

POLICY STATEMENT

MillionPlus asks on Financial Statement – July 2020

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SUPPORTING PUBLIC SERVICES

1. The impact of Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of our key public services, particularly the need for a robust and resilient NHS. To build on what we have learned, and to ensure the UK is better prepared in the future, the government should use the financial statement to strengthen and enhance education for the public services across England. This can be done by:
 - Supporting students and graduates to become key workers in public services, by [offering a maintenance grant of up to £10k](#) for all students, [removing all recruitment caps](#), investing in [NHS training placements](#), and providing [fee-loan forgiveness](#) for those remaining in the relevant professions for at least 5 years.
 - Creating a new [Public Services in Higher Education Capital Fund](#) to enable universities to invest in simulation equipment and other important infrastructure.
 - Retaining and developing key workers in public services, by [increasing general staffing budgets](#) and creating a [new professional development programme](#) focused on enhancing skills of current public servants and the new NHS volunteer reserve.

INVESTING IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

2. The government's commitment to ensuring the UK is a research and innovation superpower is of huge importance and will mean that the UK is able to compete for talent with other leading OECD countries. To support this aim, and to unlock the talent in small and medium-sized businesses across the country, the government should:
 - Commit to [investing at least 3% of GDP into research and development \(R&D\) in the 2020s](#). This will put the UK on the same footing as competitor countries like Germany and South Korea, and drive forward the government's bold agenda in this area.
 - Ensure the new [UK Shared Prosperity Fund is in place by January 2021](#), providing a vehicle for investment in research and development in regional and rural communities across the UK that have benefited significantly from European R&D funds. This approach will serve as a major contribution to both the recently published R&D roadmap and to the government's crucial levelling up agenda.

INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY AND GROWTH IN REGIONAL ECONOMIES

3. Higher education plays a vital role in a country's economic success, fuelling innovation and knowledge exchange and providing a highly-skilled workforce to enable regional growth. Modern universities are fundamental to this, and have been pioneers in working with employers to develop innovative higher and degree apprenticeships that combine the very best of work and learning.
 - The government should also consider [reforming the student loans system in England to rocket boost re-training and up-skilling opportunities](#). By allowing individuals to [access loans for shorter courses and](#)

modules at Level 4 and Level 5 without an initial commitment to a degree, the government will inspire innovation and unlock unmet demand for these courses that provide employees with the technical and professional skills employers need to grow their businesses. Modern universities are already major players in this provision and they would very quickly be able to increase capacity to support this important reform.

- The government should ensure that the apprenticeship policy in England continues to [place employers at the centre and enable them to partner with universities](#) to ensure these opportunities are available to all, regardless of age, or where they live. Expanding apprenticeship opportunities at all levels will be critical to sustaining a productivity-led recovery.