AI wellbeing companion for neurodivergent women and digital training platform for pharmacists among £1m Mayor's big ideas challenge finalists

Thursday 31 July, 2025

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19 local businesses have been announced as finalists in the £1 million Mayor's big ideas challenge, each securing a £20,000 grant and skills-building package to support their 9-month innovation journeys.

? The challenge supports West Yorkshire-based businesses to accelerate innovative products and services that combat health inequalities among communities across the region.

? An AI wellbeing companion for neurodivergent women, a digital training service for pharmacists, and a language platform to improve children's communication skills are among the 19 innovations.

? The Mayor's big ideas challenge is delivered by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and supported by global challenge expert, Challenge Works.

19 local businesses spearheading innovative solutions to some of the region's most pressing challenges have been announced today (31 July) as finalists of a £1 million competition for businesses to build a brighter West Yorkshire that works for all.

An AI wellbeing companion designed by and for neurodivergent women, a digital training service for pharmacists to improve primary care, and a language platform to improve children's speaking skills, are among the 19 innovations that have each been awarded a £20,000 development grant, as finalists of the West Yorkshire Mayor's big ideas challenge.

The £1 million challenge was launched by Mayor Tracy Brabin in February this year as part of her plan for growth, to spur on innovation and support small and medium-sized businesses to grow and succeed.

Through development grants of £20,000 for the 19 successful firms, the challenge will help to bring new technologies to life while helping businesses to grow, create skilled jobs and put money in people's pockets.

In March 2026, after facing a vigorous few months of testing and refining, three businesses will then be selected as winners of the challenge and awarded a further £100,000 to support the commercialisation of their innovations.

The challenge, delivered by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and supported by global challenge expert, Challenge Works, encourages the creation of innovative solutions, products or services that have the potential to overcome health inequalities among communities in West Yorkshire.

Aimed at local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the region, the challenge empowers those closest to the issue to drive change, and the 19 finalists' solutions showcase immense talent and entrepreneurial spirit.

Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire, said:

"These finalists represent the very best of West Yorkshire's talent, ingenuity and determination to drive positive change.

"Through bold, innovative thinking, each of these businesses are tackling serious health challenges, and we're supporting them to turn their creative ideas into concrete action.

"This is what building a stronger, fairer region looks like, and I'm incredibly proud to support their journeys as they work to transform lives and boost the wellbeing of our communities."

The challenge is a direct response to data which demonstrates deep deprivation in some areas of West Yorkshire, meaning that health outcomes can vary widely. Life expectancy in Yorkshire and the Humber stands at one year and ten months lower than the average in England, and 4.7% of working age people are economically inactive due to ill health – 0.6% above the average.

With the region trailing the UK's productivity levels by 16.8% due in part to poor health, tackling health

inequalities will have a ripple effect on the region, accelerating social and economic change, and supporting West Yorkshire to flourish.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is actively supporting the Government's 10 Year Health Plan, which will see the NHS move from treatment to prevention to alleviate pressure on frontline services. As preventative solutions, the 19 finalists present compelling opportunities to ease this pressure.

The Mayor's big ideas challenge finalist innovations include:

? **An AI companion platform designed by and for neurodivergent women** – MAGI is an AI platform offering accessible tools to help neurodivergent women navigate burnout, overwhelm, or hormonal shifts. From emotional regulation to daily decision support, the platform is both highly accessible and personalised.

? **Digital training platform for the region's pharmacists** - The West Yorkshire DPP Support and Prescribing Support Platform is a digital platform offering the region's pharmacists training, mentorship and peer support. This empowers pharmacists to improve patient access, deliver safer prescribing, and directly tackle local health inequalities, strengthening primary care for everyone across West Yorkshire.

? **An AI-powered speech and language platform for children** – Polly is an AI-powered speech and language platform helping young children in low-income, multilingual or underserved communities develop core communication skills. Co-designed with therapists, Polly delivers personalised, playful therapy sessions in schools and homes, making early intervention accessible, scalable, and effective. With children in some disadvantaged areas of the UK having to wait up to four years for support, this technology will enable all children to have the same opportunities, ensuring that they do not fall too far behind at school - and beyond.

Kathy Nothstine, Director of Cities and Societies, Challenge Works, said:

"Innovation is the key to unlocking brighter futures for those living in West Yorkshire. Faced with high levels of deprivation and limited access to spaces and services that support wellbeing, the region is battling high levels of health inequality, leading to economic inactivity and levels of productivity that trail the national average.

"The 19 finalists have come up with inspiring answers to these challenges. Rooted in personal stories and experiences, the innovations range from products such as wearables that reduce hospital visits, to programmes for teens that combat poor body image, and support groups to aid the recovery of those who are healing from traumatic experiences. There is real potential for these solutions to not only improve health inequality across the region, but to effect broader economic, social and civic change".

Other finalist solutions include platforms to bolster mental health, a digital tool to support community carers, and skill-building programmes for those living in underserved communities, granting opportunities that otherwise might not exist.

To find out more about the Mayor's big ideas challenge and the 19 finalists, visit:

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Notes to Editors
For media enquiries, please contact Sophia Houston and Bella Weetch at westyorkshire@seven-consultancy.com

* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future

About the Mayor's big ideas challenge
The Mayor's big ideas challenge is a £1 million initiative designed to accelerate innovative solutions, products, or services that address health inequalities among communities in West Yorkshire. Launched by West Yorkshire Mayor, Tracy Brabin, as a key part of her plan for growth, the challenge aims to spur innovation and support the growth and success of small and medium-sized businesses. Through development grants of up to £100,000 for successful firms, this challenge will help bring new technologies to life, create skilled jobs, and put more money in people's pockets.

About The Combined Authority
The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is a strategic authority that unites local councils and businesses across West Yorkshire. Our core mission is to build a strong, successful economy and deliver policies, programmes, and services that have a direct, positive impact on the people of our region. Deeply committed to fostering a healthier and happier West Yorkshire, the Mayor champions initiatives like the "big ideas challenge," to nurture groundbreaking ideas that directly contribute to making West Yorkshire a healthier and happier place for everyone. Complementing these broader strategies, local initiatives such as "Happy, Healthy at Home" in the Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership provide targeted support to help residents stay active, connected, safe, and well within their own communities.

About Challenge Works
Challenge Works is a global leader in designing and delivering high-impact challenge prizes that incentivise cutting-edge innovation for social good. It is part of UK innovation foundation agency Nesta. For more than a decade, it has run more than 97 prizes, distributed more than £210 million in funding and engaged with 16,000 innovators.

The Mayor's big ideas challenge finalists:

Antidote Medical Ltd. The West Yorkshire DPP Support and Prescribing Support Platform is a new digital platform offering the region's pharmacists training, mentorship and peer support. This empowers pharmacists to improve patient access, deliver safer prescribing, and directly tackle local health inequalities, strengthening primary care for everyone across West Yorkshire.

Asclepius MedTech Limited. Leeds-based Asclepius MedTech has developed Surgfit to help hospitals deliver safer and more effective surgical care. Built by clinicians, Surgifit uses wearable biosensors to assess patients before their surgery, in the comfort of their own home, providing a more convenient and patient friendly alternative that reduces hospital visits.

Body Image Coach. Built to challenge unrealistic beauty standards and help teens reduce comparison and build a positive relationship with their bodies. Through guided coaching sessions, psycho-education, and peer support groups, Body Image Coach helps to develop self-acceptance, confidence, and body appreciation – tackling the root cause of body image struggle that impact mental and physical health.

Carly Walter Coaching and Consultancy Ltd. Created by Carly Walter Coaching and Consultancy, MAGI is an AI-powered wellbeing companion designed by, and for, neurodivergent women or any women navigating burnout, overwhelm, or hormonal shifts. From emotional regulation to daily decision support, it's accessible, non-judgmental and personalised.

Confidence with SJ Ltd. An innovative app that supports professional women in West Yorkshire to strengthen their confidence, resilience and wellbeing during key life and career transitions. By addressing the root causes of burnout and progression barriers, it will shape healthier, more inclusive workplaces where women can thrive, lead, and drive lasting change.

Featherstone Rovers Foundation with Spectrum People. The Creative Health Learning Pathway is an apprenticeship programme led by Featherstone Rovers Foundation with Spectrum People combining accredited training, mentorship, and hands-on experience to equip underserved individuals with skills to deliver arts and wellbeing activities, tackling health inequalities and building a new creative workforce across West Yorkshire.

Harmonai Hub. Harmonai is an AI-powered wellbeing platform for carers, offering personalised support, guided journaling and a safe, understanding peer community. Blending self-help tools with therapeutic techniques, it empowers mental health, resilience and connection anytime, anywhere.

Health Innovation Ventures LTD. Created by Health Innovation Ventures, GP Pathways is an intelligent care navigating platform that empowers GP reception teams to safely signpost patients to Pharmacy First, Self Care, a more appropriate clinician or community-based health and care teams – easing GP pressure and tackling health inequalities through faster, fairer and more appropriate access to care.

HEROES Programme Ltd. A mental health recovery programme that is redefining healthcare. Through lived-experience, leadership, digital innovation, unique educational approaches, and inclusive group support, HEROES embeds a new standard of compassionate, whole-person healing into mainstream systems. It is driving a shift in how mental health is understood and worked with, and is designed to reach those often excluded from care.

Humant Group Limited. Humant enables occupational therapists to conduct remote home assessments

using 3D scans, images, and videos captured via smartphone. It supports clinical decision-making, reduces delays and improves patient safety by streamlining adaptive equipment planning, cutting costs and increasing capacity across NHS and social care services.

International Mixed Ability Sports (IMAS) with Nifty Sustainability. This innovation aims to harness the lived experience of disabled people and other groups that are disproportionately affected by health equalities to co-produce and co-deliver educational training and learning resources to health and social care practitioners. This will create long-term positive solutions that are needs-based, person-centred and led by those with lived experience.

JGME Consulting UK Ltd. Created by JGME Consulting UK, EqualCare Assess is an AI-powered platform that automates Care Act assessments. Automating this process provides faster and fairer access to adult social care. By reducing delays, overcoming language barriers, and promoting equity, it empowers vulnerable communities in West Yorkshire to receive timely support, improving health outcomes and inequalities.

KayHector Consulting Ltd. Created by KayHector Consulting, DiaHype Lifestyle Solutions is an AI-powered platform helping South Asian and African Caribbean communities in West Yorkshire to prevent and manage chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. The platform delivers culturally-tailored lifestyle education, self-care tools, and virtual support – boosting health literacy, reducing hospital visits, and promoting lasting, family-focused behavioural change.

Key Engineering Solutions Limited. Polly, created by Key Engineering Solutions, is an AI-powered speech and language platform helping young children in disadvantaged communities develop core communication skills. Co-designed with therapists, Polly delivers personalised, playful therapy sessions in schools and homes, making early intervention for those children who require support with their communication accessible, scalable, and effective.

Kids Speech Labs. This solution supports NHS speech and language therapy teams to identify the needs of children accessing their service. By improving referral and screening processes, only children with genuine clinical needs are directed into therapy pathways – helping to ease the backlog for speech and language therapy services. The SHARE platform's Waiting-Well initiative boosts parental engagement through targeted home-based strategies for treatment response.

Mind Body Goals. Luma³ Editions, created by Mind Body goals, is a digital tool that has been integrated into existing NHS patient pathways. It offers proven breathwork and mindfulness techniques, providing accessible, preventative mental wellbeing skills. This innovative solution democratises vital self-management for all socioeconomic groups, enhancing patient experience and proactive health outcomes across West Yorkshire.

Safe Space Labs. Empowers neurodiverse individuals by giving them the tools to regulate their emotions, and express their needs. The product improves mental health outcomes and is co-designed with educators and clinicians and the app helps build social communication and executive functioning skills, enabling users to thrive across real-world settings.

Third Age Therapeutics Limited. Loneliness can deeply affect the lives of older people and is an often overlooked health issue. Third Age Therapeutics is tackling the epidemic of loneliness by empowering people to make meaningful changes in their lives through an evidence-based telehealth solution that prevents poor mental health and loneliness in aging populations – harnessing the power of local communities, in partnership with the region's best science.

UKind Therapy CIC. UKind Therapy CIC delivers trauma-informed virtual reality (VR) therapy, co-designed with survivors of domestic abuse. Combining immersive VR with AI-guided support, UKind XR empowers users to heal from trauma, build confidence, and reconnect with purpose. The solution increases access to safe, self-led mental health support across diverse communities.

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