

Press release: Expert Group launched with £4.6 million investment in EdTech

One of Britain's most successful Paralympians led a discussion on the use of technology in the classroom, and its potential to boost accessibility and inclusion, at the first meeting of a new group of experts set up to look at how to help schools use it effectively.

Today's first meeting of the EdTech Leadership Group builds on the announcement from the innovation foundation Nesta, which has also launched a call-out to EdTech companies today as part of the EdTech Innovation Fund. This is the first step of their £4.6 million funding programme to stimulate industry innovation and support the development of EdTech products.

The programme, part-funded from the Government's £10 million investment in the EdTech Strategy, will build the evidence base to ensure that technology meets the needs of teachers, lecturers, pupils and students. The partnership aims to test and scale EdTech products, both new and existing, that could have a substantial impact to help save teachers time and improve pupil outcomes.

Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation Chris Skidmore, said:

Technology can be one of the single most important elements in any school, college or university and act as a catalyst for those who learn and those who teach.

Today's first meeting of the EdTech Leadership Group has brought together experts in education, technology and research. Baron Holmes is an outstanding person to lead the group and I am sure that his passion, experience and ability will help us maintain the momentum of the EdTech Strategy.

In partnership with Nesta, we are investing £4.6million in helping the sector make the most of those opportunities and I would like EdTech companies to step forward with bold, innovative proposals that will make a real difference to the lives of students and teachers.

Baron Holmes, Chair of the EdTech Leadership Group, said:

I am passionate about the potential of technology; how it can potentially significantly help our educators, improve learning and foster accessibility and inclusion.

I am truly proud to be chairing this EdTech Leadership Group. It

represents a great opportunity to work together to ensure every student and our entire education system can access the benefits that technology can bring.

The EdTech Leadership Group, chaired by Baron Chris Holmes MBE, co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Assistive Technology, met today (3 June) to consider how it can get industry, government and the education sector to work together more effectively. It aims to set this out in a formal pact by the end of 2019.

The group has been established to help deliver the Department for Education's EdTech Strategy, which aims to boost the use of technology in education, providing expert advice and support on initiatives such as 'demonstrator schools and colleges' to showcase best practice and provide training for teachers, lecturers and school leaders.

As part of a day of progress on the EdTech Strategy, Nesta also announced the first phase of their work to help deliver the "EdTech Challenges".

Up to 20 Edtech organisations will receive up to £100,000 to improve, evaluate and grow the reach of digital tools across four of the ten challenge areas announced in the EdTech Strategy:

- Formative assessment
- Essay marking
- Parental engagement
- Timetabling

Joysy John, Director of Education, Nesta said:

Nesta has a long history of supporting technology in education through investments, research and policy.

By working in partnership with the Department for Education we hope to have a greater impact on the education system and the EdTech sector. We aim to improve teaching and learning, bring more efficiencies to schools and colleges, save teacher time, and ultimately improve student outcomes.

The EdTech Strategy – backed by £10 million – aims to transform the use of technology in education to support innovation and raise the bar in schools, colleges and universities across England.

EdTech exports are worth an estimated £170 million to the UK economy, and the strategy will deliver on the Government's ambition for tech firms to work with the education sector and create innovative solutions to 10 key education challenges, including:

- Reduce teachers' marking workload – using technology to cut the time teachers spend preparing and marking homework.

- Boost training opportunities for teachers – looking at how technology can make training more accessible and tailored to individual needs of teachers.
- Identify how anti-cheating software can be improved – setting out more detail on how the Government can help to tackle the problem of essay mills, particularly in universities.
- Promote the use of innovative tech to level the playing field for people with special educational needs and disabilities – identifying the technology that best suits individual needs.