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Life Sciences Blueprint to build a strong and healthy future for Britain

A new Blueprint to put innovation at the heart of healthcare delivery was launched by Lord Drayson and Lord Darzi at Imperial College London today.

The Office for Life Sciences (OLS) Blueprint sets out to transform the UK environment for life sciences companies and ensure faster patient access to cutting medicines and technologies. The OLS forms part of the Government's active industrial policy.

Agreed across Government, and with industry, academia and the NHS, key actions include:

- The Government, with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), will introduce an "Innovation Pass", a 3-year initiative that will make selected innovative medicines available on the NHS for a time-limited period. The Pass will be piloted in 2010/2011, with a budget of £25 million; (cf 2.5)
- The NHS Chief Executive will review system levers and incentives, including Payment by Results, to accelerate the uptake of medical technologies; (cf 2.10)
- The Government will reinforce the need for greater emphasis on research and clinical trials in the next NHS Operating Framework; (cf 2.10)
- From 2010, the Society of Biology will begin to accredit undergraduate bioscience degrees to help ensure that graduates leave with the core mathematical and practical skills and competencies required by employers; (cf 3.5)
- The Government will support the formation of a UK Life Sciences Super Cluster to co-ordinate work across industry, Higher Education and the NHS, and boost international recognition of UK life sciences; (cf 3.9)
- The Technology Strategy Board (TSB) will launch an £18 million "RegenMed" programme of investment to support commercial R&D with additional funds from the Medical Research Council, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. The TSB has also committed to improve its expertise in the life sciences. (cf 4.8)
- The Government will invest an extra £1 million to promote the UK and NHS brands at flagship life sciences events in the UK and overseas.

Lord Drayson, Minister for Science & Innovation, said:

"The UK life sciences have everything going for them: world-class facilities, talented scientists and entrepreneurial flair. By championing innovation, the NHS can support the life sciences industry in developing ways to improve people's health. And we are changing how industry, academia, Government and the NHS work together to create jobs and ensure a bright future for this country."

Lord Darzi, Health Minister for Quality and Innovation, said:

"By placing innovation at the heart of healthcare delivery we will help create a pioneering NHS, one that responds to patients' expectations, and one where the adoption of new ideas and the diffusion of innovation is encouraged and supported."

"Establishing a culture of innovation is also essential for the NHS to meet any current economic challenges, and the Life Sciences Blueprint will help us continue to support this country's knowledge industries and ensure that we benefit from the competitive edge which they provide."

Andrew Dillon, Chief Executive of NICE, said:

"Securing a successful future for the life sciences industries is important for patients and the UK economy. NICE is committed to engaging constructively with companies and we are extending the access that companies have to us, as we appraise their products. The Innovation Pass is an opportunity for data to be gathered on potentially important new treatments. NICE has been involved in discussions about the Innovation Pass, and we are looking forward to continuing to play a key role in developing the Pass."

The Blueprint forms a key part of Building Britain's Future, the Government's vision for the country's future on the other side of the recession. As first set out in "New Industries, New Jobs", the Government is pursuing a new, more active industrial policy to drive growth and create high-value jobs of the future.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Office for Life Sciences, led by Lord Drayson, was created by the Prime Minister on the 27th January 2009. The Office for Life Sciences has worked across Government and with industry, academia and the NHS to develop a package of measures to transform the operating environment for life sciences companies in the UK. The next step will be to develop detailed delivery plans for each action, for publication in the autumn.

2. For more information about the OLS Blueprint, including video coverage of the event, video sound-bites, photos and publications, see <http://www.bis.gov.uk/ols>

3. The Government announced on 29 June the creation of a £1 billion UK Innovation Investment Fund to invest in growing small businesses, start-ups and others, in digital and life sciences, clean technology and advanced manufacturing. (<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/Content/Detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseId=404169&SubjectId=2>)

4. The Government, with NICE, will introduce an "Innovation Pass". This will be a three-year initiative for selected medicines, which will be funded for time-limited use across the NHS, from a new ring-fenced budget, without going through a NICE appraisal. NICE will play a key role in developing and applying eligibility criteria for the Pass. This will give earlier access to innovative drugs for patients with the greatest need. The Pass will be piloted with a budget of £25 million in 2010/2011. The pilot will be developed with input from industry, NICE and the NHS and will be the subject of consultation by November 2009. Funding for future years will also be discussed through the consultation and will then be determined in the context of the next spending review.

5. For further information contact:

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NHS Chief Executive, David Nicholson said:

"I welcome this report and its ambition to create a step-change in innovation in the NHS and beyond."

"The NHS exists to provide high quality healthcare to all. We are focused on driving up quality and reducing costs, linked by innovation, as we believe this approach gives us the best chance of improving services for patients. There is a critical role for industry to play, providing new ideas and products, and working with the NHS to drive innovation. Making the NHS environment attractive to industry is good for patients and good for the economy."

Sir Mark Walport, Director of the Wellcome Trust, said:

"The Wellcome Trust is committed to supporting the translation of research discoveries into new prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease. It is in all our interests that the NHS supports translation and innovation by improved partnerships with industry and the public and charitable research funding sectors. The NHS has an important role to play in the UK's economic recovery by acting as a catalyst for innovation. The OLS blueprint provides some important mechanisms to achieve this important goal."

Andrew Witty, CEO of GlaxoSmithKline, said:

"This Blueprint has the potential to transform the environment for life sciences and positively change how GSK and others in our sector invest in the UK. Deliv the 'patent box', the evolution of NICE and the NHS as catalysts for innovation and the development of world-class life science clusters will be critical to the Blueprint's success. We are committed to working with the Government, industry, academia and the NHS to make this happen and further establish the UK as world leader in life sciences."

Mike Farrar, Chief Executive of the North West Strategic Health Authority, said:

"The life sciences industry has the potential to build on an established track record to be a real driver of innovation, helping the NHS maintain quality of health and improve productivity. The package of measures announced in the Blueprint underlines how the NHS can contribute to a strong partnership with industry delivers real health benefits as well as economic growth."

This package of measures is good news for the NHS. It will provide the opportunities to capitalise on the strengths that the NHS has to offer, whilst recognising it will need to continue to evolve in order to maintain its position as a world class health provider.

High quality patient care is at the heart of a number of the measures, but it also recognises the significant contribution the NHS makes to our economy."

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