



Office for Life Sciences

Office for Life Sciences Bulletin – 15 March 2024



OLS Introduction

The Office for Life Sciences (OLS) is a joint unit between the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

This bulletin aims to keep the life sciences sector up to date on the latest government announcements and wider opportunities in policy areas which may be of interest to the sector.

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sonia.davies@officeforlifesciences.gov.uk



News

NEW – Secretary of State's Skills Speech: Life Science announcements

As part of a £1.1bn package of announcements, we announced the lead bidder for the Medicines Manufacturing Skills Centre of Excellence competition, an academic consortium led by the University of Birmingham. The centre, RESILIENCE, will include a network of academic and not-for-profit partners. We also announced the intention to launch a competition to select a delivery partner in March for the Science & Technology Venture Capital Fellowship scheme.

Read more [here](#).

NEW – Flexible AI Upskilling Fund pilot: Expression of Interest now live

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) recently announced a £7.4 million pilot scheme to subsidise the cost of AI skills training for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Professional Business Services sector. The pilot aims to increase AI adoption and productivity by incentivising greater employer-led investment in skills and training. Through this pilot programme, eligible business can apply for funding for up to 50% of the cost of AI skills training.

Read more [here](#).

NEW – £50m Apprenticeship Growth Sector Pilot: further funding available for providers

As part of the [significant funding package](#) announced on 4 March, the Chancellor set out further details of the £50m Apprenticeships Growth Pilot. From April, eligible apprenticeship providers of apprenticeship standards will now benefit from targeted payments worth £3k for every start of an apprentice. Funding will be available to support providers in making capital investment that will unlock their ability to grow and deliver the standards in scope of the pilot. This will explore ways to stimulate training and break down barriers to high-quality training in advanced manufacturing and engineering, green industries, and life sciences apprenticeships. Further detail will be set out in upcoming guidance later this month.

NEW – MHRA MedTech regulatory reform update

The MHRA has published the March issue of their MedTech Regulatory Reform blog series, setting out their progress in delivering the Innovative Devices Access Pathway Pilot, engaging with Trusted Advisors and working with international partners.

Read more [here](#).

NEW – 25,000 people to benefit after NICE recommends new ulcerative colitis treatment

Thousands of people could be set to benefit following NICE recommendation of a new one-a-day pill as an option for treating severe ulcerative colitis. NICE's final guidance on etrasimod (also known as Velsipity and made by Pfizer) was published on the same day (11 March) that the treatment was granted a licence by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Read more [here](#).

NEW – NHS AI expansion to help tackle missed appointments and improve waiting times

The NHS is set to roll out artificial intelligence (AI) to reduce the number of missed appointments and free up staff time to help bring down the waiting list for elective care. The expansion to ten more NHS Trusts follows a successful pilot in Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, which has seen the number of did not attend (DNAs) slashed by almost a third in six months.

Read more [here](#).

NEW – New action to tackle ethnic and other biases in medical devices

The government has announced action to tackle potential bias in the design and use of medical devices, as it accepts recommendations from a UK-first independent review into equity in medical devices. The Department of Health and Social Care commissioned senior health experts to identify potential biases in these devices and recommend how to tackle them. The government fully accepted the report's conclusions and has made a series of commitments, including ensuring that pulse oximeter devices used in the NHS can be used safely across a range of skin tones, and removing racial bias from data sets used in clinical studies.

Read more [here](#).

NEW – £35 million investment to boost maternity safety

Almost £35 million will be invested to improve maternity safety across England with the recruitment of additional midwives and the expansion of specialist training to thousands of extra healthcare workers. The investment, which was announced as part of the Spring Budget 2024, will be provided over the next 3 years to ensure maternity services listen to and act on women's experiences to improve care.

Read more [here](#).

NEW – New partnership to turbocharge science and research links signed by UK and Germany

A new agreement to boost science and research ties, and plans for a joint group of science and research experts, were part of shared measures announced by the UK and Germany on Tuesday 12 March. The UK Science and Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan, and German Federal Minister of Education and Research Bettina Stark-Watzinger signed a Joint Declaration of Intent committing both countries to broadening and deepening their science and research links.

Read more [here](#).

NEW – £13.5 million for 48 engineering biology R&D projects

£13.5 million funding is to be provided by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Technology Missions Fund and delivered by Innovate UK on new projects which will use engineering biology to tackle challenges in the fields of health, environment, food production and sustainability. The 48 projects cover a wide range of sectors and disciplines and involve private companies, academic institutions and partner bodies.

Read more [here](#).



Useful Links

- The [Office for Life Sciences](#) homepage provides the latest updates and information on the governments work with the life sciences sector.
- Information around Horizon Europe funding can be found [here](#).
- Guidance for businesses on Brexit can be found [here](#).
- Access the 'Check How to Export Goods' tool [here](#) for the information you need to export goods out of the UK market.
- If you're a UK business selling goods or services to Europe, you can contact the UK government [export support team](#) by phone or online.
- Access the 'Check How to Export Goods' tool [here](#) for the information you need to export goods out of the UK market.
- Click [here](#) for more information and advice on exporting.
- In England, [Growth Hubs](#) can advise on local and UK Government business support.
- Register for HMRC's free [Trader Support Service](#) if you are moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Click [here](#) to view the latest weekly Trader Support Service (TSS) bulletin.
- The most up-to-date guidance on the [Windsor Framework](#) is on GOV.UK, including information on moving goods into, out of, or through Northern Ireland.
- If you need to get in touch with the MHRA, please use the contact details below:
 - Email: MHRACustomerServices@mhra.gov.uk
 - Phone: 0203 080 6000