

The Northern Ireland opportunity

We are witnessing a change across the Health and Life Sciences sector in Northern Ireland towards system-level transformation, enabling health innovations to reach patients faster whilst unlocking better outcomes for our health service, industry and economy.

Life and Health Sciences is Northern Ireland's fastest growing sector. Worth >£2B GVA and employing ~200,000 people in the region.

Deepening relationships with regulators including MHRA, FDA, and NICE, and global industry partners such as AstraZeneca and Roche Diagnostics.

Announced in April, Northern Ireland's life sciences sector is set to benefit from closer ties with the UK's medicines regulator following the announcement that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is establishing a new hub in Belfast. Also in April 2026, HIRANI along with the Department of Health and Department for the Economy NI signed an MOU with Astrazeneca which will see over a million pound investment in NI respiratory services with more projects planned.

We are unique

A unique regulatory position with dual EU/UK market access that reduces the barriers to EU and enables us to test-bed life science supply chains and system-wide change. This recognises the unique opportunity which represents a proportionate UK dual regulatory offer with NI alongside GB's potential regulatory divergence.

NI companies such as Neurovalens, Be-secur, Axial 3D are achieving FDA clearance with pre-determined software change control approval for their algorithms and leading the way for recognition of the excellent standards within the region.





NI Indigenous and global industry

NI has over 250 life science companies and is home to the only indigenous pharmaceutical manufacturing company in the UK, Craigavon based Almac Group who recently announced a record year of growth with revenue rising to £1.1 billion, profit increases by 16%, and global workforce growth to more than 7,900 as long-term investment continues to drive expansion.

Almac supports R&D in all top 20 pharma, with Global Diagnostics and Drug Discovery divisions. They reinvests all profits back into the company to support long-term growth. These latest results mark the fifth year of Almac Group's £500 million+ global capital investment programme, first announced in November 2021. Since then, employee numbers have increased by more than 2,000, with over half of these new roles created in Northern Ireland

Other indigenous diagnostic and vaccine R&D bio-manufacturers Randox and Norbrook; and International investors: Terumo, Teva, and Stryker.

Biotech/Medtech ecosystem

There is growing recognition of the need to harness our collective strengths — a thriving medtech and biotech sector who raised over £60 million investment in the last year with

- 10+ scaling medtech and digital health sector SMEs worth (£10-£50million each) – Cirdan, TG Eakin, Axial 3D,

ARC Regulatory, Cumulus B-Secur, Neurovalens, Trucorp, Eolas & Diaceutics, Amply, Geno-Me, BlokBio, Trimedika, Sonrai, EXrt, Proaxis, PulseAI – for Diagnostics and digital analysis,

- 10+ Biotechs: Fusion Ab, Millicent, Crism, Re Vana Therapeutics, Klas Therapeutics, Diabeta labs, Stimoxigen, Finn, CV6, Xaphe, Errigal, Antigenesis – Re-Vana have recently announced a \$1B development deal with Boehringer for their ophthalmology delivery technology
- ~75% of spin-outs QUB and UU in the broader HLS sector.

Northern Ireland is beginning to benefit from longer-term investment strategies which are converging with Northern Ireland's strengthening triple helix of industry, academia, and government. These are filling the gaps which unlike GB, NI has not benefitted from past R&D structures such as Health Innovation networks or Biomedical Research Centres or a local sector-specific investment funds (like Gritstone) evidenced by:

The £7.5M Health and Life Sciences Launchpad, which has funded 35 SMEs and supported over 100 to accelerate to market in two years and provided an effective model of innovation support, combining targeted funding with people and place-based ecosystem development. This has already resulted in a further £20million follow-on investment, but is due to end in 2026 – and there is not a dedicated NI follow-on programme.

As part of Launchpad and following a successful pilot scheme in 2024 and an official launch in 2025, the HIRANI Mentoring

Programme sponsored by Roche Diagnostics launched in June 2026, offering innovators and Health and Life Science leaders an opportunity to engage in structured, high-impact mentorship. Over 300 mentoring hours and more than 90 advisory clinics have been delivered during the Launchpad programme, demonstrating the depth of engagement required to support life sciences innovation.

Infrastructure Investments

Northern Ireland's City and Growth Deals £1.2Billion represent a once in a generation investment programme designed to accelerate regional economic development, productivity and innovation.

£250M of this investment in digital health, clinical trials, diagnostics & personalised medicine for place-based innovation-led growth at their core, life and health sciences are a flagship priority sector across all four deal regions.

The Future Medicines Institute (FMI) is a new industry-led research hub for Life and Health Sciences hosted by Queen's University Belfast (QUB). A consortium of indigenous Life science companies, including Almac and Randox, ProAxis, Fusion Antibodies, Diaceutics, Sonrai working alongside QUB, Ulster University, and HIRANI have developed a model to create a new translational research unit for biomarker development that has been fully operational since September 2025. The FMI drives collaboration, cluster development and engagement, enhancing research and development opportunities for commercial and academic partners.

Six fully supported research hubs are available through FMI, with further access to Core Technology Units providing Genomics and Imaging capabilities and capacity.

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) represents the largest commitment, with more than £850 million in investment. Life and health sciences are central to its innovation ambition, particularly through projects such as Momentum 1/0: secure connected cyber resilience capabilities; iREACH Health and the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology. These facilities are designed to enable clinical research, medical technology development and real-world validation in partnership with the NHS, universities and industry, reinforcing Belfast's position as a hub for advanced clinical trials, cyber, digital health and precision medicine.

In the Derry~Londonderry and Strabane City Deal, life sciences investment is closely linked to regional regeneration and workforce development. More than £250 million is being directed towards innovation, digital and health projects,

including the Cognitive Analytics and Digital Robotics Innovation Centre (CADRIC). CADRIC is a research-led, industry-facing project that will supercharge collaboration with industry to harness technologies in areas such as AI, data analytics, machine learning, digitalisation, robotics and automation.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal adopts a differentiated but complementary life sciences focus, with flagship investments such as the Centre for Food and Drug Discovery at Ulster University Coleraine Campus. This centre strengthens research capability across human, animal and agrifood health, supporting the development of new therapeutics, diagnostics and bioactives while aligning scientific excellence with local economic strengths.

Clinical Trials & Research facilities

Health and Social Care NI R&D division also supports two clinical research facilities in Northern Ireland. These are dedicated and purpose built facilities with specialist clinical research and support staff, conducting commercial and non-commercial experimental medicine studies.

The HSC R&D Division have received funding of £12.6 million to deliver on the objectives of the VPAG Investment Programme in Northern Ireland by establishing a Commercial Research Delivery Centre (NI CRDC). With flagship investment in the Primary care research delivery centre led by Prof Nigel Hart that kicked off in 2026.

The funding from the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing, Access and Growth (VPAG) Investment Programme will be used to bolster already existing clinical research delivery infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland.

The Wellcome Trust-Wolfson Northern Ireland Clinical Research Facility (NICRF) provides state-of-the-art facilities to support clinical research in Northern Ireland.

The Clinical Translational Research & Innovation Centre is a state-of-the-art clinical research facility (CRF), and not-for-profit company based on the Altnagelvin Hospital site in Derry~Londonderry and is part of the UKCRF network of 54 clinical research facilities across the UK and Ireland.

C-TRIC is a regional asset that facilitates collaboration between universities and life and health science companies with the NHS, enabling clinical research aimed at improving patient care in our community. C-TRIC's unique infrastructure and situation on a major acute hospital campus (Altnagelvin

Hospital) optimise the potential for high quality clinical research including clinical trials across a broad range of clinical specialties.

Integrated Health and Social Care – Reset plan

Encompass is a clinically and operationally led integrated care record system. Roll out completed in Mat 2025 and it allows for a single digital care record for every citizen in Northern Ireland who receives health and social care and is a first for the UK.

The completed ENCOMPASS rollout and the Department of Health Reset Plan, with explicit commitments to cross-sector collaboration.

The NI Health and Social Care reset plan aims to stabilise, reform, and deliver a sustainable, neighbourhood-centred system while addressing a £600 million funding gap and improving efficiency. The plan builds on the three-year strategic plan which focuses on Stabilisation, Reform, and Delivery

Its primary goal is to create a neighbourhood-centred system of care, bringing services closer to patients' homes, tackling health inequalities, and supporting individuals to manage their own health and well-being and recognises that health outcomes are influenced by broader social determinants, including employment, housing, and education