

[News story: Accelerator Innovation Network Event](#)

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The Defence and Security Accelerator is holding an event in London on 23 February 2017 to provide information on the first Innovation Fund challenge

Suppliers attending the event will be able to hear presentations about the Innovation Fund challenge which is aimed at revolutionising the human-information relationship for Defence.

If you cannot attend the event, sign up for our [webinar](#) which will take place on 27 February 2017.

[The competition](#) is seeking new technologies, processes and ways of working to improve the way we analyse and exploit data. With the relationship between human and information at the centre of war-fighting we need Defence leaders to have access to the right information on critical issues to enable decision making that outpaces our adversaries.

The challenges of this Accelerator competition are to:

- free up personnel through the application of innovative use of machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence to maintain military advantage
- allow for the rapid and automated integration of new sensors
- improve operator cognitive capacity and greater human machine teaming

Up to £6 million is available in total across phase 1 and 2 of this Innovation Fund competition.

[News story: Presentation slides from the Accelerator Enduring Challenge launch event](#)

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A launch event for the Enduring Challenge was held for science and technology providers on 26 January 2017.

At the event in London, Harriett Baldwin MP, Minister for Defence Procurement, launched the Innovation Initiative's £6 million Accelerator Enduring Challenge, in her keynote speech.

The Enduring Challenge is run by the MOD's new Defence and Security Accelerator and will fast-track the best ideas by funding their development, matching suppliers with expert Innovation Partners, and boosting supplier access to defence. The competition will run regularly, with up to 12 rounds a year.

Enduring challenge overview

In the [opening session](#), the Accelerator's Rob Solly introduced the Accelerator and gave an overview of the Enduring Challenge and how it differs from the previously-run Centre for Defence Enterprise enduring competition.

This was followed by the Accelerator's Jim Pennycook, who explained the transition to the Accelerator and gave an overview of proof-of-concept research funding opportunities for innovative science and technology providers.

Further detail was then provided by the Accelerator's Bruce Hardie, who explained the specifics of the challenge, how the competitions would work and the practicalities of submitting a proposal.

Defence and Security perspectives

In the [second session](#), military advisers and technical experts from the security services, air, land and sea sectors gave their perspective of how the Enduring Challenge will meet the defence and security challenges.

[News story: Iraq Afghanistan Memorial to be unveiled in London](#)

The memorial honours both the UK Armed Forces and civilians who served their country in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan, and who supported them back home, from 1990-2015. Around 2,500 invited guests will attend a service of

dedication from a specially conducted Drumhead on Horse Guards at 11am, to include prayers, music and readings. A small ceremony will then be held in the gardens for the unveiling itself. It will be displayed on screens on Horse Guards.

The guests will be representatives of the many groups – military and civilian – whose efforts in those countries over a 25-year period are recognised, including current Service personnel, veterans, civil servants and charity workers.

They will be joined by The Queen, other members of the Royal Family, Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon and other senior politicians.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The memorial will stand as a permanent reminder of the contribution and sacrifice that so many members of our Armed Forces, aid workers and civilian personnel made towards the security of the United Kingdom and the interests of Iraq and Afghanistan. Their efforts underline our on-going commitment to support the people of this region in building a more stable future which will help keep Britain safer and more secure.

Union Jack flag on British Military base, Crown Copyright.

The memorial commemorates the duty and service of British citizens who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way, protected our nation's interests far from the security of the UK, helped those in danger and worked to improve the lives of those in Iraq and Afghanistan. UK Citizens, from a vast breadth of organisations across Government, charities and non-governmental organisations worked tirelessly over many years to help the citizens of both countries. Some made the ultimate sacrifice during their efforts to lay the foundations for peace and stability.

Importantly, it honours all those who worked on the humanitarian side of operations, whether in a military or civilian role including areas such as aid distribution, education, healthcare, infrastructure and governance. The memorial recognises, praises and remembers with gratitude the unstinting and selfless commitment of all those, military and civilian, who served their country in support of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The distinctive memorial has been designed by sculptor Paul Day and gives equal prominence to the civilian and military contributions. It consists of two large stone monoliths supporting a bronze medallion. The two-sided medallion has sculpted reliefs depicting the memorial's theme of "duty and service".

The memorial project is run by a board of trustees, whose chairman is former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Stirrup, and The Sun newspaper ran a fundraising appeal for the memorial. The unveiling is being organised by the

MOD, on the trustees' behalf, in partnership with The Royal British Legion, which is co-hosting a reception after the service.

After the unveiling, the public will be freely able to visit the Iraq Afghanistan Memorial in the Victoria Embankment Gardens.

[Press release: Fostering services merger faces in-depth investigation](#)

Both the National Fostering Agency Group (NFA) and Acorn Care and Education Group (Acorn) provide independent fostering placement services to local authorities across Scotland, England and Wales, helping them match vulnerable children with foster carers.

The market for independent fostering placement services is worth in excess of £750 million per annum and the companies are 2 of the largest national providers to local authorities.

The number of children requiring foster care is growing while shortages of carers available to local authorities and independent fostering suppliers continue, leaving a growing deficit.

Groups of local authorities often tender for such services through framework agreements, which establish a list of independent providers with foster carers available in the local area, to ensure availability when their own in-house network of carers are unable to meet demand.

The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation reviewed all local authority framework areas in which the companies overlap in the UK, and found concerns in 3 framework agreement areas: Wales, Norfolk and the framework agreement area covering Luton, central Bedfordshire and Bedford.

In each of these framework areas, the merged company's position is strong and we found that local authorities may face challenges in ensuring value for money in framework tenders.

The merger will, therefore, be referred for an in-depth phase 2 investigation by an independent group of CMA panel members – unless NFA is able to offer undertakings which sufficiently address the concerns in these areas of the country.

Sheldon Mills, Senior Director of Mergers at the CMA, said:

Many local authorities have raised concerns with us that this merger could significantly weaken their ability to ensure quality of care in their local areas, at the best possible price, when

placing vulnerable children.

We closely investigated these concerns and found that in some areas local authorities may find it more difficult to obtain value for money as a result of the merger.

We think the concerns warrant an in-depth investigation unless the company can offer undertakings which address our concerns.

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
2. Regarding the size of the market for independent fostering placement services: (i) expenditure data published pursuant to the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 indicates that local authorities in England spent around £700 million on independent fostering placement services in the 2014/15 financial year; (ii) a report published by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru states that expenditure by Welsh local authorities was around £52 million in the 2014/15 financial year; and (iii) the National Framework Agreement for Fostering and Continuing Care Services across Scotland (tendered in September 2016) was estimated to have an approximate value of £100 million over 4 years, or approximately £25 million per year.
3. SSCP Spring Topco Limited, acting through SSCP Spring Bidco Limited (the holding company of NFA) acquired the entire issued share capital of Acorn on 3 August 2016. The case was first identified by the CMA's Mergers Intelligence Unit. The merging parties subsequently filed a draft merger notice with the CMA on 26 September 2016.
4. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a merger reference, resulting in an in-depth phase 2 merger investigation, if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a 'relevant merger situation' has been created, or arrangements are in progress or in contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and that the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.
5. Under the Act a 'relevant merger situation' is created if 2 or more enterprises have ceased to be distinct enterprises; and the value of the turnover in the United Kingdom of the enterprise being taken over exceeds £70 million ('the turnover test') or as a result of the transaction, in relation to the supply of goods or services of any description, a 25% share of supply in the UK (or a substantial part of the UK) is created or enhanced ('the share of supply test').
6. The CMA considers that it is under a duty to make a phase 2 merger reference in this case under the Act. However, the duty to refer is not exercised while the CMA is considering whether to accept undertakings in lieu of a reference. SSCP Spring Topco Limited, the ultimate UK holding

company of the NFA group, has until 6 February 2017 to offer undertakings that might be accepted by the CMA. If no undertaking is offered or accepted, then the CMA will refer the merger for a phase 2 merger investigation.

7. All the CMA's functions in phase 2 merger investigations are performed by inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's panel members. The appointed inquiry group are the decision makers on merger investigations. The CMA's panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and/or business; the membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience (including industry experience).
8. The text of this decision will be placed on the [case page](#) in due course.
9. For more information on the CMA see our [homepage](#) or follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on merger cases.
10. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or by calling 020 7738 6798.

[News story: Plans for fixed cap on legal costs for medical negligence cases](#)

The government intends to impose a new, fixed cap on all clinical negligence cases up to £25,000 to prevent rising litigation costs within the NHS. There are numerous examples of lawyers who profit from the NHS by charging more than 80 times the amount awarded to the victims in minor claims.

In one case, lawyers claimed £83,000 in legal costs for a case in which the patient was awarded £1,000. These costs contributed to a total bill for the NHS of £1.5 billion in financial year 2015 to 2016.

Currently, there is no limit on legal costs that can be recouped and the money claimed by lawyers takes vital funds away from NHS trusts. It is expected the new cap will help the NHS save up to £45 million a year.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

It's important that when significant mistakes happen in the NHS, patients are able to have an open dialogue with a trust about what went wrong, receive reassurance of what is being learnt, and can discuss what form of recompense or redress may be appropriate. Legal action should only be one part of this process.

Unfortunately, what we often see in lower cost claims is a deeply

unfair system where unscrupulous law firms cream off excessive legal costs that dwarf the actual damages recovered. We believe this creates an adversarial culture of litigation, which is inflating insurance premiums and drawing away resource from the NHS at a crucial time.

Andrew Foster, Chief Executive at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust, said:

The introduction of a fixed recoverable cost for lower value claims would support more proportionate payment to claimant lawyers – which alongside improvements to the system should make things quicker and better for patients. This seems fair and appropriate recognising this all comes out of the NHS pot. Less money spent on legal costs will mean more to put into improved patient care at a local level.

See [consultation on plans for fixed recoverable costs for clinical negligence claims](#).