

Developing a Rich Pipeline of Talent

Developing a highly skilled, future-ready workforce is essential to sustaining the growth of Northern Ireland's life and health sciences sector. Throughout 2025 and 2026, HIRANI has played a leading role in connecting industry, academia, healthcare and education to strengthen the region's talent pipeline. By establishing strategic partnerships and delivering targeted careers and skills initiatives, HIRANI has helped create new opportunities for learners, educators and employers.

HEALTH TECH SPRING

In 2025, HIRANI partnered with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) to deliver a Careers and Skills Roundtable at Titanic Belfast within our Health Tech Spring 2025 Life Science Support Day, attracting students and graduates from across Northern Ireland - including attendees from Omagh, Derry, Enniskillen, Banbridge, Dublin, Mumbai, and Belfast.

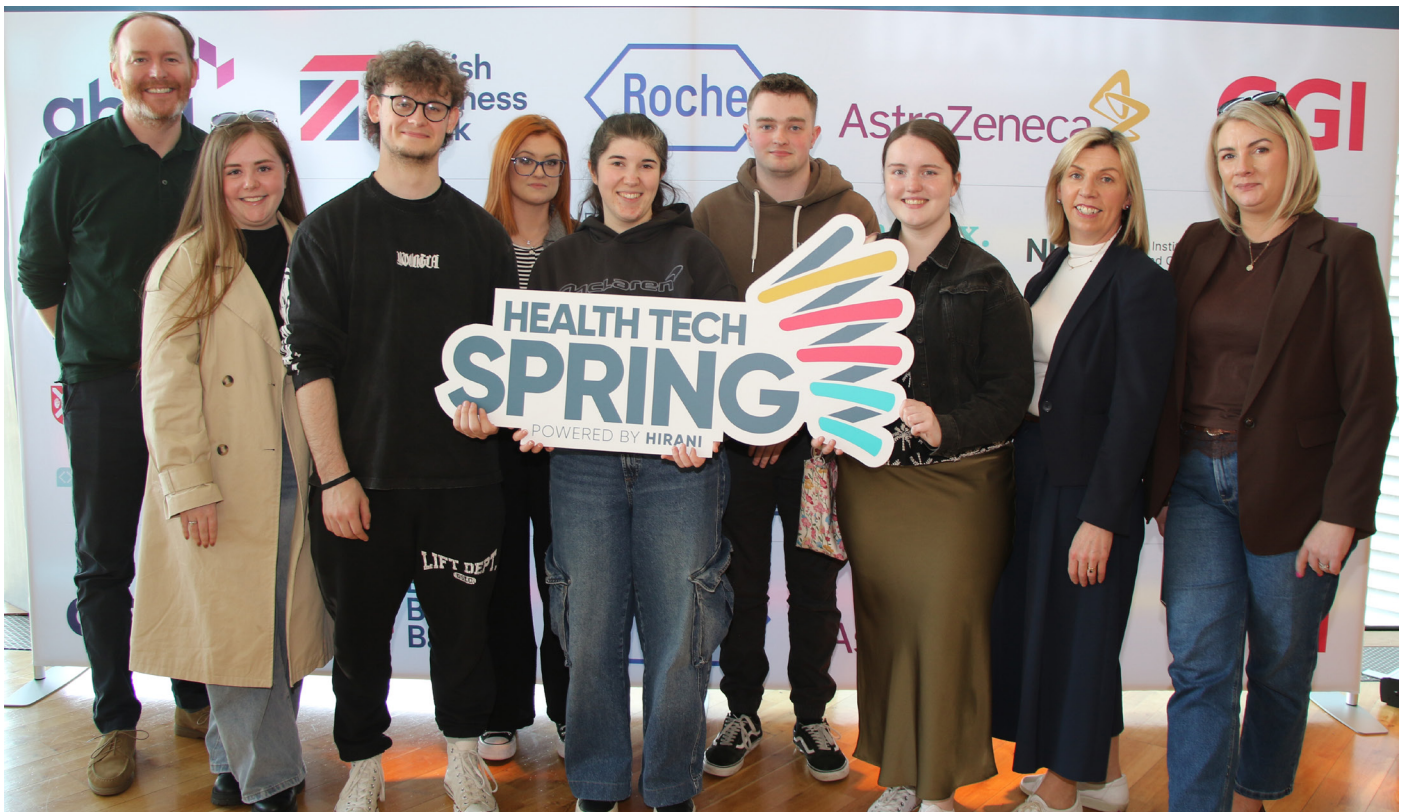
The event aimed to explore career opportunities in the life and health sciences sector through six interactive roundtable themes, including STEM skills, non-STEM roles, industry careers and apprenticeships, city and growth deals, presenting yourself and myth busting.

Facilitated by leaders in STEM, the event also featured an exhibition expedition with 35 participating organisations including Almac, Vanrath, HSCNI, Fast Technologies, and Invest NI.

A key goal was to highlight diverse routes into the industry, especially for students from non-traditional or non-STEM backgrounds.

Notably, of 16 attendees surveyed, 14 had never heard of HIRANI before the event—highlighting the importance of outreach.





Our goal was to increase awareness of the sector's career opportunities, including non-STEM roles and training routes such as apprenticeships.

The event was also an opportunity to tackle common misconceptions about the industry. One attendee commented they learnt "You can get a career in STEM without a STEM background" - demonstrating the power of myth-busting in real-time.

By providing access to employers and structured learning themes, the event aimed to equip students with career insights, personal development tools, and sector knowledge. Themes like "Presenting Yourself" and "City & Growth Deal Skills" aligned with future workforce development needs, including branding, communication, and civic innovation.

The exhibition space allowed for direct connections with 35 employers. Attendees particularly valued learning about organisations and career paths they hadn't considered before.

This event was so successful that we hosted it for a second time at Life Science Life Support in 2026. We expanded the themes to include CV presentation and profile building (LinkedIn etc), Entrepreneurship, Life & Health Sciences Career Opportunities & demystifying job titles, Progressing into Research (PhD etc, Clinical Research) and Science Communication & outreach-STEM Ambassadors etc.

With an extensive list of senior facilitators across the bio and medtech fields, it gave a thorough deep dive into the life and health sciences ecosystem in NI.

Students also had the opportunity to network with 35 exhibitors ranging from Almac, Invest NI, AstraZeneca, HSCNI, Visit Belfast, Roche and many more.

RESILIENCE

IN 2025 HIRANI was first approached to support the UK RESILIENCE programme to gain regional traction for its medicines-manufacturing training courses.

In May 2025, HIRANI and the RESILIENCE team jointly delivered an online information webinar for NI leaders and educators. The event attracted 30 attendees, confirming strong emerging interest in the programme. HIRANI recognised the value of bringing the full RESILIENCE team to Northern Ireland to support our growing life sciences ecosystem with advanced training and outreach.

Since the initial collaboration, HIRANI has signed an MOU with RESILIENCE, and we have worked closely with both RESILIENCE and the Almac Group to advance workforce upskilling, innovation, and ecosystem development. Between July and November 2025, the partnership held monthly planning calls, increasing in frequency leading up to the major in-person event.

RESILIENCE is the UK Centre of Excellence for medicines manufacturing skills, delivering industry-aligned, future-forward training and learning resources for academia, NHS teams, and industry.

Key offerings include:

- Free learning resources for members
- Benchmark training for upskilling, reskilling, and career development
- Discounted leadership accelerator programmes
- Loan of VR headsets and software for immersive biomanufacturing training
- Technical and soft skills content for integration into academic and training programmes
- Outreach tools for schools and colleges, promoting STEM career pathways

Notably, RESILIENCE recently won GOLD in the “Best Learning Technologies Project – Public & Non-Profit Sector” category at the Learning Technologies Awards, with judges praising its ambitious innovation and its impact addressing skills shortages.

In November at W5 Life, HIRANI partnered with UK’s RESILIENCE programme and Almac Group to host an interactive workshop to shine a spotlight on the latest talent development opportunities that RESILIENCE can offer us in the life sciences sector. The event focused on how we could build the biomanufacturing skills, STEM, and leadership training for GCSE-level upwards for diverse stakeholders across health-academia and industry and workforce in Northern Ireland

This event was aimed at companies working across medicines manufacturing in NI, educators (schools/colleges/universities), Health and Social Care Staff (those working in Advanced Therapies, Manufacturing, Blood and Transplant Services) and those involved in Life Science outreach and/or skills transitioning.

This event began with our Northern Ireland Chief Science and Technology advisor and Biotech entrepreneur Professor Helen McCarthy who spoke from a personal perspective of biomanufacturing and expressed excitement for what the RESILIENCE programme might mean for NI.

Gary Lye from RESILIENCE pitched the concept and vision of the programme to the audience. Then, Joann Rhodes, CEO of HIRANI, hosted a panel with RESILIENCE team, Safwan Akram, Kirk Malone, Neil Renault and Kate Barclay to hear all about what RESILIENCE can offer.



DEVELOPING A RICH PIPELINE OF TALENT

Richard Todd and Ivano Calao provided a live time demonstration of the RESILIENCE's interactive VR technology used in cutting-edge skills training. The VR sets also support a sustainability aspect, as it improves competence and with training without carbon.

Kate Barclay from RESILIENCE hosted a panel with Northern Ireland representatives of the ecosystem, Frances Weldon, Almac, Dan Corbett, Queens University Belfast and Deirdre Murray, South Regional College to hear about where we can focus our energy within the skills space in Northern Ireland.

The Belfast event attracted the most attendees of all events across the UK, showing the appetite for the programme.

Since this event, RESILIENCE team followed up with all the attendees to provide further information links on how to sign up to the programme and the team has already received 11 organisation signups from Northern Ireland for their free membership programme.

These 11 signups are spread across companies, colleges and the two NI universities.

RESILIENCE returned to Northern Ireland in February 2026 for a leadership accelerator programme workshop.

This leadership programme is aimed at early career leaders in industry and future leaders, late PhD, post-doctoral researchers and early career researchers in academia and industry.

You can find more information on the programme Here:
<https://www.resilience-skills.com/>

CAREERS & STUDENT EVENTS

HIRANI have established a strong presence at student career fairs, talks and networking events across Northern Ireland.

We exhibit each year at the Environmental, Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, Graduate Recruitment and Placement Fairs at both Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University.

As HIRANI continues to introduce itself within the student sector, the awareness of HIRANI's work is still spreading throughout this cohort.

These career fairs provided valuable face-to-face opportunities to explain our role, promote the work HIRANI does, and build initial connections with students.

At these events, we average receiving 40 HIRANI weekly newsletter sign up's and 30 expressions of interest in hearing more about our Life Science Support Day student skills session which takes place each year at our annual Health Tech Spring conference.



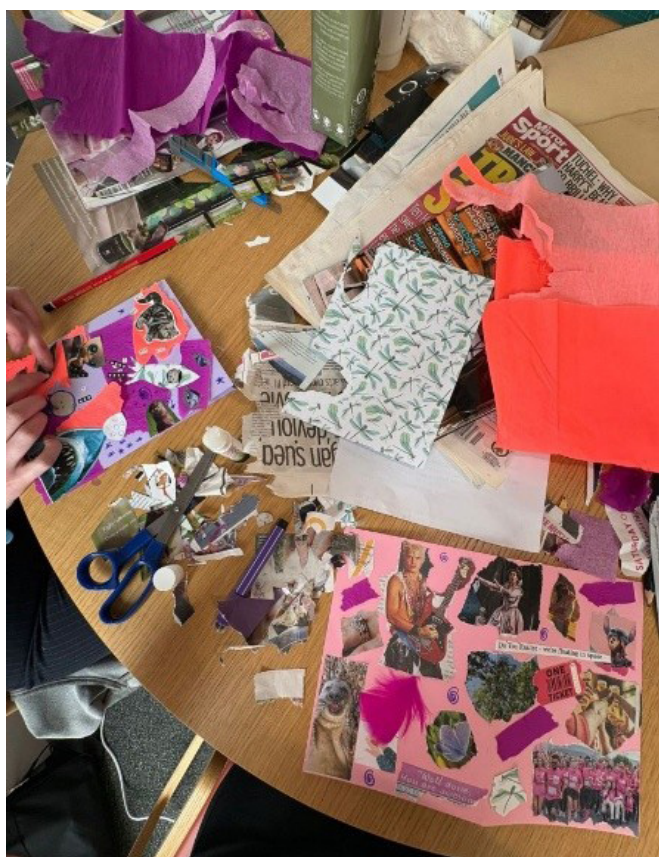
Recently, HIRANI also have exhibited at a unique event designed specifically for PhD students, bringing together individuals and organisations that align with their research, skills, and future career opportunities. We have seen a growing demand from both students and organisations for meaningful engagement at the PhD level.

With more than 50% of PhD graduates pursuing careers beyond academia, it is essential to showcase the wide range of opportunities available across both academic and non-academic sectors.

Notably, the majority of organisations and individuals attending are PhD alumni, offering valuable peer insight and allowed us to establish the organisation further with PHD students stepping into the world of life and health sciences work.

Additionally, as a recent Co-CREATE partner, we joined day one of the Co-Create Ireland Summer School.

This programme welcomed eight newly recruited PhD researchers who will be joining the Co-Create network across the National College of Art & Design, Belfast School of Art, University of Limerick, and Atlantic Technological University over the next four years.



The day connected researchers, partners and collaborators from across sectors to explore collaborative approaches to research and innovation.

Through interactive sessions, shared learning, and practical discussions, the programme focuses on co-creation methodologies, inclusive research practices, and building sustainable partnerships that generate meaningful impact. It offers a space to exchange ideas, develop new skills, and strengthen connections across the research and innovation

community.

Our continued engagement with students is helping to raise awareness of both HIRANI and the wide range of opportunities available within Northern Ireland's life and health sciences sector.

By meeting students face-to-face throughout their academic journey, we're building relationships early and encouraging them to stay connected through our events, skills sessions and communications.

The growing number of newsletter sign-ups and expressions of interest shows that students want to remain engaged beyond the initial conversation. As awareness of HIRANI continues to grow, we're seeing increasing opportunities to support students as they move from education into employment.

Our engagement has also strengthened relationships with universities and colleges. Staff who were previously unfamiliar with HIRANI are now helping to promote our activities, extending our reach and creating new opportunities to connect with students across different disciplines.

Taken together, these activities are helping to build a stronger, more connected talent pipeline for Northern Ireland's life and health sciences sector and reinforcing HIRANI's role in supporting future skills, collaboration and workforce development.