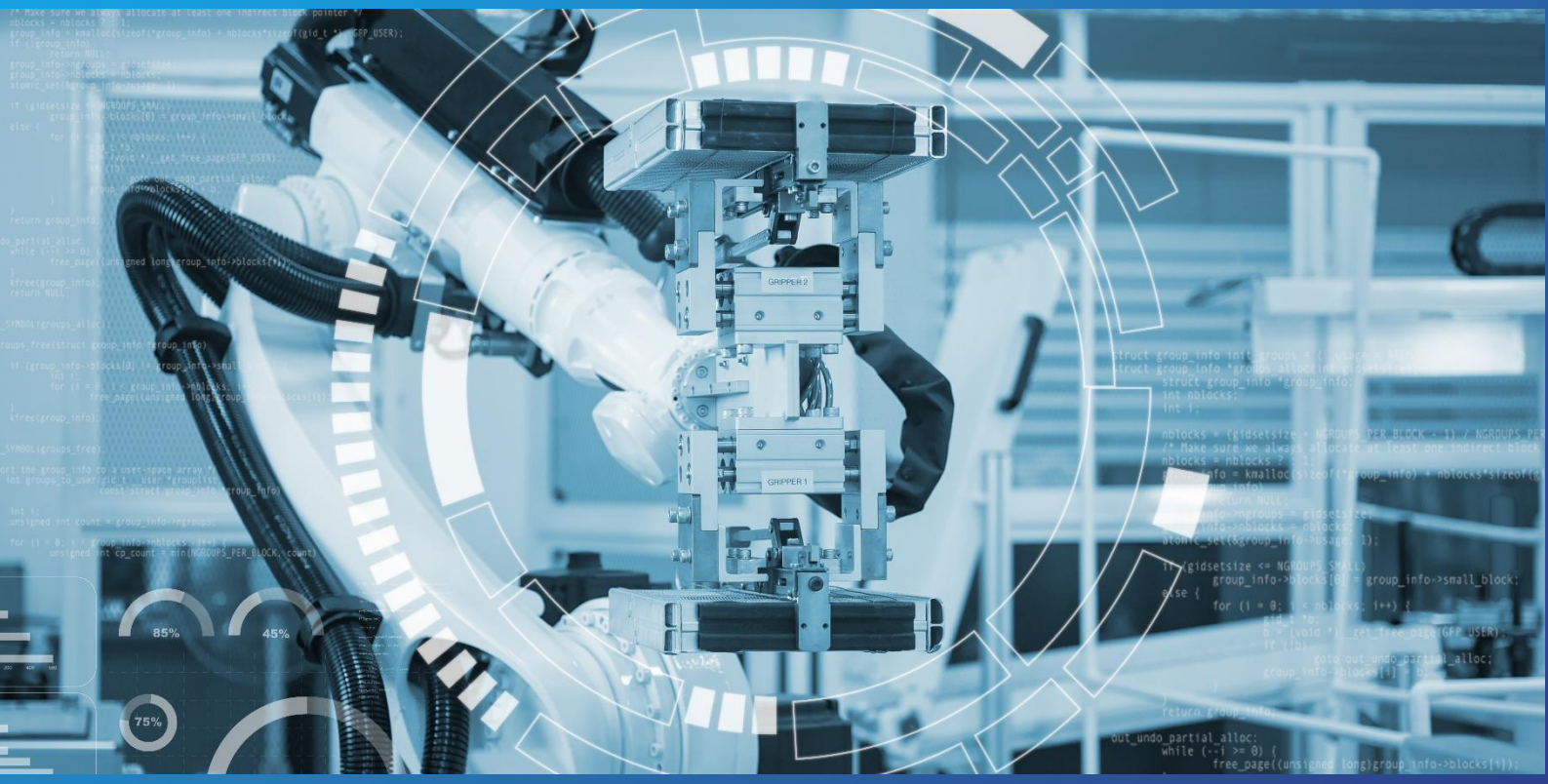
Life Sciences Sector Plan

Summary

By PLMR Healthcomms
July 2025



PLMR HEALTHCOMMS
communications + impact

PLMR
HEALTHCOMMS

Contents

1. Introduction
- Aims and Objectives
2. Ease, speed, and long-term stability for success
- Enabling world class R&D
- Making the UK and outstanding place in which to start grow, scale and invest
- Driving health innovation and NHS reform
3. Supporting our frontier industries
4. Supporting the UK's city regions and clusters
5. Creating an enduring partnership with business
6. Metrics and Accountability

1. Introduction

Although scheduled for June, the Life Sciences Sector Plan (LSSP) was today (Wednesday 16 July) launched, setting the policy direction for the Life Sciences sector for the next decade.

Developed in line with the 10 Year Health Plan and the Industrial Strategy, the LSSP is the key strategy document for the pharmaceutical and MedTech industries (the Life Sciences sector being 1 of the 8 strategic sectors selected by the Government for specific support). The LSSP provides the policy structures, ambitions and metrics aimed to drive reform of the sector, to enable growth, and to support the NHS and the economy.

The plan aims to ensure that:
• By 2030, the leading Life Sciences economy in Europe.
• By 2035, the third most important Life Sciences economy globally, behind the US and China only.

The six headline actions from the plan are:

- Establish a Health Data Research Service (HDRS) with £600 million investment to create an advanced, AI-ready health data platform integrating genomic, diagnostic, and clinical data.
- Cut trial approval times to under 150 days by implementing regulatory reforms and doubling commercial trial participants by 2029.
- Invest up to £520 million in manufacturing via the Life Sciences Innovative Manufacturing Fund to attract global investment and enhance UK health resilience.
- Accelerate regulation and market access by making the MHRA faster and enabling joint approval pathways with NICE and international reliance models.
- Simplify NHS procurement through a Rules Based Pathway and Innovator Passport to speed up MedTech adoption.
- Partner strategically with industry to secure major collaborations annually and help high-potential UK companies grow and stay headquartered in the UK.

Aims and Objectives

The plan aims to meet specific targets across the next decade, including:

1. Investment in commercial R&D: The UK will have more investment in commercial R&D than any other European economy by 2030, and more than any other country globally (excluding the US and China) by 2035.

2. Access to scale-up capital: More scale-up finance will be raised by Life Sciences businesses in the UK than anywhere else in Europe by 2030, and more than any other country globally (excluding the US and China) by 2035. Alongside measuring the volume of capital raised, government will also measure the:

- Number of UK Life Sciences companies with a valuation of over £10 billion.
- Number of Life Sciences companies on the FTSE 350.
- Number of Life Sciences Initial Public Offerings (IPOs).

3. Patient access: By 2030, the UK will be one of the top three fastest places in Europe for patient access to medicines and MedTech. To achieve this, government will measure:

- The speed with which products are licensed and/or registered on the UK market in comparison to other European markets.
- The timeline and cost to achieving appropriate Health Technology Assessment
- (HTA) in England.
- The uptake and widespread adoption of products in the NHS in England.

4. FDI: The UK will secure more Life Sciences foreign direct investment (FDI) than any other European economy by 2030, and more than any other country globally (excluding the US and China) by 2035.

The Plan also commits to not "repeating the mistakes of past strategies that offered warm words without concrete actions" and includes a metrics table (see section 6) with which to hold itself to account.

However, many of the initiatives are included without detailed delivery plans, and, as such, there remains a lack of clarity on how each of the actions will be delivered in the short-medium term.

For the full list of 33 'actions', the metrics for delivery, and the timelines, please see the full plan. The summary of these are found below.

2. Ease, speed, and long-term stability for business

The Plan sets out that the life sciences sector contributes to the economy in six main ways:

- Direct employment of over 300,000 people across the UK.
- Indirectly boosting productivity by improving population health.
- Offering high-value jobs that support national productivity.
- Attracting significant investment in R&D.
- Driving valuable exports, particularly in medicines and MedTech.
- Enabling long-term economic growth through innovation.

Despite its strengths, stakeholders within the life sciences sector identify persistent barriers across three areas.

In science and research, challenges include the slow and costly set up of commercial clinical trials and inconsistent access to curated NHS data.

In the business environment, companies face difficulty accessing growth capital, slow export support, high industrial electricity costs, and planning hurdles.

For innovation adoption in the NHS, issues include poor performance of the MHRA, variable uptake of technologies, under-valuing of economic benefits in pricing, and inconsistent deployment, even when innovations are proven cost-effective.

To overcome these challenges, the government have set out three strategic pillars:

1. Enabling world-class R&D.
2. Making the UK a globally attractive place to scale and invest.
3. Driving health innovation alongside NHS reform.

Enabling World Class R&D

The UK Government's life sciences strategy begins with a bold commitment to strengthen research and development (R&D) capabilities across the full innovation pipeline, from fundamental science to clinical application.

This first pillar of the Sector Plan focuses on improving discovery science, accelerating translational and commercial research, modernising health data infrastructure, and embedding governance reforms to align health and economic priorities.

The UK have committed to investing at scale in discovery and curiosity driven science, recognising its critical role in generating new knowledge and technologies. This includes a 10-year funding commitment to the Laboratory of Molecular Biology to support foundational research and talent development, with the aim to maintain the UK's reputation as a hub for groundbreaking, early-stage innovation.

To bridge the gap between discovery and real-world application, the government will invest in a new pre-clinical translational hub and up to three research networks targeting key health areas (with at least £30mn of Government funding). These initiatives will reduce fragmentation and help industry develop data rich, regulator ready innovations. A new national strategy to reduce reliance on animal testing will also be published in due course.

Commercial clinical trial reform is a key priority, with set up times for interventional trials to be reduced to under 150 days by March 2026. NHS Trust performance will be published monthly, and trials will expand into community and out of hospital settings. Expansion of commercial clinical trials capacity will also be via funding from the Voluntary Pricing and Access Growth (VPAG) Investment Programme.

Support for SMEs will be scaled up via enhancements to the UKRI Biomedical Catalyst and the creation of a new NIHR R&D Innovation Catalyst. These initiatives will provide milestone-based funding, link innovators to NHS testbeds, and support the real-world evaluation of AI technologies- particularly where current IT infrastructure poses a bottleneck.

The Government will establish a new Health Data Research Service (HDRS) by 2026, providing unified, AI-ready access to national datasets, including general practice, hospital, prescribing, pathology, radiology, and genomic data. Legislative and policy changes will streamline data access while maintaining public trust and cyber safeguards.

Enabling World Class R&D

Major expansions to existing datasets are planned to support the delivery of a comprehensive genomics ecosystem, maximising patient benefit and to support genomics contributing to half of all health interventions by 2035.

Our Future Health will grow to five million participants and support 50,000 annual trial participants by 2030, backed by £354mn of Government support.

UK Biobank will integrate proteomics and multiomics for all 500,000 participants. *Genomics England* will grow its dataset to over 500,000 genomes, including a new adult population sequencing programme.

The NHS Genomic Medicine Service will support real-world testing and adoption of new genomic tools.

To align R&D with public value, the government will redirect funding towards prevention and long-term conditions. The Office for Strategic Coordination of Health Research (OSCHR) will create a UK-wide research portfolio database, and a national clinical trials registry will improve transparency. The NIHR will adopt a dual mandate for health and growth, with new governance structures and performance metrics.

Artificial Intelligence is seen as transformative for the life sciences sector. With AI-focused assets like Dawn and Isambard-AI, and through the AI Opportunities Action Plan, the UK will support "TechBio" companies combining biology and data science. These firms will benefit from aligned funding, regulatory reform, and skills development.

Making the UK an outstanding place in which to start, grow, scale and invest

The UK Government has committed to making the UK a world-leading environment for Life Sciences businesses to grow and invest. It has set out a five-point strategy to address historic barriers to capital, scale-up, and market access.

1. **Finance:** £4bn in new funding via the British Business Bank will unlock £12bn in private capital for high-growth firms. Enhanced transparency on venture capital returns will build investor confidence. New export and account management services will support global trade, especially for SMEs.

2. **Skills:** Skills England will align training with industry needs in areas such as AI and regulation. New Turing Fellowships and Global Talent Taskforce initiatives will attract top international talent and support underrepresented groups, including STEM returners.

3. **Manufacturing:** The £520mn Life Sciences Innovative Manufacturing Fund will support domestic production of innovative medicines, MedTech, and diagnostics. Strategic projects over £250mn will receive bespoke support. This also addresses supply chain resilience through a new Supply Chain Centre.

4. **Net Zero:** The Government will implement the NHS Net Zero Roadmap, balancing sustainability goals with SME capacity. Initiatives like "Design for Life Roadmap" will accelerate a circular economy in MedTech by 2045.

5. **Strategic Partnerships & Retention:** At least one new strategic partnership will be landed annually. A dedicated service will support 10-20 UK Life Sciences firms to scale and remain headquartered in the UK, backed by the full implementation of the Harrington Review.

The Government's commitments signal a significant step-change in how the UK supports the growth and global reach of its Life Sciences sector. With new investment flowing into advanced manufacturing, finance, talent, and sustainability, there is a clear opportunity to align with a national agenda focused on health innovation and economic resilience.

This aims to create a favourable environment to scale innovation, access public-private partnerships, and engage with health system reform. Areas such as AI, genomics, Net Zero delivery, and export growth are positioned as national priorities, offering a platform to demonstrate value, secure investment, and strengthen engagement with the NHS and Government-backed initiatives.

These strategic pillars create potential pathways to funding, regulatory innovation, and market access, offering a platform for organisations to demonstrate their contribution to both health and economic outcomes.

PLMR HEALTHCOMMS

Driving health innovation and NHS reform

The Life Sciences Sector Plan aims to set out a more joined-up approach between health and industrial policy, positioning innovation as central to NHS reform.

For the first time, the Government has aligned its industrial life sciences strategy with health system priorities, aiming to ensure that new medicines, diagnostics, and technologies don't just reach the UK market, but are adopted at pace and scale across the NHS.

A major focus is on speeding up access. The Plan outlines steps to make regulation faster and more predictable. The MHRA will receive investment to accelerate its digital transformation, use AI in approvals, and reform its approach to devices and AI-driven tools. A new domestic route to UKCA certification will be introduced, and reliance on international approvals will be formalised by 2026.

NICE processes will also be streamlined, with more flexible pricing and dynamic guideline updates. Together, NICE and MHRA will improve alignment to cut delays and offer a single point of entry for scientific advice.

However, the Government acknowledges that approval alone doesn't guarantee adoption. To tackle persistent variation in uptake, the Plan includes actions to simplify procurement and promote national consistency. This includes expanding NICE appraisals to cover some MedTech, introducing a Single National Formulary for medicines, and launching an "Innovator Passport" to reduce repeated evaluations.

New tools like the HealthStore will provide central access to approved digital apps, while biosimilar adoption will be stepped up to release savings for reinvestment.

Commercial structures will be updated to support these goals. NHS Supply Chain and procurement teams will be given a growth mandate, and innovation metrics will be improved through an updated scorecard. Regional Health Innovation Zones will be established to test and scale new models of commissioning, evidence generation, and adoption.

Overall, the Plan aims to remove friction from the innovation pipeline, to speed up regulation, reducing duplication, and create clearer routes to NHS adoption. For industry, it signals a more coordinated and supportive environment, but with greater expectations around real-world value, system alignment, and measurable outcomes.

3. Supporting frontier industries

The Government recognises both pharmaceuticals and MedTech as principle frontier industries, setting out how the ecosystem of each contributes to UK employment, economic growth and R&D.

At the same time, it notes some of the challenges facing each sector including:

- Length of time to set up and approving clinical trials.
- A decline in the export of pharmaceutical goods taking the UK from 6th 2013 to 10th in 2023 amongst comparable countries.
- Regulatory and procurement challenges for medical technology, citing that 33% of MedTech firms reported removing products from the UK market in 2024 because of such challenges.

The Plan highlights how life sciences depend on foundational industries- from critical minerals and steel to construction and infrastructure. The forthcoming 2025 Critical Minerals Strategy will focus on securing key inputs like helium, REEs and tantalum-essential to imaging and diagnostics- by leveraging the UK's strengths in midstream processing and recycling. Despite limited domestic mining, the UK is home to world-leading capabilities in areas like platinum group metals refining and rare earth magnet recycling.

The Plan notes that infrastructure is a recurring challenge. The sector faces shortages of lab space and clean rooms, especially along the Oxford-Cambridge corridor, while mid-stage and global firms alike report difficulties scaling UK manufacturing.

Forthcoming Government reforms to planning and investment in construction skills aim to ease these constraints. A new steel strategy will also support MedTech supply chains, with a focus on sovereign production and high-grade inputs. Together, these measures are designed to strengthen resilience, attract global investment and create the conditions for life sciences to thrive.

4. Supporting the UK's city regions and clusters

The Plan emphasises the strategic role of city regions and clusters in driving innovation, investment, and national economic growth. It highlights the UK's Life Sciences sector as a globally significant industry underpinned by dynamic, geographically dispersed ecosystems such as the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, the M4 Corridor, Northern cities, Scottish cities, Welsh hubs, and Northern Ireland's centres. These clusters integrate academia, healthcare, business, and investors, generating innovation-rich environments.

Rather than treating clusters in isolation, the Government commits to strengthening connections between them to create globally competitive corridors. Major infrastructure investments, like East-West Rail and HS2, are key enablers of this vision, fostering greater connectivity and economic synergy.

To further unlock local potential, the Plan outlines targeted interventions including the creation of Regional Health Innovation Zones and sustained support for England's fifteen Health Innovation Networks. These networks help bridge the gap between innovation and NHS adoption.

Capital investments include flagship projects like the ONE BioHub in Aberdeen and Ipsen's £75m expansion in Wrexham. The Plan also supports a network of health-focused R&D institutions such as the Medicines Discovery Catapult in Cheshire and the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult across multiple UK cities.

Additionally, place-based Life Sciences Investment Zones have been established in regions such as West Yorkshire and Liverpool City Region, aiming to accelerate breakthroughs in HealthTech and therapeutics.

Devolved nations play a central role in this strategy. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are advancing their own tailored plans, aligning regional strengths with the UK's national objectives. In England, Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) are developing 10-year Local Growth Plans with Life Sciences at their core. These will be supported by a new MSA Life Sciences Working Group, aligning local ambitions with national funding to maximise sectoral impact.

5. Creating an enduring partnership with business

The Plan marks how government and industry will work together to realise the UK's vision for a globally competitive Life Sciences sector. It outlines a new long-term partnership model designed to embed industry expertise into delivery, governance and clear accountability across the Plan's actions, following deep engagement in its development.

Implementation is supported by a detailed framework, with each action tied to clear metrics and an assigned Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) accountable for delivery.

The Government will publish annual Implementation Updates alongside the Life Sciences Competitiveness Indicators which summarise the progress in delivery of the Plan as well as clearly measured performance.

As part of a centralised Monitoring and Evaluation framework, six key metrics will be tracked across all Industrial Strategy Sector Plans to assess impact. These are

- Exports.
- Business investment.
- Gross value added (GVA).
- Productivity growth.
- Labour market outcomes.
- The number of new, large 'home grown' businesses.

The Plan also acknowledges the insights from the O'Shaughnessy Review and the Sudlow Review and states that these, alongside the Science and Technology Framework and the Technology Adoption Review, have provided important guidance on transforming and fostering growth in the science and technology sectors.

For industry, this creates a clear mandate and mechanism to engage in the shaping of policy, system performance and driving innovation on a national scale. With the Plan's implementation milestones reaching to beyond 2030, this signals the UK's serious commitment to Life Sciences growth and growth that has clear measurable outcomes and accountability.

The Government has designed the Plan with a long-term focus, with core actions aimed at supporting sustained sector growth. The Plan outlines the Government's acknowledgement that technological progress and constantly evolving global challenges mean adjustments will be required, and as a result, the Government commits to continuous collaboration with industry to revise strategies as needed. A formal review of the Plan and its implementation is scheduled for 2030, unless there is a reason to review sooner.

6. Metrics and Accountability

2025

- **(Medtech) By July 2025:** MHRA Publication of Medical Devices Statement of Policy Intent on Early Access and Innovation.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By September 2025:** MHRA will be providing easily accessible scientific advice and will publish specific, published performance metrics.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) Summer 2025:** The Global Talent Taskforce will be established, which will help attract talent from the IS-8, including Life Sciences.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) Autumn 2025:** Turing AI Pioneer Fellowship applications open which Life Sciences Talent can apply to.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By Autumn 2025:** Government will publish a 10 Year UK Research Workforce Strategy and a 3 year implementation plan for England.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By Autumn 2025:** Government will publish a 10 Year UK Research Workforce Strategy and a 3 year implementation plan for England.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By October 2025:** Publication of NIHR's improving health and economic growth delivery plan.
- **(Pharma) By December 2025:** Publication of "Replacing animals in science: A strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods".
- **(Medtech) By end 2025:** Value Based Procurement Pilot Launch.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end 2025:** The OLS will work with the Futures Group on a series of skills-focused industry workshops.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By the end of 2025:** The Department for Education will develop a new Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy, fulfilling a key government manifesto commitment.

2026

- **(Pharma and MedTech) By March 2026:** Commercial Clinical Trial approval and set up time will be 150 days or less.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By March 2026:** UKRI will have delivered improved coordination with NIHR activity and be working to support SMEs.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By March 2026:** UKRI will have identified game-changing technologies for IUK Biomedical Catalyst support.
- **(MedTech) By April 2026:** RBP will be launched, including referrals to the NICE Technology Appraisal process.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end Q1 26/27:** The BBB will begin deploying new Industrial Strategy capital.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end Q1 26/27:** The BBB will enhance monitoring and reporting functions to track investments into IS sectors.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By June 2026:** DHSC will have created a single searchable database of clinical trial activity.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) Spring 2026:** Complete implementation of 7 healthcare Centres of Excellence in Regulatory Science and Innovation.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By September 2026:** MRC will support the development of OSCHR-led UK-wide research portfolio database and management tool.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By September 2026:** Launch of the minimum viable product for the HDRS.
- **(MedTech) By Summer 2026:** MHRA will publish a new framework for Medical Devices, including AI.
- **(MedTech) By Autumn 2026:** For Medical Devices, DHSC will introduce a pre-market statutory instrument, including an International Reliance Framework, to Parliament.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) From December 2026:** New data assets will be brought into scope for the HDRS on a prioritised basis.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end 2026:** NIHR will launch an AI Research Screening Platform.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end 2026:** In relation to data access, use and sharing, and Parliament permitting, the Government will pass regulations reforming the current Health Service (Control of Patient Information, COPI) Regulations of 2002.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By 2026:** MHRA will have delivered digital transformation to better support industry applications and enquiries.

6. Metrics and Accountability

2026

- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end 2026:** As part of our pre-clinical translational infrastructure, MRC will
  - Establish a Pre-Clinical Translational Hub.
  - Establish at least one Translational Network.
  - Track industrial co-investment leveraged by Network(s).
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end 2026:** Implementation of reform to the wider NHS research data access approvals and governance system in relation to data access, use and sharing, and, subject to legislative progress.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end 2026:** Launch the NIHR Innovation Catalyst.
- **(MedTech) By end 2026:** NICE will ensure 60% of Technology Appraisals started in 2025/26 are published within 240 working days of NICE's Invitation to Participate.
- **(MedTech) By end 2026:** The NHS will introduce an Innovator Passport.

2027

- **(Pharma and MedTech) By end Q4 26/27:** The BBB will begin publishing VC investment return data.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By April 2027:** The innovative Device Access Pathway (IDAP) will be rolled out as a permanent programme and complete the refresh of the Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway (ILAP).
- **(Pharma and MedTech) From April 2027:** HDRS will begin creating UK-wide service.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By the end of 2027:** Industry engagement will launchas part of a review of priority skills needs of the Life Sciences sector.

2028

- **(Pharma and MedTech) By 2028:** MRC will establish a further two translational research networks.

2030

- **(Pharma and MedTech) By 2030:** The NIHR Innovation Catalyst will ensure at least 2 innovations supported by going through regulatory approvals and being considered for adoption.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By 2030:** Our Future Health will be the largest longitudinal health research and clinical trials resource globally, with samples, genomic and linked health data from up to five million participants, with 50,000 taking part in commercial clinical trials per year.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By 2030:** UK Biobank will expand its biomedical research resource with enhanced participant characterisation.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By 2030:** Genomics England will host one of the largest genomic research databases globally, with over 500,000 genomes.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By the end of 2030:** Realised the ambitions of the Healthcare Goals by meeting the programme's Key Performance Indicators.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By the end of 2030:** There will have been a sustained increase in R&D funding towards prevention and Multiple Long-Term Conditions – tracked via 'UK Health Research Analysis' data.
- **(Pharma and MedTech) By the end of 2030:** The OLS, Department of Education and Department for Business and Trade to review activity across all skills actions and set priorities.

PLMR
HEALTHCOMMS
communications + impact