Bright Ideas in Health Awards

Category: Innovation for Reducing Economic Inactivity

This category is open to organisations in the North East and North Cumbria

Poor health is a major barrier to employment across the North East and North Cumbria, with around one in five people living with a health condition that affects their ability to work and, in some areas, up to one in three working-age adults out of work due to ill health.

Many people with physical, Musculoskeletal, or mental health conditions face significant barriers to entering, remaining in, or returning to work, leading to reduced income, poorer wellbeing and increased pressure on health and public services.

Yet good work is a vital contributor to health, recovery and quality of life.

This award recognises innovative solutions that address health-related economic inactivity by supporting people to stay in, or re-engage with, meaningful employment.

From healthcare interventions and inclusive workplace practices to digital tools and cross-sector collaboration, we celebrate approaches that break down barriers and create new opportunities.

By supporting healthier working lives, these innovations not only improve outcomes for individuals but also support a more inclusive workforce, strengthen communities, and help people manage their health conditions so they can remain in work or return to employment.

In turn, they contribute to a more resilient economy where health and work are better connected.

Examples of eligible initiatives may include:

- Musculoskeletal services supporting people to remain in or return to work
- Mental health interventions focused on employment and recovery
- Supported employment programmes
- Vocational rehabilitation initiatives
- Workplace health and wellbeing innovations
- Occupational health services and interventions
- Digital tools that help people remain in or return to employment
- Cross-sector partnerships between healthcare, employers and public sector organisations
- Initiatives supporting people with long-term conditions to access or sustain meaningful work.

Eligibility:

Open to NHS organisations, industry participants, local authorities, employment services, voluntary and community sector organisations, and public sector partners working collaboratively to improve health-related employment outcomes.

The entry questions for the **Innovation for Reducing Economic Inactivity** category are:

1. What health-related employment challenge does your initiative address?
2. Which population or group does the initiative support?
3. How does it help people enter, remain in or return to work?
4. What healthcare, employment, employer or public sector partners were involved?
5. How does the initiative address physical health, mental health or wider barriers to employment?
6. What measurable outcomes have been achieved for individuals, services or communities?
7. How does the initiative support inclusive employment or healthier working lives?
8. What is the potential for wider adoption or long-term sustainability?

Specific judging focus:

- Clear link between health and employment outcomes
- Support for people facing barriers to work
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Evidence of individual, community or economic impact
- Scalability and sustainability

Entries will be assessed on the following:
Innovation: originality of the idea
Value: impact of the initiative on patient care and/or service effectiveness
Patient focus: evidence that patient/service user need was central to the work
Collaboration: evidence of the involvement of other professionals, services and/or patients in the project
Clinical effectiveness: data demonstrating how this initiative drives clinical enhancements
Leadership: evidence of entrants championing their innovation in their organisation or more widely
Adaptability: ideas that could be adapted for use elsewhere in entrants' organisations or other organisations
Sustainability: initiatives that can be embedded within organisations to operate without the input of the people who developed them

The deadline for entries is 27 November 2026

For further information and to enter please visit: https://brightideasinhealth.org.uk/

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