

Press release: Dstl staff shortlisted for The Sun Military Awards

Work carried out at the lab by Diagnostics Fellow Dr Roman Lukaszewski and his team has been nominated in the Innovation category of the awards, for breakthrough work on treatment for sepsis.

A new test, which can identify patients most likely to develop sepsis, was developed following ten years of work by Dstl and its partners, including the US Department of Defense. The test could one day be used on the frontline to save the lives of troops, and in hospitals in the UK and beyond.

The test diagnoses the condition before people become ill by identifying a 'signature' for sepsis.

Dr Lukaszewski said:

It's a real honour for the team to be shortlisted for a Millie. We have been working on this project for more than a decade and it's fantastic to be able to have a result which could one day save so many lives.

Infection is a huge issue for soldiers injured on operational tour. This breakthrough could identify troops who are likely to develop sepsis and start treatment early. The work is unique as only Dstl has found biomarkers indicating patients who will go on to develop sepsis. It's a new way of looking at how to tackle cases.

It's a condition which affects people across the world – it's estimated that more people die of sepsis than breast cancer, bowel cancer and prostate cancer combined each year, and projects like this are vital to help us move forward with solutions.

Dstl has also been nominated for its role in the procurement of the Carbonite-2 demonstrator satellite, which is able to capture colour and full HD still imagery and full-motion video from space.

Sean Murphy, a Principal Scientist in Dstl's Space Programme, said:

It's a tremendous feeling to be invited to the awards ceremony and great to be given an opportunity to highlight our work at events like this and a privilege to represent Dstl and the whole of the space programme team.

The Millies are awarded each year for those who have made a significant contribution to the support of our troops. A special ceremony in central London will bring together shortlisted nominees for the awards night, along with celebrities and military chiefs.

Gary Aitkenhead, Chief Executive of Dstl, said:

Both of these projects are fantastic examples of the huge impact of Dstl's work and I'm delighted they have been nominated in the innovation category for the Millies. The Sepsis breakthrough has potential benefits – not only to our troops but for the population as a whole. It requires investment and foresight for long-term studies like this but it's been so worthwhile.

The event will be broadcast on Forces TV on December 13, when the winners will be announced.

Press release: Dstl staff shortlisted for The Sun Military Awards

Staff at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) have been shortlisted for the coveted Sun Military Awards – better known as The Millies.

Press release: Gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrows

New [statistics](#) published today (13 December) show that disadvantaged primary school pupils are closing in on their better off peers as the disadvantage gap index falls for the seventh year in a row.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb welcomed the news and praised the impact of academies in supporting this improvement. The figures show the disadvantage gap index has shrunk by 13% since 2011 and 3% in the last year alone.

In addition the statistics show that in multi-academy trusts disadvantaged pupils did significantly better than the national average in writing and maths.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Standards are rising in our schools, with 86% of schools now rated good or outstanding as of August 2018, compared to 68% in 2010 and these statistics show that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has closed by 13% since 2011.

Every child, regardless of their background, deserves a high quality education and opportunity to fulfil their potential. Headteachers are using the freedoms afforded by academy and free school status to make this a reality, as illustrated by the progress disadvantaged pupils in multi-academy trusts are making in writing and maths.

Statistics released today show:

- The gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is smaller in MATs than the national average in each progress measure (reading, writing and maths);
- 88% of pupils who met the phonics standard in year 1 reached the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 2; and
- The attainment gap between girls and boys has remained stable with 61% of boys meeting the expected standard compared to 68% of girls

This release follows [statistics](#) published earlier this year that showed 64% of pupils met the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths this year.

The data is part of a number of publications from the Department today that show how our primary schools are performing. It includes the performance tables, which help parents make informed choices about schools in their areas, and how individual multi academy trusts are performing.

The tables show that Dilkes Academy Trust (now known as Catalyst Academies Trust), Yorkshire Collaborative Academy Trust and Hull Collaborative Academy Trust all rank in the top ten trusts in the country for attainment in reading, writing and maths.

The department collects and publish more information about MATs than we do about local authority schools – including new information about how we are tackling high pay and late filing of accounts. Publications like today's Key Stage 2 performance measures, which now include around 240 trusts, show the

important role MATs play in our improving system.

New [research](#) also published today highlights the approaches trusts take to supporting their schools to succeed.

We continue to strengthen the accountability regime across the academies sector. In recent months, we have strengthened financial accountability, including new rules on related party transactions, which local authority schools do not have to publish at all. Ofsted is today publishing its improved approach to Summary Evaluations which bring together the inspections of individual schools in a MAT to give a picture of its contribution to education quality.

We will continue to make information about trusts more visible. As we do this, we will also consider how this compares to the transparency of local authority schools.

News story: Oxford University: Surveillance Camera Code Compliant

The University of Oxford is a large, internationally-renowned academic institution recognised as the oldest in the English-speaking world. From an initial six cameras in 1990 to almost 200 cameras today, the university has sought to use its CCTV system to prevent and detect crime and support a safe environment for staff, students and visitors.

The importance of Certification

Earlier this year University of Oxford was awarded the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's certification mark after being audited against the 12 guiding principles of the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. The code aims to balance the need for cameras in public places with individual's right to privacy. The certification audit was conducted by the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB).

Lesley Nesbitt, Crime Prevention Design Advisor said:

Oxford University aspires to the highest standards of CCTV surveillance and the Commissioner's certification provides confidence to the University staff, students and visitors that the deployment of our CCTV system is proportionate, effective, compliant with relevant legal obligations and importantly deployed to protect and support them.

University of Oxford is one of the largest employers in Oxfordshire and certification enables it to demonstrate its commitment to transparency and accountability to nearly 24,000 students and more than 13,000 employees. The University employs its own security team to provide 24/7 staffing for the security control room and undertake patrols of the academic and residential campus.

Ethos

The university encourages visitors to enjoy the architectural splendor of its buildings, parks, gardens and green spaces including its many colleges, museums, and galleries, in a city that is small enough to explore on foot.

The University of Oxford Security Services team carries out an annual review of their CCTV cameras to ensure that each camera's deployment is justified with a pressing need and legitimate reason, identifying cameras that can be removed and areas where new cameras should be deployed.

Tony Porter, Surveillance Camera Commissioner said:

Oxford University is one of the most prestigious Universities in the world. It's great that they are demonstrating to staff, students and the public their commitment to using surveillance cameras to the highest standards by achieving my certification mark.

Statement to parliament: Provisional local government finance settlement 2019 to 2020: statement

With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on funding for local authorities in England next year. Every day, these councils and the many hard-working, dedicated people who work for them do their communities proud; delivering the essential services on which we all depend and making a difference to every life they touch. It's a privilege to be working with and representing these communities.

In doing so, I'm determined to ensure that they get the resources and support to rise to new opportunities and challenges, to grow their economies and to ensure there is opportunity for all, here no one is left behind.

The [draft local government finance settlement](#) being published today – is an important step towards this. Provisional local authority funding allocations

will be subject to further review before final settlement in line with my department's usual processes.

This provisional settlement confirms that Core Spending Power is forecast to increase from £45.1 billion in 2018-19 to £46.4 billion in 2019-20, a cash-increase of 2.8% and a real-terms increase in resources available to local authorities.

It has been challenging.

I am in no doubt about how challenging it has been for councils to drive efficiencies as they contributed to helping rebuild our economy and tackling the deficit [political content removed].

Which is why I'm delighted that the Budget committed around £1 billion of extra funding for local services, with a strong focus on supporting some of our most vulnerable groups.

This includes £650 million for adults and children's social care in 2019-20.

Of this, £240 million will go towards easing winter pressures, with the flexibility to use the remainder – £410 million for either adult or children's services and, where necessary, to relieve demands on the NHS.

This is on top of the £240 million announced in October to address winter pressures this year.

In addition, the Budget pledged an extra £84 million over the next five years to expand our Children's Social Care programmes to support more councils with high or rising numbers of children in care. This builds on the good work my department is already doing through the Troubled Families programme to improve all services for families with complex problems.

The Budget also provided a boost for our high streets via a £1.5 billion package of support; including a business rates discount worth almost £900 million and a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help them adapt and thrive in changing times. In addition, there is a further £420 million to repair and improve our roads this year.

Mr Speaker, I recognise some of the pressures within social care.

I've been working with the Health and Social Care Secretary to take this forward and the government will soon be publishing a green paper on the future of Social Care.

This is a complex issue and we're working with local authorities – to ensure we get this right.

And we've taken this approach across the board – listening carefully to what councils of all shapes and sizes, across the country, are telling us and responding.

My thanks to my ministers – especially the Minister for Local Government, my

Honourable Friend, the Member for Richmond – for all their work on this.

As a result, I can confirm that I will increase the Rural Services Delivery Grant by £16 million in 2019-20 to maintain this at last year's level. This recognises extra costs of providing services in those communities.

In addition, I am committing up to £20 million to maintain the New Homes Bonus baseline at 0.4% in 2019-20 – to ensure we continue to reward councils for delivering the homes we need.

There will also be no change to the Council Tax Referendum limits set for local authorities in 2018-19, aside from further flexibility offered on the police precept level.

Authorities will have the flexibility to increase their core Council Tax requirement by up to 3% and can draw, as needed, on the Adult Social Care precept to meet demand for services. But local residents will continue to be protected and be able to approve or veto any excessive rises in a referendum.

Measures that I have agreed with the Home Secretary – to allow Police and Crime Commissioners to increase the police precept to £24 – will also help Police and Crime Commissioners tackle the changing demands they face. Now, I'm also conscious that so-called "negative RSG" remains an issue in certain areas.

Having consulted on options for addressing this, I am pleased to announce that we intend to directly eliminate the £152.9 million "negative RSG" in 2019-20 using foregone business rates.

This will prevent any local authority from being subject to a downward adjustment to their business rates tariffs and top-ups that could act as a disincentive for growth.

So, Mr Speaker, we have been listening and acting on what we hear.

And nowhere is this more than true than when it comes to answering calls from councils, over many years, for more control over the money they raise.

Our plans to increase business rates retention to 75% from 2020 does that and more – giving local authorities powerful incentives to grow their local economies.

Under the current scheme, councils estimate that they will receive around £2.4 billion in business rates growth in 2018-19.

A significant revenue stream on top of the core settlement funding that I'm unveiling today.

It's therefore no wonder that councils are queuing up to get involved in the pilots we've been running to test the new approach.

And I'm delighted to announce that, in 2019-20, 15 new pilots will get underway in:

- Berkshire
- Buckinghamshire
- East Sussex
- Hertfordshire
- Lancashire
- Leicestershire
- Norfolk
- Northamptonshire
- North and West Yorkshire
- North of Tyne
- Solent Authorities
- Somerset
- Staffordshire and Stoke
- West Sussex and
- Worcestershire

We will also be piloting 75% rates retention in London and continuing the existing pilots in devolution deal areas.

I'm also pleased to announce that every authority in England stands to reap the rewards of increased growth in business rates income, which has generated a surplus in the business rates levy account in 2018-19, and we are proposing to distribute £180 million of levy surplus to all councils based on need.

I am aware of a few authorities though who are continuing to undertake significant amount of borrowing for commercial purposes. I share the concerns of CIPFA and others about the risks that these local authorities are exposing themselves and local taxpayers to. We are considering with HM Treasury what further interventions may be required.

We're also launching two further consultations today on reforms to the business rates retention system and the new approach to distributing funding through the Review of Relative Needs and Resources.

There is little doubt that the current funding formula needs fixing – and replacing with a robust, straightforward approach where the link between local circumstances and resources allocated is clear.

And with these consultations, we're making important progress towards this – and a stronger, more sustainable system of local government.

Mr Speaker, 2019 is shaping up to be a big moment for local government, drawing together our plans for a new approach to distributing funding and increased business rates retention, as well as the upcoming Spending Review.

No one knows their local areas like the councils that are at the heart of their communities.

And we're supporting them to harness that vast local knowledge and those networks to, yes, make the best of available resources and increase efficiency – but to also innovate and improve the way that we deliver services.

We're working with local authorities to promote efficiency and using this, we will develop a package of support to help councils become more efficient and get better service outcomes.

We will launch a continuous improvement tool in Spring 2019.

And we're championing authorities who are putting communities at the heart of service delivery.

The smarter use of technology is clearly pivotal to this and has the potential to be genuinely transformative. Which is why the Digital Declaration – launched by my Honourable Friend, the Minister for Local Government– to share and spread best practice in this area is so important.

This is backed by a £7.5 million Local Digital Innovation Fund and I'm delighted to say that the first successful bids were announced last week to kickstart projects, led by councils, to promote service transformation.

Mr Speaker, there is so much excellent, inspiring work that is underway in our local communities and it is right that we get behind it and have faith in the authorities who, day in, day out, always deliver.

This settlement and the extra funding announced in the Budget reaffirm that faith.

Delivering a cash-terms increase of 2.8% and a real-terms increase in spending for local authorities in 2019-20. Delivering extra support for the vulnerable, for quality public services, for our high streets and for local economic growth.

And paving the way for a fairer, more self-sufficient, more resilient future for local government – and a brighter future for the people and places they serve.

And I commend this settlement to the House.