

News story: Support schools to maximise their resources and budgets

Over the course of the 2017/18 academic year, the Department for Education, through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), has piloted using [School Resource Management Advisers \(SRMAs\)](#). We've run the pilot with support from the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL).

Since January, SRMAs have provided impartial, expert business advice to schools and academy trusts. This includes how to make best use of their revenue and capital resources to deliver educational outcomes and contribute to whole-school improvement.

ESFA prioritises those schools/trusts that will benefit the most from this support. SRMAs then work through their financial information to identify ways to improve how they deploy staff or make more effective use of non-staff resources.

SRMAs also consider whether the trust or school uses an integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP) approach and how they carry this out.

So far, the results have been encouraging and SRMAs have been well received by the schools and trusts in the pilot who can see the real value of this service.

We are now in a position where we want to roll this service out more widely. To do this, we will be tendering for:

1. Organisations to manage the supply of SRMAs.
2. An organisation to develop and deliver induction and an accreditation process.

Suppliers of the management and supply contract will undertake activities including:

- identify potential SRMAs to go through an induction and accreditation process
- manage deployment of SRMAs throughout the contract period
- maintain a record of accredited SRMAs throughout the contract period, informing ESFA of any changes
- match SRMAs to monthly ESFA deployment commissions
- manage the contracts and payments to SRMAs or their employers
- liaise with ESFA on progress of SRMAs and any issues that arise during the contract period

SRMAs must have at least 2 years' experience of school business management or financial management. They must have a good understanding of how the school system works. Experience as an accountant, school business professional, or similar role is desirable as is specialist experience in the school sector including, but not limited to, estates management, HR and procurement.

The key activities under the accreditation contract will be to:

- develop and deliver induction sessions for potential SRMAs identified by the winners of the management and supply contract
- develop and deliver a robust accreditation process, testing the candidates' understanding of strategic school finances and the integrated curriculum financial planning (ICFP) approach

ESFA will be tendering for these services over the summer and expects to release the documentation later in July. We will run the tender process through the Bravo e-Procurement tool.

We will only make the tender documentation available through Bravo at the launch of the procurement.

This is an exciting opportunity. If you are interested in bidding, you can register on the [Bravo e-procurement system](#) now in advance of the tender launch.

Press release: UK to host Australia-UK Ministerial talks

The UK Government will host Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop and Australian Minister for Defence Marise Payne in the UK for the 10th Australia-United Kingdom Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN) on Friday 20 July 2018.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson will join their counterparts for discussions of high level foreign policy, defence and security issues between the United Kingdom and Australia. This AUKMIN marks over a decade since the talks began and is a chance for both nations to reflect on the enormous progress made over that time.

Speaking ahead of the talks Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Australia is one of the UK's closest allies and I am delighted to be co-hosting Foreign Minister Bishop and Defence Minister Payne so soon after being appointed as Foreign Secretary. Our relationship with Australia is based on shared history, interests and values, and we have a dynamic modern friendship including a significant exchange of people and goods. The recent commissioning of nine warships from BAE, to be manufactured in Australia, is a sterling example of this relationship in action.

I look forward to our continued work together on global challenges and opportunities – based on our shared respect for the rules-based international system. The fight against extremism and terror, eliminating modern slavery and encouraging global co-operation will be top of the agenda during this tenth AUKMIN. Talks with businesses and government on boosting trade between us when we leave the EU will also be a top priority.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are entering an exciting new era for Britain and Australia with our two nations having one of the strongest relationships in the world. With both our world class Armed Forces respected and present all over the globe, defence is one of the pillars of our deep and enduring relationship.

The £20bn Global Combat Ship deal between BAE Systems and the Australian Government demonstrates how defence and our Armed Forces are not just vital to keeping us safe but also crucial to delivering prosperity, jobs, and keeping our two countries at the height of innovation and advanced manufacturing. I look forward to strengthening our historic defence relationship further this week.

The United Kingdom has a strong and dynamic relationship with Australia underpinned by common values, shared heritage and a closely aligned strategic outlook. Military ties between the two nations are deep and long-standing, including a range of operational and intelligence activities such as joint-operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The recent awarding of a £20 billion contract from the Australian Government to BAE Systems to build nine British Type 26 Global Combat Ships is a demonstration of the relationship between the two countries creating a safer world.

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@Jeremy_Hunt](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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Further information

Government response: UK government calls for investigation over Cameroonian footage of killing of women and children

Commenting on the recent video circulating in Cameroon of men wearing military-style uniforms executing two women and two children, Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the images circulating in Cameroon of the horrific killings of four women and children by perpetrators in military-style clothing, including allegations that those responsible may be members of the Cameroonian armed forces.

I welcome President Biya's decision to open an urgent investigation. Those responsible must face justice for their appalling actions – there is no justification for these actions.

News story: New multi-million pound deal to boost skills across West Midlands

Businesses, young people and adults across the West Midlands are set to benefit from a new skills deal, which could unlock up to £69million, the Education Secretary has announced today (18 July).

The skills deal agreed with the West Midlands Combined Authority will boost digital and technical skills, job opportunities and productivity across the region – supporting more young people and adults into work as well as upskilling and retraining local people of all ages.

The Government will co-fund the new skills deal, alongside employer funding and the West Midlands Combined Authority will invest £20million into this area as set out in their Skills Plan.

The new deal includes:

- Creating hundreds of new apprenticeships at small and medium sized businesses in priority areas, including in construction, automotive and digital sectors – helping increasing job opportunities for all.
- A multi-million investment in local colleges – ensuring they have access to the latest equipment and facilities to teach the skills the region and the country need, including digital, and construction.
- Up to £5million to work with employers to develop a National Retraining Scheme (NRS) pilot to drive adult learning and retraining.
- £1million to boost Edtech and the way it supports adult learners in the West Midlands.
- £1million to improve careers advice for young people, including a new careers hub in the West Midlands.
- Piloting an innovative online portal for businesses to share work experience opportunities with schools.

Some of this country's most acute skills challenges are found within the West Midlands, which the skills deal will aim to address through the new funding and support for the West Midlands economy, driving local growth. This deal builds on the work already underway through the Government's modern Industrial Strategy, which aims to boost productivity and earning power across the country. This includes investing in maths, digital and technical education to help generate well-paid, highly skilled jobs across the country.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

The West Midlands is the engine of our thriving economy, but we want to make sure even more local people have the skills they need to get on in life, while also boosting the region's productivity and technical expertise.

This new skills deal will provide the right investment so that both young people and adults have the chance to learn, upskill, retrain and take advantage of the range of exciting jobs in areas such as construction, cyber security and digital technology.

By supporting apprenticeships in small and medium sized businesses, more people will be able to earn and learn and the focus on digital and technical skills, which are both in high demand, will help people to get the skills they need to get the jobs of tomorrow.

Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street said:

Every time I speak to businesses in West Midlands, the number one issue that keeps getting fed back to me as the barrier for growth is skills. We know best the challenges facing West Midlands businesses and, among the colleges and educational institutions, we know how to tackle them.

This deal means more apprenticeships and more money for adult education, career advice and technical education which is brilliant news for both businesses and young people. But perhaps more importantly, this new way of working with Government means we have new powers and resource to help deliver the right outcomes for the West Midlands and for Government.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Esther McVey said:

As part of this investment we will be introducing new progression coaches so young people can get extra support to guide them when making choices about their future – whether that's choosing to go straight into work, an apprenticeship, further training or education. Enabling them to make the most of the opportunities on offer.

To help boost the region's digital and cyber skills Government will launch a new Local Digital Skills Partnership in the West Midlands bringing together regional businesses, local authorities and educational institutes to tackle the digital skills gap and support the growth of the local economy.

Digital Minister Margot James said:

There should be no digital divide. Every individual and business should have the skills and confidence to make the most of the huge opportunities modern technology brings.

These new schemes will give people from all ages and backgrounds in the West Midlands the chance to improve their digital and cyber skills and play a vital part in helping us build a Britain that is fit for the future.