



Office for Life Sciences

Office for Life Sciences Bulletin – 4 December 2025



OLS Introduction

The Office for Life Sciences (OLS) is a joint unit between the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC), Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT).

This bulletin aims to keep the life sciences sector up to date on the latest government announcements and wider opportunities in policy areas which may be of interest to the sector.

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News

DSIT/DHSC/DBT – Landmark UK-US pharmaceuticals deal to safeguard medicines access and drive vital investment for UK patients and businesses

NHS patients will benefit from a landmark trade deal between the UK and the US, which will secure and expand access to vital drugs, safeguard our medicines supply chain, and drive crucial investment while supporting UK patients and industries. The deal – part of the UK-US Economic Prosperity Deal – sees the UK become the only country in the world to secure a zero percent tariff on pharmaceuticals to the US - protecting UK-based manufacturing and cementing our place as a world leader for life sciences investment.

DSIT/DHSC – Visionary leader appointed for Health Data Research Service

Baroness Nicola Blackwood has been appointed by the government as Chair of the Health Data Research Service (HDRS). Baroness Blackwood is a recognised leader in life sciences and innovation. She is Chair of Oxford University Innovation and Genomics England and serves on the boards of biotechnology company BioNTech and investment fund RTW Biotech Opportunities. HDRS is backed by up to £600 million funding from the government and Wellcome, to transform how researchers and innovators access the UK's health and care data.

DSIT – Budget backs technology firms to start-up, scale-up and stay in Britain to drive growth and national renewal

Last week's Budget will help deliver a wave of growth powered by science and technology, including a fresh package of backing for entrepreneurs, new support for companies at the cutting-edge of innovation, and AI champions who will help boost adoption of the tech in key growth sectors.

DHSC – Almost every GP now offers online access for patients

Patients at nearly all GP practices (98.7%) in England can now access their surgery online, thanks to government changes allowing patients to submit online consultation requests open during work hours (8am – 6.30pm). A record eight million online requests were submitted by patients in October after the requirement was introduced.

MHRA – MHRA and NICE receive £2 million from Wellcome to improve safety and effectiveness of digital mental health technologies

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have secured a £2 million funding boost from Wellcome to continue its joint work on clearer, more consistent regulation and evaluation of digital mental health technologies. Running to Autumn 2028, the renewed support builds on activities already underway to help people across the UK access safe and effective digital mental health technologies.

MHRA – From Brussels sprouts to mobility scooters: five tips from the MHRA for staying safe and well over the festive period

The MHRA has five top tips to help you stay well through the festive season and beyond, with advice on avoiding fake medicines – including weight loss drugs.

MHRA – Patient and family experiences inform antidepressant safety information review

An Expert Working Group advising the MHRA has completed a detailed review, in consultation with families, patients, and mental health support organisations, on how the potential risks associated with 28 antidepressant medicines are communicated to patients.

MHRA – New MHRA-supported research reveals patterns of vaccine-derived poliovirus spread and implications for global eradication efforts

[A major new study in Nature Microbiology](#) led by Imperial College London and supported by the MHRA has uncovered critical insights into the spread patterns of vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2), offering valuable intelligence to support global efforts to eradicate polio.

MHRA – MHRA approves tisotumab vedotin for the treatment of cervical cancer

The MHRA has this week approved tisotumab vedotin (Tivdak), used for the treatment of adults with cervical cancer that has come back or spread. It is used if the disease worsened after previous anti-cancer treatment.

MHRA – Chris Kessler: How access to innovative rare therapies can transform the lives of children like Charlie

A story of hope, medical innovation, and the impact of effective regulation on access to treatment. Read on to hear Charlie's dad tell his son's story, and how breakthrough medical advances are giving the hope of a happy and healthy life to children.

NHSE – 'Life-changing' AI support helping stroke patients get a second chance

Stroke patients in England are getting life-changing treatment more than an hour earlier thanks to a revolutionary "fast-track" AI tool, a major study has revealed. The landmark analysis published in The Lancet Digital Health shows around 15,000 patients directly benefitted from having their scans reviewed by the tech. The AI tool — now rolled out by the NHS to a network of over 70 hospitals — helps doctors spot deadly clots in minutes, speeding up clinical decision making and helping get patients rushed to specialist stroke centres faster.

NHSE – GPs managed record number of online requests in October

More than 8 million people submitted their GP request online during October 2025, up more than a fifth (21%) on the previous month and up more than two-thirds (68%) on last year. Around 1 in 3 online requests are for non-clinical reasons such as admin requests and repeat prescriptions, meaning people no longer need to call their GP and clog up phone lines for non-urgent requests.

NICE – Changes to NICE's cost-effectiveness thresholds confirmed

The government announced this week that it will increase the thresholds NICE uses in evaluations of new medicines to decide which are cost-effective for use in the NHS. This change, from April 2026, is designed to improve the operating environment for pharmaceutical companies in the UK to maximise the government's commitment to unlock innovation and support the sector.

UKRI – Survey opens on UK animal research facilities and resources

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC) have launched a UK-wide survey seeking views on current and future needs across the UK's animal research facilities and resources. To take part, [share your views via the survey](#) – it is now live and **will close on 19 January 2026**.



Useful Links

- The [Office for Life Sciences](#) homepage provides the latest updates and information on the government's work with the life sciences sector.
- Annual data on the life sciences sector in the UK and beyond can be found [here](#).
- Information around Horizon Europe funding can be found [here](#).
- Guidance for businesses on Brexit can be found [here](#).
- Access the '[Check How to Export Goods](#)' tool for the information you need to export goods out of the UK market.
- If you're a UK business selling goods or services to Europe, you can contact the UK government [export support team](#) by phone or online.
- In England, [Growth Hubs](#) can advise on local and UK Government business support.
- Register for HMRC's free [Trader Support Service](#) if you are moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Click [here](#) to view the latest weekly Trader Support Service (TSS) bulletin.
- The most up-to-date guidance on the Windsor Framework is [here](#), including information on moving goods into, out of, or through Northern Ireland.
- If you need to get in touch with the MHRA, please use the contact details below:
 - Email: MHRACustomerServices@mhra.gov.uk
 - Phone: 0203 080 6000