

The UK's Life Sciences Industrial Strategy: Digital Health Implications

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On August 30, the UK government published a [report](#) by Professor Sir John Bell of Oxford University providing a number of recommendations to government to ensure the long term success of the life sciences sector in the UK (Life Sciences Industry Strategy). This blog post summarises the key recommendations and observations made from a digital health perspective. As the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy notes, “[d]ata in the healthcare system provides crucial opportunities to fundamentally change the way health services are provided and developing digital tools, such as AI, are going to form an increasingly important segment of the life sciences sector”.

The Life Sciences Industrial Strategy makes a number of recommendations and ‘reinforcing actions’ of significance from a digital health perspective, including:

- the establishment of a ‘Health Advanced Research Programme’ to undertake large research infrastructure projects and high risk ‘moonshot programmes’ to create entirely new industries (a core principle of these programmes will be the NHS’ provision of secure and appropriate access to cradle-to-grave data sets and the piloting of technologies);
- the use of digitalisation and AI to transform pathology and imaging;

- the UK should work with industry and regulators to (i) establish a working group to evaluate the use of digital health care data and health systems, (ii) evaluate the safety and efficacy of new interventions, and (iii) help ICH modernise its GCP regulations;
- the National Data Guardian's and Care Quality Commission's data safeguards and standards should be implemented alongside a wider national conversation with the public to enable a true understanding of data usage and how such data is vital to improving health, care and services through research;
- NHS Digital and NHS England should set out clear and consistent approaches to data and interoperability standards and requirements for data access agreements;
- access to currently available national datasets should be accelerated by streamlining legal and ethical approvals;
- ePrescribing should be mandatory for hospitals;
- creating a new regulatory and commercial framework to capture the value of algorithms being generated using NHS data (this may include the development of 'sandbox' access to deidentified or synthetic data from providers such as NHS Digital, where innovators could safely develop algorithms and trial new regulatory approaches for all product types);
- the creation of 2-5 digital innovation hubs providing data across regions of three to five million people should be set up as part of a national approach to building towards full population coverage, to enable research to be done on meaningful data sets; and
- creating an apprenticeship scheme focused on data sciences and skills across the life sciences sector.

The Life Sciences Industrial Strategy contains many other recommendations of interest to those in the life sciences sector, including in relation to taxation, manufacturing support and the impact of Brexit of the movement of skilled people and regulatory approvals. The UK government is reviewing the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy and its recommendations.

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