

18/05/2020

Marches Local
Enterprise
Partnership (LEP)
Innovative
Healthcare
Analysis and
Research

Addendum May
2020

Addendum to Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Innovative Healthcare Analysis and Research Report

Background

The supporting research for the University of Birmingham report to Marches Local Enterprise Partnership was completed in 2019 and the report finalised in January 2020 before the outbreak of COVID 19.

This addendum takes account of:

- Parallel research on [The Marches Digital Strategy 2020-25](#) undertaken by Hatch Regeneris for Marches LEP completed in October 2019
- Research completed by Hatch Regeneris in December 2019 on the [Midlands MedTech Sector](#) for the Midlands Engine
- Developments since January 2020 - including COVID-19 – based on discussions with project steering group and recent policy briefs produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The key points from these reports are summarised below.

Research to support the development of Marches Digital Strategy 2020-25

Research undertaken by Hatch Regeneris (2019) to support the development of [The Marches Digital Strategy](#) identified the following digital influencers and opportunities for the Innovative Healthcare sector.

Digital Influencers

- Data Analytics
- Telecare', including virtual appointments and check-ups
- Monitor efficiencies in workforce performance
- Monitoring the use and efficacy of specific treatments
- Provisions for mobile working
- Electronic prescriptions and appointments services

Digital Opportunities

- Supporting service users and patients manage their own care
- Integrated health and social care
- Widespread use of sensors and Internet of Things for dynamic patient monitoring and diagnosis
- Integrate public, social and private sector actors
- Improve procurement systems

The research identified a set of priorities to form part of the Marches Digital Strategy. We map out below how these relate to our recommended priorities in this research report to demonstrate how they are supportive of developing an innovative healthcare sector in the Marches.

	Priority (and Suggested Actions) from The Marches Digital Strategy	Corresponding priority identified in Innovative Healthcare and Analysis Research report
<p>People</p>	<p>Exceptional Digital Talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerate awareness and take-up of vocational routes to employment, delivering digitally skilled talent to meet the needs of local employers Conduct research to assess the digital skills requirements of the future and understand job replacement implications Broker engagement between employers, education institutions and the labour market to develop a digitised curriculum and advocate local employment opportunities Progress the development of a Digital Skills Partnership <p>Inclusive Digital Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support outreach efforts which target locations where digital inclusion levels are poor and are holding back individual potential Ensure infrastructure rollouts extend to areas suffering from acute deprivation, where reasonably practicable <p>Digitally Connected Citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue public sector digitisation programmes aimed at improving service delivery, extending reach and increasing democratisation Maintain and enhance public Wi-Fi networks, aiding quality of connectivity and access to information and services 	<p>Continue to support local education institutions that are developing innovative approaches to staff recruitment and retention in the health and care sector</p> <p>This can take the form of practical support in convening and/or supporting forums between interested parties including employers, education institutes and private sector training organisation, local technology companies that provide online learning solutions, sector bodies</p> <p>Support the roll out of successful interventions developed to improve IT literacy and acceptance</p> <p>This includes the general population and, more specifically, vulnerable adults. Shropshire has demonstrated, working in partnership with organisations such as Amazon, how off the shelf technology can be used with vulnerable groups in a ways that reduce barriers to adoption and acceptance. It highlights the need to ensure that provision is place to enable new entrants and existing staff to progress through the NHS Health and Care Digital Capabilities Framework. This involves continuing to work with education and training providers and the sector to ensure sufficient opportunities are made available</p> <p>The Marches LEP continues to play a strategic role in facilitating engagement and involvement with key players. This involves a coordination and signposting role to activities and events being developed and delivered by LEP partners.</p> <p>Acceptance of new technologies by the care work force will be dependent on governance arrangements. While the Marches LEP may not have a direct role in ensuring ethical standards in the use of digital technologies by care providers and their managers, it can support necessary training in ethics around the use of digital technology</p>

Priority (and Suggested Actions) from The Marches Digital Strategy		Corresponding priority identified in Innovative Healthcare and Analysis Research report
Business	<p>Digitally Collaborative Businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster enhanced relationships between digitised businesses to stimulate research and investment opportunities • Position the Growth Hub front and centre as the conduit for digitally focused business support, advice access to finance and training <p>Digitally Enabled Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen partnerships between universities, the public sector and digital vanguards to drive digital innovation and research • Target digital initiatives around areas where businesses demonstrate innovation deficiencies • Further develop Skylon Park as a nationally significant cyber security hub and cluster, attracting tenants and new development • Develop opportunities around digital health and assisted living expertise that is embedding into University Centre Shrewsbury and Shropshire Council <p>Maximising Digital Exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and promote the impacts and benefits of digital exploitation to The Marches business base (all sectors) • Incentivise SMEs and start-ups to make active investments in technology to improve productivity • Promote availability of fixed and mobile infrastructure upgrades in such locations • Ensure businesses are taking substantial cyber security precautions and are aware of cyber threats 	<p>Secure greater engagement with the West Midlands Academic Health Science Network (WMAHSN) and other regional bodies such as Innovation Midlands (a consortium of universities across the region interested in the commercialisation of technologies they are development). Include a stronger complementary focus on social care, in which the Marches can bring its particular expertise in terms of future collaborations to the fore. This includes investigating with the WMAHSN how it might increase support for within the Marches including outreach events and improved signposting. Practical steps that might be taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify where the support provided by local providers (e.g. University Centre Shrewsbury) complements and/or provides a substitute for service provided by WMAHSN and other bodies within the region. This needs to take account of different funding arrangements as these can affect who can receive support. Some aspects of the WMAHSN offer are only available and relevant to NHS Trusts for example. • Assess whether qualifying organisations with the Marches are taking advantage of the standard offer and what are the barriers to doing so. WMAHSN offers two levels of membership to NHS Trusts and HEI within the region. • Explore the possibility of clinics, presentation of networking events hosted by the area's Higher Education Institutions (University Centre Shrewsbury, University of Wolverhampton, The Orthopaedic Institute, MiTAC) and innovation parks that have regular WMAHSN presence. • Draw on the expertise of the R&D unit at RJAH and its links with Keele University and other international partners <p>Strengthen the role of NHS R&D units within the Marches area. The region has strong R&D unit at RJAH, which is actively involved in clinical studies to support the adoption of new technologies, but outside orthopaedics, there is less R&D activity within the region.).</p>

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	<p>Modern business professional services have an important role to play in the digitalisation of industrial sectors across the area, including health and social care. The LEP can play two roles. The first being to help businesses navigate current provision and thereby avoid crowding out existing private sector provision. The second being to support the development of new specialist business service providers in the region focusing on the need of the sector (e.g. meeting the needs of regulators, evidence gathering, developing value proposition). This could also include intermediaries between technology companies and care providers who can: (a) support the adoption of new technologies by care providers by having an understanding of the issues that are likely to emerge and need to be managed; (b) provide specific support to companies commercialising their technologies; and (c) or foster the development of apps and software that support the planning and management of care provision.</p> <p>The Marches Growth Hub should play a central role here in supporting businesses in understanding current support available and working with partners to develop new products and services. Marches LEP may wish to consider with the Marches Growth Hub can whether it can tailor its existing offer to the sector’s needs and what additional services require development and funding. The Growth Hub is well placed to provide general business support, with more specialised support around the adoption and application of new technology provided by specialist providers, such as Digital Social Care, who can provide information, advice and guidance for care providers.</p>

Priority (and Suggested Actions) from The Marches Digital Strategy		Corresponding priority identified in Innovative Healthcare and Analysis Research report
Place	<p>Ripe for Digital Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop compelling inward investment messaging, orientated around digital assets, growth locations and rural distinctiveness • Build on existing events and initiatives to showcase The Marches digital business base and digital specialisms • Appoint a digital ‘tsar’ who is able to champion The Marches and strengthen links between the LEP and business, showcasing the extensiveness of digitisation <p>Digitally Anchored Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure new developments across all brownfield and greenfield sites are connected at the highest specification • Enshrine digital commitments across policy (particularly planning), to ensure technology is deployed as cost effectively as possible <p>Smart and Connected Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of procurement and influencing of local authority contracts to position The Marches at the forefront of digital technology adoption through deployment of smart technologies • Governance and data policies implemented to coordinate the use of open data and mitigate cyber threats • Public sector driving smart technology deployment (hackathons/procurement) • Leverage digital technologies to develop innovative transport modes and improve the efficiency of existing transit links 	<p>Raise awareness and set out more clearly what the Marches can offer innovative healthcare companies. There needs to be an equivalent document to that produced by Invest in Shropshire that can be used that covers the whole Marches area for the sector (Invest in Shropshire, undated)</p> <p>Partners should continue to utilise assets such as public buildings and networks as a focal point for innovation in health and care services. This has included making the space available for third sector providers, local training in digital skills and networking events.</p> <p>The Tech Severn annual event is example of intervention based around place that brings together different actors that allows cross-fertilisation of ideas and technologies across sectors. It should become annual centrepiece as part of regional series of events.</p> <p>Emphasise the key role of local authorities as commissioners and also as enablers in making links across to other policy domains such as housing, education and infrastructure, in driving forward activity. Furthering local authorities’ roles in developing regional intelligence and insights building on the work of RDAR and UCS that provides an important horizon-scanning role. While local authorities have and continue to play a strong leadership role, they also face conflicting pressures from supporting providers to innovate whilst being mindful of the need to manage their own finite resources. Local authorities are playing an important role in creating the ecosystem - including the development and application of big data that needs to be showcased to demonstrate both the achievements and potential of the Marches region to innovators, investors, policymakers and the public.</p>

Priority (and Suggested Actions) from The Marches Digital Strategy		Corresponding priority identified in Innovative Healthcare and Analysis Research report
Infrastructure	<p>High Quality Digital Centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage commercial full fibre and 5G connectivity in key urban centres, opportunity towns and growth locations to underpin vitality and key economic development • Build on rural full fibre footprint where possible, extending competitive advantages that make The Marches distinctive <p>Seamless Digital Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plug remaining superfast speed gaps where market failures persist, and communities remain out of reach of fibre networks • Influence extended 4G rollout and encourage a clear upgrade path for future technologies (5G) • Augment fixed and mobile network coverage with accessible public Wi-Fi hotspots <p>Digital Trials and Innovation Hotspot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a series of digital innovation trials which support the needs of local industry, develop new technology use cases and solve technical challenges • Encourage standalone commercial investment in The Marches, establishing the LEP as hub of digital innovation 	<p>Continue to support investment in improved connectivity including improved mobile coverage and improved internet provision to support smarter ways of delivering care, as this remains a significant priority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of new infrastructure masks may require winning the hearts and minds of some communities who may be resistant because they have concerns about visual impact, possible detriments to their health and some cases idealised notion of being off grid <p>Thought needs to be given to the type of facilities and services needed by technology companies at the proposed Oswestry Innovation Park and how funding might be secured for Robert Jones Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital to invest in facilities on the park and become an anchor institution</p> <p>Have in place a system for prioritising support for organisations within the region seeking central government funding. Good applications are resource intensive in terms of bid writing time and require more than supporting letters from local partners. The Marches LEP and/or local authorities need to develop a set of criteria around which to identify and select potential opportunities. The main funding sources are NIHR, Innovate UK, Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, British Business Bank, some research charities and potentially the Shared Prosperity Fund that will replace European Regional Development Fund funding that currently supports targeted business support in the sector</p>

	Priority (and Suggested Actions) from The Marches Digital Strategy	Corresponding priority identified in Innovative Healthcare and Analysis Research report
Investment		<p>Set out the business case for investing some resource in engaging potential business angels who have relocated to Marches as part of their retirement plans</p> <p>Consider how to improve access to finance for companies developing and implementing innovations in the health care sector. Signposting sources of seed capital for innovators for example through Business Angels based in the region, or requests to relevant research charities which might fund early stage research and development. This could include signposting and providing support in accessing grant finance where there is clear additionality in terms of outcomes for the public purse (i.e. would not achieved the same outcomes without grant finance) or loan guarantees. For example, ensuring companies are aware of relevant funding calls by Innovate UK (e.g. Small Business Research Initiative funds companies to develop solution to specific priorities identified by care commissioners). Marches LEP may wish to explore with the British Business Bank (BBB) how different funding programmes might be tailored for the sector and work with relevant third parties who deliver programmes on behalf of BBB, as well considering the merits of negotiating a fund that the LEP might directly administer.</p>

Draft for comment & discussion

Recent research on the wider Midlands MedTech Sector

This research commissioned by Midlands Engine, covering both the East Midlands and the West Midlands, sets out the Medtech sector's contribution to the Midlands economy and the UK economy. Hatch Regeneris (2019) analysis is based segments of MedTech activity captured in the Strengths & Opportunities (S&O) data produced annually by the Office for Life Sciences (OLS) augmented by additional data provided by University of Birmingham from FAME database. The report identifies clusters of activity in The Marches. Box 1 presents the key findings taken directly from the report.

Box 1: Key Findings of Hatch Regeneris Study on Medtech in the Midlands

MedTech's Contribution to the Midlands Economy

- MedTech contributes an estimated £1.6bn in GVA for the region annually. It is a driver of high productivity, with GVA per worker standing 40% higher than the Midlands average.

Businesses and Employment Data

- There are close to 1,000 MedTech businesses operating in the Midlands – the largest number of MedTech companies in any region in the UK.
- Midlands MedTech employs 23,600 people – the second highest UK region for employment.
- Businesses and employment are split almost equally between East and West.
- The region contains a large number of well-established businesses, with 85% setup >10 years ago and only 5% being ≤5 years old. This compares to 80% and 7% across the UK respectively.
- The East Midlands has seen a 15% rise in MedTech employment between and 2009 and 2017. This contrasts with a 12% fall in the West Midlands, likely due to a mixture of causes including successful promotion of investment options leading to overseas acquisition and restructuring.
- Most businesses view future prospects positively and appear confident in their ability to cope with future economic shocks.

Specialisms and Clusters

- Alongside major employers, the Midlands is home to a wide range of MedTech-related facilities, research and expertise, including those unique to the UK market.
- There are two major clusters of businesses located around Nottingham and Birmingham, with further clusters located in Loughborough, Leicester, Derby, Coventry and Stoke-on-Trent.
- There are key regional specialisms in assistive technology, hospital hardware, single use technologies and infection control, alongside a range of specialisms within local clusters.
- Evidence from businesses on supply-chain links and the geographical dispersal of MedTech supply and service businesses points to a fragmented supply-chain hindering productivity.

R&D and Innovation Activity

- MedTech businesses in the Midlands are already engaged in a range of innovation activity, in particular early & later stage R&D. On average, 28% of staff time is taken up by R&D.
- Around 75% of businesses are engaged in some form of collaboration. The same proportion are integrating new technology into their businesses. The majority of businesses wish to engage more in R&D and innovation activities. Research on markets, innovation focussed staff training and university collaboration are in highest demand.
- Primary barriers to innovation highlighted by businesses are access to finance, time constraints, regulatory barriers and a lack of skills. Barriers to working with universities relate to businesses' understanding of university and academic strengths, internal expertise and time constraints.

Barriers to Growth and Supporting a Stronger, More Dynamic Sector

- The barriers to growth most frequently highlighted by businesses are in access to finance and investment, clinical partnerships, skills and the means to better connect a fragmented sector.
- The priorities for support highlighted by businesses include access to finance, clinical partnerships and trials, skills, facilities for product development and research expertise, facilitating business and university collaboration and help to understand and open new markets.

Taken directly from Hatch Regeneris (2019) report.

Hatch Regeneris identified 95 Medtech business sites across The Marches and Worcestershire, about 10 per cent of the total in the Midlands region¹. They found that The Marches is home to around 600 employees across 10 sites in Assistive Technology, well above the national average for this segment. The major employers are:

- Helping Hand Co Ltd (c. 170 employees): is located close to Ledbury in Herefordshire and specialises in products for independent living including for pressure ulcer management and postural care
- Hydro Physio (>100 employees): is located in Broseley close to Shropshire and manufacturing specialist pools for hydro aquatic therapy.

Hatch Regeneris’s report provides the following information on MedTech concentration in the Marches based on their analysis of Strengths & Opportunities data and MINT data.

Table 1: Employment and businesses within in the MedTech Sector within the Marches

	Employment	Businesses	LQ [‡]
Assistive Technology	590	10	6.6
Hospital hardware including ambulatory	320	4	5.1
Assay developer	155	1	89.3
Contract manufacturing/ research organisation	107	3	2.9
Wound care and management	77	2	1.5
Cardiovascular and vascular devices	39	1	1.5
Surgical instruments (reusable)	39	1	1.0
Education and training	39	1	8.2

Source: Hatch Regeneris (2019) drawing on S&O, 2017; MINT Data, 2019; Hatch Regeneris. Employment data rounded to the nearest 10.

‡ A LQ greater than one shows the area has a greater concentration of employment in MedTech when compared to the UK as a whole, indicating a degree of specialism in that location.

COVID 19

The sector has had to respond rapidly to COVID 19 in terms of introducing ways of working which have brought forward the adoption of technologies and how care is organised. Developments have included:

- **Greater focus on the need to develop tools to support collaborative working by local multi-disciplinary teams.** The British Geriatrics Society issuing [guidance](#) stating ‘All professionals should consider setting up multi-professional local or regional WhatsApp groups, or other similar fora, to provide support to care home staff who may feel isolated and worried by the pandemic’. NHS England and NHS Improvement now require as a result of COVID increased coordination and partnerships between general practices, pharmacy teams and community services in supporting care homes. This provides an additional imperative for adoption of digital technologies in providing care and sharing of information and form the basis of models of care going forward that the sector in the Marches is well placed to develop based on our findings in our original report.
- **In Telford and Wrekin for example, there is strong sense of partners coming together as a system to work for greater patient benefit which cementing the existing strong relationships between health and social care in the region.** Recent national directives relating to

¹ Includes both East and West Midland area that form the Midlands Engine region.

information governance represent an enabler for integrated working. Ways of working have changed for both and people who use services including greater use of platforms like Microsoft teams to support home working and convening meetings including: strategic groups like the health and wellbeing board; virtual MDT meetings for staff on patient care including support to nursing and care homes; virtual video and audio consultations for people using primary care and outpatient services; virtual training platforms for care home /domiciliary staff around personal protective equipment and procedures they may not had previously undertaken; and setting up of helplines for people using mental health services.

- **Increased funding to the sector.** The provision of additional funding to the sector including £1.6 billion for local government to support commissioning of care. COVID 19 has resulted in reduced risk aversion by local authority commissioners of care, who have been afforded an enhanced freedom to innovate and a desire to overturn traditional ways of working. This has afforded the sector the opportunity coming out of COVID for a step change in the level of innovation in delivery of services including increased digitalisation and new care models.
- **Local authorities will need access to recovery funding** and anticipate there will be an urge for economic development. Marches LEP is working with government to support medium and longer term economic recovery planning. Data and intelligence gathered from partners during the Covid-19 outbreak will be used to inform these plans.
- **Acceleration in the use of telecare and remote support for carers and care workers.** COVID 19 has been a spur to developing the use of technology in the provision of care for individuals who are isolating and in care homes.
- **Challenge Funding for demonstration projects / proof of concept in response to COVID 19 has shown there is pool of new innovations in the sector that could be supported.** A national competition TechForce19 competition organised by NHSX, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government attracted 1,600 innovations nationally within a month. The aim of the competition was to reach out to innovators who can support the elderly, vulnerable and self-isolating during COVID-19 for instance by enabling remote care both in care homes and domiciliary care, and optimising staffing in the care sector.
- In our report we identified SPIC (Shropshire Partners in Care) as a significant asset in supporting innovation in the region. COVID 19 has presented financial challenges for small not for profit companies where a main income source has been face to face training with a large practical element for social care and the need to rapidly develop new training material in response to frequently changing guidance for social care sector. Going forward SPIC has adopted more home working arrangements and use of virtual meetings, and need to consider platforms for delivery of blended training.
- **Nationally, the government is committed to developing a new online platform which will give people who want to work in social care access to online training and the opportunity to be considered for multiple job opportunities via a matching facility.** The intention is to streamline the recruitment process for candidates and employers. CQC is involved in the platform's development so that providers can be assured that this platform will help them recruit staff in line with CQC's requirements. However, we know from employability programmes in the West Midlands that some job seekers we might wish to target may not have access to a computer at home and previously been relying on facilities at their local library. Skills for Care are working with employers to access rapid online induction training for new staff. This includes key elements of the Care Certificate and is available free of charge.

- **Some potential regulatory barriers are being suspended in response to COVID 19.** Temporary arrangements to provide Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and fast-track emergency checks of the Adults' and Children's Barred Lists free of charge may remove a potential barrier to those considering entering the sector. The positive has been focus on outcomes and desire to work across organisations; challenge will be when regulators return to pre-COVID practices potentially dissipating energy created to innovate.
- The recent establishment of Birmingham Health Partners **Centre for Regulatory Science and Innovation** (CRSI) to support the development and delivery of novel therapeutics and medical devices in the UK, through advanced regulatory standards and tools provides an additional resource that the businesses and innovators in the Marches can draw upon.
- Digital health sciences is likely be one key strategic sectors that neighbouring West Midlands Combined Authority will focus on its recovery plans from COVID 19.
- Our analysis of recovery from the financial crash in 2008 found that responses by Regional Development Agencies built on existing or schemes in development. However, in this crisis there has been willingness to widen the policy toolkit nationally as shown by the introduction of furloughing nationally and acceleration of digitalisation of public services.
- Care Commissioners in the Marches and technology firms are working together to provide support for elderly who are isolating and care homes. Examples include:
 - The provision of Kindle Fire Tablets in care homes in Telford and Wrekin and iPads by Hereford and Worcestershire CCG. Large providers like [Coverage Care Services](#), a not-for-profit organisation which operates 14 care homes in the Shropshire purchased 30 new laptops when it introduced measures to actively restrict non-essential visitors to avoid unnecessary spread of Covid-19.
 - Shropshire is a pilot site for [ACTIVAGE](#) project that offers people who are 55 and over with a broadband connection, free Samsung watch and smartphone tech equipment to stay independent, safe and active for longer. When restrictions imposed by COVID 19 are lifted home sensors will also be installed in homes to provide monitoring. ACTIVAGE Shropshire, an EU funded project led by Samsung, is a collaboration between Shropshire Council and the global tech company that aims to see how consumer technology such as smart watches, smart phones and sensors, can be used or adapted to support the health and social care needs of vulnerable people.
 - The use of oximeters (a small device that clips onto your finger and monitors oxygen levels in the blood) to monitor residents
 - Remote support for care workers in verifying death
 - BT has made dongles available to the care sector to improve digital connectivity.
 - West Mercia Rural 5G project started on 1 April 2020 will focus on innovative ways to deploy 5G networks in rural areas, especially on the borders where Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire meet. Funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) the £3.3m award will be managed by Worcestershire County Council. The project consortium includes Worcestershire County Council, Shropshire Council, Airband, Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP, Three Mobile, The University of Chester, The University of Worcester, and the West Midlands Academic Health Science Network.
- **Covid 19 has focussed the need for all businesses to consider their use of technology and opportunities to maximise this.** Marches LEP are lobbying for further investment in the areas digital and mobile communications infrastructure to support this, along with enhanced business support and skills development to enable this. A £3million funding package has been

developed drawing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supported by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and Marches Growth Hub. This includes £800,000 for [Marches Small Equipment Grant](#) to help businesses plan their recovery from the coronavirus across the Marches who can apply for grants of up to £10,000 to meet up to half the cost of installing new equipment. The funding package also the [Marches Building Investment Grant](#). However, local social welfare providers are ineligible under ERDF rules.

- [Remote Online](#) identified as one of the Marches tech stars who support the development of digital solutions in our report is a providing webinars to businesses on how to how to make best use of government [Bounce Back Loan](#) including building digital assets to create additional revenue, what technology to use and to leverage your loan with additional funding.
- Intelligence gathering by LEP partners indicates there are concerns around: access to technology widening inequalities between those who have means to engage in services this way and those who do not; and the (therapeutic) benefits of human contact (both from perspective of staff and people using services) which means longer term adoption of technology to remotely provide care will need to reflect clinical need such as the need for a physical examinations as part of diagnostics in healthcare.
- Telford and Wrekin are supporting the sector by establishing systems and processes to gather the learning nationally and regionally and assess the innovations being introduced as the sector moves into restore and recovery.
- The four universities with a presence in the Marches are part of the LEP's Higher Education Group which has been convened to help inform response to COVID-19. The crisis has triggered rapid adoption of new ways of working amongst education providers, especially via use of Microsoft Teams for teaching, meetings, committees, assessment boards. They have also rapidly expanded online submission and marking of work with staff now working from home. This has proved efficient although sometimes hampered by WIFI connectivity for those working from rural areas.
- Harper Adams University which has expertise in agricultural technology has offered to deliver drone sprayer training to qualified emergency services drone pilots, to enable them to use spray drones to disinfect COVID-19 infection hotspots in the UK.
- In Herefordshire & Worcestershire all care homes have been provided with an iPad (around 250 plus) to support video consultations. The Clinical Commissioning Group are working with care homes to improve connectivity across care homes and are involved with NHSx national pilots around connectivity and use of Facebook Portal. The area is taking part in trailing remote monitoring for COPD patients and group consultations and support for patients with long term conditions. All practices are now using video and online consultations to triage and consult with patients. The CCG is working with local partners to produce personal protective equipment and NMITE have been able to respond by developing a mask/vizier which meets all quality standards and can produce 1000s a week. COVID 19 has provided an impetus for improved information sharing across care setting to improve patient care and support this the CCG are putting in place new work streams including: Herefordshire & Worcestershire Digital Health innovation work stream - which will involve working closely with the Marches and Worcestershire LEPs and Technology in Care Homes work stream. This has been possible by a focus on outcomes and desire to work across organisations, but coming out of COVID 19 regulators are expected to return to their previous practices potentially putting at risk some of the energy created to innovate by the crisis.

- **The Marches LEP has enhanced its relationships with key partners and business representative groups to share information during the Covid-19 pandemic.** These will be actively sustained through the economic recovery phase to maximise impact. In addition, some of the Marches LEP's existing structures can be flexed to support key sectors such as innovative health, e.g. the Marches Growth Hub Steering Group could be asked to consider hosting the delivery of sector specific support with partners, the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) could focus on skills delivery, curriculum development to meet the needs of staff in or entering the sector, the Higher Education sub-group of the SAP could consider opportunities for research and development to support innovation within the sector.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been developing a number of [policy briefs on how to respond to COVID 19](#). One of its conclusions is that COVID 19 will lead to an accelerated digital transition in the [development of local economies and this will have implications for job location](#) and access to services. Particularly relevant to the development of the Marches cluster of innovative health care are:

- **Rise in teleworking, both within cities and in rural areas:** The short-term rise in teleworking and the use of accompanying tools could spark broader acceptance of this form of work over the long term. This could contribute to some decentralisation of jobs away from major metropolitan areas or on the outer edges, as workers are freer to locate where cost of living is lower or quality of life is higher. This means the Marches may be in a better position to attract more highly skilled individuals to relocate to the area but of course is dependent on the successful role out of digital strategy.
- **Online delivery of local education and training, and other public services:** Likewise, as education and training providers have had to adapt rapidly to online delivery, such methods may become more common over the long term. This could help overcome challenges related to economies of scale in delivering these services to a greater number of people and to less dense places. The OECD has also noted that many less advantaged individuals have access only to a mobile phone and reliant on accessing computers and printers at local libraries – these are facilities that local authorities have invested in and maintained in the Marches. Innovations such as the co-production of a platform to support learning by care staff between care providers in The Marches and a games company represent a significant step in supporting skills development. This is particularly important as the usual 'classroom delivery' of such training has been disrupted and the need to provide individuals the opportunity to develop and maintain their skills and knowledge whilst furloughed or self-isolating. There may be opportunities to build pre-employment apps to support entry into the care sector including self-assessment against NHS Values and pre-employment training.
- **Shift from brick and mortar to online:** There is the possibility of replicating the [Airedale Digital Care Hub](#) that provides a triage service and support to care homes locally and nationally. However, whilst other NHS Trusts have explored establishing their own hubs which has the advantage of retaining highly skilled senior nurses who might otherwise have retired early they have not been able to make the necessary capital investment.
- **Increased pressure on digital infrastructure:** Overall, this increased reliance on digital tools has put additional pressure on digital infrastructure. This makes public investment and regulatory barriers even more salient to addresses to upgrade infrastructure in places with insufficient access, including addressing urban-rural divide.
- **An even greater role for the social economy and corporate social responsibility in local development:** This renewed sense of civic responsibility could encourage further local development more generally, particularly the type of ground-up community development built around local social capital. Traditional companies seeking to increase their social impact may adopt a new sense of social purpose and there may be an increase in social enterprises and social economy organisations specifically.
- **Revisiting job quality for essential workers:** There is an increasing appreciation for the essential workers who are keeping our societies functioning during confinement, often at increased risk to their personal health. Already, calls for hazard pay and other types of bonuses for healthcare workers and grocery store clerks are growing, and could potentially be the start of a longer-term reflection on how different

types of work are valued and compensated. Our consultations identified how digitalisation might enable more rewarding job roles for care workers in that capture of information about living conditions by auxiliary care providers will enable them to work more closely with care providers to provide more holistic responses to individual needs that both result in better outcomes for clients and potential cost savings that can be reinvested.

Action plan

This is to be developed based on the findings in this report and the Addendum.

Draft for comment & development