

Deja Review



Introduction

Medical technologies range from syringes and sticking plasters, to replacement-joints and robotics. They provide support to the NHS every day, at every level of care, and for patients right across the country – in hospitals, communities and in their own homes. Medical technology impacts every part of the patient pathway, from prevention through to diagnostics, treatment, recovery and ongoing management of a range of conditions.

MedTech helps improve patients' lives, and can improve patient outcomes. It also supports clinicians to diagnose and treat patients quicker and more effectively. It can save the NHS money through quicker treatment and recovery times, and helps to cut the backlog by ensuring patients aren't in hospital for more time than they need to be.

MedTech also makes a significant contribution to the UK economy, proving employment across the country; contributing billions of pounds to the UK economy; and accounting for over half of all employment in the life sciences sector.

However, innovators face a range of challenges when developing and deploying their products. It is a long, expensive process, with a convoluted pathway to adoption at pace and scale, and a challenging reimbursement framework that can be prohibitive to companies developing medical technologies – particularly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

With these challenges going unanswered, patients may be denied access to the most innovative technologies, as fewer companies may develop and deploy their technologies here, or pivot their strategies and sell abroad where there are more accessible markets, with more favourable conditions for entry and spread. Were this the case, it could potentially lead to worse outcomes for patients across the country.

The UK Government has developed a range of strategies and policy instruments over the past 20 years to support the medical technology sector, both national and local; but the challenges for those developing and manufacturing the latest medical technologies remain.

The Medical Technology Group launched the Deja Review in June 2016 to examine the challenges for the sector, and make recommendations to support the Government and the NHS to fully embrace the benefits which medical technologies can bring.

About the MTG

The Medical Technology Group (MTG) is the only UK coalition of patient groups, research charities, medical technology and life sciences companies working together to improve patient access to medical technologies.

The common purpose of the MTG is to increase patient access to the medical technology.

However, the sector is still faced with familiar challenges, and the Medical Technology Group has developed this paper to ensure that support for the successful development and deployment of MedTech remains a focus for Government and the NHS.

This report sets out a number of recommendations for the Government and the NHS to ensure that this focus – particularly through the implementation of the MedTech Strategy and the Sinker Innovation Review – can bring benefits to the NHS, patients and the sector. However, we need to learn from the past – from the successes and failures – to ensure future success.

Deja Review 2016 Recommendations

- Lessons from past failures be learned.
- Move away from the focus on single technologies and focus on system-wide adoption of technology.
- Enhance collaboration between Government and NHS bodies.
- Ensure long-term focus on solutions, particularly through the Accelerated Access Review.
- Ensure long-term funding for the support of the MedTech sector.
- Set out implementation plans to ensure the success of the AAR and other Government and NHS strategies.

2023 Recommendations

- Create a single pathway within the NHS for medical technologies, with easy-to-understand steps and processes, and clear guidance on how medical technologies can be adopted in the NHS at pace and scale.
- Enhance the weighting given to value within the assessment process for medical technologies, particularly on the value to the patient, to ensure that cost is not the single factor to consider when deciding on innovative technologies to approve for use in the NHS.
- Support the adoption and spread of proven, effective medical technologies by ensuring effective payment mechanisms and support for spread within the NHS, to ensure equitable access to medical technologies for patients across the country.

The Challenges for the MedTech Sector

The MedTech sector faces many challenges when engaging with the NHS, particular in ensuring patients can access effective medical technologies where and when they need them.

Challenges

1. There is no single pathway for medical technologies.
2. The weighting that the NHS and its Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) place on cost and cost savings versus value is not configured in a way to support the best outcomes for patients.
3. Adoption and spread of medical technologies is not supported by the NHS and its constituent parts, leading to unequal access and poorer outcomes for patients, based on their postcodes.

These challenges mean that many technologies do not make it into the NHS, or are only available to patients in certain parts of the country.

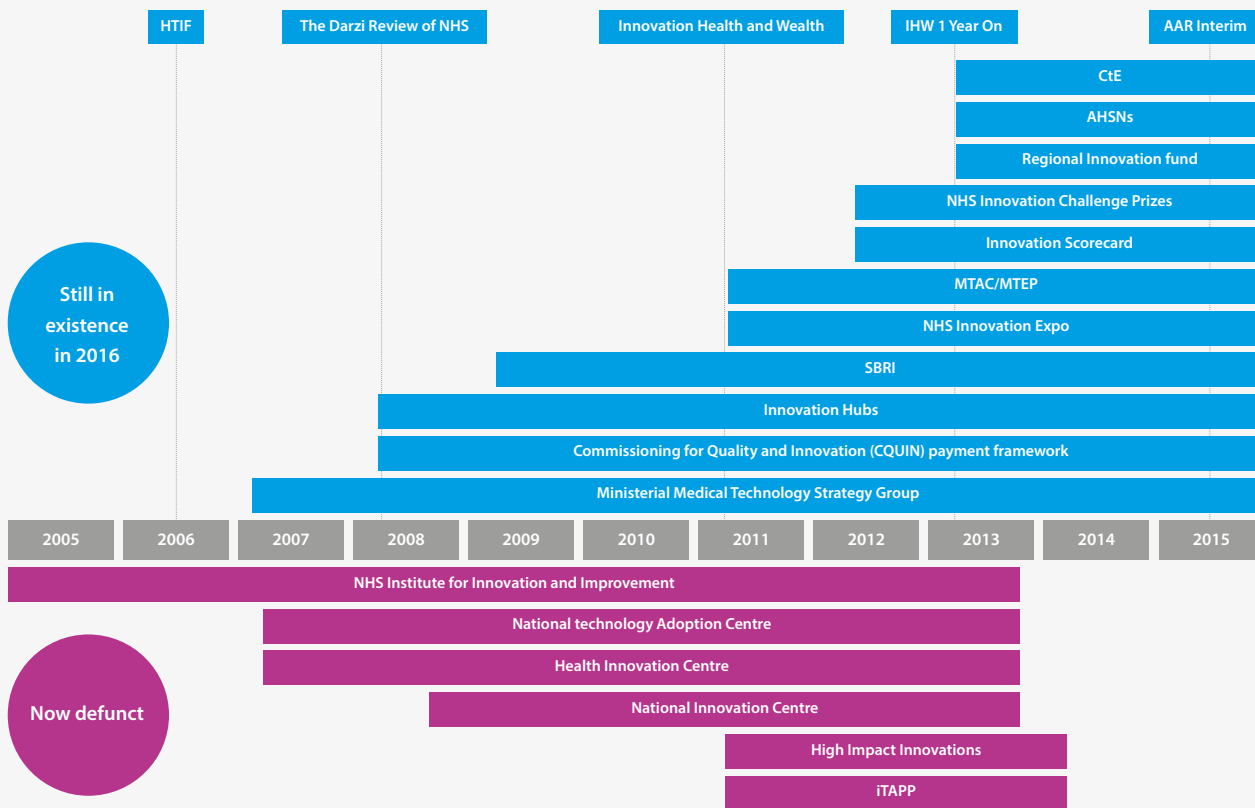
The MTG's [RationWatch](#) report paints a stark picture of inequalities across the country, where patients do not have access to medical technologies at the right place, and the right time.

These challenges are not new, and although the Government and the NHS have recognised the barriers faced to adoption and spread of MedTech for some time, they have not done enough to address them.

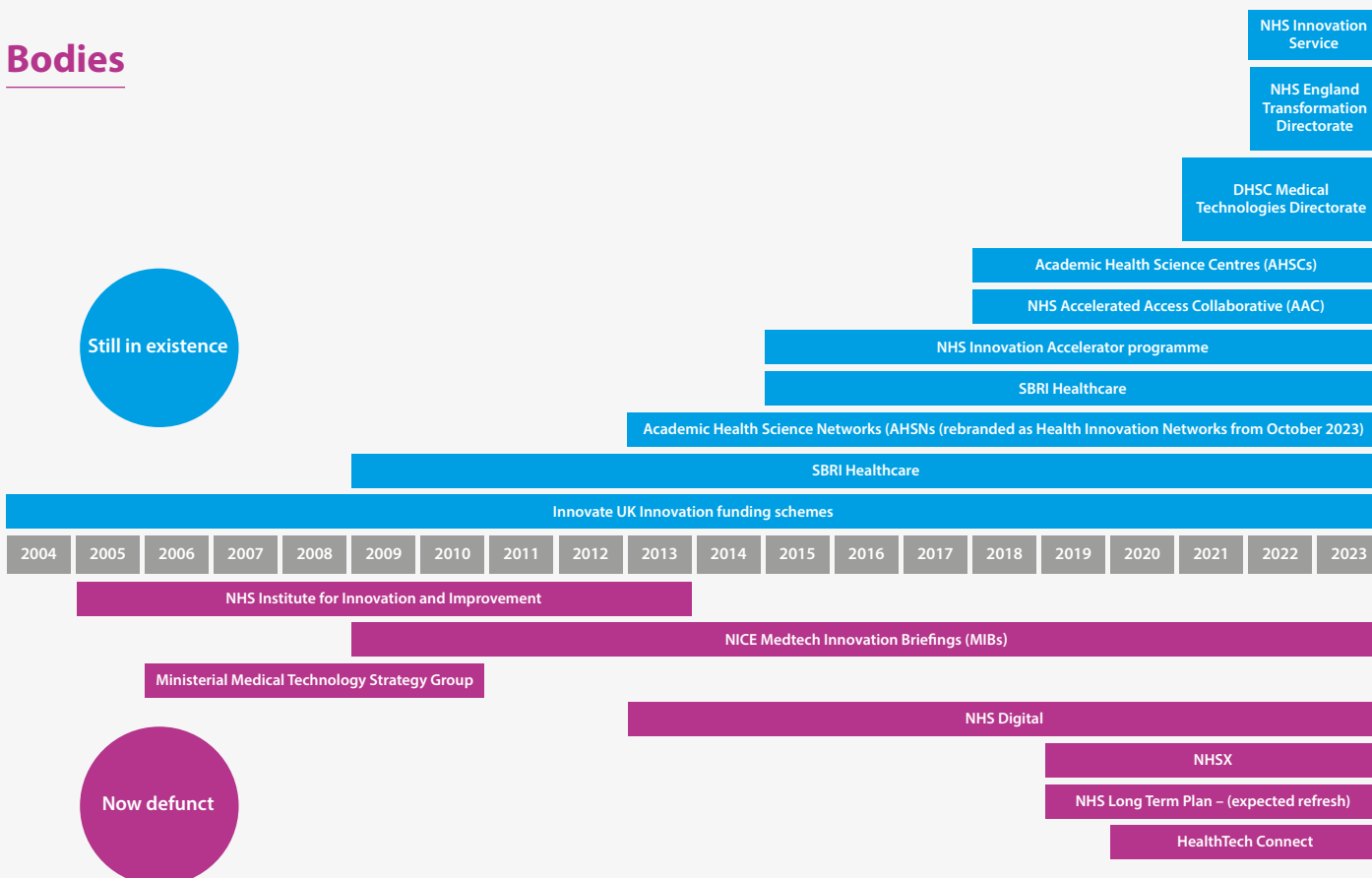
There have been numerous initiatives developed by and for the NHS since the original Deja Review report in 2016. Despite this, adoption and spread of medical technologies remains a challenge, with complexity remaining in the pathway to adoption, and further negative impacts for patients.

The MedTech Strategy is the latest Government strategy on innovation, and sets out a range of recommendations around how the NHS should better utilise medical technology, and how to ensure better uptake. It sits within a long line of similar documents and reports which have all aimed to support uptake of innovative medical technology to help the NHS and deliver better outcomes for patients. None have been successful in fully tackling the challenges faced for patients to access this technology.

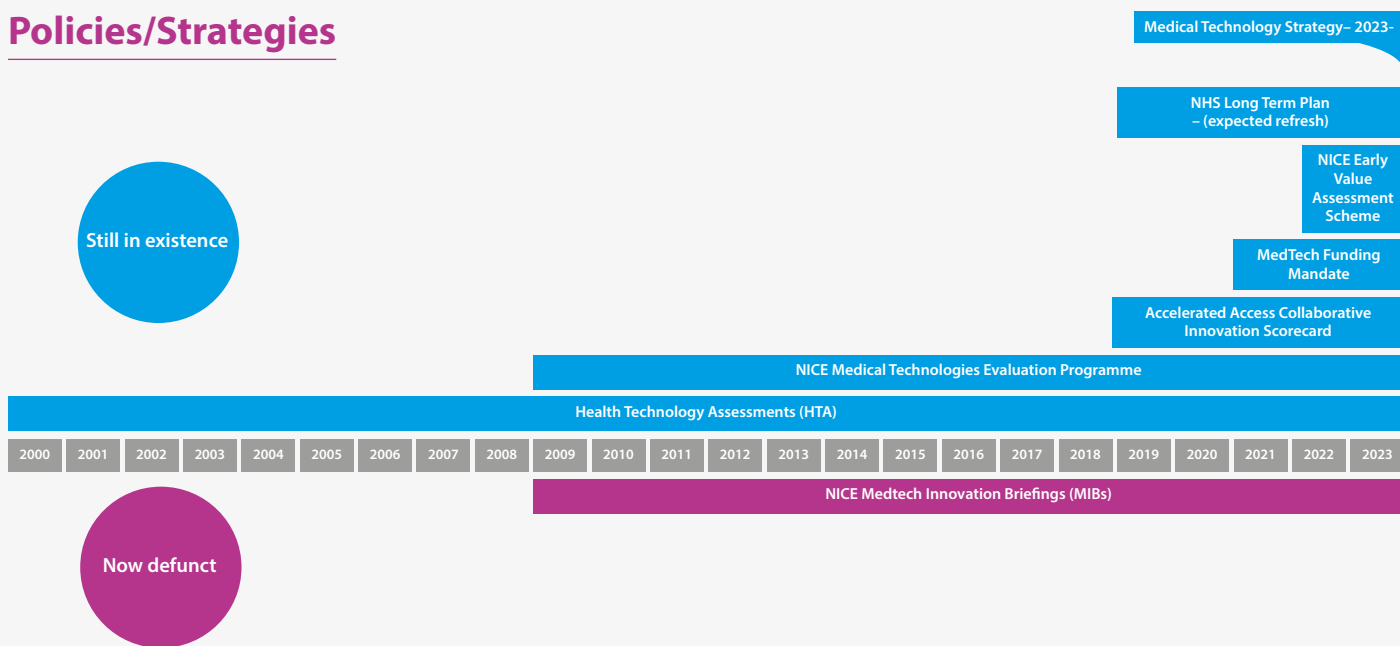
What We've Seen



Bodies



Policies/Strategies



This paper will not perform a post-mortem on those bodies and strategies which were set up and which may or may not still be in existence, to determine fault or failures in delivering a more successful environment for medical technologies.

However, the scale in the development of these bodies and strategies, and the rate of their decline and replacement, demonstrates the complex and challenging environment into which the Government must provide oversight and guidance in relation to medical technologies. Further, billions of pounds have been invested in research and development in the UK, compared to the much smaller amount which has been invested in adoption and spread.

Although bodies like Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) have been set up to help the adoption and spread of innovation in the NHS, and the MedTech Funding Mandate to ensure fair reimbursement, they have not been able to deliver a step change, or even sustained change, in the short term to medium term.

In part, this failure is due to the fragmented way the NHS has evolved in its 75 years, with a range of commissioners spread across the country, including through the recently created ICSs. Before this, there were over 200 CCGs commissioning treatments for NHS bodies in England.

However, these failures are also due to an inability of the system to fully implement policies and strategies, despite its best efforts and despite the numerous bodies which have been set up to ensure their success.

These structural challenges must be addressed before any meaningful change can occur in this sector.

CASE STUDIES

Accelerated Access Collaborative

The Accelerated Access Collaborative (AAC) was launched in 2018 as a [unique partnership](#) between patient groups, government bodies, industry and NHS bodies, working together to streamline the adoption of new innovations in healthcare.

At the time, the MTG welcomed the launch and made a series of recommendations as to how the AAC could be most effective. Ultimately, this focused on the AAC holding accountability and budget for driving innovation through the system.

Whilst progress has been made in carrying out conversations between organisations and teams to align on uptake of innovative devices, it is clear that without one organisation which is responsible for driving uptake across the system at pace and scale, the system will remain complex, and the challenges will not be addressed.

NICE

The MTG has repeatedly called for NICE to reconsider how they evaluate medical technology and ensure that the full societal benefits of technology are taken into consideration, and that medical devices are appropriately differentiated from pharmaceuticals.

In 2022, NICE began reviewing and updating processes for guidance for medical devices. The MTG welcomes the work on how to incorporate real world evidence into reviews, and the start of this through the [Early Value Assessment Scheme](#). This will hopefully also ensure quicker access to technologies for patients.

The MTG believes that more needs to be done to take into consideration the wider societal benefits of medical technologies, rather than just the initial cost. However, the Group welcomes the trajectory of NICE to prioritise guidance for medical technology in an appropriate and separate way to pharmaceuticals.

The Opportunities for Reform

The MedTech Strategy

The MedTech Strategy is the latest policy document to be developed by the Department for Health and Social Care to deliver change in this area.

It states that:

Building on learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid development of medical technologies during that time such as lateral flow tests and ventilators, this strategy will ensure the right product is available at the right price and in the right place. As a result, patients will continue to have access to high-quality care, alongside improved patient safety and health outcomes.

Its priorities to ensure innovative and dynamic markets are clear, and are a step in the right direction for providing a framework around which the MedTech sector can work.

The implementation plan will aim to achieve the following:

- for every product type we have a clear, recognised clinical voice articulating practitioners' needs for medtech
- we have granular clarity of the NHS's priorities for innovation which are reflected in systems and processes
- we have a clear, readily accessible and clinically driven national view of the relative qualities of the products available
- a clear pathway from pre-registration through to commercial adoption which enables rapid progression for priority, innovative products

The MedTech Strategy provides an opportunity for the Government and the NHS to build a strong foundation for success. In order to ensure access to medical technologies for the NHS and for patients, there is a need for the clear pathway from pre-registration to commercial adoption. This has been missing to date, and will go a long way to providing clarity on the pathway to adoption for medical technology companies who wish to provide life saving products to the NHS.

The Sinker Innovation Review

In Spring 2023, Roland Sinker was asked by NHS England Chief Executive Amanda Pritchard to lead a review into how the NHS can partner with the life sciences and innovation sectors effectively. National Director for Innovation Tim Ferris said that Sinker's work will seek to *"[put patients] at the front of the global queue for more effective and personalised tests, treatments and therapies."*

If he is to succeed, Sinker will need to ensure that medical technologies are a key plank in his review, and that his report for Government include actionable recommendations that ensure that the UK realises and delivers on the aims of the Life Sciences Vision; the NHS realises the benefits of innovation; and patients are given access to the latest technologies, wherever they are in the country.

Through his recommendations, he should make clear the need for change in the way that medical technologies are assessed, adopted and reimbursed.

Looking to the Future

The benefits of reforming the MedTech pathway and reimbursement mechanisms are very clear – a simpler, more accessible process for the MedTech sector; greater access to the latest technology for patients; and an empowered NHS, fit for the 21st Century and beyond.

However, the challenges remain, and it is imperative that the Government and the NHS adapt to the needs of the patients and the NHS now, to ensure their mutual success in the short and long term.

The implementation of the MedTech Strategy and the recommendations of the Sinker Review will be key to this transformation. The Medical Technology Group's recommendations seek to support the development and implementation of the MedTech Strategy and the Sinker Review, and work to ensure their success.

The MTG has been, and will remain a key partner to the NHS in its journey to transforming its services, supporting clinicians, and driving better outcomes for patients.

Without reform, and the necessary support for implementation of the MedTech Strategy and the Sinker Review, it is likely that the problems for the sector will remain.

The previous Deja Review report noted as its first recommendation that the NHS should learn from previous experiences. This remains the case, and the MTG remain hopeful that the current strategies – given the appropriate support from Government – can provide the change necessary to deliver real change for patients and the NHS.

Recommendations

- Create a single pathway within the NHS for medical technologies, with easy-to-understand steps and processes, and clear guidance on how medical technologies can be adopted in the NHS at pace and scale.
- Enhance the weighting given to overall value within the assessment of medical technologies, particularly on the value to the patient. It is important that costs is not the single factor to consider when deciding on innovative technologies to approve for use in the NHS.
- Support the adoption and spread of proven, effective medical technologies by ensuring effective payment mechanisms and support for spread within the NHS, to ensure equitable access to medical technologies for patients across the country.