



# Our support for innovators

## Overview:

**AHSNs support innovators to work with health and care systems to identify proven solutions to existing challenges. Wessex AHSN's industry and innovation team provide that support to innovators at any stage of their journey; from early ideas jotted on the back of an envelope through to licensed products with existing NHS sales.**

Our support is tailored to what each innovator needs and we work with our partners to:

- understand the needs of the wider NHS system and what innovations might be successfully adopted
- connect people and organisations matching the innovator's area of need
- share best practice across healthcare organisations
- identify locations and people to participate in trials, pilots and evaluations
- work with our colleagues across the other AHSNs on regional projects.

## The issue:

**The development of health technologies can be a long journey for innovators, requiring a thorough understanding of value proposition, relevant regulatory frameworks, research governance, supporting organisations and route to market.**

In aligning with the innovation pathway, we work across the value chain to help the adoption and spread of new technologies to improve patient outcomes and drive cost efficiencies within the NHS. We also introduce our insight colleagues to generate and evaluate the real world evidence needed for successful implementation.

## What we did:

**We increased the uptake of promising innovations across Wessex by embedding a coordinated, evidence-based innovation network across the healthcare environment.**

Alongside direct support for an average of four innovators per week, we held regular health innovation surgeries and hosted the Health Innovation Programme (HIP), an immersive and intensive course for innovators and SMEs starting or building a healthcare business. This programme helped innovators to understand, develop and explain the value of their proposition to the health and care system.

Our funding support service helped innovators and SMEs to find and apply for grants for product development or evaluation; for example, from the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI), National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the Health Foundation and Innovate UK.

We were integral to the development of the NHS Innovation Service (NIS), and within that platform we are the lead contractor providing the Needs Assessment Service (NAS).

We have also developed a partnership with Wessex Cancer Alliance to support earlier cancer diagnosis in line with the NHS Long Term Plan.



## Who we've supported:

### GenomeKey – Rapid sepsis diagnosis using bacterial DNA

We provided grant application advice, guidance on NHS diagnostics procurement, and connected the GenomeKey innovators to potential stakeholders, securing

- **£350k investment**
- **£125k Innovate UK grant**
- a successful CARB-X bid, leading to **\$3m funding** with an additional **\$6.5m** subject to deliverables.

### Behold.ai – Chest x-ray analysis using artificial intelligence technology, reducing specialist workload and speeding up lung cancer diagnosis

We supported Behold.ai to apply for the AI in Health and Social Care Awards for their Red Dot algorithm, securing

- **£1.4m grant funding.**

We convened a team of radiologists from University Hospital Southampton (UHS) NHS Foundation Trust who joined the bid leads and provided application and interview support. UHS will be one of the sites benefiting from the **£1.4m grant** and evaluating patient impact.

### Sooba Medical – Urinary stents and catheters developed to improve patient care and reduce financial burdens for healthcare services

We supported Sooba Medical to develop their business model and routes to market through the Health Innovation Programme, and assisted in their bid for an NIHR Product Development Award, culminating in

- **£1.2m grant funding.**

### S12 Solutions – Supporting the mental health crisis care pathway from point of referral for Mental Health Act assessment to admission to hospital

We supported S12 Solutions with implementation and evaluation. The company has grown from two to 20 staff and is in widespread use across the UK.

### Glyconics – Developing a two-second non-invasive diabetes test

We convened an advisory panel, leading Glyconics to win a significant grant of **£50,000**.

### PeRSo – A personal respirator hood developed in Southampton to reduce Covid infections amongst frontline NHS staff

We rapidly provided expertise and significant support to help the PeRSo hood inventors receive regulatory approval and the appropriate CE mark during a global shortage of personal protective equipment. Thousands of the hoods are now in use in the very highest risk clinical areas across the UK, with designs also created for care homes and developing countries.



## xim Lifelight - Contactless vital signs monitoring software

We partnered with NHS organisations and industry leads to explore where Lifelight could be of most benefit. Using our innovation adoption expertise and prior experience of Lifelight projects in primary and secondary care, we developed implementation plans for Lifelight at local, regional and national scale in various settings.

Lifelight is currently being piloted in isolation rooms within GP practices and care homes for rapid insight and evaluation. The pilots will capture learning from real world implementation, informing spread and adoption plans.

## What impact did it have?

On average, we see four innovators per week. From April 2020 to March 2022, our impact was:

- **180.5 jobs created or safeguarded economic growth of £56.4m in sales, grants and investment**
- **We helped Wessex-based NHS organisations and universities to win over £8m in external funding.**

**“The AHSN provides invaluable support to startups like GenomeKey. Through the AHSN we were able to access domain experts in the NHS and we gained a much better understanding of the patient pathway and how our technology might improve UK healthcare. The AHSNs have been supportive throughout the entire journey. Since winning the CARB-X grant we have set up our labs, expanded to a team of nine staff and made good early progress on our research and development. We can now set our sights on proving that the underlying technology works end-to-end and provides accurate bacterial identification and antimicrobial susceptibility testing, from whole blood, in a matter of hours. This will get us to our goal of saving lives and combating antimicrobial resistance.”**

**Chris Hays**  
Director, GenomeKey





“Wessex AHSN has been extremely proactive in helping us move forward, they spent time understanding our needs and through their extensive clinical network provided us with invaluable feedback that we will use in the development and eventual commercialisation of our innovative wound treatment device.”

**Keith Heaton**

Managing Director, Nexa Medical

“Wessex AHSN has been a great help, working with us from the start to identify a route through regulatory approval, signposting to potential procurement routes, and spreading the word through webinars, newsletters and personal contacts. They were instrumental in helping us formulate a testing plan [...] which the HSE approved.”

**Tom Baynham**

Chairman, Baynham's - manufacturer of the PeRSo personal respirator PPE device

► You can watch our innovator testimonials at [wessexahsn.org.uk/videos/show?tag=Industry%20and%20Innovation](https://wessexahsn.org.uk/videos/show?tag=Industry%20and%20Innovation)

## Strategic alignment



## Want to find out more?

🐦 @WessexAHSN

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