NIHR | HealthTech Research Centre



14 HRCs

















NIHR HealthTech Research Centre Network

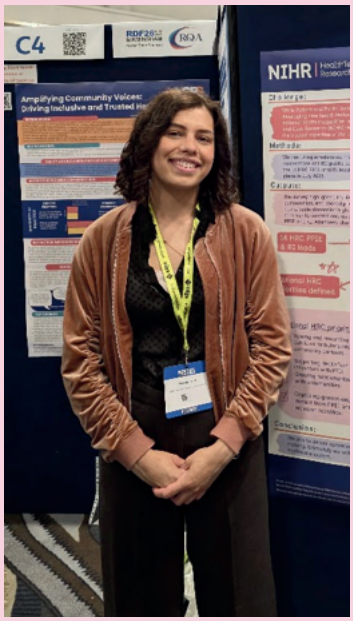
Annual Showcase 2026

14 HRCs. One Network.

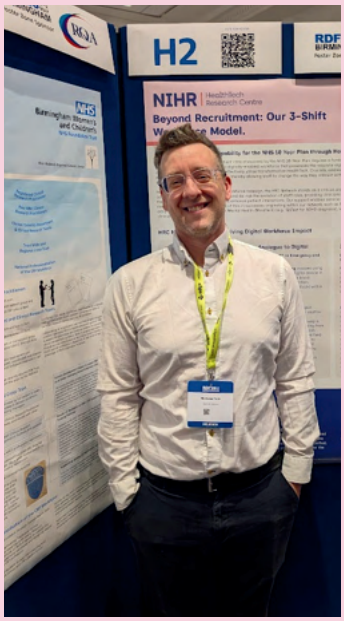
Greater impact together.

Inside this showcase

Welcome	03
14 HRCs. One Network	04
Progress so far	05-06
Working better together	07-09
Building connections	10-11
HRC Network industry hosted events	12
Responding together	13-14
Investing in our people	15-16
Putting our collective voice at the heart of HealthTech	17-18
Communications that connect the Network	19-20
Events from across the Network	21
Looking ahead	22-23









Welcome

A year of collective progress.

Two years in, the NIHR HealthTech Research Centre (HRC) Network has shown what is possible when 14 specialist centres work together. By bringing centres together, sharing expertise and building on common strengths, we are achieving more collectively than any one centre could alone.

Over the past year, we have strengthened cross-Network support through HealthTech-focused training, the Collaboration Challenge Fund (CCF), which provides pump-priming funding for projects combining expertise across HRCs, and opportunities to tackle shared challenges. These activities enable centres to access expertise, develop new approaches and deliver work that would be far more difficult independently.

We are also building relationships across the wider HealthTech landscape, working with industry and influencing policy to help technologies move closer to adoption. Through engagement with organisations including the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), we are bringing key stakeholders together to highlight challenges, explore solutions and address barriers that can prevent promising innovations from reaching patients.

Sustained adoption remains one of the biggest challenges in HealthTech innovation, but the Network is helping to influence this journey. By working collectively, we can bring a stronger national voice, respond to emerging opportunities and support initiatives that benefit the wider HealthTech community.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to build on this progress, deepen our partnerships with industry and other key organisations, and continue improving the support we provide to every HRC. We are grateful to the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) for the funding that makes the Network's work possible.

This brochure showcases how we are delivering on that investment and continuing to build our collective impact, helping more promising technologies reach the patients who need them. Thank you to everyone across the Network who has contributed to the successes of the past year and helped make this progress possible.

Professor Wendy Tindale OBE
Director, HRC Network



14 HRCs. One Network.

What happens when we work together?

14 specialists HRCs

Connected through one Network

Sharing expertise and insight

Collaborating across disciplines and regions

Generating collective action and greater impact

The HRC Network's federated model brings together the expertise of 14 specialist HealthTech Research Centres (HRCs), while allowing each to retain its own strengths, relationships and clinical focus.

In 2025/26, our 14 centres collectively:

- Leveraged **£13.95** in external funding for every **£1 invested***.
- Supported **804** industry collaborations, including **96** international partnerships.
- Supported **691** projects, involving more than **21,400** participants through research, public involvement and other forms of engagement.

*For every £1 invested, this comprises £3.85 in leveraged NIHR/DHSC funding, £8.87 in other non-commercial funding and £1.22 from industry. This is a measure of funding leveraged, not a return on investment.

Network numbers *so far.*

Connected

14

HealthTech Research Centres in one Network

12

Cross-HRC working groups

119

HealthTech Forum members

Collaborated

8

National policy contributions

30

SMEs supported through grant writing training

18

Training courses developed and delivered

Event highlights

Nov 25

HRC Brain Health Innovation Event

Apr 26

i4i Grant writing workshop

Jun 26

NHS ConfedExpo

Network numbers *so far.*

Developed

136

Colleagues undertaking training

3

CPD-accredited courses

8

Innovators supported through the Net Zero Catalyst

Shared

20

#HRC20Stories case studies

348

Attendees at HealthTech Forum events

2,600+

Network LinkedIn follower growth

Event highlights

Aug 26

HealthTech Forum: Strategic Communications in Life Sciences

Sept 26

PPIE & RI Away Day

Nov 26

HRC Network Annual Showcase

Working better together

The power of 14.

What can the Network achieve together that no HRC could achieve alone?

10
joint projects funded

£454k
awarded across Rounds 1 and 2

3+
HRCs working on every project

The **Collaboration Challenge Fund (CCF)** offers up to £50,000 in pump-priming funding to support projects that combine expertise across HRCs to tackle shared health and care challenges.

Collaboration Challenge Fund: Round 1 projects

HRC; Brain Health, Sustainable Innovation, Long-term Conditions

Diverse dementia diagnosis

This study tested remote memory assessments and finger-prick blood tests in a diverse population. It sits within a portfolio of ongoing projects aiming to validate community-based triaging of individuals at risk of cognitive decline and/or dementia. The long-term goal is to improve the diagnostic pipeline towards personalised care, while reducing the strain on healthcare systems. In order for this goal to be realised, it's crucial to validate any tools across a diverse research cohort. This project is the first to intentionally recruit with diversity being the main focus, therefore providing invaluable validation of these cutting-edge tools.

HRC; Long-term Conditions, Accelerated Surgical Care, Community Healthcare, Diagnostic and Technology Evaluation, In Vitro Diagnostics

682 social care technologies mapped

SyNAPSE built a working cross-HRC Network in older adult social care, and assembled a unified account of what technology has actually been deployed in care homes and domiciliary care. The clearest impact is on the newly commissioned three-year Digital Care Programme (DHSC/NHS England, to 2029/30, run by the Health Innovation Network). SyNAPSE's network map is helping that programme establish what is already underway and avoid duplication.

The power of 14.

Collaboration Challenge Fund: Round 1 projects continued

HRC; Sustainable Innovation, Long-term Conditions, Brain Health

Tackling frailty

Combined specialist expertise and public involvement to explore technology for physical and cognitive frailty, shaping future research. Additionally, this project has included patients and the public to understand the challenges they face and what aspects they consider to be critical in both addressing physical and cognitive frailty and giving critical insight into acceptability and appropriateness of novel technological interventions. The PPIE involvement has shaped both the review and also the acceptable design of future studies, which are in production thanks to this challenge funding.

HRC; Community Healthcare, Paediatrics and Child Health, Long-term Conditions

Oxygen readings that keep up

A new measurement technique designed to stay accurate when patients move, with benefits for children and people with tremors. Follow-on funding was secured from two sources to advance device development:

- University of Oxford MLST Award (£53k) to develop prototypes and build a motion artefact resilience testing rig.
- EPSRC IAA award (£28k) to create look/feel prototypes derived from paediatric user needs data, followed by a final trial-ready prototype.

What's next for CCF

Round 1
4 projects delivered

Round 2
6 projects,
ending March 2027

Round 3
Closed
November 2026

Working better together

12 working groups.



*Qualitative, Usability, Behaviours, Implementation Science & Human Factors

The Network's 12 working groups connect expertise across 14 HRCs to tackle shared challenges, influence national priorities and drive collaboration.

- **Securing funding:** QUBIS and Infections each secured almost £50,000 for cross-HRC projects supporting HealthTech implementation and improved respiratory infection diagnosis. Statistics & Health Economics is working with Imperial College London's Research Support Service on a national methodology fund. Technology-focused demand signalling pilot for the Women's Health group will support project prioritisation and funding applications.

- **Shaping policy:** Data and AI is contributing to the MHRA's AI Airlock programme and Respiratory has informed an NIHR funding call.

- **Partnerships with industry:** Infections has secured two SME collaborations and engaging with the NHS England AMR diagnostic programme while Paediatrics is gathering industry views on the barriers to engaging with child health technology.

- **Standardisation:** Sustainability is working towards a national strategy, having completed a skills and training audit across the HRCs.

- **External collaboration:** The dementia group connects HRCs with SPIN-D, Bridges Network+ and Dementia Carers.

Building the right connections.

> "The Network has been able to identify generic opportunities for growth, sustainability and collaboration, particularly with other parts of the NIHR infrastructure and the stakeholders needed for successful NHS innovation."
> **Peter Buckle – Strategic Collaborations Workstream Lead, NIHR HRC: NIHR HealthTech Research Centre: In Vitro Diagnostics**

HealthTech Forum

Launched by the HRC Network in 2025, the Forum is a community of researchers, clinicians, industry professionals and public contributors, sharing expertise and building networks to advance the UK's HealthTech landscape.

348
event attendees

119
forum members

12
collaboration spaces

A supportive community

A directory of HealthTech professionals and a series of events give members regular chances to connect and network.

Exchanging knowledge

From AI and Sustainability to PPIE and Effective Communications in Life Sciences Innovation, events have tackled high-interest topics.

Bringing key partners together

Sessions have showcased work from across the HRCs and partners including the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the Health Innovation Network and the Association of British HealthTech Industries.

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Developing the Futures site

Our online space on NHS Futures brings together the cross-HRC working groups, the Network's PPIE leads and the wider Forum community.

Working with partners.

Strategic relationships across the HealthTech ecosystem

NIHR Industry Hub

We support the Industry Hub who lead the NIHR's national delivery model for industry, connecting innovators with the NHS through infrastructure strands including the 14 HRCs.

NICE

We help industry understand how evidence is generated and assessed, creating a more consistent, streamlined route from evidence to national adoption.

Health Innovation Networks

We brought Health Innovation Network and HRC colleagues together to co-develop referral routes and a shared narrative, giving innovators clearer pathways with less duplication.

Research Support Service

We co-develop training for innovators, such as grant-writing workshops for Invention for Innovation (i4i) Product Development Awards, and champion new methods for research and development.

NIHR i4i

We co-develop FAST (Funding At the Speed of Translation) calls, consulting the HRCs so funding targets the greatest unmet clinical and care needs.

MHRA

We connect clinical engineering, industry and public contributor voices into MHRA advisory groups, and bring HRC data and AI expertise to the AI Airlock regulatory sandpit.

Supporting industry: NIHR Net Zero Catalyst

As the nation's largest funder of health and care research, NIHR recognises the key role HRCs play in driving sustainable health and care systems.

The HRC Network partnered with the NIHR HRC: Accelerated Surgical Care, the NIHR Climate, Health and Sustainability team and product design agency Pd-m to deliver the NIHR Net Zero Catalyst, giving HealthTech innovators hands-on support to embed sustainability early in product design.

Following a successful first CPD-accredited programme in Spring 2026, a new, expanded phase launched in Autumn 2026.

HRC Network hosted industry events.

The HRC Network has worked with HRCs and other partners to deliver industry focused events that bridge the gap between emerging SMEs and the wider HealthTech infrastructure. Events offer tailored, hands-on guidance and networking opportunities across industry, clinical, academic, the public, and innovation support.

Recent initiatives include: **Brain Health Innovation**, providing sector intelligence to help innovators navigate the HealthTech landscape; **Accelerating Sustainable Healthcare**, focusing on NHS Supply Chain priorities, sustainable cultural change, and the Net Zero Catalyst programme; and the **PDA Launchpad**, which delivers intensive guidance on regulatory strategy, commercialisation, and NIHR i4i funding applications.







"Brain Health Innovation and Accelerating Sustainable Healthcare are important because progress rarely happens in isolation. We are in exciting times with innovating breakthoughs at pace in these areas. By convening partners from across the ecosystem, these events help us identify common priorities, learn from different perspectives, and accelerate innovations that can deliver meaningful benefits for patients, communities, and the wider economy."

Professor Chris Fox, Co-Director NIHR HRC: Sustainable Innovation, and HRC Network Industry Workstream Lead.

Coordinated funding opportunities.

NIHR i4i FAST call: Respiratory care pathway

The respiratory working group shaped the scope for the September 2026 NIHR Invention for Innovation (i4i) FAST (Funding At the Speed of Translation) to support innovations addressing unmet needs across the respiratory care pathway, drawing on priorities identified through the HRC-led HERON project. This funding opportunity aimed to improve prevention, risk identification, diagnosis, monitoring, treatment, self-management and long-term care for eligible chronic respiratory conditions in both paediatric and adult populations within community, primary care, or home settings.

Additional supported i4i calls

- **March 2025** - Paediatrics
- **September 2025** - Multi-morbidity
- **April 2026** - Community care

MLTC funding opportunity

The NIHR Multiple Long-Term Conditions (MLTC) Cross-NIHR Collaboration and NIHR HealthTech Research Centre (HRC) Network are jointly funding four £30,000 projects (£120,000 total) to support collaborative HealthTech research addressing the challenges of multiple long-term conditions. The pump-priming funding aims to generate preliminary evidence, proof of concept, methodological innovations and policy insights to advance HealthTech research and adoption across NIHR infrastructure.

RTO Catapult

All HRCs were invited to become delivery partners for the Innovate UK RTO (Research and Technology Organisation) Catapult Grant Scheme. This allows HRCs to collaborate with RTO Grant winners to support the testing and prototyping of ideas, provide technical and regulatory advice, engage in R&D collaboration, and provide market analysis, and commercialization support. So far, HRCs have had funded requests from new SMEs totalling £60k.

One opportunity.

Collective expertise.

By bringing together expertise and collecting 35 case studies across 14 centres, we delivered a substantive submission to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) call for evidence for the NHS 10 Year Workforce Plan. The submission demonstrated how HealthTech can support the three shifts in the NHS: moving more care from hospitals into community and home settings; making better use of digital technologies and data to transform how care is delivered; and shifting the focus from treating illness to preventing it through earlier intervention and improved monitoring. Submitting as one Network earned explicit recognition from DHSC as an organised, impactful contribution and gave our findings far greater policy weight than separate inputs ever could.

Working together ensured we avoided duplicated effort, leveraged the strategic leadership of our Network and directly showcased how our combined portfolio builds workforce capability, maps future skill needs, and shapes new hybrid clinical roles.

Case study: DHSC workforce survey

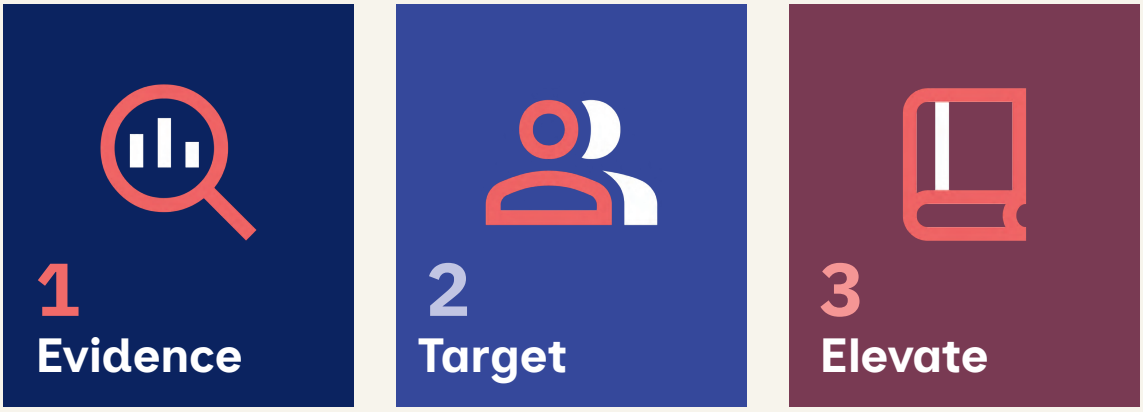
The challenge	**Standalone inputs from individual centres risk diluting our influence and duplicating work.**
Our response	**We led a unified national submission, coordinating 14 HRCs to deliver 35+ case studies into a single strategic response.**
The value	**Delivering a single collective submission earned DHSC recognition for its impact, proving how our combined scale amplifies the reach of every centre.**

Beyond directly shaping national policy, we actively translated these findings to share our collective impact across the wider health and care system. We developed the submission into a joint poster for the Research Delivery Forum (RDF26), highlighting our collaborative model and workforce insights to R&D leaders nationwide.

Understanding future needs.

By assessing expertise across all 14 centres, our skills gap analysis identified core national growth areas to drive targeted network training and resource sharing. We have actively turned these insights into action by:

- Tackling procurement, commercialisation, and Intellectual Property through a Commercialisation training series (launched July 2026 and set to delve further in 2027)
- Strengthening health economics capability through dedicated workshop days (held November 2025 and returning February 2027) and a bespoke webinar series (November–December 2026)
- Supporting a successful Collaboration Challenge Fund bid to develop Implementation Science training in 2027
- Partnering with the Sustainability Working Group to map centre needs in greater detail.



"To understand the current state of play regarding workforce and development activity, the challenges and the capacity to support new initiatives, a survey was conducted across all 14 HRCs. This informed our priorities for new initiatives including an induction package for staff joining HRCs and the development of online and face to face training sessions, drawing upon expertise from across the HRCs and their extended network. Looking ahead to 2027, our continued focus is delivering high-value opportunities that directly support HRC capacity-building, to best enable their success."
Olivia Brookes, Workforce Development Workstream Lead.

Connecting people, skills and knowledge to drive innovation.







The Network's shared training offer provides colleagues and industry across all 14 HRCs with consistent, high-quality professional development designed to close key capability gaps. By pooling resources and expertise nationally, we ensure teams have equal access to learning opportunities that build core domain knowledge and practical HealthTech skills.

Supporting HRCs

- NIHR Learn onboarding package
- Communications modules
- Centralised CPD directory
- Association for Project Management Qualification pilot

Supporting industry

- CPD accredited Network training
- Health Economics training day
- Commercialisation masterclass
- PDA grant writing workshop (Launchpad)

Involvement and inclusion across the Network.

Involvement & Inclusion activities are at the centre of HRC Network, to make sure that the public feeds into all of the work we do. From making sure our innovators understand Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE), to showcasing the work that HRCs are doing, we make sure that the strategic direction of the Network always has the public voice included.

Bespoke training for industry

Now live, our Involvement & Inclusion knowledge hub brings together resources highlighted by the HRCs to make sure industry knows the importance of embedding the public voice. We have developed two e-learning courses for industry and innovators, about the importance of PPIE & Research Inclusion (RI) in HealthTech development, and hands on advice about how involvement activities run. Check these out on our Involvement & Inclusion knowledge hub here.

Expanding our Patient and Public Advisory Group (PAG)

Raising the collective voice

Our pilot public advisory group (PAG) has been running since April 2026 feeding into the decision making and operations of the Network. The pilot group is recruiting new members, giving the opportunity for more public contributors from across the HRCs to feed into HealthTech at a national level.

Hear from the pilot PAG members about the work being conducted at the annual showcase online meeting on 12th November 10:30-12:00. We hope you join us!

PPIE across the HRCs.

HRCs are great at putting the public at the heart of their work. At the Network we wanted to highlight some of the different ways our HRCs are embedding the public voice and making sure that we keep listening to what the public really needs.

HRC in **Diagnostic and Technology Evaluation**

Different perspectives in product development
Working with an SME, HRC: Diagnostic and Technology Evaluation brought together different PPIE groups, to provide a broad, rounded view for product development. Read about their approach on our website as a best-practice case study.

HRC in **Cardiovascular and Respiratory Medicine**

Identifying and prioritising unmet needs
Collaborating with Evelina Children's Heart Organisation and the London Institute for Healthcare Engineering, HRC: Cardiovascular and Respiratory Medicine worked with young people and their families to understand unmet needs for heart health technology. Watch their video on our website.

HRC in **Brain Injury**

Engagement for the next generation
Engagement with schools created opportunities for the next generation of researchers to learn about NIHR, and acquired brain injury. HRC: Brain Injury reached over 3000 students to showcase the skills behind medical advances, from computer science and maths to engineering and clinical care.

HRC in **Sustainable Innovation**

Public voices in early decision making
Embedding public contributors in governance processes and prioritisation of projects, HRC: Sustainable Innovation has encouraged meaningful contributor involvement. Their work has strengthened decision-making, and ensured that patient benefit remains central to their activities

Learn more about the varied work that the HRCs do at our Involvement & Inclusion Showcase.

March 2027

Find out more on our involvement and inclusion page on our website.

Out on the road.



NHS ConfedExpo 2026

With technology at the forefront of the 10 Year Health Plan, we exhibited at the nation's leading health and care conference to showcase NIHR's investment and impact in HealthTech. Live demonstrations connected our **innovator partners** with NHS leads, and conversations on the stand opened doors to new strategic collaborations.

7,000+	2	6	2
delegates	exhibition days	HRCs on the stand	NIHR-funded innovators

Two NIHR-supported HealthTech innovators - **Strolll and JT-Rehab** - exhibited alongside the HRC Network. Strolll provided live demonstrations of their augmented reality headset and JTRehab's leg-strengthening S-Press device was showcased on the exhibition stand. Demonstrating their technologies to a large audience of NHS stakeholders, both innovators made valuable connections and set up opportunities to explore NHS implementation.

20 Stories. One Network.

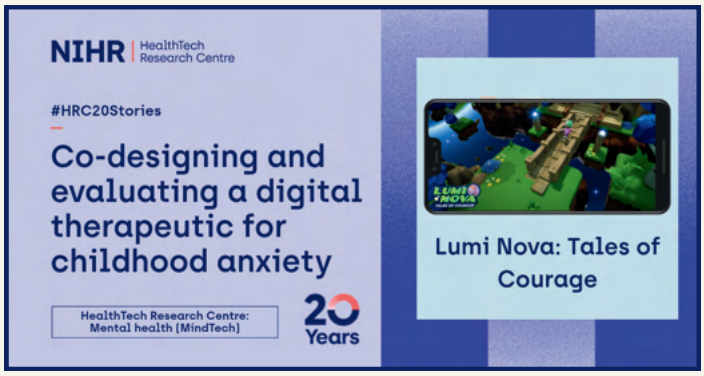
During NIHR's 20th anniversary year, #HRC20Stories has celebrated the people, partnerships and innovations supported across the HealthTech Research Centre Network.

Every story is different

Different HRCs | **Different technologies** | **Different stages of innovation**

Different patient populations | **Different types of impact**

Explore the full collection of #HRC20Stories









The story so far.

From workshops and summits to training days, our HRCs have brought innovators, clinicians and communities together throughout the year.

- **Brain Health Innovation**
  Brain Health | Nov 2025
- **PPIE workstream at the Innovation Observatory's Futures, Foresight and Horizon Scanning conference**
  Diagnostic and Technology Evaluation | Nov 2025
- **Digital Youth: Sprouting Minds**
  Mental Health (MindTech) | Nov 2025
- **Brain Injury Rehabilitation Workshop**
  Brain Injury | Feb 2026
- **Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) Diagnostics Event, Oxford**
  Community Healthcare | Feb 2026
- **Innovator Exchange**
  Sustainable Innovation | May 2026
- **Commercialisation Training Day**
  In-Vitro Diagnostics | Jul 2026
- **Working Age Innovation Event**
  Rehabilitation | Long-Term Conditions (Devices for Dignity) | Jul 2026
- **From first spark to NHS adoption**
  Cardiovascular and Respiratory Medicine | Sept 2026
- **SurgTech**
  Accelerated Surgical Care | Oct 2026
- **Evidence Generation for Digital Health Innovation**
  Devices, Digital and Robotics | Nov 2026
- **Sepsis Summit, Infections Working Group**
  Emergency and Acute Care | Dec 2026
- **Paediatrics and Child Health Technology Conference**
  Paediatrics and Child Health | Dec 2026

Building on what we have achieved together

01 **Continue connecting expertise**
Supporting more opportunities for cross-HRC collaboration.

02 **Strengthen collective responses**
Bringing the right expertise together around strategic challenges.

03 **Deepen partnerships**
Across NIHR, the NHS and the wider HealthTech ecosystem.

04 **Develop people and capability**
Continuing to invest in the skills and connections across the Network.

05 **Keep telling the story**
Celebrating the people, partnerships and innovations that makes us who we are.

> “Already, we’ve demonstrated what we can achieve by working together. Now, as the NIHR marks its 20th anniversary and technology sits at the centre of the government’s 10 Year Health Plan, we’re building on this momentum by deepening the partnerships that matter across NIHR, the NHS and industry, so more promising technologies reach patients faster. There’s an incredible opportunity to harness the very best of HealthTech, and the clinical and technical expertise across our 14 HRCs puts us in a strong position to drive it, backing the NHS, patients and clinicians who stand to gain the most.”

Nathaniel Mills, Chief Operating Officer, NIHR HRC Network

Upcoming events, initiatives and programmes.

January to March 2027 Quarter 4

- Event
- Training

February

- Dementia Networks+
- Women's Health Working Group launch
- Health Economics for non-health economists

March

- Involvement and Inclusion Showcase
- Cross-NIHR Collaboration Multiple Long-term Conditions Industry Event
- Net Zero Foundations
- APM certified Project Management training (PMQ)
- HealthTech Forum: Implementation Science

From April 2027

- HRC Network Accelerator
- Net Zero Catalyst 2

One *Network.*

14 HRCs. Greater impact together.

hrc-network@nihr.ac.uk.

NIHR | HealthTech Research Centre