

# New bill gives hospitals power to develop personalised treatment

NHS hospitals will be able to use innovative, personalised medicines for unique cancers and diseases, following the introduction of the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill today (Thursday 13 February).

The bill will also:

- increase the range of professions able to prescribe medicines in low-risk circumstances, reducing unnecessary GP appointments
- introduce new regulations on medical devices, such as pacemakers, breast implants and ultrasound imagers, to ensure patient safety

The new bill means hospitals can use patient tissue and DNA samples to tailor treatments to individual patients when other medicines have failed, or to develop drugs that have a shelf-life of minutes and would otherwise be unavailable to them. This has the potential to streamline access to treatments for patients with rare cancers and brain tumours.

The bill also allows the sector to increase the range of professions able to prescribe medicines in low-risk circumstances, as midwives and paramedics do now with pain relief and physiotherapists with anti-inflammatories. This means the NHS can make the best use of its highly skilled workforce, saving patients' time and reducing unnecessary GP appointments.

There will be safeguards and limits on what medications are eligible. The government will work with the NHS and stakeholders to determine what medicines could be eligible and in what circumstances.

The bill will also allow the government to ensure medical devices are subject to the highest standards of regulation, further boosting patient safety and ensuring the UK leads the way in developing pioneering health technology. With a faster, more flexible system in place, regulators will be able to respond to changes in technology or patient safety concerns as soon as possible.

Companies will need to register medical devices with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), ensuring suppliers follow strict safety checks and enabling tough enforcement action if something goes wrong.

The Health and Social Care Secretary will be given the power to disclose specific information about devices to members of the public and the healthcare system, subject to appropriate safeguards, when there are serious patient safety concerns.

Health Minister Baroness Blackwood said:

I am determined to help everyone who uses our world-leading NHS to access pioneering, cutting-edge treatments as soon as possible.

The new bill will give our most treasured institution further freedom to innovate to improve the lives of countless people and protect patient safety to the highest standards.

It will slash red tape, support uptake of treatments for people with rare diseases and empower those in the NHS who know what's best for their patients to deliver the best quality care.

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## Plans to remove funding for courses with low student numbers

More than 5,000 qualifications which are not being taken by anyone or are being studied by less than 100 students each year may lose government funding, under plans announced by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson.

The proposals set out [today](#) (Thursday 13 February), will make it easier for students to choose the qualifications that are in demand and help them to land great jobs.

The current system is confusing with around 12,000 qualifications on offer to young people at Level 3 and below – including A Level and GCSEs – often with multiple qualifications in the same subject area.

This action is a key part of the government's ambitious plans to transform further education and training, including introducing new T Level qualifications. Alongside world-class A Levels, new T Levels will be the gold standard technical course of choice for young people from 2020.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said

Trying to decide what course will put you on the path to a great career is hard enough, but with over 12,000 qualifications available and many in the same subject – it can feel like a needle in a haystack.

Removing funding for qualifications that have no or low numbers of enrolments will help make sure students have a clearer choice of the qualifications on offer, and ensure they get the skills they need to progress.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of The Association of Colleges said:

Making the qualification landscape easier to navigate for students and employers is crucial for the success of technical education. This will help that, but at the same time I am pleased at the approach being taken which should protect highly-valued but low enrolment qualifications which provide crucial skills, often in smaller sectors of the economy. We also welcome the opportunity for colleges to feed into the process alongside the awarding bodies they work with.

Qualifications including ProQual Level 1 Certificate in Business Administration, OCNLR Level 2 Award in Interior Design and Focus Awards Level 3 Certificate In Personal Training are being considered. These qualifications have no one taking them and other options exist that are more in demand.

This move is the latest step in the [Government's wider review of Post-16 qualifications at Level 3 and below](#), which aims to ensure all qualifications on offer are high-quality, necessary, and support students to progress into employment or further study.

The review builds on work already underway to help level up skills and opportunities across the country, including the introduction of new T Levels, working with employers to create more high-quality apprenticeship opportunities and establishing a network of Institutes of Technology.

The government is seeking views from the education sector on whether any of the 5,000 qualifications on the list should continue to attract public funding from August 2021.

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## [Gülnak and Cape Mathilde report published](#)



Damage to port bow of Gülnak

Our accident investigation report into the bulk carrier Gülnak colliding with

a moored bulk carrier on the River Tees on 18 April 2019, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, the subsequent actions taken and recommendation made: [read more](#).

Damage to port side of Cape Mathilde

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## **CMO for England announces ninth case of novel coronavirus**



One further patient in England has tested positive for novel coronavirus (COVID-19), bringing the total number of cases in the UK to nine.

This virus was passed on in China and the patient has now been transferred to a specialist NHS centre at Guy's and St Thomas' in London.

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## **Six general licences reissued for the**

# control of wild birds

Defra has today (Wednesday 12 February) announced that six general licences for the control of wild birds will be reissued on a temporary basis ahead of new licences coming into force on 1 August 2020.

The [current licences](#) GL26, GL28, GL31, GL34, GL35 and GL36 will be reissued from 1 March to 31 July. No action is required by licence users, beyond the ongoing requirement to act in accordance with the licence conditions.

Defra announced a longer-term review of general licensing in June 2019 which has made significant progress. An online survey to gather key information from stakeholders closed on 5 December 2019, receiving over 4,400 responses from organisations, licence users and other stakeholders. A series of consultation workshops with stakeholders have also been held.

The reissue of licences is necessary to complete the required analysis of evidence, both from scientific sources and from the online survey, and to hold further stakeholder workshops so that longer-term licensing arrangements are informed by the best available evidence. As part of the process, Defra will also consider Natural England's statutory advice.

Defra intends to publish new licences in early July to allow user groups to become acquainted with the changes before they officially come into force on 1 August.

Environment Secretary, Theresa Villiers said:

We are working intensively on delivering a robust licensing system for the future which balances the different interests at stake in a fair way. To do that, we need to ensure that we have carefully considered all of the relevant evidence, including the detailed responses to our online survey.

This extensive consultation and review process will be completed in the coming months, with the new licences coming into force on 1 August.

The general licences allow users to kill or take certain species of wild birds for a range of purposes such as the protection of livestock and crops, conservation, or public health and safety.

Following a legal challenge by Wild Justice in April 2019, Natural England revoked three general licences and subsequently issued three licences (GL26, GL28 and GL31) to cover some of the species and purposes covered by the original licences that were revoked. Defra subsequently issued three interim licences (GL34, 35 and 36) while the longer term licensing requirements were reviewed. NE's licences have remained in place, since they allow for specified activity on European protected sites which are not covered by

Defra's licences. These interim licences expire on 29 February.

### **Further Information:**

The six general licences are:

- Carrion crows: licence to kill or take them to prevent serious damage to livestock (GL26)
- Canada geese: licence to kill or take them for public health and safety (GL28)
- Woodpigeons: licence to kill or take them to prevent serious damage to crops (GL31)
- Licence to kill or take wild birds to conserve wild birds and to conserve flora and fauna (GL34)
- Licence to kill or take wild birds to preserve public health or public safety (GL35)
- Licence to kill or take wild birds to prevent serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, fisheries or inland waters (GL36)

Licence users seeking to kill or take wild birds on or within 300 metres of a European site, and which General Licences 26, 28 or 31 do not permit, must continue to apply for individual licences from Natural England. [You can view the areas excluded from the General Licences here.](#)

[Read guidance on applying for an individual licence here](#)