

UK to launch new research agency to support high risk, high reward science

- UK government will launch the Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA), a new independent research body to fund high-risk, high-reward scientific research
- ARIA will be led by prominent, world-leading scientists who will be given the freedom to identify and fund transformational science and technology at speed
- the new agency will help to cement the UK's position as a global science superpower, while shaping the country's efforts to build back better through innovation

The UK's next generation of pioneering inventors will be backed by a new independent scientific research agency, the Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng has announced today (Friday 19 February), as part of government plans to cement the UK's position as a global science superpower.

The new agency, the Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA), will be tasked with funding high-risk research that offers the chance of high rewards, supporting ground-breaking discoveries that could transform people's lives for the better.

The UK has a long and proud history of inventing that dates back centuries – from Ada Lovelace and Alan Turing who pioneered early predecessors of the computer, Thomas Newcomen and James Watt who transformed travel by creating steam engines, William Grove who created fuel cells and Frank Partridge who helped save millions of lives by developing the first portable defibrillator.

The creation of ARIA will continue this tradition, backed by £800 million, to fund the most inspiring inventors to turn their transformational ideas into new technologies, discoveries, products and services – helping to maintain the UK's position as a global science superpower.

The new agency will be independent of government and led by some of the world's most visionary researchers who will be empowered to use their knowledge and expertise to identify and back the most ambitious, cutting-edge areas of research and technology – helping to create highly skilled jobs across the country. It will be able to do so with flexibility and speed by looking at how to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and experimenting with different funding models.

ARIA will be based on models that have proved successful in other countries, in particular the influential US Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) model. This was instrumental in creating transformational technologies such as the internet and GPS, changing the way people live and work, while increasing productivity and growth. More recently, ARPA's successor, DARPA, was a vital pre-pandemic funder of mRNA vaccines and antibody therapies, leading to critical COVID therapies.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

From the steam engine to the latest artificial intelligence technologies, the UK is steeped in scientific discovery. Today's set of challenges – whether disease outbreaks or climate change – need bold, ambitious and innovative solutions.

Led independently by our most exceptional scientists, this new agency will focus on identifying and funding the most cutting-edge research and technology at speed.

By stripping back unnecessary red tape and putting power in the hands of our innovators, the agency will be given the freedom to drive forward the technologies of tomorrow, as we continue to build back better through innovation.

Central to the agency will be its ability to deliver funding to the UK's most pioneering researchers flexibly and at speed, in a way that best supports their work and avoids unnecessary bureaucracy. It will experiment with funding models including program grants, seed grants, and prize incentives, and will have the capability to start and stop projects according to their success, redirecting funding where necessary. It will have a much higher tolerance for failure than is normal, recognising that in research the freedom to fail is often also the freedom to succeed.

Science and Innovation Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The UK's scientific community has a proud history of discovery, producing iconic inventors such as Alan Turing whose imagination and creativity changed the world as we know it.

But to rise to the challenges of the 21st century we need to equip our R&D community with a new scientific engine – one that embraces the idea that truly great successes come from taking great leaps into the unknown.

ARIA will unleash our most inspirational scientists and inventors, empowering them with the freedom to drive forward their scientific vision and explore game-changing new ideas at a speed like never before. This will help to create new inventions, technologies and industries that will truly cement the UK's status as a global science superpower.

Legislation to create the new research agency will be introduced to Parliament as soon as parliamentary time allows. The aim is for it to be fully operational by 2022.

Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance said:

The Advanced Research and Invention Agency will build on the UK's world-class scientific research and innovation system. The importance of scientific innovation has never been clearer than over the last year and this new body provides an exciting new funding mechanism for pioneering R&D.

The new body will complement the work of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) while building on the government's ambitious [R&D Roadmap](#) published in July 2020. In November 2020, the Spending Review set out the government's plan to cement the UK's status as a global leader in science and innovation by investing £14.6 billion in R&D in 2021 to 2022, putting the UK on track to reach 2.4% of GDP being spent on R&D across the UK economy by 2027.

A recruitment campaign will begin over the coming weeks to identify a world class interim Chief Executive and Chair to shape the vision, direction and research priorities for the agency.

ARIA will be backed by £800 million of government funding over the course of this Parliament, as set out by the Chancellor Rishi Sunak in the March 2020 Budget.

Matthew Fell, CBI UK Chief Policy Director said:

ARIA will create new opportunities for high-risk, high-reward research. As world leaders in R&D and home to the brightest and best scientists, the UK has a unique opportunity to play to its strength with this new agency, to help create jobs, raise productivity and tackle the biggest challenges facing our country such as net-zero. Key to ARIA's success will be strong business engagement to make sure the brilliant ideas developed can make it through to market.

This a prime chance for business, government and the research and innovation community to work together and turn ambitions into realities. And coalesce around an shared economic vision for the next decade in which innovation will be at the heart of it. The CBI looks forward to engaging with the government as it looks to develop its proposals further.

Sir Jim McDonald FEng FRSE, President of the Royal Academy of Engineering, said:

We are delighted to see the government deliver on its commitment to a high-risk high-reward funding agency. I hope this ambitious new funding mechanism will help to unlock radical innovation and enable step changes in technology that provides value for our economy and society at large. Engineering is central to an ambitious innovation agency of this kind, forming the bridge between research and innovation to enable technological and commercial breakthroughs.

Previous comments provided as evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee as part of its formal inquiry into the proposition of a new UK research funding agency include:

Universities UK

There is space in the UK's research landscape for a new funding agency that supports high risk, high pay off investment. It should be designed to complement the wider system of funding streams that already exist and should be tied closely to a well-funded university research network.

Royal Society

A UK ARPA could facilitate investments in technologies with radical potential that may not otherwise receive support through existing mechanisms. It is important that this differentiated focus is clearly articulated and understood.

Institute of Physics

The ARPA model's focus on the future would also be a welcome addition to the UK's R&D funding system, scanning the horizon for areas of research and technology development that may not have an obvious immediate market application but that are likely to benefit the industries of tomorrow, in 10, even 20 years' time.

[New campaign to support vaccine roll-out backed by social media companies and British institutions](#)

- Range of frames and GIFs with designs featuring the NHS, the Premier League, the Beano and Charlie Mackesy
- Images are available across the UK and allow users to show "I've had my vaccine" or pledge "I'll get my vaccine"

British institutions the Premier League and the Beano, much loved author, artist and illustrator Charlie Mackesy, and social media platforms Facebook and Instagram are backing a new nationwide social media campaign launched by government and the NHS for people to show their support for the vaccine roll-

out.

The new initiative allows users to update their profiles with a range of specially designed profile frames and graphics. People can use these to show “I’ve had my vaccine” or make a pledge that “I will get my vaccine” when their time comes. Famous faces including iconic British designer Zandra Rhodes and actor Brian Blessed are among those set to join in with the campaign.

During the pandemic social media has been a vital tool for people to connect and share updates with their loved ones. The new collection of graphics will allow people to celebrate getting the vaccine with their family, friends and followers and say thank you to the hard work of our NHS heroes.

The designs launched today include artwork featuring the NHS, the Premier League, British favourite the Beano and beloved author, artist and illustrator Charlie Mackesy, who have all helped create images for those that wish to show their support for the vaccine roll-out.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It’s truly remarkable how quickly we are meeting our vaccine roll-out targets and so protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities. The pace and progress of the roll-out is testament to the way such a huge team has pulled together to support each other through this pandemic, and the tremendous national effort of our NHS workers, volunteers, local partners and the armed forces.

We know people are turning to social media more than ever to stay in touch with family and friends. These new graphics will make it easy for people to share their support for the job and thank the NHS – whether that’s to mark the pivotal moment that they get their vaccine, or pledge to get it when it’s their turn.

It’s been inspiring to hear the stories of people getting their jab across all 4 corners of the UK and it’s vital we keep up this momentum.

The range of new Facebook frames and Instagram GIFs will be ready to use on social media from today (19 February) and will also be available in 13 languages from Monday so that people from communities all across the UK can support the campaign. The campaign aims to reach tens of millions of people across the UK as the roll-out continues over the next few months. These will be the first in a series of graphics created for a range of platforms that will launch over the coming months.

The roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine is the largest medical deployment in UK history. Over 16 million people have now received their first dose of the vaccine across the UK, and this week people in priority groups 5 and 6 started to receive their jabs as the roll-out expands further.

NHS England's primary care director and London GP Nikki Kanani said:

I've seen first-hand the enthusiasm for being protected when vaccinating people against coronavirus, and it's great people have a new way of showing support for the roll-out online – it's vital everyone is confident to have the vaccine when it is their turn to do so.

Vaccines are safe, simple and effective, and word of mouth is a great way of communicating that message so that our friends, family and loved ones are encouraged to take up the jab.

Premier League Chief Executive Richard Masters said:

Throughout the pandemic, Premier League clubs and players have been proud to provide a wide range of support to local communities, the NHS and other frontline workers – from direct financial contributions to providing facilities for medical use and helping vulnerable members of society. We are pleased to be able to extend this support and help promote important messaging around the vaccine programme.

Charlie Mackesy said:

The vaccination programme has brought hope to many, and I'm happy to help people mark the moment they get the vaccine and give thanks to our wonderful NHS.

As well as promoting the new campaign, Facebook and Instagram have worked closely with the NHS and government throughout the pandemic to help direct people to accurate information and advice, and to do more to identify and take action to remove incorrect claims about the virus.

Nicola Mendelsohn, Facebook Vice President for Europe, Middle East and Africa, said:

We've been supporting the NHS and the UK government throughout the pandemic by directing over 10 million people to their websites and sharing vital information within our Facebook COVID-19 Hub. We're promoting these unique profile frames and GIFs to all UK Facebook and Instagram users to raise vital vaccine confidence and we're giving free advertising credits to the NHS so they can reach the public with their campaign.

I got my vaccine this week and feel grateful to the NHS for all their hard work so I want to show my support in whatever way I can. It only takes a minute to change your profile picture – why not

give it a go today!

The UK's vaccination programme will be extended to more groups in the coming months, with the government aiming to offer the vaccine to everyone over 50 by May, and all adults by September.

Background information

[Find out more about the COVID-19 vaccine](#)

The Facebook frames and GIPHY stickers will be available in English from Friday 19 February and in all UK language variations from Monday 22 February.

Last week, the government and NHS published a new plan setting out the work we are doing in partnership with communities at a national and local level to increase vaccine uptake and ensure equity of access. Building on work already underway to reach more hesitant audiences, which includes translating vaccine resources into over 13 languages, the plan aims to raise awareness of how the NHS is making vaccination accessible to all, especially ethnic minorities, homeless people, asylum seekers and those with disabilities.

How-to guide to using Facebook frames and Instagram GIFs

Facebook frame: desktop

To add one of the COVID-19 vaccine frames to your profile picture:

1. Go to www.facebook.com/profilepicframes
2. Search for the 'NHS Covid Vaccine' frames and select the one you want to use
3. Click 'Use as Profile Picture' in the bottom right of the screen to save

Facebook frame: in-app

To add one of the COVID-19 vaccine frames to your profile picture:

1. Open your profile in the Facebook app
2. Click your profile picture
3. Click 'Add frame'
4. Search for the 'NHS Covid Vaccine' frames and select the one you want to use
5. Click 'Use as Profile Picture' to save

Instagram GIPHY

To use one of the COVID-19 vaccine instagram stickers (from GIPHY) on your Instagram story:

1. Open instagram and add to your story – take a new picture or use a photograph or video of your choosing

2. From your Instagram story, tap the 'add media' button, or swipe up to add Stickers from GIPHY
 3. In the search bar, use the search term 'NHS Covid Vaccine' and select a sticker of your choosing (scroll through the options to find the one you want to use)
 4. Position this on your story image or video
 5. Use the hashtag #CovidVaccine if you wish, then post
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[Unregulated accommodation banned for vulnerable children under 16](#)

A ban on placing vulnerable children under the age of 16 in unregulated accommodation will come into force in September, the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has announced, as part of a series of reforms to drive up standards in children's social care.

Children in care under 16 will no longer be allowed to be accommodated in unregulated independent or semi-independent placements, helping to ensure the most vulnerable are cared for in settings that best meet their needs. Regulations have been laid in Parliament today, Friday 19 February, for the ban to come into force in September, as part of the Government's response to its consultation [last year](#) aimed at ensuring the highest quality provision for all children and young people in care.

Published today, the Department for Education's response to the [consultation](#) makes clear that while independent and semi-independent provision can be the right option for some older children where it is high quality and meets their needs, children aged under 16 are too young for this type of accommodation – which is intended to facilitate supported living for older children developing their independence before they leave the care system.

In his response, the Education Secretary has also announced that plans will be developed to support local authorities in creating more places in children's homes, backed by additional investment, building on the £24 million announced at the Spending Review and recognising that there are pressures on some local authorities to find the right placement for a child.

He also confirmed that he will be moving forward with plans for legislating at the earliest opportunity to give Ofsted new powers to take enforcement action against illegal unregistered providers, who should be registered as children's homes but are operating without the correct registration in place. This will enable Ofsted to take quicker action to register or close down these homes, building on their existing powers to prosecute providers operating without the correct registration and strengthening the options available to them.

The Government will also introduce national standards for unregulated settings that are accommodating 16 and 17-year-old children in care and care leavers, to raise the bar for the quality of this provision and ensure consistency across the country. The Department for Education will shortly launch a consultation on the new national standards, so that as more older children come into the care system, a high quality option is available where they can receive the support they need to prepare for adult life.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Vulnerable children under 16 are too young for the type of accommodation that provides a place to stay but not the care and support that they need. The action taken today – supported by the sector and in response to their views – is an important step in making sure children in care are placed in settings that give them the highest chances of success.

We know that for some older young people, independent or semi-independent accommodation can be right in helping them transition to adult life – but these settings need to be consistently high quality. We cannot be complacent about the standards we expect to be met for children in our care.

Our consultation response sets out the urgent steps we are taking to raise the bar for these children, which alongside the independent review of children's social care, will level up outcomes for those most in need.

Mike Thiedke, Depaul UK CEO said:

Children's homes are the right place for many looked after children and I am glad that the Government intends to work with local authorities to open more. Some 16 and 17 year olds want to live in places where they have more independence – specialist young people's supported accommodation can be the best option for these young people.

Depaul UK provides this type of accommodation. We already have close local authority oversight and extensive internal policies and procedures to ensure we provide safe, supportive accommodation, and we believe other providers should operate with these controls in place to protect young people. I support today's announcement that national standards will be introduced with new powers for Ofsted.

Depaul will continue to work with the Department for Education to do our utmost so that young people living in appropriate accommodation can look forward to a bright future.

[Statistics](#) show that across the year 2018-19 there were 660 looked after

children placed in independent or in semi-independent living accommodation who were under the age of 16 when their placement started. This is 5% of looked after children in these settings during 2018-19. New data published today shows the characteristics and placements in independent or semi-independent living accommodation for looked after children under the age of 16 in England.

The Government's drive to raise standards and level up opportunities for the most vulnerable in society sits alongside an investment of almost £4.4 million to extend Covid-19 response programmes run by major children's charities aimed at reaching 'hidden' children who may face neglect or exploitation, especially while they spend more time at home. It adds to plans to create a National Centre for Family Hubs that will improve families' access to vital services across the country, and the confirmation from November's Spending Review of an additional £24 million investment in 2021-22 to expand capacity within secure children's homes, as well as £165 million funding for the Government's [Troubled Families programme](#).

The response to the consultation on unregulated provision builds on a campaign of improvement across children's social care, including last month's launch of the wide-ranging and independent [review into children's social care](#). The review is being led by independent chair Josh MacAlister and will look at improving outcomes for children that have experienced the care system.

Statement by the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America

"The Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the U.S. Secretary of State held a virtual meeting, for the second time in this format since Secretary Blinken took office, to discuss Iran and other pressing issues. They reaffirmed the centrality of the transatlantic partnership in dealing with the security, climate, economic, health and other challenges the world faces.

"Regarding Iran, the E3 and the United States expressed their shared fundamental security interest in upholding the nuclear non-proliferation regime and ensuring that Iran can never develop a nuclear weapon. In this context, the conclusion of the JCPOA was a key achievement of multilateral diplomacy. The E3 welcomed the United States' stated intention to return to diplomacy with Iran as well as the resumption of a confident and in-depth dialogue between the E3 and the United States. The Ministers affirmed strong interest in continuing their consultations and coordination, including with

China and Russia, on this key security issue, recognizing the role of the High Representative of the European Union as Coordinator of the Joint Commission.

“The E3 and the United States affirmed their shared objective of Iran’s return to full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA. Secretary Blinken reiterated that, as President Biden has said, if Iran comes back into strict compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA, the United States will do the same and is prepared to engage in discussions with Iran toward that end.

“In this context, the E3 and the United States called on Iran not to take any additional steps, in particular with respect to the suspension of the Additional Protocol and to any limitations on IAEA verification activities in Iran. The E3 and the United States are united in underlining the dangerous nature of a decision to limit IAEA access, and urge Iran to consider the consequences of such grave action, particularly at this time of renewed diplomatic opportunity. They reiterated their full support for the professional and impartial role of the IAEA and its Director General and their efforts to implement the necessary verification and monitoring of Iran’s nuclear commitments under the JCPOA.

“The E3 and the United States also expressed their shared concerns over Iran’s recent actions to produce both uranium enriched up to 20% and uranium metal. These activities have no credible civil justification. Uranium metal production is a key step in the development of a nuclear weapon.

“The E3 welcomed the prospect of a U.S. and Iranian return to compliance with the JCPOA. The E3 and the United States affirmed their determination to then strengthen the JCPOA and, together with regional parties and the wider international community, address broader security concerns related to Iran’s missile programs and regional activities. The E3 and the United States are committed to working together toward these goals.

“The Ministers also called on Iran to release all our arbitrarily detained nationals and reunite them with their families. They also expressed deep concern about the continuing grave human rights violations in Iran.

“The E3 and the United States look forward to engaging with partners in order to work together toward these key objectives.

“They expressed their joint determination to work toward de-escalating tensions in the Gulf region. They stressed in particular the urgency of ending the war in Yemen, while reaffirming their steadfast commitment to the security of their regional partners. On Yemen, the Ministers agreed to work closely together to support United Nations Special Envoy Griffiths’ efforts to end the war and to address the humanitarian crisis. They expressed concern about the recent Houthi offensive against Marib and strikes against civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, calling upon the Houthis and all Yemeni parties to engage constructively in the political process.

“On Iraq, the Ministers reiterated their condemnation of the February 15

rocket attack in Erbil. They expressed their condolences for the victims, their families, and the Iraqi people and emphasized that attacks on U.S., Coalition and NATO personnel and facilities will not be tolerated. Ministers reiterated their support for the Iraqi Government.

“Discussing the evolving challenge posed by Daesh, ministers re-committed to continuing critical efforts to target and eliminate the Daesh threat in Iraq and Syria, including efforts via the 83-member Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh. They also emphasized the growing importance of coordinating efforts to target the threat posed by Daesh branches and networks worldwide.

“The Ministers agreed to closely coordinate to address the global challenges posed by China, as well as the need for cooperation across a range of issues, including climate change.

“On Myanmar, they condemned the military coup. They called on military leaders to immediately end the state of emergency, restore power to the democratically elected government, refrain from violence, release all those unjustly detained, and respect human rights and the rule of law.

“The Ministers agreed on the importance of further strengthening NATO and ensuring it is positioned to address today’s strategic realities, building on the NATO Reflection Group’s recommendations.

“Ministers agreed that strong international and multilateral cooperation was essential to ending the COVID 19 pandemic and building back better collectively. They reviewed efforts on the global response, including support for rapid deployment of vaccines globally, primarily through the ACT-A/COVAX facility.

“They agreed to work with urgency to address the climate crisis ahead of the 26th UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Glasgow in November. They agreed that significant collective action was needed to implement the Paris Agreement, including keeping a 1.5 degree Celsius temperature rise within reach. They looked forward to the upcoming U.S.-hosted Leaders’ Climate Summit as an important forum for enhanced climate ambition.”

[Surge testing to be deployed in areas around Leeds](#)

Press release

A further targeted area will have additional testing made available to control and suppress the potential spread of a COVID-19 variant.



Working in partnership with the local authority, additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas in Leeds LS8, including parts of Harehills and the area just north of Easterly Road where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Extra testing is being introduced in addition to existing extensive testing. In combination with following the current lockdown rules and remembering '[Hands. Face. Space](#)' advice, it will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus.

Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

People living within this targeted area are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test when offered, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should [book a test in the usual way](#), and those without symptoms should [visit their local authority website](#) for more information.

Published 18 February 2021