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Road to NHS ConfedExpo 2026



HSJ Information is delighted to be participating in the NHS ConfedExpo on 10-11 June. This year's agenda is centered around [8 core themes](#).

In anticipation of the event, we are providing insight and predictions into each of eight themes with our *Road to NHS ConfedExpo 2026* series, featuring expert input from across the HSJ Information portfolio.

This 5th entry in our series takes a close look at **Health and Prosperity**.

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Health and Prosperity: What's it worth?

Featuring contributions from



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Health and Prosperity: What's it worth?



Oli Hudson
Content Director
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The government and the NHS have increasingly positioned the health service as a primary driver of economic growth, focusing on keeping the population in work and leveraging the UK's life sciences sector.

This strategy involves a "pivotal role" for commercial leadership within the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to oversee investment promotion and major delivery programs that "unlock economic potential and improve the health and care services."



Annabelle Collins
Deputy Bureau Chief (Health Service Journal)
HSJ Information

Mental ill health is estimated to cost the UK economy billions of pounds each year through lost productivity, and pressure on public services, with ministers increasingly concerned about its impact on growth and workforce participation.

Former health secretary Alan Milburn is leading a government-backed review into the role employers can play in improving the health of the working-age population, including tackling mental ill health and supporting people to stay in or return to work.

Separately, Professor Peter Fonagy is leading a prevalence review examining the scale of mental health need, amid concerns demand for services is continuing to rise sharply.

Economic Impact of Health Investment

There is a growing shift in how health spending is viewed by central government, moving from a "cost centre" to an investment that generates supply-side benefits for the economy.

- **Labour Market Participation:** The Treasury and the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) have begun accepting evidence that specific health interventions, such as talking therapies, obesity treatments (GLP-1 inhibitors), and management of musculoskeletal issues, directly increase economic growth by enabling more people to remain in or return to the workforce.
- **Productivity Gains:** The government has set a target of 2% overall productivity growth year-on-year for the NHS, aiming to achieve this through "deep transformation" enabled by technology, modern facilities, and updated care pathways.
- **Regional Prosperity:** Local initiatives, such as those led by the Health Innovation Network (HIN), focus on the link between regional productivity and population health, arguing that digital health can reduce inequalities and empower local places for prosperity.

Collaboration with the Life Sciences Sector

The relationship between the NHS and life science is being formalised through national strategies and commercial agreements designed to foster innovation and revenue.

"The 10-Year Health Plan and Life Science Sector Plans have set ambitions to transform health services, to improve health outcomes, drive economic growth and establish the UK as a global powerhouse for health and life sciences."

Ben Bridgewater, Health Innovation Manchester

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Key areas of collaboration include:

- **Commercialising Data:** The NHS holds a vast trove of health data estimated to be worth upwards of £9bn. While maintaining "social license" and privacy is critical, some trusts are already working with pharma and life sciences industries to "further research and improve patient pathways" while generating revenue to fund patient care.
- **Infrastructure and Medicines:** Regional collaborations are replacing "ageing critical infrastructure" with modern facilities, such as a £290m aseptic unit in the Midlands designed to manufacture chemotherapy drugs more efficiently through shared expertise and economies of scale.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Leaders have called for utilising the "NHS brand in global terms, which for any business is like gold," to strengthen joint working with industry on projects ranging from major pharmaceutical negotiations to low-cost public health initiatives.

The Role of Innovation Networks

The 15 regional Health Innovation Networks (formerly Academic Health Science Networks) act as the primary bridge between the NHS, academia, and industry.

Their mandate is to help the NHS find and adopt innovative technologies quickly and at scale, which is viewed as essential for meeting the needs of both patients and the UK economy.



Julian Snape
Head of Consulting
HSJ Information

"Meaningful innovation happens when the NHS and industry work in genuine partnership, rather than in silos.

HSJ Information has been on the frontline of this, supporting and convening many of the conversations, insights and collaborations that are now becoming central to the sector's future and national healthcare development ."



Jack Serle

Senior Insights Correspondent (Health Service Journal)
HSJ Information

The government is desperate to see economic growth from the life sciences industries and sees the NHS as a key means to achieve this.

There are grand plans for leveraging the NHS' data, a resource of incomparable value, and restoring the UK's stature as a prime place to carry out research and clinical trials.

Industry and government are also continuing efforts to close between companies and the health service and foster greater collaboration and joint working.

Considerable, laudable work goes on through a multitude of local and national innovation networks and bodies, helping companies develop new products and interventions, and bring them to market.

But progress remains slow across much of this agenda because of the health service's variable levels of engagement and commitment at the local level. Government and its national agencies are working hard to amend regulations and improve processes. But efforts too often stumble at the provider level where engagement continues to be on a trust-by-trust or primary care network-by-primary care network basis.

This stems from its fragmented, federated structure at the local level and the intense service and financial pressures on staff and leaders.

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FURTHER READING ON HEALTH & PROSPERITY FROM THE HSJ INFORMATION PORTFOLIO

'Trusted' NHS must bring R&D benefits to the disadvantaged



Jonathan Pearson-Stuttard
Chair
Royal Society for Public Health



James O'Shaughnessy
Board Member
HDRUK

Realignment of R&D investment could generate a better return on R&D investment to UK plc by improving access to innovative medicines, reducing variations in health outcomes, reengaging people with the labour market, and improving healthy life expectancy, write Jonathan Pearson-Stuttard and James O'Shaughnessy.

HSJi Review: Innovation hotspots



Jack Serle
Senior Insights Correspondent
HSJ

The NHS needs to put its weight behind growing the economy, particularly by helping the life sciences sector prosper, according to the government. Here you can read more about both the government plans and priorities for the life sciences sector, and what they mean for NHS suppliers. *(HSJ Intelligence subscription required).*

Driving Value Through Biologics: NHS England's National Strategy in Action



Jyotika Singh
Senior Principal Consultant
HSJ Information

Biological medicines are among the biggest drivers of hospital medicines spend. With major products coming off patent, NHS England is pushing a "best value first" approach and the need for close working with the sector is acute.

In this edition of HSJ Information's Soundbites from the NHS, Senior Principal Consultant Jyoti Singh is joined by NHSE's Bhavana Reddy to discuss biologics and the national strategy in action.

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