



# Briefing Paper: Health Innovation Wessex Innovation Ecosystem Programme Report

Version 1

**[NHS Dorset/NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight] Integrated Care Board (ICB)**

## Executive Summary

The Innovation Ecosystem Programme was given a mandate to foster collaboration between the NHS and key stakeholders. The Chief Executive of NHS England tasked the IEP with fostering collaboration between the NHS, industry, academia, and regulators to streamline healthcare innovation. The recommendations stem from analysis of extensive engagement – hundreds of interviews, roundtables and working group discussions – through 4 targeted workstreams led by the chief executives and chairs of many of the key organisations in the life sciences ecosystem.

This briefing paper provides an overview of the national Innovation Ecosystem Programme (IEP) report published in November 2024. It outlines the recommendations and the opportunities for ICBs and how Health Innovation Wessex can support system partners in realising the benefits.

The IEP report recommendations have been grouped into four categories.

- A. Setting the direction**
- B. Structures and tools for delivery**
- C. People, skills, and capabilities**
- D. Acceleration**

Given the ICBs' responsibilities to ensure the four aims of integrated care systems are met, they hold a pivotal role in creating the conditions for innovation adoption success:

- by providing a key signal that innovation and research are vital to achieving NHS [Hampshire and Isle of Wight/Dorset] plans

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- by ensuring that their patients and citizens have equitable access to appropriate interventions to meet their needs, and
- by empowering NHS management and clinical leadership to deliver.

Through mobilising local systems, evaluating what works and sharing learning, the ICB can successfully support a flourishing local innovation ecosystem.

Health Innovation Wessex has over 10 years' experience in identifying, implementing and evaluating innovation, with a breadth of detailed knowledge and expertise. We offer innovation adoption skills development and capability building.

Health Innovation Wessex has undertaken a mapping of the recommendations, identifying areas of ICB focus. We can support your organisation to realise the Innovation Ecosystem recommendations and would be happy to arrange a deep dive session to discuss them further.

## Background

The NHS has an illustrious history of healthcare research and innovation. Innovation transforms patients' lives and brings significant benefits to the UK economy and society. Innovation is a cornerstone of the NHS.

The Innovation Ecosystem Programme was managed by NHS England to boost the research and innovation environment in the UK, enabling patients and clinicians to access proven technologies faster than ever before.

The programme began in summer 2023, led by Roland Sinker, Chief Executive at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. It focused on how the NHS can partner with wider health innovation and research organisations to better enable research and the development, adoption and spread of innovation into health and care settings. Its emphasis is on supporting prevention and early diagnosis to keep the health service at the forefront of medical advancements.

## Key findings from the Programme

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In November 2024, findings from the Innovation Ecosystem Programme were published alongside recommended actions for system partners to consider.

The key messages from the IEP are:

- **All partners are to collaborate**, prioritise and align to better meet the needs of patients and the public.
- **Innovation must be embraced as a core solution**. It offers a route to enhanced capacity, streamlined processes and improved patient outcomes – providing the agility needed to address the demands of an ageing population, complex health needs and workforce shortages.
- As Lord Ara Darzi<sup>1</sup> Independent investigation of the NHS in England report (2024) states, “by adopting a bold, integrated approach to innovative technologies and system-wide improvements, the NHS can meet today’s challenges but also future-proof itself as a resilient and sustainable healthcare system.” **Immediate investment in innovation is therefore not just beneficial; it is essential** to fulfilling the NHS’s commitment to high-quality, equitable care for all.
- There is a need to **significantly increase the capacity, capability, and skills of the NHS workforce** to undertake innovation work – and the skills required should be recognised as distinct and important, akin to those recognised for research and quality improvement work.
- The successful introduction of these new technologies and approaches will require a **focus on system-wide transformation, not individual technological adoption**; it will require **better alignment of innovation and research infrastructure and new ways of working** with the large and small companies from where the innovations are emerging.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-investigation-of-the-nhs-in-england>





- The NHS needs to make it easier to adopt innovation by **reducing friction in the system with a clear, consistent, standardised and streamlined rules-based approach**, and regulate how patients, industry, academia, and the voluntary and community sector can partner with the NHS.

## The Innovation Ecosystem Programme recommendations

The recommendations set out the practical changes needed to evolve the ecosystem to test, adopt and scale innovation to meet the country's future healthcare needs.

There are fourteen recommendations identified, grouped into four categories:

**A. Setting the direction:** The innovation ecosystem and the NHS must be aligned to support the transformation of healthcare and the government's health and growth missions.

### 1. Make innovation core to NHS business:

Integrate innovation with NHS priorities alongside education and research, and do so in a way that also works for the wider ecosystem.

### 2. Prioritise and co-ordinate innovation around the shifts and goals for health:

Focus on healthcare shifts such as digitalisation, prevention, and home care, with priorities harmonised across NHS plans. This will require choices to be taken on specific shifts, rather than attempting to do everything.

### 3. Establish co-ordinated oversight and aligned innovation funding:

Consolidate funding and oversight to support the innovation priorities with clearer accountability.

### 4. Develop incentives to support and monitor delivery:

Use key performance indicators (KPIs) to track and incentivise innovation adoption within NHS governance and management.

**B. Structures and tools for delivery:** Accountability, oversight, and leadership at all levels. This must be supported by standardised tools, policy, and guidance for the





key enablers of innovation testing and adoption, to support confident local decision-making.

**5. Simplify and strengthen the structures and functions for innovation in the NHS:** Boost NHS leadership and capacity to test and adopt innovation and develop the missing expertise in collaboration with Health Innovation Network (HIN) support.

**6. Strengthen data access and information governance:** Expand secure data access for research to prioritise testing and monitoring of innovation.

**7. Align procurement to facilitate rollout of tested innovations:** Standardise procurement and facilitate easy transfer of innovations across the NHS.

**8. Develop commercial approaches to share value and adoption in testing innovations:** Update intellectual property (IP) policies and share value through risk-managed partnerships.

**C. People, skills, and capabilities:** Build the skills, capabilities, capacity, and culture required to prepare the NHS workforce for future ways of working and to help them collaborate confidently with patients and citizens, industry and academia.

**9. Build the right skills and capabilities:** Develop innovation skill frameworks and training across NHS roles, with industry and education partners supporting future workforce readiness.

**10. Create time in jobs for innovation:** Integrate innovation responsibilities into roles, with dedicated time for related activities. Establish joint clinical fellowships with industry.

**11. Foster a positive culture and understanding:** Identify the next generation of innovation leaders, promote cross-industry exchanges, celebrate innovation achievements, and appropriately manage the different risk profiles and success rates of innovation. Speak well of each other.

**D. Acceleration:** Alongside action to redesign the architecture and wiring of innovation, the programme partners should work together to mobilise major

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geographies behind current priorities – working with centres across the UK that have shown excellence in innovation development and adoption.

**12. Mobilise local systems behind work:** Key localities should lead on priority innovations, collaborate with industry, and share best practice for scaling and implementation.

**13. Evaluate what works:** Build robust evaluation into innovation efforts to assess health, social and economic impacts.

**14. Establish peer-learning networks:** Create networks to connect successful innovators with policymakers and others for shared learning and support.

### What do these recommendations mean for Integrated Care Boards?

Innovation only succeeds when it can be effectively adopted locally. This needs individuals who can drive through implementation in a supportive culture that embraces and creates the conditions for innovation adoption (e.g., skills, capabilities, leadership, and acceleration mechanisms).

Integrated care boards and healthcare systems hold a pivotal role in creating the conditions for innovation adoption success. The Integrated Care System Design Framework stipulates that the NHS must support ‘fostering and deploying research and innovations.’<sup>2</sup>The Framework – with the recommendations - ensures that the patient and citizen voices are heard, and clinical leadership is empowered to explore and deliver innovation, providing a strong signal that innovation and research are important. Alongside mobilising local systems, evaluating what works and sharing learning, this will result in a successful and flourishing local innovation ecosystem.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/B0642-ics-design-framework-june-2021.pdf>





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### **How can Health Innovation Wessex support you to embed the recommendations of the Innovation Ecosystem Programme?**

We are *the* health innovation adoption experts.

Health Innovation Wessex has over 10 years' experience in:

- Understanding and shaping the Research and Innovation ecosystem
- Supporting the development of innovation
- Capability building e.g. delivery of innovation adoption training.
- Designing national/regional and local adoption programmes e.g. development of local delivery plans
- Supporting local health and care systems' ability to deliver improvement and adopt innovation e.g. delivery of Attitudes Toward Innovation Survey (ATIS) and Rapid Insight methodologies.
- Supporting the adoption of innovation in relation to specific priorities, pathways, and technologies.
- Undertaking rapid insight gathering and evaluations.

We can support your organisation to realise the Innovation Ecosystem recommendations and would be happy to arrange a deep dive session to discuss them further. Please contact us at [enquiries@hiwessex.net](mailto:enquiries@hiwessex.net)

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