



Science, Innovation
and Technology
Committee

Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP
Secretary of State
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

By email only

15 June 2026

Subject: Work of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

Dear Liz,

The Committee is pleased to welcome you on 8 July for our next session on the work of the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology. I am writing to seek information and clarification on some topics that are likely to be covered during our session to allow us to make the best use of your and the committee's time.

Online Safety

In March 2026, the committee held an [evidence session](#) to assess the current evidence for and against banning access to social media accounts for children under 16 and submitted conclusions on 29 April [to the Department](#)'s consultation on "Growing up in the online world". We concluded that self-regulation and business models for social media are broken, and government must bring forward strong controls to prevent further harm especially to children and young people. We will be considering the changes announced today by the Prime Minister following the consultation and look forward to hearing the details of those further measures that are yet to be announced on 8 July.

In July, it will be a year since we published our 2025 report on [Social media, misinformation and harmful algorithms](#), which made a series of recommendations aimed at reducing online harms. Thus far, the responses provided to our report have not reassured us that the decisive steps needed to protect the public online are underway.

- The committee recommended legislation to ensure generative AI platforms implement user safeguards, provide risk assessments and curate content transparently. The [Department responded](#) that these platforms are "already



regulated under the OSA in the same way as 'real' content. [In correspondence in January](#), you said that officials have been commissioned to identify any gaps in the Online Safety Act around chatbots. Please update the committee on the findings from this work, as well as how, and when, government will act to ensure all chatbots are covered by effective regulations.

- We also recommended that generative AI services and platforms should be obliged to share internal information with independent researchers studying online safety. Responding, the Department told us that it has powers to create new frameworks for online safety data to be accessible to researchers. Despite reassurance from the tech companies at our [24 March session](#) that their APIs provide some unlicensed content to some researchers, academics submitting evidence to our current inquiry into Neuroscience and digital childhoods continue to call for mandatory access to data for independent researchers. Please provide details on how the Department's powers are being used, including the timeline for the development of data access frameworks.
- In response to our report, the Department said it was "working with partners to investigate the potential for detecting AI-generated content to support transparency". Please update us on the technological solutions identified and how current measures are being used to detect AI-generated content including on social media platforms.
- In response to our recommendation on mandating 'Know Your Customer' checks, the Department also stated that it would "explore options for [these] checks alongside other possible interventions" to foster trust and promote transparency in the online advertising ecosystem. Please provide an update on the interventions identified and how these will be implemented, including a timeframe.

US-UK Pharmaceuticals deal

The government's [December 2025 announcement](#) of the UK-US pharmaceuticals trade deal included adoption of the EQ5D-5L value for estimating Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY). Is the UK limited to using EQ-5D or can it use other methods for evaluating quality of life, including benefits to carer quality of life? Is the UK committed to a specific variant of EQ-5D?

In their letter of [2 April](#), Lord Vallance and former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Social Care, Dr Zubir Ahmed, state that the [UK-](#)



[US Arrangement on Pharmaceuticals Pricing and Tariffs](#) “has been made in the best interests of patients, the UK economy, and our Life Sciences sector”. Can you please provide details about:

- What impact assessment government has made about the benefits to the NHS and patients of this deal, and how the Department will ensure these benefits are realised.
- How, and when, will government publish progress towards its interim targets for spend on medicines as percentage of GDP?
- What will be the composition of the industry-government working group to consult with the design of a new scheme to replace VPAG? How will the government ensure all industry voices are heard, including SMEs and smaller innovative biotechs?
- In this arrangement, government also commits to ensure “rapid and equitable adoption of [those] medicines within its territory”. Can you please explain how is equitable? How is government planning to reduce/remove medicine postcode lotteries in line with this agreement?

Phone theft

In June 2025, we held an [evidence session](#) with the Metropolitan Police, technology experts and representatives from the industry exploring the growing issue of mobile phone theft in the UK and technological solutions that could address this crime. We heard that, in 2025, phone theft cost an estimate of £50 million to members of the public and insurance companies, as well as being linked to violence and serious organised crime. Our conclusion was that technological solutions such as cloud-based blocking or IMEI-linked device locks were possible but that the technology companies were failing to respond to the issue. We are aware of only one company taking any action to make it harder for their devices to be used if stolen. Following the international conference on phone theft hosted by the Metropolitan Police in March, it [called on government to](#) “step in and legislate to protect victims unless mobile phone manufacturers, network providers and technology companies agree to take urgent action.” The Met has since [highlighted the value of data-sharing](#) with tech companies to allow it to track stolen phones.

In light of the seriousness of this crime, and inaction by industry, we ask that you please provide information regarding:



- What, if any, actions the technology companies have committed to take, and any agreed timeline for implementation.
- What, if any, technological solutions or data-sharing arrangements government is considering mandating which would undermine the business model for those committing phone theft crimes at scale.
- Is government considering legislation, and in what timeframe?

Future of funding for UK science and research

Hedging policy and currency fluctuations

On 4 March, the committee held a [one-off evidence session](#) on the future of science and research funding in the UK, in response to concerns about cost pressures faced by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and other bodies. We are concerned that STFC is particularly exposed to currency exchange fluctuations due to its annual subscriptions to international facilities, such as CERN.

[Lord Vallance and Sir Ian Chapman](#) told us that UKRI's hedging policy allows only "forward-buy" contracts with the Bank of England, and that these are only to be used for international subscription payments. The committee remains concerned, however, as the "forward-buy" contracts ensure certainty over costs, but they do not protect against "long-term unfavourable currency movements or potential global economic pressures". Please provide further reassurance regarding:

- Given the extent of government's ability to hedge against currency movements in the longer term, how will the Department ensure the Science and Technology Facilities Council budget is maintained?

Following our work on the future of UK science and research funding, we also wish to understand how UKRI funding allocated to universities from 2027-28, with a portion ringfenced for the purposes of "sustaining current facilities", will be used to improve research infrastructure. We are conscious that universities themselves are legally responsible for much of the UK's research infrastructure assets meaning that there is limited central control over much of the infrastructure required to achieve government's strategic priorities. The [National Audit Office have found that](#), due to financial pressures, universities have not spent the amounts necessary to ensure their research infrastructure is maintained over recent years. Please provide more detail on how the Department will ensure research infrastructure funded from UKRI is improved and maintained cost-effectively.



Sovereign AI Fund

Following publication in May of the Department's [Main Estimate memorandum 2026 to 2027](#) the committee would like to better understand the £150.3 million funding increase for the Digital Economy Unit, mainly driven by increased spend in Sovereign AI. Please provide further details in relation to the following questions:

- How is the Department deciding who gets access to the Sovereign AI funding and access to the supercomputer network?
- Why was Callosum chosen as the Fund's first investment?
- What due diligence is being done to ensure these are the right firms to access public resource?
- What are the priority areas for the Sovereign AI fund? Are these linked across other parts of the Department's targeted investment areas?

Planning policy for data centres

As the use of AI spreads across all sectors, data centres will become essential infrastructures to provide these digital services as well as digital sovereignty. However, they also come with challenges in relation to water and energy consumption. My committee will have significant interest in scrutinising the forthcoming consultation on a new National Policy Statement for data centres. We would therefore be grateful to receive your assurance that sufficient time will be provided for thorough parliamentary scrutiny, including time to fully consider the consultation responses.

Responses to the committee's reports

Thank you for your timely responses to our reports published during the current Parliament. Several responses to recommendations accepted by government, however, do not provide specific dates or timelines for delivery. Lack of clear timelines impedes our ability to assess progress or fulfil our scrutiny function effectively. When providing responses to reports and progress updates to the committee please provide specific timeframes wherever relevant.

In the response to our report, Flying Blind: Innovation, Growth and the Regions, your Department refers to plans to develop more robust monitoring of innovation clusters, expand regional data, refresh the UKRI infrastructure Roadmap, and review the Higher Education Innovation Fund but responses lack specificity on delivery timelines. Please



provide specific implementation timeframes in relation to the following recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: Set out a clear timetable for establishing a national framework for monitoring innovation clusters and publishing data. The government committed in its response only to develop a more “joined-up approach” over the next year.
- Recommendation 7: Clarify how and when it will develop a framework for R&D data and impacting, including regional reports. The government response refers only to improving and refining data through “future annual updates” and ongoing work.
- Recommendation 16: Provide a timeline for improving performance measurement of the Catapult network. The government response indicates changes will be made only “ahead of” the next funding period in April 2028, with no detail on when this work will be implemented.
- Recommendation 19: Publish a long-term strategy for the science infrastructure investment and revise the UKRI roadmap. The government response states that a refreshed roadmap will be published “later in 2026” and is “exploring” a framework, with no clear timeline.
- Recommendation 21: Make clear when the updates on the diffusion and adoption of technologies will be delivered. The government response refers to an update “in the Spring” with no specific date.

I would be grateful if you could provide a response to the matters raised in this letter by **29 June** and in advance of your appearance before the committee on 8 July. I intend to place this letter, and your response, in the public domain.

With best wishes,

Dame Chi Onwurah MP

Chair – Science, Innovation and Technology Committee