Press release: More than 105,000 businesses helped through start-up fund

More than 105,000 businesses have been launched with the support from the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA), a fund available to jobseekers with a business idea.

Successful applicants get access to a business mentor, financial support for up to 6 months and may be able to apply for a loan of up to £25,000 to help with start-up costs.

The latest NEA figures show that the North West had the highest number of start-ups (16,090), followed by London (12,870) and Yorkshire and Humberside (11,590).

Minister for Employment Damian Hinds said:

> As these latest figures show, thousands of people across the country have great business ideas, and are taking the steps to turn them into a reality.
>
> The NEA provides the right mix of expert, tailored advice and support to people of all backgrounds which can be invaluable in the early days of starting a company.

The figures also show that of the individuals launching a business:

- over two thirds were aged between 25 and 49
- 24% were over the age of 50
- 7% were aged between 18 and 24
- 40% were women
- 22% have a self-declared disability
- 13% were from a black and minority ethnic background

Sunderland-based Colin Young, 51, made use of the scheme to launch his business after being made redundant. The NEA helped him start North East Drone Services, a professional drone photography service.

> After working as a TV and photography technician for 13 years, I decided to invest in myself with the New Enterprise Allowance.
>
> I met with an adviser who not only helped me with my business plan, but also to plan for any pitfalls that I might not have considered.

The full regional breakdown of figures:

Region	Individuals with an NEA business start (entries are rounded to the nearest 10)
North West	16,090
London	12,870
Yorkshire and Humberside	11,590
West Midlands	10,210
Scotland	9,600
South East	8,040
South West	7,240
East of England	7,210
North East	7,180
Wales	6,130
East Midlands	6,100

105,500 businesses have been set up through the NEA scheme.

The financial support is paid as a weekly allowance of £65 a week for 13 weeks and then £33 for the following 13 weeks (a total of £1,274 over 26 weeks).

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5124

Follow DWP on:

News story: Jellyfish collagen pioneers set up biomaterial plant in Wales

Cardiff is now home to the first commercial manufacturing plant for extracting high-purity collagen from jellyfish.

The 7,500 square foot facility – established by medtech and biomaterials company Jellagen at Capital Business Park, Wentloog – will serve the research, medical, biotech and pharmaceutical markets.

Collagen is the most abundant protein in the human body and provides structural support for cells in the body’s tissues and organs. It has been used in medical device and research applications for many years. It is usually sourced from pigs, cows, rats and horses.

Manufacturing in bulk quantities

As these mammals carry a risk of disease, Jellagen is moving away from traditional sources to develop a next generation collagen. This is with the help of £225,000 in grant funding from Innovate UK.

The company carries out sustainable harvesting of jellyfish off the west coast of Wales and operates a depot at Pembroke Dock.

Professor Andrew Mearns Spragg, Chief Executive and Founder, said:

> This is a key milestone in Jellagen's evolution. To be able to manufacture jellyfish collagen in bulk quantities enables us to supply and meet the needs of world-leading medical device, biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies.
>
> Jellyfish collagen is, in essence, the root of all collagens and is compatible with a broad range of cell types. This makes it ideally suited to support the growth of a wide range of human cells and enables it to be an effective biomaterial for applications such as cell culture, wound care and regeneration.

Investment from Finance Wales

The next step for the business is ISO13485 certification, allowing it to produce material suitable for medical application and devices and to sell to the market. This will be in place by the end of 2017.

Since it was founded in 2013, Jellagen has raised more than £2.4 million in funding from grants and investment. That has included £1.8 million through the Angels in MedCity programme, with involvement from Finance Wales.

Last year the firm won the Life Sciences Hub Wales Boost Cymru competition to find the most innovative new life sciences business in Wales.

News story: Department for Education Reports Gender Pay Gap

The Department for Education has today become the first Government department to publish its gender pay gap and bonus pay gap, setting an example to other employers on promoting gender equality in the workplace.

The department has reported a mean pay gap – the difference between average salaries for men and women – of 5.3% and a median pay gap of 5.9%. This is compared to the UK’s national gender pay gap of 18.1% which is the lowest since records began in 1997.

The pay gap data will be published by all government departments and large private companies by April 2018 – shining a light on our workplaces to see where there is more to do and helping people make informed decisions about their career.

Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities Justine Greening said:

> I’m proud that the Department for Education has taken an important step in reporting its gender pay gap, setting an example to other employers as we build a stronger economy where success is defined by talent, not gender or circumstance.
>
> The UK’s gender pay gap is at a record low, but we are committed to closing it. As one of the UK’s largest employers, the public sector has a vital role to play in leading the way to tackle the gender pay gap which is why the DfE’s step to publish our gender pay gap matters.
>
> Through transparency we can find out what the situation is, where there is best practice and create pressure for more progress.

The Department for Education is committed to reducing its gender pay gap and has introduced a range of initiatives to support women in the workplace, including:

- Support for women returning to work: through shared parental leave, job sharing or part time opportunities. The department has also updated its guidance on supporting staff returning from maternity or adoption leave.
- Helping women progress in their careers: through talent management schemes such as the Positive Action Pathway, open to all from protected characteristic groups.
- Providing networks: the departmental women’s equality network, Network 58, runs upskilling events, promotes campaigns and holds talks to support women in the workplace.
- Monitoring pay: to identify any pay differences and take targeted action where appropriate.
- Improving the recruitment process: the department has anonymised the application process to reduce unconscious bias and ensuring that all interviewers have undergone unconscious bias training.
- Focus on gender equality: the department has made gender equality a central part of the departmental Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

These initiatives have helped to create a culture that supports women in the workplace and have been supported by strong leadership across the organisation, helping to close the gender pay gap.

In April, the UK became one of the first countries in the world to require mandatory gender pay gap reporting, a key part of the government’s work to eliminate the gender pay gap. Private, public and voluntary sector employers with 250 or more employees will be required to publish their gender pay gap and bonus pay gap by April 2018. The published gender pay gap data can be viewed here.

The detailed information published today shows the department has also reported a mean bonus pay gap of only 0.8% and a 0.0% median bonus pay gap. Its bonus awards are based on performance and this 0.0% pay gap reflects the fact that men and women’s performance is valued equally and fairly.

Breaking down the gender pay gap data by quartiles has helped the department to identify exactly where attention should be focused. Over half (55%) of the department’s senior civil servants are female and there is a higher proportion of women than men in the department’s top pay quartile. However, there is also a higher concentration of women to men in the department’s lowest pay quartile, which has contributed to the gender pay gap. Through the initiatives referenced above, the department will work to continue to support women’s progress in the workplace.

The gender pay gap mandatory reporting requirements are part of wider work the Government is doing to support women in the workplace. This includes £5 million to support returners, offering 30 hours of free childcare, and introducing shared parental leave and new rights to request flexible working. There is also extensive cross-Government work to get more women into the top jobs at the UK’s biggest companies and to get more girls taking STEM subjects at school.

News story: British High Commissioner Fiji Speech at Queen’s Birthday Party

Acting President Chief Justice Honourable Anthony Gates, Hon Vice President of Kiribati Kourabi Nenem, Attorney General Honourable Aiyaz Sayed Khayium, Hon Ministers & Members of Parliament, High Commissioners & Ambassadors, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Distinguished Guests

Ni sa bula vinaka.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Gordon House to the 2017 Queen’s Birthday Party, celebrating the 91st Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. For Alessandro and I, as well as our daughters Lara and Tess, this is the first time we will celebrate this occasion with you. I want to start by saying a heartfelt vinaka for the wonderful welcome that you have given all four of us in our ten months in Fiji. We were back in the UK in May, after a couple of days, my daughters asked “when are we going home?”. They also asked when are we going to see proper weather and wear proper clothes again but

I’ll gloss over that.

For the United Kingdom, we see ourselves as strategic partners in the Pacific. Each of you are invited here tonight because you have contributed in some way to the deepening of this very special relationship. We see the Pacific as family – in good times and in bad. I want to thank the Prime Minister as well as Madam Speaker, and the Leaders of Opposition parties for all your messages of solidarity following London & Manchester attacks.

More broadly, it is impossible to talk about the UK-Fiji relationship without talking about sport. Despite the fact that I arrived after Fiji Sevens’ Olympic Gold win, I get to watch the team thrash team GB in the final over and over again. And just in case, I didn’t get the message, Fiji Airways show the match on all their planes, so I can relive that moment of defeat any time I want! But tonight, I want to acknowledge the presence of the Scottish Rugby team here. Fantastic to see your kilts. Delighted that you will use your day off tomorrow to visit Hilton Special School and Gospel School for the Deaf and Veiuto Primary School. This shows the power of sport for social good – we will continue to use UK sporting and high level visits to promote sport for social good. At last week’s Italy match, I divided my half-Italian family by supporting Fiji. This week, I will of course support Scotland, although my children have asked if they can support Fiji. I would like to congratulate FRU for hosting two international matches and we hope this is the just the start for you.

Turning from sport to culture, this has been an incredible year. Dance Group VOU attended the Edinburgh festival, winning an award, and are again in the UK this week to attend a different festival. Last autumn, His Excellency the President visited London and met Her Majesty the Queen. He also opened the exhibition “Fiji: Art & Life in the Pacific”, at the University of East Anglia, the largest ever exhibition of Fijian artifacts. It is often said that Her Majesty retains a soft spot for Fiji [reference to photo loops] and it was no coincidence that in January, Her Majesty undertook a visit the Fiji exhibition. I want to acknowledge the presence of Professor Hooper with us tonight – it is wonderful that you are now working as a cultural adviser to the COP 23 Secretariat to ensure that this important gathering sends a clear message on the deep cultural history of the Pacific. I am very proud that the British Government provided financial support not just for the exhibition in East Anglia, and for the Tabua exhibition here at the Fiji Museum, but to enable you to assist the museum with its strategic plan to strengthen this fantastic resource for all Fijians.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Ratu Meli Vesikula, of the Royal British Legion, representing the officers and families of Fijians who have served in the British Army.

For the next few minutes, I’m going to talk about the assistance that the UK provides in the Pacific. Rather than display a diplomatic beauty contest, I want to tell some of the stories of the individuals and events behind the headlines.

- Trade – Tate and Lyle, through its presence in the UK, has continued to purchase all of Fiji's sugar, and has recently undertaken further high level talks with FSC.

- Secondly, education – we offer approximately 16-18 scholarships per year. Masters level. Leadership. Acknowledge the presence here tonight. It makes us proud when we see our scholars do well in their studies. We had two such scholars, Krishnan Nair received a Distinction for his Master of Science in Sustainable Energy and Environment and Maika Tuicakau who was awarded the Dean's Award for Best Student on the MSC Structural Engineering programme. We were also pleased that we were able to award a scholarship to Krishneer Sen, our first Chevening Scholar from the Pacific with a disability who completed his Masters in Human Rights from the University of London. Krishneer started off as a student of the Gospel School for the deaf and is now UNICEF Pacific's Ambassador. In addition, the British Government – sole funder of Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, which provides approximately further scholarships per year in the region.

- Marine Economies – in 2015, the UK launched a new programme for Pacific Commonwealth countries. This opened up world-class expertise from the UK Hydrographic Office, the National Oceanographic Centre and the Centre for Enviornment Fisheries and Acquaculture Science to the Pacific. At the heart of this program is an offer to help with gaps in hydrographic mapping and to use this to develop action plans which balance economic growth with environmental protection.

- Bilateral projects – support to UNDP/police – video recording; funded women's political participation through support to Fiji Young Women's Forum; police leadership training done in collaboration with Australia and New Zealand; a growing defence relationship with an offers of places at Dartmouth Sandhurst, and regional courses on governance and strategic leadership; capacity building to parliament hosted by the Rt Hon Speaker.

- Multilateral – the most interesting part. Very proud to be a lead funder of the UN – UK funds between 9-13% most agencies. As a Board Member of the World Bank, the UK has pledged £3.3bn to the International Development Association between 2014-17. As the Pacific draws down more IDA, we estimate that there will be more UK funding to the Pacific than at any other time.

- In addition, I want to underline the contribution the United Kingdom makes to the European Union's support to the Pacific. I particularly want to underline the good work done through the Access to Justice programme, with UNDP, which provides a welcome boost to legal aid, the climate partnership with Pacific Small Island States, and the support to the Commonwealth's hub and spoke trade capacity building, including

advisers to the PIF and to the Ministry of Trade. For the UK, whilst we are negotiating a new partnership with Europe, make no mistake, we will continue to be a leading partner on foreign and security policy, globally and here in the Pacific.
Finally, I want to touch on climate. I wish to pay tribute to Fiji's Presidency of COP and leadership of last week's UN Oceans conference alongside Sweden. Attorney General, Ministers, I wish to congratulate you on an outstanding achievement including over 1300 new commitments to protect Oceans. The UK fully recognises the interconnectivity between oceans and climate, as well as the particular context of the Pacific, and warmly welcome this leadership.

- On COP, the United Kingdom is fully committed to the Paris agreement. We are delighted to support Fiji's COP Presidency, not least through our support to the European Union. We are ready to lead, shoulder to shoulder with our European partners. We are the 3rd largest contributor to the Green Climate Fund. We are proud that London is a leading centre on green finance. To have credibility internationally, it is vital to show leadership domestically also. As you may already know, the UK was the first developed nation to have legally binding targets for Greenhouse Gas emissions through our 2008 Climate Change Act. Last week, the energy mix from renewable overtook coal and gas for the first time. We are the first country to propose an end date for all unabated coal-fired power stations in this time frame as part of our plans for a cleaner energy future. This, ladies and gentlemen, is history in the making.

Before concluding, I want to look ahead to the coming year. I am delighted that the UK will host the next Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting in April 2018 and will be chair in office of the Commonwealth for a 2 year period. As the much-needed reform program of the Secretariat moves ahead, I look forward to deepening our understanding of what Pacific States want to see from a reformed Secretariat.
In 2015, the Queen's Young Leader Programme was launched – we are honoured to have the Fiji recipients here tonight. [Elisha Bano and Luisa Tiulau both use creative arts to advocate social issues, including social inclusion and climate change. The Queen's Young Leaders are in the UK this week and will receive their awards from Her Majesty on 29th June. Next week marks the launch of the search for the Queen's Young Leader 2018 and we need to your help to publicise this life-changing programme and to nominate the very best young men and women.

We will have other opportunities to reflect on the depth of the Commonwealth partnership in the months ahead. The Commonwealth Games will be in our neighbourhood at the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia. The Queen's Baton Relay will be in Fiji in November this year. In another example of leadership, Fiji will host the Commonwealth Education Ministers here next February. Overall, the Commonwealth offers many practical areas of assistance in terms of trade policy support, parliamentary capacity building and other programmes associated with governance/rule of law, greater access to climate finance and election support, including observer missions. We look forward to working with all Pacific countries more closely in order to insure a dynamic Summit which renews the Commonwealth as an effective global institution, attuned to the particular needs of Small Island States.

In closing, I will be pleased to report to Her Majesty that we have celebrated her birthday in style in Suva – with Bula-Kilt combination found nowhere else on earth.

I also want to thank all the staff of the British High Commission Suva who have worked tirelessly to prepare tonight’s event.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would now like to offer you a toast, if you could charge your glasses, The toast is: to the President, the Government and the People of Fiji. To Fiji.

Vinaka Vaka Levu.

Press release: An analysis of 2 decades of efforts to improve social mobility

Two decades of government efforts to improve social mobility have failed to deliver enough progress in reducing the gap between Britain’s ‘haves and have nots’, the Social Mobility Commission warns today (28 June 2017) in a hard-hitting new report.

The commission, an independent body that monitors progress on social mobility, calls on current and future governments to learn 5 key lessons from the mistakes and successes of the past 20 years.

It warns that without deep-seated reform, social and economic divisions in British society are set to widen with consequences for community cohesion and economic prosperity.

The ‘Time for change’ report examines various public policies pursued over the last 20 years and assesses the impact they have had – for good or ill – on social mobility in Britain.

The in-depth analysis, carried out for the first time, covers 4 life stages from the early years and school through to training and further/higher education and then into the world of work. It gives ‘red’, ‘amber’ and ‘green’ ratings depending on how successful governments have been in translating policy into positive social outcomes.

Damningly, the report is not able to give a single ‘green’ rating to any of the life stages. Both early years and schools are given an ‘amber’ rating, while young people and working lives receives a ‘red’. Overall, only 7 policies score a green while 14 score ‘amber’ and 16 ‘red’.

While the report says that some policies – such as increasing employment and getting more working-class young people into university – have had a positive impact, overall the report concludes that ‘too little’ has been done to break the link between socio-economic background and social progress.

It says that over 20 years new divides have opened up in Britain, across geographies, income groups and generations – and that many policies of the past are no longer ‘fit for purpose’. It comes up with 5 key lessons from the past and makes recommendations for government which includes:

- successive governments have failed to make social mobility the cornerstone of domestic policy – so in future they should develop a strategic cross-departmental social mobility plan
- long-term progress has too often been sacrificed to short-term change – so 10 year targets should be implemented to ensure public money is spent effectively
- how policies have been designed has often been misaligned from the objective of securing higher levels of social mobility – so public policy should be subjected to a new social mobility test
- public resources have not been properly lined up behind social mobility policies – so future budgets should identify how public spending addresses geographical, wealth and generational inequalities
- governments have overly limited their scope of action – so in future they should be more active in building a national coalition with councils, communities and employers to improve social mobility

The Rt Hon Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

> As the general election seems to demonstrate, the public mood is sour and whole tracts of Britain feel left behind. There is a mood for change in Britain.
>
> When more and more people feel like they are losing out, social mobility matters more than ever before. Higher social mobility can be a rallying point to prove that modern capitalist economies like our own are capable of creating better, fairer and more inclusive societies. It is the best antidote to the growth of political populism, both right and left, that we have witnessed around the world.
>
> For 2 decades, successive governments have made the pursuit of higher levels of social mobility one of the holy grails of public policy. While there has been some progress, it has not gone far enough towards translating welcome political sentiments into positive social outcomes.

In fact, what is so striking about this new analysis is how divided we have become as a nation. A new geographical divide has open opened up, a new income divide has opened up and a new generational divide has opened up.

If we go on like this, these divisions are set to widen, not narrow. There is a growing sense in the nation that these divisions are not sustainable, socially, economically or politically. There is hunger for change. The policies of the past have brought some progress, but many are no longer fit for purpose in our changing world. New approaches are needed if Britain is to become a fairer and more equal country.

Main findings from the report

Early years

- child poverty has risen in the aftermath of the recession and there is currently no prospect of it ending
- early years services have become a welcome part of the education system in Britain, but despite billions of investment the attainment gap has only begun to shrink recently
- at current rates of progress, it will take 15 years before all children are school ready and 40 years before the attainment gap between poor 5 year olds and their better-off counterparts is closed

Schools

- spending on education is 50% higher than what it was in 1997 and increased for the first decade, but has fallen in the second
- despite reforms to schools and success in improving results and raising standards, two-thirds of children on free school meals do not get good GCSEs
- there has been significant progress in reducing the attainment gap between poorer pupils and their better-off classmates at primary school, but the gap increases substantially at secondary school
- there is currently no prospect of the gap between poorer and wealthier children being eliminated at either GCSE or A level
- geographical inequality amongst the poorest children in England has increased as attainment in London schools has improved far faster than the rest of the country

Young people

- progress such as the school age rising to 18, access to higher education widened and the recreation of apprenticeships should be welcomed but progress is too slow
- labour market outcomes for young people are poor – while youth unemployment has fallen, the number of young people who are NEET has barely changed
- young people’s wages have fallen 16% – taking pay to below 1997 levels

- the number of young people receiving careers advice or work experience has fallen and more new apprenticeships have gone to older workers than younger ones
- despite university access widening, retention and graduate outcomes for disadvantaged students have barely improved
- at current rates of progress, it will take 120 years before disadvantaged young people are as likely as their better-off peers to achieve A level or equivalent qualifications – in higher education, it will take 80 years before the participation gap closes

Working lives

- employment rates are the highest on record and extreme low pay has been eliminated, but 1 in 5 people in the UK are stuck on low pay – a higher proportion than other comparable nations
- wages have stagnated in real terms with living standards falling – particularly for young people
- regional inequalities have risen with London and the south moving ahead while other parts of the country fall behind – output per person in London is £43,629 compared to less than £19,000 in the North East
- the highest-paid and best-paid jobs remain deeply elitist, while some progress is being made – it is painfully slow

Recommendations in the report

Early years

The government should:

- establish a new national ambition to ensure that within a decade every child, regardless of background, is school ready by the age of 5 and that the attainment gap between poorer 5 year olds and their peers has been halved
- focus childcare policy on improving teaching for the poorest children by doubling the early years pupil premium to enable childcare providers to offer extra support for disadvantaged children
- support early years' teachers by shifting regulatory emphasis and funding from teacher qualifications to continuing professional development
- restore funding for parenting programmes and experiment with online classes to achieve scale without undermining quality – using funding from both health and education budgets and shared objectives across both departments.

Schools

The government should:

- introduce a new ambition that, within a decade, the attainment gap between poorer children and their better off classmates should be closed at GCSE level
- align inspection regimes and redistribute resources behind the new drive

- to close the attainment gap
- abandon plans to extend grammar schools and instead focus on developing new collaborative approaches to turning around failing schools
- introduce effective incentives to attract and retain good-quality teachers in the schools that need them most, including a new emphasis on continuing professional development
- develop a more balanced curriculum incorporating social and emotional learning, alongside careers advice, within the formal school timetable

Young people

The government should:

- set a new aim to have the attainment gap in level 3 qualifications within the next decade through new policies including [T levels](), apprenticeships, and extra support and accountability reforms for further education colleges
- refocus apprenticeships policy on young people and on higher quality apprenticeships
- ensure careers advice and support is available in all schools via greater emphasis on destinations measures plus increased training and time in the curriculum
- ensure that higher education is available via further education colleges in social mobility cold spots
- encourage universities to focus on helping students succeed in the labour market by measuring graduate outcomes and offering better careers advice and work experience opportunities

Working lives

The government should:

- introduce a new ambition to make the UK the country with the lowest level of low pay in the OECD by 2030
- increase the number of high-skilled jobs in the regions and particularly in social mobility cold spots, by encouraging and incentivising public sector bodies and private companies to base themselves in those areas
- devolve accountability and resources to enable the development of local skills strategies that bring employers to those areas
- forge a new concordant with employers behind a national drive to improve career progression underpinned by increased investment in skills policies – including high-quality apprenticeships
- make socio-economic diversity in professional employment a priority by encouraging all large employers to make access and progression fairer, with the Civil Service leading the way as an exemplar employer

Notes for editors

1. The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social

mobility in England. It currently consists of 4 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

2. The commission board currently comprises:
    - Alan Milburn (Chair)
    - Baroness Gillian Shephard (Deputy Chair)
    - Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath
    - David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation
3. The functions of the commission include:
    - monitoring progress on improving social mobility
    - providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility
    - undertaking social mobility advocacy