will take up a new role as Interim Group Director, Corporate, at Ofcom from 7 September 2020.

Melissa was appointed Chief Executive of the VOA in September 2017 and has overseen a major modernisation programme at the agency.

Melissa is currently on loan from the VOA to lead HMRC's COVID-19 Response Unit, overseeing HMRC's delivery of the support schemes and the governance of HMRC's overall response to the pandemic. Melissa was also appointed as HMRC's Tax Assurance Commissioner last year and sits on HMRC's Executive Committee.

[Jim Harra](#), HMRC Chief Executive, said:

I'm enormously grateful to Melissa for her leadership and expertise, overseeing the department's response to COVID-19 over the last few months.

Before that, Melissa proved a highly effective Chief Executive of the VOA and has a long history as a senior leader and tax professional within HMRC. I'm going to miss Melissa but wish her all the very best in her new role.

[Melissa Tatton](#), VOA Chief Executive, said:

It has been an absolute privilege to lead VOA. The agency plays a vital role in funding local public services by providing the business rates and council tax valuations that underpin more than £50 billion of taxation.

I was pleased to support HMRC by leading the COVID-19 Response Unit and I've been hugely impressed by the commitment and resilience of all those involved in playing such a vital role in helping the country during the pandemic.

I'm delighted to accept the position of Interim Group Director, Corporate, at Ofcom and I look forward to getting started.

Over £100 million cash boost to manufacture millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccine

- New state-of-the-art centre to scale up COVID-19 vaccine and gene therapy manufacturing gets £100 million investment
- additional £4.7 million for new training facilities and an online learning platform to boost vaccine and cell and gene therapy skills
- new centre and skills vital for the UK's ability respond to diseases like coronavirus, and potential future pandemics

The UK's capability to manufacture vaccines has received a substantial boost today (Thursday 23 July), as the government announces an additional £100 million to ensure that any successful COVID-19 vaccine can be produced at scale in the UK.

The investment will fund a state-of-the-art Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult Manufacturing Innovation Centre to accelerate the mass production of a successful COVID-19 vaccine in the UK. Due to open in December 2021, the Centre will have the capacity to produce millions of doses each month, ensuring the UK has the capabilities to manufacture vaccines and advanced medicines, including for emerging diseases, far into the future.

Located in Braintree, Essex, the government initiative will upgrade an existing facility to create a fully-licensed manufacturing centre. Doing so will increase the UK's ability to respond to diseases like coronavirus and to prepare for potential future pandemics while creating new, high-skilled jobs to fuel the UK's economic recovery.

The new centre will complement the [Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre](#) (VMIC), which is currently under construction in Oxfordshire thanks to a £93 million investment from the government. Once complete next year, the facility will have the capacity to produce enough vaccine doses to serve the entire UK population at scale.

While the centre is under construction, the government has invested an additional £38 million to establish a rapid deployment facility, opening later this summer, that will support efforts to ensure a successful vaccine is widely available to the public as soon as possible.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

We are taking all necessary steps to ensure we can vaccinate the public as soon as a successful COVID-19 vaccine becomes available.

This new Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult Manufacturing Innovation Centre, alongside crucial investment in skills, will support our efforts to rapidly produce millions of doses of a coronavirus vaccine while ensuring the UK can respond quickly to potential future pandemics.

To support these enhanced vaccine manufacturing capabilities, the government will invest an additional £4.7 million for the [Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult](#) to ensure that the UK has the best skills and expertise through the development of virtual and physical national Centres for Advanced Therapies Training and Skills, in partnership with industry.

The facilities and online training platform will provide industry-standard skills and experience in advanced gene therapy and vaccine manufacturing, including sterile techniques for Good Manufacturing Practice which is the minimum standard that a medicines manufacturer must meet in their production processes.

Employment in the cell and gene therapy sector is predicted to reach over 6,000 jobs by 2024, with over 3,000 in manufacturing and bioprocessing.

Matthew Durdy, CEO, Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult commented:

This commitment from government through the Vaccines Taskforce will enable continued growth and productivity in the cell and gene therapy sector, as well as providing vital resource for vaccine manufacturing and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are delighted to be able to deploy the specialist capabilities of the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult in such an important initiative. Accelerating the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, increasing skills and employment, and facilitating growth of the advanced medicines industry will make a valuable contribution to the recovery of the economy.

Kate Bingham, Chair of the Vaccines Taskforce said:

Today's announcement is another important milestone for us. The work of the Vaccines Taskforce is focused on protecting the UK against COVID-19 through vaccination as quickly as possible.

In order to vaccinate our high-risk populations at the earliest opportunity, the government has agreed to proactively manufacture vaccines now, so we have millions of doses of vaccine ready if they are shown to be safe and effective. The acquisition of this state-of-the-art manufacturing centre will not only help us with this,

but also ensures we are well-placed as a country to be able to cope with any pandemics or health crises in the future.

As well as addressing the immediate need to produce a COVID-19 vaccine, the new Cell and Gene Therapy Centre, developed with [Innovate UK](#) and the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, will be at the forefront of the growing UK cell and gene therapy industry. Scientists and researchers based in the centre will accelerate the time taken for new treatments to be delivered to patients by developing cutting-edge therapies to treat life changing diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

The UK is at the forefront of international efforts to research and develop a COVID-19 vaccine and has provided £131 million funding to University of Oxford and Imperial College London to accelerate their work on 2 vaccine candidates.

This follows news on Monday (20 July) that the government secured early access to 90 million vaccine doses from the BioNTech/Pfizer alliance and Valneva as part of its strategy to build a portfolio of promising new vaccines to protect the UK from COVID-19. In addition, treatments containing COVID-19-neutralising antibodies have been secured from AstraZeneca to protect those who cannot receive vaccines.

Notes to editors

About the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult

The Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult was established as an independent centre of excellence to advance the growth of the UK cell and gene therapy industry, by bridging the gap between scientific research and full-scale commercialisation.

With more than 230 employees focusing on cell and gene therapy technologies, it works with partners in academia and industry to ensure these life-changing therapies can be developed for use in health services throughout the world. It offers leading-edge capability, technology and innovation to enable companies to take products into clinical trials and provide clinical, process development, manufacturing, regulatory, health economics and market access expertise. Its aim is to make the UK the most compelling and logical choice for UK and international partners to develop and commercialise these advanced therapies.

The Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult works with Innovate UK. For more information please visit the [Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult](#) or [Innovate UK](#).

DIT joins Women in Aviation and Aerospace Charter

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has today joined the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Charter, reaffirming its commitment to promoting and supporting gender balance in the sector and delivering on equality commitments outlined in the government's 2018 [Aerospace Sector Deal](#).

The Charter, which was established at the Farnborough Air Show in 2018, is an industry-led initiative which encourages companies to commit to supporting improved gender balance and diversity within the aerospace sector.

Women are under-represented in aviation and aerospace, with only 5% of commercial pilots in the UK being women, as well as a well-recognised shortage of women studying Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and taking up roles in engineering.

DIT will now join over 200 signatories to the Charter, including Airbus, British Airways, Boeing, NATS, UK Space and International Airlines Group.

In 2019, the UK's aerospace exports totalled £37bn. The sector is spread across the UK with a strong presence in areas such as Belfast, the Midlands, North Wales, South Wales and Scotland.

Graham Stuart MP, Minister for Exports, said of DIT's accession to the Charter:

This government's leadership in championing diversity across all sectors and providing opportunities for everyone is a key pillar of our Global Britain vision, and it's fantastic that the Department for International Trade will be joining this Charter.

Aerospace is an hugely important industry for the UK and will be even more successful if it can access the widest possible talent pool.

Oriel Petry, Director, Technology and Advanced Manufacturing at DIT added:

The Department is proud to support industry efforts to tackle the under-representation of women in the aviation and aerospace sectors.

The UK is world-leading in aerospace manufacturing and innovation, and diversity is crucially important for maintaining this status

and driving continued excellence.

Jacqui Sutton and Sumati Sharma, Co-Chairs of the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Charter said:

It is with great pleasure that we welcome DIT to the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Charter. The Charter is more important than ever as the industry starts to recover from the pandemic – building back better will only be possible with a diverse, collaborative and forward thinking workforce that is able to drive aerospace and aviation forward to a better and more sustainable future.

Thank you to DIT for pledging their support in achieving better gender balance across our sector.