

*The***AHSN***Network*

**NIHR** | National Institute  
for Health Research

# SURVEY OF LOCAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION NEEDS OF THE NHS

REGIONAL REPORT FOR NORTH EAST AND  
NORTH CUMBRIA AHSN

APRIL 2019

# NORTH EAST AND NORTH CUMBRIA: DRAFT STATEMENT OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PRIORITIES

## BACKGROUND

In November 2017, NHS England and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) published the paper “Twelve actions to support and apply research in the NHS”. The paper requested that, in order to articulate regional NHS needs the 15 Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) working with their regional NIHR infrastructure, each produce a statement of regional NHS innovation and research needs on behalf of their regional Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STPs). The AHSN Network commissioned an independent research consultancy, ComRes, to design, implement and deliver a survey that would provide a detailed understanding of the innovation and research needs at regional level and across all AHSNs. A governance group was established to oversee the project, including representatives from NHS England, the AHSN network, and NIHR. The project gathered the views of regional health stakeholders between June and October 2018, with 61 qualitative telephone interviews conducted, followed by a quantitative survey of 257 stakeholders.

This exercise focused on the views of clinicians and managers rather than researchers, and short to medium term priorities.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PRIORITIES FOR NORTH EAST AND NORTH CUMBRIA AHSN

In North East and North Cumbria AHSN, 3 stakeholders were interviewed and 17 completed the survey about regional innovation and research needs. Given the size of the sample that the research draws upon, we have reported the results as indicative findings in the context of the larger set of national data, with many of the national findings reflected in the consultation with North East and North Cumbria AHSN stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

Key themes emerged in the national findings to do with mental health and an aging population, with multi-morbidities and frailty frequently referenced or chosen in relation to both. Workforce issues and technological change were also considered to be challenges or opportunities.

**SYSTEM-LEVEL PRIORITIES:**<sup>2</sup> Stakeholders were asked to select their top three innovation and research priorities from a series of topics that spanned a number of complex issues or multiple areas of the health system. When asked about system-level topics, national stakeholders identified their top three priorities as **workforce issues** (41% had in their top three), **integrated care** for those with multi-morbidity and/or complex social care needs (39%) and optimising use of **digital technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI)** (33%). Stakeholders in North East and North Cumbria AHSN had broadly similar priorities, though with slightly different emphases. They placed integrated care for those with multi-morbidity and/or complex social care needs and improving quality and efficiency within organisations as the highest priorities. These were closely followed by workforce issues and earlier diagnosis and intervention. Optimising the use of digital technology and AI, however, was a lower priority for those in North East and North Cumbria AHSN compared to national findings.

**MEDICAL TREATMENT AREAS:** National stakeholders were most likely to identify **mental illness, multi-morbidities** and **frailty** in their top three priority medical treatment areas for research and innovation (57%, 46% and 44% respectively). In the North East and North Cumbria AHSN, multi-morbidities, mental illness and obesity were most likely to be prioritised by stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, the term “national” is used to refer to the total population of stakeholders who participated in this project on the invitation of all AHSNs involved. This group incorporated the stakeholders of 14 AHSNs who completed the online survey and the stakeholders from 15 AHSNs who took part in a telephone interview.

<sup>2</sup> System-level priorities refer to any aspect of the processes, infrastructure and resources used in the delivery of public health services and care. By system-level we did not mean specific conditions/ diseases, or the functionality of individual organisations and practices.

**SPECIFIC GROUPS:** Of a number of specific patient groups put to them, stakeholders chose people with **mental health conditions, older people** and **socially-isolated people** as top three priorities for research and innovation (62%, 50% and 46%). North East and North Cumbria AHSN stakeholders' priorities are generally aligned with the national picture, placing people with mental health conditions and older people as top three priorities. However, they were more likely than national stakeholders overall to say that those from lower income backgrounds should be a focus.

## NEXT STEPS

AHSNs will facilitate further discussions at regional level to refine the priorities identified through the project. These discussions will include the research community, health and social care partners, health care practitioners, as well as patients and the public. NHS England and NIHR will consider these findings and each AHSN's final list of research priorities.