NHS
Innovation Service

Commissioning and adoption stage

Understanding the NHS guide

Understanding the NHS

To understand more about the NHS and its ongoing development, read about the NHS Long Term Plan. Find out more about how the NHS works from The Kings Fund charity which works to improve health and care in England.

To have your innovation adopted into the NHS, you need to understand the complexity of the NHS and the stakeholders who will be involved in the uptake of any new technologies. Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are partnerships that conjoin the care provided by local councils, the NHS and other partners. There are 42 regional ICSs covering England. They embed collaboration between care providers with a regional focus, to ensure that communities receive joined-up support from local health and care providers.

ICSs comprise two components:

- integrated care boards (ICBs), which are statutory bodies responsible for planning and funding most NHS services in the area
- integrated care partnerships (ICPs), which are statutory committees that bring together a broad set of system partners (including local government, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, NHS organisations and others) to develop a health and care strategy for the area

Working through their ICB and ICP, each ICS has four key aims:

- improving outcomes in population health and health care
- tackling inequalities in outcomes, experience and access
- enhancing productivity and value for money
- helping the NHS to support broader social and economic development

Key to the design of ICS was the designation of smaller footprints within the geography of each ICS of 'systems' (500,000 to 3 million people), 'places' (250,000 to 500,000) and 'neighbourhoods' (30,000 to 50,000) which they are expected to work through. These sub-areas allow the drawing together of local healthcare organisations to focus on local needs and challenges.

ICSs have a statutory duty to support innovation adoption and spread. The Accelerated Access Collaborative (AAC) has co-developed a series of case studies with AAC partners on the implementation approaches taken in local ICSs to promote the adoption and spread of proven innovation.

Find out more about ICSs from The Kings Fund.