



A National Life Sciences Strategy for Ireland

An opportunity to improve the health
of the nation

Ireland's life sciences industry is a leader in developing healthcare innovation, including:



medicines to treat illness and improve health (pharmaceuticals);



technology and products used in preventing, diagnosing, treating and monitoring diseases (medical devices);



medical and health products based on biological systems e.g. vaccines (biotechnology).

A Life Sciences Strategy is designed to position a country as a leading centre for researching and developing these innovations, and to ensure they are accessible to everyone who relies on them.

The Irish government is now developing a Life Sciences Strategy for Ireland. Often the benefit of this strategy is referenced in terms of skills, jobs and economic growth. **But this must be so much more.** It is also about the health, as well as the wealth, of our nation.

The opportunity for people to benefit from improved access to innovative healthcare technologies must be central to our conversation about advancing life sciences.

How could a Life Sciences Strategy improve our health?

1. Enabling faster access to new healthcare innovation
2. Creating opportunities for people to benefit from clinical trials
3. Supporting the development of a digital, interconnected health system



Faster access to the latest healthcare innovation

Science is continually advancing, and new medicines or products are being developed to treat or prevent all kinds of diseases and conditions. Rapid access to these medicines is key.

New medicines can:



offer better outcomes relating to symptoms, daily functioning, overall well-being, or survival;



reduce complications and hospital stays through better disease control;



be more patient-centric by aligning more closely with their needs, preferences, and values (e.g., some patients may prefer a specific route of administration, more sustainable formulations, or indeed to administer their medicine in the community or home, instead of the hospital). These qualities can also help improve adherence.

Today, Ireland is one of the slowest countries in Europe to provide access to new medicines – taking up to 645 days after European Medicines Agency approval. This compares to the EU average of 586 days. This means Irish patients wait longer to benefit from new medicines. It also impacts clinical trials, which often rely on the current standard-of-care being available as a comparator for the new medicine being tested.

A Life Sciences Strategy should be an opportunity to ensure that Irish people have broader and faster access to new advances.



2 Increased involvement in the latest clinical trials

Clinical trials are needed to answer a simple but critical set of questions: does a new medicine work, is it safe, for whom does it work best, and how does it compare to what we already have? They are essential to developing new medicines.

Collectively, clinical trials move science forward, but they are also important for individual participants. Often, clinical trials will test new medicine for people who are not responding to or cannot take the current preferred treatment – offering them a lifeline to control, treat or even cure their disease or condition. They can be essential to ultimately improving the health of people living with conditions for which there are no treatments available.

Ireland has world class universities and a thriving life sciences industry; however, we have few clinical trials compared to other European countries. The Life Sciences Strategy should look to change this to ensure that our population has access to the latest innovation.

An increase in clinical trials is not just about economics and building Ireland's scientific expertise, it's about ensuring access to new treatment options for people who need them most.

3 Faster digitalisation and improved use of data

Modern healthcare is driven by data. That from clinical trials, but also health information from all of us. This data is powerful and with the latest digital tools can be harnessed to speed up science and improve care. Data can also potentially support more evidenced-based decision making for the reimbursement of new medicines.

The system in Ireland is already progressing in its digital transformation, with the aim to provide you with your own data to empower you to make more informed decisions and have better conversations with your healthcare team. Other priorities include connecting IT systems across different parts of the health service to streamline care delivery, improve efficiencies and equip your health team with the information they need to deliver your care in the right place, and at the right time.

The Life Sciences Strategy is an opportunity to ensure digitalisation moves at speed, while positioning the empowered patient at the centre. This means ensuring patient representation across of all aspects of decision-making, including the design, implementation, and assessment of digital initiatives.





How you can get involved

Learn more. If you are part of a charity or advocacy group, ask how they are planning to engage in the development of the strategy? What are their priorities? How do they differ to those here?

Stay up to date. Ask your local representatives for updates. Ask how they will ensure the Life Sciences Strategy will support a healthy Ireland.