



Defence and Security
Accelerator

DASA INNOVATION
FOR A
SAFER
FUTURE

Defence and Security Accelerator Strategy 2024-26



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Welcome

Introduction from Anita Friend, Head of DASA



have brought forward their ideas to solve our customers' challenges.

 This vital collaboration between customers and innovators is the cornerstone of our success. 

Welcome to the Defence and Security Accelerator Strategy 2024 -26

I am delighted to present DASA's Strategy for 2024-2026. I am extremely proud of our team's achievements in strengthening national security both at home and abroad. We have been resolutely focussed on helping government, industry and academia to convert developing ideas and technology into strategic advantage over our adversaries and boosting economic growth and in so doing innovating for a safer, more prosperous future. Our thriving network now encompasses more than 20,000 innovators, our forward work programme is robust and we are seeing more successful innovations making real-world impact than ever before. None of this would be possible without our government partners across the national security community that have entrusted us with their challenges. Their guidance, support and funding has shaped our services and enabled us to pursue rapid, exploitable innovation. Equal thanks go to the thousands of innovators up and down the UK and from around the world who

We have developed this strategy against a backdrop of ongoing reviews and reforms. We have therefore deliberately focussed on a two year timeframe, allowing us to assess and incorporate emerging findings from various reviews. During this period we will continue to test and refine new ways of working and then adjust to the outcomes of the reviews for the longer term.

In today's rapidly evolving defence and security landscape, agility and innovation are more critical than ever. DASA has demonstrated its resilience and ability to deliver innovative solutions across defence and security aligned with our customer's needs. Whether you are an innovator, a Government Official, a member of our Armed Forces, Police or Emergency Services, DASA stands ready to work with you in our shared mission of keeping our Nation and our people safe.



1. Executive Summary

In an increasingly contested and volatile world, the need for innovation and rapid adaptation remain critical to Defence and Security. The pace of technological change has never been faster, but significantly, technologies generated in all parts of the private sector and academia - not just within the traditional Defence and Security sector are increasingly relevant and applicable to Defence and Security challenges. DASA is focused on enabling the UK to unlock this growing potential for the benefit of both National Security and UK prosperity.

DASA recognises that a fundamental shift in how Government collaborates with industry and academia is needed if we are to source the most diverse and best range of innovation opportunities for our user community. Historically narrow engagement with the industrial and academic base means that the relevance of innovations to Defence and Security may not be immediately obvious and it is not always clear who needs to be engaged to make them a success.

DASA's Mission remains to 'find and fund exploitable innovations to support UK Defence and Security quickly and effectively, and support UK prosperity'.

DASA is the most effective front door for Defence and Security. Sat at the heart of the largest network of Defence and Security departments, public and private sector innovation hubs, academic institutions, industry partners, innovators and supplier groups, DASA is able to broker between users and solution providers at unmatched pace and to build the mutual understanding and trust needed for successful collaboration.



We understand the need to move beyond transactional relationships and into collaborative partnerships is essential if we are to build a safer, more prosperous future together.

Rather than operating its own fund in the way a more typical commercial accelerator might function, DASA finds and matches innovation in the private sector and academia to National Security challenges and provides tailored support to enable the collaboration needed for innovation to succeed, resulting in impact. This includes brokering relationships between end-users and industry and academia; demystifying what it takes to succeed in innovating and entering into the National Security sector. The wide range of adaptable services ensures defence and security customers access the best innovative ideas, products and services more quickly, and DASA has particularly focused on reaching out widely across the UK, outside the traditional Defence and Security sectors, and connecting to existing networks such as Innovate UK Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN).



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DASA's services extend beyond technology developments to supporting the businesses and organisations behind them. We provide our funded innovators with wrap round services to help maximise the likelihood of commercialisation and exploitation of ideas into capability. Our ability to rapidly supply funding for the collaborative development of ideas is augmented by our business growth services, which prepare companies to become suppliers that can meet the scale and pace required by Defence and Security needs.

Since 2016, we have invested £285 million in innovation with 1519 projects funded

Building on these strong foundations, this strategy will ensure DASA develops deeper, more open relationships with the UK supply chain, laying the foundation for a closer partnership between industry and Defence and Security departments. In implementing the strategy we will strive to ensure coherence and collaboration across the defence and security sectors as well as seeking opportunities in other market sectors so that together we can more rapidly and sustainably address the challenges of today and the future.

DASA recognises the need for change to further improve the success rates of capability pull-through into the complex Defence and Security landscape. This strategy sets out the next phase of DASA's evolution, designed to provide greater coherence of the Defence and Security innovation ecosystem, demystifying Defence and Security to attract greater engagement with innovators and

increasing the diversity of thought applied to our challenges. DASA will pilot a fully end-to-end process for generating ideas and pulling them through into capabilities for Defence and Security customers, identifying ways to improve our services and ensure DASA can support and deliver the Strategic Defence Review outcomes for innovation.

Working across all parts of the innovation ecosystem and engaging with the market earlier for closer collaboration, these pilots will be delivered as challenges throughout the next two years to make DASA the partner of choice for innovation in Defence and Security for customers and suppliers.

These ambitious changes will be delivered alongside enhancements to our most demanded and successful services related to business growth and support to innovators. DASA will supplement its support to innovators offer by establishing the new Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and Business Accelerator capability in Imperial Campus, White City, London and adding capacity, through a commercial arrangement, to our existing business growth operations. This will provide a new environment to bring together Defence and Security users in ever-closer collaboration.

Maintaining the UK's strategic technological advantage over our adversaries, whilst helping the UK prosper, places DASA at the forefront of driving ideas into real-world impact. We are proud of the success that we share with our suppliers who have demonstrated world-leading ingenuity coupled with dedication to our shared values. We look forward to working with you to build a safer and more secure future for the UK.





2. The DASA Story



2. DASA - The front door for innovation discovery

The National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 established the need for the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) to “help the private sector, allies and academia turn ideas into innovative equipment and services faster for National Security users”. Launched in December 2016 as part of the Defence Innovation Initiative, DASA was designed to work with Defence and Security partners to “...identify the best routes to develop specialist, sovereign capabilities, and those products with broader commercial and export potential...”, under an SDSR mandate to develop technologies through partnership and joint investment.

Our role as a Government backed service is to help Small and Medium-sized businesses and other innovators bring new ideas to the market quickly, while maximising the scope for commercialisation; a pressing need validated by the recent Integrated Review Refresh 2023, which cited speed of adaptation and innovation as decisive factors in generating the UK’s strategic advantage.

To deliver against this mandate, DASA services have been developed and continue to evolve to meet the increasing demands of our Defence and Security customers, and the needs of those potential solution suppliers that can satisfy those demands. The next two years will see DASA instigate further changes to optimise and enhance our services.

Accelerating Impact: 43 projects supported by DASA are providing new or improved capabilities to Defence and Security

As the front door for innovators into Defence and Security, we remain committed to improving our ability to broker and partner across Government and private sector suppliers. Working closely with other innovation enablers across Government and internationally, DASA is able to quickly and effectively connect Defence and Security challenges and solution providers to overcome challenges and exploit opportunities.

We will continue to align our efforts to other reforms and initiatives across Defence and Security Departments including the current Strategic Defence Review. We will continue our engagement with private sector organisations to diversify and partner more effectively with the current and future Defence and Security supply chain, whilst supporting companies to grow and contribute to national prosperity.



2.1. Vision, Mission and Objectives

The DASA vision is for UK Defence and Security to maintain its strategic advantage through having access to the most innovative Defence and Security capabilities in the world.

This is delivered by the DASA mission to **'find and fund exploitable innovations to support UK Defence and Security quickly and effectively, and support UK prosperity'**.

Our objectives remain to:



Be an exemplar innovation organisation, promoting best practice across Government whilst constantly building on experience and learning, and enabling DASA staff to work creatively and effectively.



Strengthen and broaden links to innovators across the UK and elsewhere, attracting the best ideas for Defence and Security.



Collaborate with customers across HM Government to find innovative solutions to the most pressing National Security problems.



Increase the successful pull-through of innovative ideas, supporting the exploitation and commercialisation of solutions into capability.





3. DASA Services



3. DASA services

Our commitment to supporting UK Defence and Security to maintain its strategic advantage through innovation has seen us work across Government, industry and academia to collaborate on the rapid development of solutions delivered into the hands of users.

Bringing together diverse perspectives from both solution providers and problem holders and breaking down the perceived barriers of working with Defence and Security organisations has seen DASA evolve an ‘innovation as a service’ model, offering flexibility, agility and accessibility at unprecedented levels, becoming the de facto front door for innovation into National Security.

DASA has a broad remit; we operate at any Technology Readiness Level (TRL), we are interested in all fields of technology and services, and our network of customers and suppliers spans all parts of UK Government, national and international partners and allies, academia, investment sectors and all industrial sectors. This diverse service offering includes:

- **A UK Network of Innovation Partners** – DASA employees, based across the UK developing and maintaining fruitful relationships with industry and academia;
- **The Ideas Marketplace and other discovery services** – a suite of information services to enable collaboration between Defence and Security customers, and provide them with access to potential solution suppliers;
- **An Open Call for Innovation** – a direct route to submit ideas into Defence and Security at any stage that might improve the National Security of the UK;
- **Themed calls for Innovation** – a customer driven route to seek novel ideas to solve the most pressing challenges faced by Defence and Security;
- **Partnership and Impact Services** – building and sustaining collaborative partnerships across the Defence and Security ecosystem delivering services to help build the business behind innovation, nurturing suppliers of innovation for the National Security market;
- **Launching a London-based Business Accelerator** – to deliver an intensive training programme, mentoring and networking events to selected small businesses for NATO DIANA and DASA;
- **Support to the rollout of a network of RDSCs** – a growing enterprise of managed networks designed to discover the best innovations in the UK and internationally, and to promote innovation to National Security and our international allies.

DASA consolidates its innovative strength through IKE accreditation



DASA was awarded the IKE Institute's ISO 56002 Investor in Innovations Accreditation in the summer of 2023, achieving the highly coveted Best Practice rating in all six categories of the Standard. It had taken DASA only three years to attain this rating, a unique achievement for IKE Institute members, demonstrating deep capability in innovation.



3.1 SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Service development - supporting the response to a more contested and volatile world

DASA has developed its operating model to deliver at pace and will continuously improve on its ability to enable suppliers and Defence and Security users to rapidly solve problems together. Building on the experience of operation since 2016, DASA will evolve its services over the next two years to support Defence and Security customers to increase the amount of successfully fielded capabilities generated by the best ideas, drawn from the widest field of innovators.

Specifically, we will deliver four key initiatives to provide innovators and Defence and Security customers the fastest and most effective route to developing and delivering solutions to Defence and Security challenges. These are:

- **A new approach to themed competitions**, delivering a series of pilots that fully link all of the organisations and acquisition processes involved in capability development and delivery from the outset of an innovation challenge for the first time. Starting with early market engagement on challenge themes and identifying an assured exploitation pathway for successful solutions prior to competition design, DASA will deliver a competition fully integrated with the entire acquisition and integration pipeline, move beyond the traditional transactional relationship with industry into a deeper and more open collaborative approach to innovation;
- **Proactive partnering for better quality outcomes**; entering new partnering arrangements with other innovation organisations in both the public and private sector, co-ordinating and cohering activity across our

various innovation systems, working across departments to increase the conversion rate of ideas into capabilities, providing leadership, advice and interventions to provide a truly end-to-end system for innovation and more closely aligning activity between business units engaged in the delivery of innovation;

- **Grow our networks and increase our reach nationally and internationally**, supporting the growing number of Regional Defence and Security Cluster hubs throughout the UK, launching the NATO Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) Accelerator and supporting AUKUS competition delivery;
- **Increase capacity for innovation and business growth services**, including launching the DASA Business Acceleration Services Hub in London, offering increased access to business growth and mentoring services as well as networking services for NATO DIANA and DASA.

These initiatives are designed to increase the effectiveness of technology pull-through in terms of both pace and quality of outcomes, supporting ideas through the capability development pipeline and into the hands of users, as well as continuing to support other customer and Departmental benefits including policy development. They will also increase our visibility and accessibility to a broader audience of those who might want to work with us, as well as providing broader exposure of our innovators to the Defence and Security communities in the UK, our allies and partners.

Boosting Businesses: 60% of DASA contracts are awarded to SMEs



Innovation without Borders

The UK accelerator has been chosen as one of the 13 affiliated accelerator sites participating in NATO DIANA's 2025 accelerator programme.

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), working in partnership with the Janus Consortium has been selected to deliver the NATO DIANA UK Accelerator. Through a comprehensive six month acceleration programme, innovative companies will receive expert guidance, investment opportunities, and crucial access to defence networks, helping them navigate the complex journey from concept to defence-ready solutions.



DASA and the consortium will also be providing a DASA Accelerator programme for DASA selected companies, and others from across the defence ecosystem, so they too will benefit from access to a leading accelerator programme. Moreover, the consortium will be creating a vibrant innovation space at the DASA office at White City, running a number of events and activities to create a hub for defence innovation.

The accelerator's dual-use approach - supporting technologies that serve both military and civilian purposes - creates a unique value proposition for participating businesses.

Companies will gain access to the NATO Innovation Fund, specialist mentoring, and connections across an alliance of 32 nations, while developing solutions that can scale across both defence and commercial markets.

This initiative comes at a crucial time when rapid technological advancement and evolving global threats demand innovative solutions. The UK accelerator will play a vital role in NATO's broader network of test centres and accelerator sites, fostering international collaboration and knowledge sharing. By bringing together universities, industry leaders, and governments, the programme will help grow a new generation of NATO innovators capable of addressing strategic security challenges.

The selection of the UK accelerator as a key node in NATO's innovation network reinforces Britain's position as a driving force in defence technology, promising to deliver strategic advantages for domestic capability while strengthening international security partnerships. This initiative marks a significant step forward in ensuring the UK remains at the forefront of defence innovation while contributing to NATO's technological edge.

 This programme represents a step-change in how we develop defence capability. By connecting UK innovators with NATO's extensive network, we're not just building individual companies – we're strengthening the entire defence innovation ecosystem. 

Anita Friend, Head of DASA



3.2 Accessing DASA Services

DASA offers a range of products to find solutions to customer challenges that best fit the organisation, challenge and budget. We don't stop at finding the ideas, we work with suppliers to help them pull through their ideas into capability supporting both exploitation and commercialisation.

Our most popular services include:

Market Exploration

Provide an early indication of the innovation landscape surrounding a particular challenge. Seeking solutions that:

- Already exist and are used in a non-Defence or Security setting
- or**
- are in development and require further investment



Themed Competitions

Enable Defence and Security customers to reach into industry and academia to find solutions to specific challenges.

- Open for a fixed window of time
- Often multiphase
- Typically 100% funding

Open Call for Innovation

Offers innovators the opportunity to submit any ideas that help address Defence and/or Security challenges.

- Open all year round with assessment dates scheduled across the year
- Open to any idea, technology or service
- Innovation Focus Areas identify specific challenges



3.2 ACCESSING DASA SERVICES

Ideas Marketplace

An online platform where innovators can collaborate and share ideas, and end users can present challenges and find solutions.

- Fostering collaborative working relationships between Government, industry and academia
- Access to networking and collaboration events



DTEP

The Defence Technology Exploitation Programme (DTEP) is designed to help SMEs join the defence supply chain through partnering with a Higher Tier supplier.

- Projects aligned with MOD Capability Challenges
- Up to 50% grand funding (max. £500,000)
- Typically 100% funding

Defence Innovation Loans

Designed to help SMEs commercialise their mature defence solutions.

- Loans from £100,000 - £1 million
- Projects must be at TRL 6 or above
- Loans can cover up to 100% of project costs to aid commercialisation of the solution



The UK Accelerator

The UK accelerator is led by DASA and supported by an external delivery partner, which has been funded by the Ministry of Defence.

The UK accelerator has been chosen as one of the 13 affiliated accelerator sites participating in NATO DIANA's 2025 accelerator programme



3.3 Securing Britain's Future

DASA's Security Open Call for Innovation has transformed how the UK approaches security challenges, delivering remarkable value from its £20 million Treasury investment. This ground-breaking programme has already achieved real-world implementation of security solutions two years ahead of schedule, demonstrating exceptional efficiency in bringing innovations from concept to deployment.

The programme's success lies in its unique ability to forge partnerships across 21 security organisations, private sector innovators, and academic institutions. This collaborative approach has generated an impressive pipeline: from 333 initial ideas, 63 high-potential projects received funding, spanning crucial areas from counter-terrorism to public safety. Standout successes include Trilateral Research's AI system for identifying vulnerability, now operational in Lincolnshire Police, and Quickblock's innovative ballistic protection solution, adopted by multiple agencies including West Midlands Police. At Waterloo Station, Createc Ltd's privacy-compliant crowd monitoring system exemplifies how innovation can enhance security while respecting civil liberties.



The programme's scope extends across the entire security spectrum, funding projects that address pressing challenges such as online harms, violence against women and girls, and serious organised crime. Notably, many innovations have found dual applications in both Security and Defence sectors, maximising taxpayer value through cross-sector utility.

DASA's approach has proven particularly effective in rapidly transitioning innovations from development to deployment. With over 10% of funded projects already implemented in operational environments, the programme demonstrates how targeted investment in innovation can deliver immediate security benefits while building long-term capability.

This strategic investment in innovation isn't just enhancing Britain's security capabilities – it's creating a sustainable ecosystem for future security innovation, ensuring the UK stays ahead of emerging threats while delivering exceptional value for money.

66 DASA provided us the space and time to innovate and co-design with users, which enabled our development of sociotechnical methods for building ethical AI to combat complex societal problems. The opportunities for defence and security end users are huge, working together, we can offer the capability to harness explainable AI to combat complex societal problems from national security to crisis and conflict stabilisation efforts. 

Dr Hayley Watson
Trilateral Research





4. Our People



4. OUR PEOPLE

4. Our People

DASA is a talented and diverse team drawn from the Public and Private sectors and academia. Although there is healthy diversity of thought bringing in new ideas and approaches, the one thing we have in common is a passion for innovation and the safety and security of the UK.

We nurture our people, investing in training and professional development opportunities to bring out the best in our outstanding team. Each year we take part in the Civil Service People survey, consistently receiving excellent engagement scores. We also use the survey to target further improvements to the way we work together and manage our people.

Our aim is to continue to ensure a safe, secure and inclusive workplace in which everyone can achieve their full potential. Creating a culture of diversity and inclusion makes sense for any organisation but for us, as we aim to find and fund innovation, it is essential. We need to reach out and find the best innovations wherever they are located and that requires us to be diverse and inclusive in our approach inside, as well as outside, the team. A diverse and inclusive environment leads to creativity and drives innovation, and this in turn ensures we are achieving the best results and improving our reputation for spot on delivery. We will take positive action and take nothing for granted in our quest to recruit and retain the best talent and create an inclusive team that is inspired to do even better things.



Photo: Members of the DASA team at an All Staff meeting, 2023

4.1. Governance

DASA is a part of the Defence Innovation Directorate in the Military Capability branch of the Ministry of Defence, reporting to Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Military Capability). DASA, as a part of the Defence innovation ecosystem, is held to account by the Defence Technology Innovation Board (DTIB). Supporting this the Science, Technology and Innovation Group (STIG) is a sub-committee for Defence innovation, reporting to DTIB with terms of reference to provide strategic direction, policy and priorities for innovation projects and work streams across the Ministry of Defence, linking to the broader HMG National Security communities. DASA's unique role as a cross-National Security community business is re-enforced through a quarterly Deputy Director level cross-Government Governance Board, designed to provide effective oversight, governance and assurance from both Defence and Security stakeholders, and to hold the Head of DASA to account.

94% of DASA staff said they are encouraged to work innovatively, coming up with new and better ways of doing things.

Civil Service People Survey 2023



Get in touch



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