

The Innovation Scout Scheme

Innovation is about thinking differently and identifying unmet needs, applying new solutions to problems, and developing new ways of working. Innovation can encompass either a new technology, a new device, or an improved service, but ultimately it is about a change that makes a positive difference. The impact of innovation can be transformative, from directly improving patient care and experience through to making services more efficient. But how does innovative activity become embedded within the culture of a healthcare community? The Innovation Scout Scheme is one way in which the Academic Health Science Network for the North East and North Cumbria (AHSN NENC) is trying to achieve this.

Organisational culture is a major factor affecting the speed and frequency of innovation (Smith et al, 2008)*

Challenge

- Innovation is not the responsibility of one person within an organisation; it must be nurtured and encouraged at all levels.
- Everyone has the potential to come up with an innovative idea but people need to know where to go and what actions to take in order to develop and protect their idea.
- It can be difficult to unearth best practice innovation that is ongoing in other nearby NHS organisations.

Opportunity

To identify those within each organisation that become the 'go-to' individuals for all innovation enquiries, and promote innovation internally.

To develop healthcare professionals to learn more about the process of innovation and intellectual property protection so that they become skilled in identifying and promoting innovation.

To connect people from different organisations and help them to find solutions to unmet needs, providing a strong network of support.

**Smith, M., Busi, M., Ball, P., Van Der Meer, R. (2008) Factors influencing an organisation's ability to manage innovation: A structured literature review and conceptual model. International Journal of Innovation Management, 12(4): 655-676*



Action

- The AHSN NENC set up the 'Innovation Scout Scheme' to develop a network of healthcare professionals across the region to encourage the development of innovation, stimulate the creation of ideas, and drive a culture of innovation within their respective organisations.
- Training days and learning events are provided.
- Support is provided by a team of innovation specialists to help the Innovation Scouts to assist with queries.
- The AHSN NENC has funded 52 Innovation Scouts across 19 organisations in the region to date, covering Acute and Mental Health Trusts, CCGs, and Primary Care.
- The ongoing support needs of Innovation Scouts are assessed to ensure the provision of relevant resources and further networking events.