

Bridging the gap

Midlands

Supporting innovators



west midlands
ACADEMIC HEALTH SCIENCE NETWORK

East Midlands
**Academic Health
Science Network**
Igniting Innovation

Welcome

AHSNs are uniquely placed to bridge the gap between healthcare and industry. Our remit is to cross traditional sector boundaries and strengthen partnerships between industry and healthcare organisations so that more patients benefit from innovative technologies.

We understand the challenges that industry and innovators face when trying to access the NHS marketplace and our aim is to support you along the way.

As a network of 15 Academic Health Science Networks, we have complete coverage across England and our shared priorities and objectives are pivotal to spreading innovation quickly across big populations. In addition, working regionally allows each AHSN to establish local connections and knowledge of the health and care challenges in our respective areas.

In the Midlands there are two AHSNs, East Midlands AHSN and West Midlands AHSN. Although we are separate organisations we work very closely together to deliver support to industry and healthcare across the Midlands region. We develop bespoke support based on local needs, however our common goals include:

- Helping health and care partners identify need and use this as an opportunity to broker relationships between industry and healthcare – matching your proven solutions to their unmet needs
- Supporting industry and innovators to gather real-world evidence to prove the value of their solution
- Using our expertise and knowledge to support market access for industry and innovators
- Accelerating adoption and spread of innovation with ground-breaking schemes and opportunities
- Signposting around the complex healthcare system and identifying funding opportunities.

Regardless of what stage innovators and industry professionals are at, we aim to guide and support you throughout that journey.

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Challenges and tips

1

Getting your business case right

A robust business case is important for any procurement decision within the NHS. Business cases are not just used to make a clinical decision and must address wider benefits. Coproduction of business plans with the NHS is key.

2

Regulations and NHS requirements

Understanding NHS regulations at the earliest stage is essential. This could save you lots of time and effort going down the wrong path. Do your research and seek help before developing your engagement plan.

3

Gathering the right evidence

Evidence in a real-world setting is imperative to the adoption of your innovation in the NHS. Understanding what evidence is important for the various and complex NHS audiences will help you get it right faster. What you think is the right type of evidence might not be quite enough for NHS stakeholders – get advice about this early on.

4

Export and overseas trade

If you're looking to spread your innovation to other countries, you will need to gather comprehensive information on the scale of need for your product in those countries. Consider the country's pathways, procurement process and channels, rules and tariffs and whether you have the right certification for that country. This will help you focus your efforts.



Identifying need

Our AHSNs work across the Midlands to develop strong relationships with the Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in our areas.

Developing and maintaining these relationships is vital to the support we offer industry and innovators as this enables us to understand and identify unmet needs and common challenges – so we can bring people and organisations together to develop, test and spread solutions.

Innovation Exchange

Funded by the government's Office for Life Sciences, the Innovation Exchange is an AHSN-coordinated approach to identify, select and support the adoption of innovations which have the potential to transform the lives of patients and support growth of the businesses we work with.

Innovation Exchanges can take a number of forms

but they always respond to regional health system challenges identified in partnership with STPs and ICSs. As an example previous Innovation Exchange themes in the Midlands have included Rural Health and Care, Digital Outpatients and Digital Technologies in Mental Health.

The core functions of Innovation Exchanges are:

- Needs analysis
- Signposting

- Real-world validation
- Adoption and spread

Industry and innovators can get involved in Innovation Exchanges by responding to calls for solution proposals following our initial engagements and refinement of needs from health and care partners. These are usually displayed on the website of each AHSN. However, we'd advise you to make contact with us so that we can offer you any support you need

before this stage and so that we have details of your organisation/ product to circulate any relevant calls for solution proposals.

All 15 AHSNs operate local Innovation Exchanges – to make it easier to navigate around our national AHSN Network and identify opportunities, we have created a digital Innovation Exchange gateway www.ahsninnovationexchange.co.uk



Innovation exchange

CASE STUDIES

TRANSFORMING ADHD DIAGNOSIS

Following innovation exchange work focusing on mental health, East Midlands AHSN supported QbTest, a diagnostic tool which measures the core indicator symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). On average, QbTest can reduce time to diagnosis by 153 days and provide 20% cost reductions.

East Midlands AHSN's mental health Innovation Exchange event brought together the region's health and care partners to establish key themes – child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) were recognised as a priority. Following the event, support and funding was offered to innovation programmes that tackled these

priorities and a call for proposals was launched. QbTest's proposal was successful and following the Innovation Exchange event, received funding for a clinical trial across three East Midlands trusts. The clinical trial enabled the trusts and innovator to gather a strong evidence base.

With East Midlands AHSN support, this innovation has spread to 41 NHS trusts and 73 clinics in England, and to four trusts in Northern Ireland with impressive outcomes. This innovation has also been recently selected as one of the AHSN's national adoption and spread programmes, meaning other AHSNs will concentrate resources on the programme from 2020.

BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST CLINICAL GUIDANCE APP

B13 Technology specialise in software and app development and wanted to further their work within the healthcare sector, to provide custom solutions to help NHS organisations tackle their challenges by using smart technology.

They reached out to West Midlands AHSN, seeking support to identify the best way to gain traction in this sector. After helping the company refine their offer to the health and care market, West Midlands AHSN were able to broker a relationship between B13 Technology and Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. The children and families division at the trust were concerned about patient safety as clinical guidance documents

used by the practitioners in the field were not standardised and, in some cases, were outdated.

To solve this issue, B13 Technology developed a version-controlled clinical guidance app. The app was designed to be available on all NHS devices, so every member of staff would be able to see the correct documents eliminating risk and ensuring patient safety.

“As we had been working with the AHSN on our offer and how to place ourselves in the market, they knew our capabilities and were able to put us in touch with the trust when they recognised that they needed a service like ours.” B13 Technology

Supporting market access

The health system is complex and it can be difficult for innovators to know where to get the right help with improvement planning, development and adoption of new ways of working. The AHSNs are well placed to make sense of this complexity and help industry and innovators navigate the health and care landscape.

In the Midlands we have a number of initiatives to support industry access to the health and care market, whether this is with product development, formulating a business plan or getting in front of the right people. Examples of these initiatives include:

East Midlands

- **Innovation Surgeries** – these regular Innovation Surgeries give innovators, clinical entrepreneurs and SMEs the opportunity to pitch their concepts to a panel of experts. Following the pitch they receive feedback, advice and guidance on the next steps to take their solution further. They also receive signposting support to other initiatives where appropriate.
- **Digital Health Accelerator** – this East Midlands accelerator programme works with a small cohort of companies to develop and spread their digital health technologies and innovations, with a tailored package of support available to the successful applicants. Companies who are successfully selected for the scheme benefit from specialist training, one-to-one support and opportunities to showcase their products to NHS decision-makers and influencers.

West Midlands

- **Industry Gateway** – acts as a single entry point for all commercial and industry enquiries and offers an integrated service to the region.
- **Serendip®** – this programme was developed in partnership with NHS Digital. Innovators are invited to apply to become part of the incubator and accelerator which is based at the iCentrum® building in Birmingham. Successful applicants receive comprehensive mentoring, attendance at digital health and business support workshops and other learning and mentoring opportunities.
- **Digital Health West Midlands** – this covers a number of different support offers, forming part of the Serendip® Incubator, but also enables access to digital health networks for peer-support and a number of skills workshops and opportunities.



Both Midlands AHSNs work closely in partnership with Medilink Midlands, a specialist business support organisation for health technology innovators and companies, and are able to access their services and expertise.

Market access

CASE STUDIES

EAST MIDLANDS DIGITAL HEALTH ACCELERATOR

Spirit Digital successfully applied to the Digital Health Accelerator Scheme in 2018 and have progressed on to the 2019 cohort as alumni working with the East Midlands AHSN.

Spirit Digital's platform CliniTouch Vie provides remote clinical monitoring of medical conditions by healthcare professionals to help people who have had multiple admissions to stay out of hospital. Patients with a long-term condition such as COPD are able to submit answers to condition-specific questions and submit their vital sign readings. Clinicians are notified based on a risk score and by doing this CliniTouch Vie supports healthcare teams to actively monitor a patient's condition, enabling a prioritised focus on those who need support.

As part of the Digital Health Accelerator programme Spirit received advice and guidance to refine their offer to the NHS market. In addition to this they received a number of opportunities to present and pitch to a large number of senior NHS commissioners and those responsible for NHS transformation at events including Innovation Exchanges and the accelerator launch event.

This year Spirit have received a European Space Agency (ESA) Business Applications and Space Solutions contract and funding to incorporate real-time air quality data into the platform, which will add a new dimension for patients to self-manage even more effectively. East Midlands AHSN supported Spirit with the application and will offer guidance to position this new offer.

KAIDO'S SUPPORT THROUGH SERENDIP®

Kaido Group Ltd is one of the start-ups in the Digital Health Quarter of the Serendip Smart City Incubator, delivered by Innovation Birmingham in collaboration with West Midlands AHSN as the commercial partner.

The Kaido wellbeing platform uses smart technology and access to world-leading health expertise to empower individuals, and their communities, to make educated lifestyle choices.

In 2018, following an introduction from West Midlands AHSN, Kaido's health and well-being challenges were launched to 9,000 staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. In the challenges, points are awarded based on positive improvements that participants make to their daily activities.

"Being part of Serendip has been invaluable. The level of expertise we've had access to and have been exposed to has been so important to take our platform to the next stage." Kaido Group Ltd

Gathering real-world evidence

One of the most important factors in spreading innovation within the NHS is being able to demonstrate impacts with real-world evidence in a relevant setting. This is often one of the stumbling blocks for industry professionals. AHSNs are committed to helping both industry and

healthcare partners to gain real-world evidence of transformative solutions to support adopt and spread, and sustainability.

AHSNs can support companies to gather real-world evidence in a number of ways, including through the Innovation Exchange

process – where if relevant and successful, companies may have the opportunity to take part in a demonstrator project alongside a health and care partner.

Both Midlands AHSNs work in partnership with medical technology experts to support companies with clinical

trials and research to broaden their evidence base. West Midlands AHSN work with MD-TEC (Medical Technologies Testing and Evaluation Centre) and East Midlands AHSN work with Medilink part-funding a number of their Medical Technology Trial (MTT) grants that cover the East Midlands region.



Real-world evidence

CASE STUDIES

BUILDING NUVISION'S EVIDENCE BASE

NuVision eye treatment offer an alternative to eye surgery by using preserved amniotic membrane (membrane from placentas) to treat damaged corneas and promote healing. The products are unique, as the material is preserved making it easy to store and accessible to hospitals. The company is in the process of expanding into using their product to facilitate the treatment of chronic wounds, such as diabetic foot ulcers.

East Midlands AHSN have worked with NuVision since 2017. Initially NuVision were invited to attend an extended innovation surgery which focused on market scoping and advice around business direction and growth. They also attended a number of one-to-one support sessions with

East Midlands AHSN experts, including a workshop on developing an NHS business case.

After this initial guidance, East Midlands AHSN signposted and supported NuVision in their application for a Medical Technology Trial grant provided by Medilink and part-funded by East Midlands AHSN and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

They secured a £100,000 grant to cover clinical trials to provide an evidence base for using the product for the treatment of diabetic foot ulcers; results are currently pending. The company has also received support to develop their network of contacts and with further funding applications.

OPTISHIELD – THE FLEXIBLE OPTICAL OCCLUDER

DHC Innovation's product Optishield, is a flexible optical occluder made of soft medical grade silicone which fits neatly onto the spectacle's lens allowing good coverage when conducting visual assessments. This gives the optometrist the confidence to concentrate on the test taking place instead of the positioning of the occluder.

West Midlands AHSN's Industry Gateway, delivered by Medilink, introduced DHC Innovations to the Medical Devices Technical Evaluation Centre (MD-TEC) based at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust to explore if MD-TEC could assist DHC with an evaluation of

their product and also help them to prepare for CE marking.

A formative usability study recently completed by MD-TEC found a very high level of acceptance among optometrists. The study identified a 100% completion success rate, with the highly experienced participants perceiving the device as a helpful aid to enable hand-free working, resulting in a direct positive impact on their usual clinical practice.

DHC Innovations will use this evaluation to assist with securing a CE marking and to highlight the impacts of the product to a wider NHS audience.

Enabling adoption and spread of innovation

As well as local relationship brokering, there are a number of national schemes supported and delivered by the AHSN Network which aim to remove the barriers to the adoption and spread of innovation.

The Accelerated Access Collaborative (AAC)

The AAC is a national group (made up of partners including NHS England, NHS Improvement, the government, NICE and patient representatives). Each year they select a small number of the innovations put forward for coordinated spread across all 15 AHSNs – known as ‘rapid uptake products’ – saving NHS money, benefiting patients and supporting national economic growth.

Innovation and Technology Payment (ITP) programme

Delivered by NHS England in partnership with the AHSNs, the ITP programme works to accelerate the adoption and spread of proven and affordable innovations.

The ITP removes financial and procurement barriers to support NHS adoption of innovative medical devices, diagnostics, and digital products – the products are available free to NHS organisations.

Evidence Generation Fund (EGF)

NHS England set up the EGF to support digital products to get the kind of evidence required for national roll-out through schemes like the ITP or AAC. There are currently three digital products that are part of this scheme.

The NHS Innovation Accelerator (NIA)

The NIA is an NHS England programme in collaboration with AHSNs across the country and aims to create the conditions and cultural change necessary for proven innovations to be adopted faster and more systematically through the NHS. As part of the NIA there is an annual call for applications from exceptional individuals representing innovations which address a clear need or challenge faced by the NHS.

For more information about these schemes, visit www.ahsnnetwork.com



Adopt and spread

CASE STUDIES

CHATHEALTH – PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR SPREAD

The ChatHealth secure platform allows two-way, confidential communication between secondary school students aged 11-19 and adolescent health teams, including school nursing. The text messaging service was co-designed with young people and health professionals to provide access to advice, signposting and support for a range of physical and mental health and wellbeing issues.

ChatHealth have been working with East Midlands AHSN since 2015. The AHSN has invested funding for adoption and spread to frontline teams across the UK as well as providing advice and assistance on intellectual

property, commercial development and marketing. ChatHealth is now used by 40% of nursing teams in the UK and is available to nearly 2 million young people.

Jimmy Endicott, Digital Development Manager at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust who pioneered the innovation, was selected as a 2019 NHS Innovation Accelerator (NIA) Fellow.

Being part of the NIA is recognition of the value that ChatHealth can have and provides a national platform for further adoption and spread. Since being selected as part of the NIA, ChatHealth has been represented at national events and has sparked the interest of senior NHS stakeholders.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

The HeartFlow FFRCT Analysis is a non-invasive diagnostic tool that aids clinicians in determining, vessel by vessel, both the extent of an artery's narrowing and the impact that the narrowing has on blood flow to the heart. By identifying which patients do and don't require intervention, clinicians can reduce unnecessary invasive testing, reduce healthcare system costs and improve patient quality of life.

West Midlands AHSN engaged with HeartFlow via the Meridian industry gateway and invited the company to the launch event for the Innovation

Technology Payment (ITP) hosted on behalf of NHS England. West Midlands AHSN assisted the company to engage with the region's NHS Trusts via their Membership Innovation Councils (MICs) and also supported them through the ITP application process.

Heartflow became part of the ITP in 2018 and has since been spread to 50 trusts throughout the country showing them the benefits of the product without a fee while it is part of the ITP programme.

We bridge the gap between healthcare and industry.

Our remit is to cross traditional sector boundaries and strengthen partnerships with industry so that more patients benefit from innovative technologies. We understand the challenges that industry and innovators can face when trying to access the NHS marketplace and our aim is to support you along the way.

Contact us

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