Press release

Next-gen therapies for cancer, dementia and more fast-tracked with new facility

New facility based in Darlington to springboard novel RNA therapies – which could help tackle cancer, heart conditions, infectious diseases, and more.

From: **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (/government/organisations/department-for-science-innovation-and-technology)**, **The Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP (/government/people/peter-kyle)** and **Lord Vallance (/government/people/patrick-vallance)**

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- New facility based in Darlington to springboard novel RNA therapies – which could help tackle cancer, heart conditions, infectious diseases, and more
- RNA therapies – fast to design, adaptable and much more precise than traditional drugs – are a gamechanger for our health services, economic potential and pandemics resilience
- £30 million facility to maintain the UK's early lead in RNA science, putting more great ideas on the production line from the labs to the market sooner,

supporting our Plan for Change

A new facility that will springboard new RNA therapies – which could help tackle cancer, heart conditions, and other diseases – will be established in Darlington thanks to £29.6 million government backing announced today (Thursday 28 August).

The UK RNA Biofoundry will help UK scientists and businesses working in this revolutionary area of medicine get their ideas out of the laboratory, and onto the market, sooner – helping to ensure the NHS is built for the future.

mRNA vaccines were pivotal in our Covid-19 response, and now RNA therapies are being put to the test in our NHS for their huge potential to transform our health. They reprogramme immune cells or tumour cells, teaching the body how to shut down illnesses, like certain types of cancer, more effectively.

Adaptable, quicker to develop and much more accurate than traditional medicines, RNA therapies will make sure our health services are ready to take on pandemics, rare conditions and other emerging diseases.

Manufacturing RNA at the clinical grade and scale needed for early trials is costly and complex, and too often, potentially world-leading ideas are shelved before they can prove their worth. The new biofoundry, based in Darlington, will be a unique and specialised facility that will act as a high-tech workshop for manufacturing RNA materials affordably, quickly and to the necessary clinical standard. It will also be able to switch to vaccine production should circumstances require, bolstering our pandemic resilience.

All this will give researchers the best tools to validate their science, attract follow-on investment, and scale production – bringing effective new treatments to patients faster.

Harnessing this technology will be critical to the government's Plan for Change (https://www.gov.uk/missions) and modern Industrial Strategy (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy), with its vast potential to attract international investment into the UK, drive growth, and overhaul healthcare.

Science Minister Lord Vallance said:

> "RNA therapies are a new frontier in healthcare. With their ability to reprogramme our cells, and adapt to different diseases, they could be the answer to many treatments the British public are desperately in need of, tackling cancers, infectious diseases and more.
>
> "This new biofoundry will accelerate the journey RNA therapies take from labs to the markets, to give our innovators the best opportunities to turn their great ideas into the lifesaving treatments for our NHS patients, and faster.
>
> "It is a huge step forwards in delivering our Life Science Sector Plan, and will help us attract further backing for high-value British manufacturing that will drive growth in all parts of the country, including the North-East."

Health Minister, Stephen Kinnock, said:

> "This investment is exactly the kind of approach that will pull our health service into the 21st century.
>
> "RNA therapies hold extraordinary promise for patients battling some of our most devastating diseases – from cancer to cardiovascular conditions that claim far too many lives each year.
>
> "Our Plan for Change is turbocharging the development of life-changing treatments right here in the UK, as we deliver an NHS which is truly fit for the future."

The biofoundry is a significant and early step in the delivery of the recently published Life Sciences Sector Plan (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/life-sciences-sector-plan), demonstrating commitment to invest at scale in life sciences manufacturing innovation. The sector plan also sets out broader steps the government is taking to help the UK's health innovators make the jump from lab to marketplace, including reforms to slash clinical trial setup times to under 150 days, moves to streamline regulation, and measures like the NHS 'Innovator Passport' to get innovative new technologies into the health service sooner.

Wider work is also underway to increase access to mRNA therapies for the benefit of NHS patients and the British economy. Our strategic partnership with BioNTech aims to provide up to 10,000 UK patients with personalised cancer immunotherapies by 2030, either in clinical trials or as authorised treatments. Earlier this year, construction of the Moderna Innovation and Technology Centre at Harwell was completed under a 10-year strategic partnership with the UK government, helping UK patients benefit sooner from advances in mRNA science.

Frank Millar, CEO of CPI, said:

> "We're proud to host the biofoundry at our RNA Centre of Excellence in Darlington, building on CPI's proven track record of translating cutting-edge science into real-world health and economic impact. This investment reflects the government's commitment to life sciences manufacturing and positions the North East as a powerhouse for innovation in manufacturing technologies that enable growth in our life sciences sector. We're determined to continue building a more resilient, sustainable, and investable health innovation ecosystem for UK growth and look forward to working in close collaboration with our partners to accelerate the UK's leadership in RNA and biomanufacturing."

Jane Wall, Managing Director of the UK BioIndustry Association, said:

> "RNA technology holds great promise for healthcare and UK economic growth as part of our thriving life sciences industry, with innovative SMEs at its core. By creating the right conditions for growth through infrastructure, investment, and partnerships, we can accelerate the translation of cutting-edge RNA research into new medicines and vaccines for NHS patients and export around the world. Investments such as this are critical to ensure the UK leads the world in innovative approaches to manufacturing and reinforcing the UK's position as a global leader in life sciences."

The UK RNA Biofoundry will be based at CPI's RNA Centre of Excellence in Darlington, building on the skills and expertise already present at the UK's world-leading centre for RNA manufacturing and development. CPI is a not-for-profit translational research and innovation organisation, and a founding member of the UK's High Value Manufacturing Catapult, which accelerates the growth of innovative UK companies.

This effort is enabled by design and manufacturing advances jointly supported by Wellcome Leap, a nonprofit established by Wellcome to drive breakthroughs that benefit human health, and by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), a nonprofit focused on accelerating the development of new medical countermeasures to prevent epidemic threats that are accessible to all people in need.

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