

# Press release: High quality evidence helps government deliver better public services

The government-funded network, which is made up of 10 independent What Works Centres, was created to improve the use and generation of robust evidence in policy areas such as health, education and policing.

The progress report, released today to mark the network's fifth anniversary, highlights how public funds and resources have been allocated more effectively, thanks to evidence provided by independent researchers in the government-backed What Works Centres.

For example, research from the Early Intervention Foundation showed the impact of parent conflict on children's long-term outcomes. This research informed the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions to invest £30 million in interventions designed to resolve parent conflict in families with the most disadvantaged children.

By translating complex evidence into practical and useable tools, the What Works Centres help public sector decision-makers deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.

David Lidington, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Elizabeth Truss, Chief Secretary to the Treasury said:

This government is committed to delivering public services that work for the ordinary citizen. Services delivered by schools, hospitals, GP practices, residential care homes, and police forces have all been enhanced by the findings of the What Works network.

The UK is now seen as a world-leader in the application of evidence in policy and practice and that is largely due to the increasing profile of the What Works Centres.

Dr David Halpern, What Works National Adviser said:

At the request of the Cabinet Secretary and Prime Minister, it has been a great honour to champion this agenda these last five years. Answering the question 'What works?' is hard work, but often a game changer. We've been asking this question in medicine for 50 years, and it's saved countless lives. Now we're asking it in schools, policing and economic growth policies, and its impact is proving equally large.

Megan Dixon, Director of Literacy, Aspire Educational Trust said:

The research that the EEF [Education Endowment Foundation] does helps us make really effective decisions about what to focus on in schools. It is great to have independent, robust research to consider when you are thinking about adopting a new approach.

Sir Jeremy Heywood, Head of the Civil Service said:

What Works' is a quietly radical agenda that is materially increasing the supply of evidence available to decision-makers. I am delighted to see that the public sector is embracing it.

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## [News story: Home Office proposes changes to passport application fees](#)

The Home Office has outlined plans to introduce different passport fees for online and postal applications as part of its push to increase the use of online services and its ambition to create a self-sustainable immigration and borders system.

The proposals, which remain subject to Parliamentary approval, would mean the money collected through fees will contribute to the cost of processing British passport holders as they travel in and out of the country, shifting the burden for paying for these services away from the taxpayer – millions of whom do not currently hold passports. These reforms are part of plans by the Home Office to invest £100 million on border security and infrastructure next year.

This forms part of the ongoing work to modernise and further strengthen the security of the border. British passport holders already receive a world-class customer experience at the UK Border with 76% of eligible passengers now using ePassport gates which had a record 46.2 million passenger crossings in 2017. And in total 250 million people travel across the UK Border each year and this number is increasing, helping to grow our economy.

In addition, as is currently the case, the fee will pay for the costs associated with issuing UK passports and for consular support provided to British nationals abroad.

As well as ensuring that the process of getting a passport is funded by those who use them, the proposals reflect the differing amounts it costs to process online and postal applications. Her Majesty's Passport Office is continually

developing its online application services, with everyone over the age of 16 now able to renew their passport using the latest online system where applicants can upload their passport photograph digitally.

Under the plans, online applications, which are available to all UK-based applicants, will increase in line with inflation, taking the total from £72.50 to £75.50 for adults and £49 for children. Postal applications will increase by £12.50 to £85 for adults and £58.50 for children, reflecting the increased costs of processing postal applications compared to online applications. Adults choosing to apply online would still be paying less than they would have in 2009, with passport fees having decreased in 2012.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

The passport is an invaluable document that allows millions of British people to travel around the world for business and pleasure.

Our priority is to ensure that UK travellers have a secure, effective, and efficient service from the point of application to the time they pass through the UK border and it is only right that we should look at this whole process when setting our fees.

These proposals will ensure that those people who don't travel abroad are not footing the bill for those who do.

The changes are fully supported by the fee-setting powers that were brought in by the Immigration Act 2016 and if they are approved by Parliament, they will come into force on 27 March 2018.

The proposals are unrelated to the announcement that the colour of the UK passport will be changing in 2019, which will be delivered at no additional cost.

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## **[News story: Assessing the impact of medical technologies: apply for funding](#)**

Ultrasound machine in a laboratory.

The [Office for Life Sciences](#), in partnership with Innovate UK, has up to £1 million to invest in projects that help developers of innovative medicines, medical devices, diagnostics and digital technologies to evaluate their

products in a clinical setting.

This competition will allow small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to generate evidence that the products they are developing can meet the priorities of the NHS.

## **The life sciences sector**

Life sciences is one of the most important sectors of the UK economy. More than 5,000 businesses employ around 235,000 people and generate £63.5 billion in turnover.

Over 95% of businesses working in the sector are small. They often find it difficult to generate sufficient evidence to get their products adopted.

## **In line with NHS priorities**

Projects can range from smaller ones looking at the feasibility of collecting data to larger ones that support the actual collection of data.

They must be carried out in the NHS and show how they will impact NHS priorities. This includes to:

- reduce cancellations or unnecessary appointments in primary and secondary care
- reduce the burden on accident and emergency services, for example, by diverting footfall
- improve patient safety and avoid patient harm
- speed up diagnosis, such as improving the scope of lower cost diagnostic imaging
- enable earlier diagnosis of cancer
- support the management of long-term conditions, such as diabetes, chronic pain management, cardiovascular disease, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

## **Competition information**

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is at midday 21 March 2018
  - projects must be led by an SME working alone or with partners, but only the lead business can apply for funding
  - we expect projects to range in size between £50,000 and £250,000 and to last up to 10 months
  - businesses could attract up to 50% of their costs
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# Press release: UK puts forward Jodrell Bank Observatory as 2019 World Heritage nomination

Jodrell Bank Observatory has been chosen as the UK's nomination for World Heritage site status in 2019, Heritage Minister Michael Ellis announced today.

The Observatory, part of the University of Manchester, is home to the Grade I Listed Lovell Telescope and is a site of global importance in the history of radio astronomy.

Founded in 1945, it is the earliest radio astronomy observatory in the world still in existence and pioneered the exploration of the universe using radio waves.

The UK currently has 31 World Heritage Sites, with The Lake District having been inscribed in 2017.

In order to be inscribed as a World Heritage Site, nominations must show that they possess Outstanding Universal Value, which transcends borders.

The nomination will now be formally assessed by the International Council of Sites and Monuments before the World Heritage Committee decides whether it will join the likes of The Great Barrier Reef, the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China as a designated World Heritage Site.

Jodrell Bank is the only site in the world that includes evidence of every stage of the post-1945 development of radio astronomy. As well as the Lovell Telescope, it also includes the Grade I Listed Mark II Telescope and the Park Royal building, which was the control room for the Transit Telescope, whose detection of radio waves from the Andromeda Galaxy confirmed that the Universe extends beyond our own galaxy.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

“Jodrell Bank played a central role in transforming our understanding of the Universe and is therefore a site of global importance.

“The nomination process for UNESCO is rightly thorough but I believe Jodrell Bank deserves to be recognised.

“The diverse heritage of the UK is world renowned and the observatory would be a worthy addition to our list of World Heritage Sites.”

Professor Teresa Anderson, Director of Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre said:

“The Jodrell Bank Observatory, and Lovell Telescope in particular, have become icons of science and engineering around the world and we're delighted

to reach this milestone. We have been preparing the case for nomination for inclusion of Jodrell Bank on the World Heritage list for several years now and we look forward to showcasing its rich scientific heritage on the international stage.”

Professor Tim O’Brien, Associate Director of the Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics, said:

“Jodrell Bank really is an iconic site and institution, not just here in the northwest of England but to people around the world.

“It is the one remaining site, worldwide which has been a working observatory from the very first days of radio astronomy to the present day. It’s important that we protect its rich heritage as we celebrate its current and future work.”

Last year the Government announced it will award £4 million to Jodrell Bank to help fund its new interpretation centre project, promoting the historically significant scientific work.

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## [News story: The SME spend target must go on](#)

As shown in the latest figures from 2015/16, over £12bn worth of central government work was delivered by SMEs in that year, and there’s effort underway to ensure this figure continues to rise:

### **Regular webinars**

Introducing small business owners to platforms such as [Contracts Finder](#), services like [Mystery Shopper](#), and buyers who set out the type of products and services they’re after. In the space of 30 minutes, with a conversation accessible from anywhere, these online events connect SMEs with the people in government who are working to make it easier for small firms to win work.

### **Meet the Buyer events**

Face to face meet the buyer events are on the rise with cross departmental events, the popular and annual [NDA supplier show](#), and sector focused innovation and buying exchanges such as [Defence Contracts Online](#) and [Transport Systems Catapult](#). We are looking to collate these events on a single page so SMEs have one point of access to find out what’s happening in their sector/locality.

### **Advice and guidance for SMEs**

A free [selling to the public sector guide](#) offers top tips and testimonials

from entrepreneurs who've been there and done it, in addition to [4 videos featuring advice and guidance for SMEs](#), from SMEs, wanting to work with government.

## **SME Panel**

A passionate group of entrepreneurs, in the form of an [SME Panel](#), meets regularly to work on solutions to bring down the greatest barriers to SMEs winning work. And their counterparts in government, the SME Champions, meets to discuss how terms and conditions in contracts can be simplified, payment be prompt, and upcoming contracts communicated to a small business audience

This work reflects a commitment from within government, and from willing entrepreneurs, to work towards government's aspiration of spending £1 in every £3 with SMEs is met by 2022.

There's always more that can be done. That's why in 2018 a key area of focus for the SME team will be in matching government's largest strategic suppliers with small businesses, to jointly fulfil government contracts. We do not want to see the problems that have afflicted SMEs in the Carillion supply chain – far from it. But what we do want to see is greater cooperation between big and small to sort payment terms down the supply chain, and to jointly innovate to deliver the best deal for the taxpayer.

The case of Carillion isn't a warning against outsourcing; it's an opportunity to build stronger relationships in the delivery of public services; between government and auditors, large companies and their suppliers, and SMEs direct with buying departments. The benefits of this will be felt by all.

Emma Jones is [SME Crown Representative](#) for Crown Commercial Service.