Technical term-busting

1 Explain to the group that they are going to read a cartoon that is featuring several people working at the Met Office and explore some key terms related to careers in weather and climate. Put the 'Weather heroes' cartoon up on the screen or interactive whiteboard so that you can read and share ideas as a whole group. You may also want to hand out printed copies to individuals or pairs. Depending on ability, you may even want to ask young people to read it out loud, assigning different characters to each person

2 As the story is read, ask young people to circle or write down any scientific or technical words they hear. Explain that you don't expect them to know what all of these mean. Next, ask them to read through it again and circle any other words they don't understand. You could do this in pairs to see if some already know the terms and are able to help their partner with defining them

3 When everyone has compiled their lists, talk these through as a group. Start with the technical terms. The glossary below can be used to prompt discussion and help everyone understand the more difficult terminology, including examples of what they mean within the context of the story:

🕑 20 minutes

👥 Groupwork

🖼 Weather heroes' cartoon

Apprenticeship: A paid work opportunity that allows you to train and progress towards a qualification while working

Sophie got into her job at the Met Office through an apprenticeship. She was able to go straight into the job after college, so that she could earn money while training to be a qualified engineer.

Bridge: A frame made out of scaffolding that allows engineers to safely work at height within a radome

Sophie has to climb up to the bridge in order to fix the radar's receiver (refer back to the radar factsheet for more information on receivers). The receiver is high up within the radome, so the bridge is there to make sure she stays safe as she works on it

Code: An arrangement of rules or instructions that tells a computer to perform different tasks

Aaron's job involves looking at the code that controls the radar, alongside the data it is recording, to see what is broken. By using different coding techniques, he can figure out exactly what the problem is

Data: A collection of values that are collected through observation and can then be converted into information as text or visuals

The radar records data about the precipitation, but to be useful the data needs to be turned into information about the incoming snowstorm

Snowstorm: A very heavy fall of snow that is blown by strong winds for a sustained period of time. It can include snow, sleet, ice and freezing rain

Sophie is fighting the clock to fix the radar before this extreme weather event gets too near! Because of the risks it can bring to people's safety, it's very important that the radar is able to transmit data back to Met Office HQ, so that they can pass information on to prepare the emergency services

Alternatively, if they have access to the internet, individuals can find their own definitions

4 To bring the activity to an end, you can ask young people if they know of any other words or jobs associated with weather and climate. You can suggest they pick one word and research the definition in their own time when they're at home.