



# Accelerating adoption of healthcare innovation

Actionable insights to enable adoption at pace and scale – transforming patient outcomes, enabling NHS efficiencies, and supporting wealth creation.

## Key Policy Recommendation

Create a more effective national framework for implementing NHS and healthcare innovation:

1. **Define the accountability and expectations** for innovation adoption performance within NHS and healthcare systems / organisations.
2. **Provide a greater national emphasis on funding** the implementation of healthcare innovation, alongside the existing focus on healthcare research.
3. **Establish stronger digital and data foundations** to enable more effective adoption, and sustaining / embedding of health innovation.
4. **Reduce friction in the innovation process** by reforming the pathway for innovators to develop, test and deliver technologies.
5. **Strengthen the mandate of the NHS and healthcare innovation support infrastructures**, and **leverage their knowledge and expertise**, to inform national guidance and policy.
6. **Define national priorities** for health and care innovation.

## The impact of an effective national framework

Creating an effective national framework for NHS and healthcare innovation will support the following key health outcomes:

- **Transform primary care.**
- **Reduce NHS waiting lists.**
- **Help get more economically inactive people back to work.**
- **Move care out of hospital.**
- **Shift from treating sickness to preventing it.**
- **Enable safer care.**
- **Get more research outputs implemented.**

## The need for accelerating innovation adoption

The NHS has a rich history of innovation: from kidney transplants, to CT scans, to IVF, to large scale vaccination programmes {1}; however, with an aging population {2}, increasing prevalence of long-term conditions and a greater proportion of our lives spent in ill-health, the need for further innovation has never been greater {3}:

- **Primary care transformation:** capacity and productivity can be created in primary care by implementing innovations that drive prevention, deliver faster diagnosis and support people to manage their conditions.

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***The UK spends around £1.6 billion annually on healthcare research but the Health Innovation Networks receive only £60 million annually for innovation adoption.***

(The Academy of Medical Sciences, May 2023)

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- **Reducing NHS waiting lists:** inappropriate referrals and patient deterioration while waiting for treatment, negatively impact efforts to reduce waiting lists {2}. AI and digital innovations can increase capacity and efficiency by improving diagnostics and supporting people to manage their conditions, and 'wait well'.
- **Getting people back to work:** The UK economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 is over 20% and increasing {4}. Innovative technologies offer opportunities to support the economically inactive to get back to work, whilst addressing healthcare inequalities and reducing social deprivation.

- **Moving care out of hospital:** millions of hospital services could be delivered elsewhere. Innovation can transform high volume care pathways (such as long-term conditions, frailty, and cancer) at scale through enabling diagnostics, monitoring, self-management and treatment in other care settings or at home. Refining and optimising care at home also supports sustainability (NHS Net Zero) through reduced travel to appointments.
- **Moving from treating to preventing sickness:** Cardiovascular disease is the biggest cause of preventable deaths in the UK. It is the leading cause of people leaving the labour market and one of the worst contributors to healthcare inequality {5}. Technologies offer clear opportunities to diagnose and treat people who are experiencing (or are at risk of developing) conditions such as CVD – keeping them well and in work.

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***The UK economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 is over 20% and increasing.***

(Office for National Statistics, Labour market overview: UK February 2024)

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- **Enabling safer care:** Patient Safety is the avoidance of unintended or unexpected harm to people during the provision of health care. This reduces demand on services helps keep people well and in work, driving economic growth; with potential savings of almost 1,000 lives and £100 million in care costs each year {6}.
  - **Getting more research outputs adopted so they transform outcomes and enable the NHS to work more efficiently and effectively:** The UK excels at healthcare research {7}, spending around £1.6 billion annually but the Health Innovation Networks (operating as the NHS's innovation implementation arm) receive only £60 million annually for innovation adoption.

## Implementation

### 1) Define accountability and expectations to create pull and ensure demand and supply

- i) Formal accountability for local systems and for research to develop innovations in areas of unmet need.
- ii) Multi-year funding streams for innovation implementation rather than delivering 1 year Return on Investment.
- iii) Formalise innovation collaborative arrangements between local system partners via joint missions, shared governance and MOUs.
- iv) Support for the NHS and care systems to develop capacity, capability and workforce cultures to innovate, and introduce incentives for innovation.

### 2) Shift the focus of innovation funding to develop an 'adoption ready' pipeline

- i) Create a single R&I budget to resource invention through to implementation.
- ii) Align the existing funding mechanisms to stop duplication and increase impact.

### 3) Establish stronger digital and data foundations to realise the full potential

Support systematic development of digital and data in local health and care systems, including infrastructure, data insight, data standards, and fostering an NHS culture that embraces digital technology.

### 4) Reduce friction in the process to reform the pathway for innovators

- i) Create a single innovation value proposition repository, agreed across whole research and innovation ecosystem, and developed alongside the existing NHS Innovation Service {8}
- ii) Develop a national framework to standardise Real World Evidence (RWE) & Real World Validation collation and evaluation through RWE hubs that are able to fast-track promising innovations.
- iii) Create national standards for 'adoption ready' innovations and technologies.

### 5) Define national innovation priorities, aligned to the NHS 10-Year Plan

- i) Embed innovation priorities through a defined accountability structure.
- ii) Use national innovation priorities to provide the focus for health research and innovation funding and investment programmes across government.

### 6) Leverage England's 15 Health Innovation Network's (HINs) to transform lives through innovation

- i) HINs are expert at finding, selecting and testing promising innovations – working with partners to create a pipeline of research into innovation, then identifying the value of promising solutions, preparing for large scale adoption based on rigorous methodology, and drawing on a national innovation pipeline comprising more than 3,000 evidenced innovations.

Rapid national implementation of QbTest, a technology that significantly reduces the time to diagnose ADHD, is one example of the HINs' abilities to identify and rapidly scale game-changing technologies {9}.

- ii) HINs' locally embedded and nationally coordinated structure enables them to deliver impact at scale.
- iii) HINs help to grow the health and life science industries and deliver economic growth – since 2018 they have contributed more than £1.8 billion of growth to UK PLC, with the creation of more than 6,600 jobs {10}.

This policy briefing paper was produced by Prof. Phil Baker, Independent Chair, Health Innovation East Midlands and Chris Taylor, Director of Communications and Engagement, Health Innovation East Midlands, with the support of the University of Leicester Institute for Policy.



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