



**OXFORD ACADEMIC
HEALTH SCIENCE
NETWORK – STAKEHOLDER
PERCEPTIONS AUDIT**

AUGUST 2016

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) exist to promote collaboration and partnership between the NHS, academia and industry, in order to facilitate improvements in public health and wellbeing, patient care and prosperity. As such, the support and participation of stakeholders across the region is essential for the future sustainability of Oxford AHSN.

Approaching year four in its five year licence agreement with NHS England, 2016 was viewed as the ideal time for Oxford AHSN to gauge stakeholders' perceptions of Oxford AHSN and its work in the region, in order to inform the organisation's programmes and the way in which it works with stakeholders. To deliver this insight, the board of Oxford AHSN commissioned ComRes to conduct a thorough stakeholder perceptions audit, involving a quantitative survey of 563 stakeholders, followed by 20 in-depth qualitative interviews.

With this in mind, the research had the following core objectives:



Gauge stakeholder awareness and perceptions of Oxford AHSN, including the core team



Gain an in-depth understanding of how local stakeholders view being part of Oxford AHSN



Evaluate the perceived effectiveness and impact of Oxford AHSN's programmes

METHODOLOGY

The research fieldwork process was separated into two key phases, the first quantitative and the subsequent qualitative. In both phases, three core audiences were included:



NHS



Academia



Industry

Quantitative	
Sample size	563 (In total, 2153 stakeholders received invitations to take part – a 26% response rate).
Audiences	NHS Providers: 269 Academia: 74 Life science industry: 53 NHS Commissioners: 41* Public / patient: 29* NHS Regulators: 2** Other: 95
Fieldwork dates	13 th May – 10 th June 2016
Methodology	Online

Qualitative	
Sample size	20 (In total, 55 stakeholders were invited to take part).
Audiences	Life science industry: 9 Academia: 6 NHS: 5 (Please note that this sample was a mix of providers and other NHS staff. Of the three commissioning contacts we were provided with, none took part)
Fieldwork dates	1 st July – 11 th August 2016
Methodology	Telephone

*These audiences have low bases sizes of below 50 (**and below 10), and their results should therefore be treated with caution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Awareness of & familiarity with Oxford AHSN

Awareness of Oxford AHSN is high among their stakeholders (91% report knowing at least a little about the organisation). The qualitative interviews identified the key drivers of this high familiarity as being close working relationships with the core team, attendance at Oxford AHSN hosted or supported events (such as the series of summer roadshows) and involvement with the organisation's key programmes.

Stakeholders are most likely to associate Oxford AHSN with positive terms such as 'collaborative' and 'innovative', though a significant minority also associate the organisation as being 'Oxford-centric', suggesting further work is required to communicate its wider impact.

In terms of stakeholder contact with Oxford AHSN, this generally occurs on a monthly basis, with contact for most dependent on the life cycle of specific projects.

Working relationships

A majority of stakeholders say that the Oxford AHSN core team engages effectively with them, and perceived effectiveness is highest among those who engage most frequently with the AHSN. Key drivers of this positivity are the proactive, dynamic approach of the AHSN team, the quality of their senior leadership and the perception that the core team tailor their engagement to the needs of specific stakeholders. However, stakeholders do report that the AHSN can do even more, engaging with a wider range of stakeholders, to ensure all components of the sector can benefit from their expertise.

Two thirds of stakeholders agree that the AHSN adds value to their work, with NHS providers the most likely to say this. Stakeholders feel Oxford AHSN could add more value to their work and the wider region by focusing communications on clinical outcomes and continuing to increase links across the sector.

A majority of stakeholders agree that Oxford AHSN works productively with academia and NHS providers, though most appear to be uninformed about its work with NHS commissioners and industry. Value is seen to be added primarily through the collaborative focus of the AHSN, in terms of creating connections that stakeholders think would not exist were it not for Oxford AHSN.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The role of Oxford AHSN & regional collaboration

Collaboration is perceived by stakeholders to be the core role of Oxford AHSN, in terms of benefitting patient care, increasing innovation adoption and sharing best practice. Stakeholders support the concept of Oxford AHSN, with a majority agreeing that collaboration is important to health and prosperity in the region, and the AHSN is vital to developing a more innovative, safe and cost effective health system in the region.

The qualitative interviews display that stakeholders have seen the impact of the AHSN in their own work creating positive outcomes in their region, citing numerous examples. Industry stakeholders are particularly positive, seeing the impact of Oxford AHSN as providing access to NHS bodies. As such, a majority of stakeholders say Oxford AHSN has been effective in facilitating collaboration.

There is some room for improvement though, with one in four stakeholders working outside the NHS (including 19% of academics and 37% of industry stakeholders) saying Oxford AHSN is ineffective in connecting their organisation with the NHS. Around three in five (58% of academics and 57% of industry stakeholders) report that AHSN is effective in this regard.



Performance and AHSN programmes

A majority of Oxford AHSN stakeholders feel that Oxford AHSN's work is having a positive impact on the health of the people who live in the region, and believe the AHSN to be effective in assisting the adoption of innovation into practice and connecting clinicians with their peers to deliver better care. However, there is less clarity regarding the AHSN's involvement in emerging NHS work streams such as the development of STPs and digital roadmaps. While low levels of awareness of Oxford AHSN's work in this area may be expected, it could be beneficial to demonstrate the Network's impact on STPs to a wider audience.

Almost all of Oxford AHSN's stakeholders, nine in ten, have heard of at least one of its programmes or themes. The clinical innovation, research and development and wealth creation programmes are the best known. In terms of future focus, clinical innovation is the area which stakeholders would most like to see the AHSN focus on, with stakeholders least likely to say wealth creation should be a focus.



Future challenges and priorities

The key future challenge cited for the AHSN is funding. With NHS budgets being perennially tightened, and a continuously changing political environment, Oxford AHSN will have to focus on justifying its funding, by focusing on the value its contribution adds to patient safety and care in the region.

In terms of future opportunities, stakeholders encourage Oxford AHSN to utilise the brand of Oxford and the connotations of expertise and prestige that goes along with that, to generate interest and support in collaboration both nationally and internationally, while taking steps to avoid perceptions of being Oxford-centric locally.



KEY FINDINGS BY AUDIENCE



NHS

NHS stakeholders, including providers and commissioners, are marginally less likely than stakeholders from academia or industry to be familiar with Oxford AHSN. This group's familiarity is principally with the wider network, rather than the core team, and it centred around the life-cycle of specific projects.

A majority of NHS providers consider their working relationship with the AHSN to be productive, while commissioners are split. In addition, NHS commissioners are the least likely across all audiences to report that they feel a part of Oxford AHSN. In the qualitative interviews, some NHS providers feel that more involvement and buy-in from commissioners is needed if Oxford AHSN is to maximise the productivity of its working relationships with the NHS more broadly.

Seven in ten NHS providers feel that Oxford AHSN adds value to their work, and this may be driven by the perception that it is focused on clinical outcomes. The core team should focus on promoting these clinical outcomes in its engagement with NHS stakeholders.

In terms of future focus, NHS stakeholders believe that Oxford AHSN can play a major role in driving innovation, developing STPs and highlighting the overall role the Network can play in developing the region's health sector.



Academia

Academic stakeholders are highly familiar with Oxford AHSN, and many have personal relationships with senior members of the core team. Two academic stakeholders also report having been involved in the organisation's inception. Academic stakeholders tend to say that they have productive working relationships with Oxford AHSN; that the Network adds value to their work; and they are also most likely of all stakeholder groups to report that they feel a part of the Network.

Academic stakeholders are more likely than any other audience to report that they already have good links with universities, industry and the NHS in the region, and, perhaps as a result of this, in the qualitative phase a small but significant number of academic stakeholders report that they do not feel they need to engage with Oxford AHSN. While this view is not universal among academics, it is worth bearing in mind, and as such Oxford AHSN may wish to focus on impressing upon academics how engagement with the Network can benefit their organisation specifically, rather than focusing on the wider goals of Oxford AHSN.

Academic stakeholders are particularly positive about the potential of the region covered by Oxford AHSN. As such, these stakeholders recommend that Oxford AHSN leverage the Oxford brand and the profile of its universities to generate further interest from outside.

KEY FINDINGS BY AUDIENCE



Industry

Industry stakeholders are most positive about Oxford AHSN in terms of its approach to collaboration, the value the Network brings them, and the overall achievements of the Network. These stakeholders report that the core team's engagement with them is tailored to their own specific needs, and that its staff take a proactive approach to getting them involved.

The key value industry stakeholders say the AHSN brings them is the ability to get them around a table with their counterparts from academia and the NHS. The majority of industry stakeholders we interviewed in the qualitative phase indicate that this would not occur without the assistance of the core Oxford AHSN team. As a result, industry stakeholders prove to be good advocates for the overall goals of the Network, particularly in the area of innovation adoption, which appears to be a main area of involvement for industry stakeholders.

Despite their overall positivity towards Oxford AHSN, industry stakeholders are less likely than academic or NHS stakeholders to readily engage with Oxford AHSN communications materials, mostly saying that they look only look over these briefly. In order to encourage greater engagement among industry stakeholders, and attract more industry stakeholders to interact with the Network, the Oxford AHSN team may wish to target communications to these groups to show the ways in which Oxford AHSN is benefitting industry specifically, as well as success stories that show how industry collaborations have led to innovations that have positively impacted clinical outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a summary of the key findings that emerged across the quantitative and qualitative phases of this research, including recommended next steps for Oxford AHSN:



Stakeholders see a genuine need for Oxford AHSN

The vast majority of stakeholders say that collaboration between academia, the NHS and the life science industry is important, and the majority of those who are aware of Oxford AHSN consider the Network to play an important role in making that happen. Oxford AHSN is therefore in a good position from which to build its reputation across the region.
→ Raise overall awareness of Oxford AHSN across the region, particularly among those stakeholder groups that have less interaction with the Network.

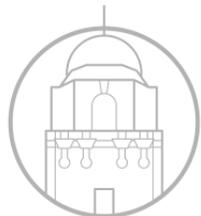
Stakeholders are uninformed about the full impact of Oxford AHSN's work across the region

When it comes to Oxford AHSN's impact, many stakeholders are uninformed about its achievements outside of the programmes they are involved in, and as such many are unable to say whether the Network represents good value for money or not.
→ Publicise the success stories of Oxford AHSN's programmes more widely throughout the sector and region, to demonstrate the Network's impact and its overall value.

Oxford AHSN is perceived to be a strong Network, with a good understanding of its stakeholders

Stakeholders provide many positive examples of Oxford AHSN instigating fruitful partnerships across different parts of the sector. However, while Oxford AHSN is broadly thought to have a good understanding of its stakeholders and to collaborate well, some feel that it could do better at incorporating the views of its different stakeholders, in particular NHS commissioners.
→ Ensure that stakeholders from all groups feel they are listened to and see themselves as an active part of the Network, avoiding more transactional relationships. Personal contact, effective events and close engagement in programmes can help to achieve this.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Oxford AHSN can be seen as Oxford-centric

In line with anecdotal evidence, Oxford AHSN continues to be seen as Oxford-centric by around one in four stakeholders. While in the qualitative phase of research some stakeholders say this view is starting to change, Oxford AHSN is likely to gain greater buy-in from stakeholders based outside of the Oxford region if it can demonstrate itself to be far-reaching and fully inclusive of the entire region.

→Ensure that the Network incorporates organisations from across the entire region, and continues to emphasise its work outside of Oxford, of which stakeholders may feel less informed.

The region offers a strong brand for Oxford AHSN

Stakeholders say there is a large amount of potential in the region covered by Oxford AHSN, particularly in light of the academic institutions and biomedical companies that are based there. This is seen as offering strength to the overall Oxford AHSN brand, and something that should be used to promote the Network on a national as well as international level.

→Promote the unique strengths of the Oxford AHSN region and demonstrate the ways in which this has benefitted the Network, in order to attract others from outside the region to collaborate with the Network.

Stakeholders are highly positive about Oxford AHSN events and networking opportunities

Stakeholders speak highly of Oxford AHSN's events and the opportunities provided for networking, with the roadshows being particularly highly praised. These also offer an opportunity for Oxford AHSN to make stakeholders aware of the work going on outside of the programmes they are directly involved with.

→Continue to offer a range of events and networking opportunities for stakeholders, and consider ways in which such events could be used to increase engagement among stakeholder groups that are currently less involved with the Network.

**CHAPTER 1: AWARENESS
OF & FAMILIARITY WITH
OXFORD AHSN**



KEY FINDINGS: AWARENESS OF & FAMILIARITY WITH OXFORD AHSN

This section looks at perceptions of Oxford AHSN, in terms of stakeholder awareness and familiarity, covering both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research.

Oxford AHSN's stakeholders are familiar with the organisation and well informed of its activities, primarily associating it with being innovative and collaborative.

91% of stakeholders know at least a little about Oxford AHSN, 47% know a fair amount



Stakeholders cite **personal relationships, AHSN hosted events and AHSN programmes / themes** as the key drivers of familiarity.

Word associations

Collaborative	71%
Innovative	52%
Oxford-centric	26%



Stakeholder contact with the Oxford AHSN team is generally every few months (26%) or monthly (21%).

AWARENESS OF & FAMILIARITY WITH OXFORD AHSN

General awareness of Oxford AHSN is high within the stakeholder community, with nine in ten (91%) saying they know at least a little about the organisation.

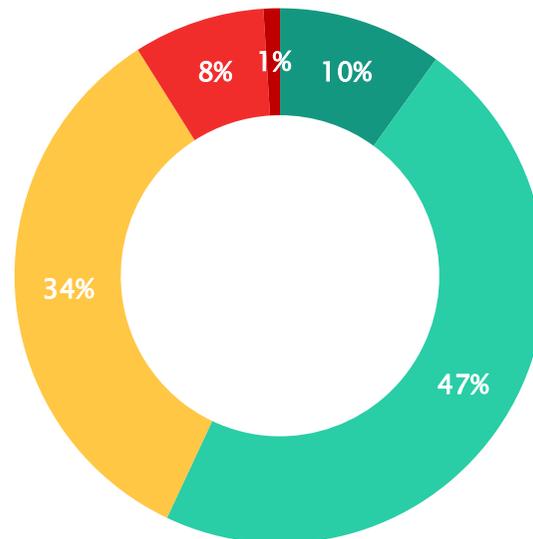
More than half of Oxford AHSN's stakeholders say they know either a great deal (10%) or a fair amount (47%) about it, suggesting a good level of engagement among the majority of the organisation's stakeholders. While levels of awareness are consistently high across stakeholder groups, those working in academia (97%) and industry (96%) are most likely to say they know at least a little about the organisation, a larger proportion than NHS providers (89%), commissioners (90%*) and the public / patients (86%*).

Despite high levels of overall awareness, a third of stakeholders say they know just a little (34%) and 8% say they have heard of the organisation but know nothing about it, therefore there is scope for improving a small number of stakeholders' knowledge of Oxford AHSN and the work that it does.

Awareness of Oxford AHSN

■ A great deal ■ A fair amount ■ Just a little ■ I have heard of it, but know nothing about it ■ I have never heard of it

91% of respondents know at least a little about Oxford AHSN



THE MAIN WAYS IN WHICH STAKEHOLDERS COME INTO CONTACT WITH OXFORD AHSN

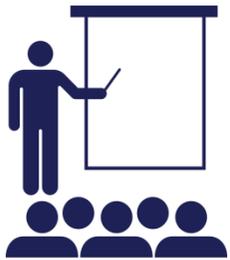
Overall familiarity with Oxford AHSN was also found to be high in the follow up interviews conducted with stakeholders, largely due to close working relationships with the core team, attendance of Oxford AHSN events – such as roadshows – or being aware of, or involved with, the organisation’s key programmes.



AHSN programmes / themes

Most of the stakeholders interviewed qualitatively say their awareness of the organisation comes from their work on a specific programme or theme they are involved with. While some of these stakeholders are active on a number of programmes and sometimes programme Boards too, the majority have little or no interaction, and therefore little knowledge about Oxford AHSN outside of their direct programme work.

“I know a fair bit about it... I think there’s five themes, am I right?”
Industry



Oxford AHSN-hosted events, including recent roadshows

Oxford AHSN is known among stakeholders for hosting interesting and engaging events, and these are regularly cited by stakeholders when discussing the ways in which they come into contact with the organisation. In particular, the recent series of roadshows run by Oxford AHSN are mentioned by a significant proportion of stakeholders, who praise them for having boosted awareness of the organisation among new audiences.

“They’ve had a recent series of roadshows. I think there were nine in total over the summer where they went across the whole three counties and got people together from academia, business, NHS and talked about what they do broadly.”
Industry



Active participation in the leadership of Oxford AHSN

Many stakeholders have worked with Oxford AHSN for some time, with a handful saying they hold positions on the Oxford AHSN board or that they played a role in setting up the Network when it first began.

Such stakeholders say they have high-level strategic relationships with Oxford AHSN, and that they tend to engage mostly with the senior team.

“We’ve worked closely with them on a couple of events so, I know them all personally.”
Industry

“I do a lot of things with them one way or another. I’d say I know them well.”
Academic

FAMILIARITY WITH OXFORD AHSN, BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP

In the qualitative phase of research, as in the quantitative phase, those working in academia and the life science industry are found to have higher levels of familiarity with Oxford AHSN.



Academic stakeholders report high levels of familiarity with Oxford AHSN, though this group does not always work closely with the Network. Around half of academics name senior Oxford AHSN figures with whom they are in regular contact, and two also report having been involved in the organisation's inception. Conversely, a handful of stakeholders from this group say they are less interested in working with Oxford AHSN because they already collaborate with NHS / industry as a necessity in their work, and do not see a need for this to be facilitated by the core team.

"I was involved in setting it up, and sit on some of the committees, and work closely with the team."
Academic



Industry stakeholders also report high familiarity with both the Oxford AHSN core team and the wider network. Those working in the life science industry are the most likely to report having worked with Oxford AHSN, with the purpose of collaborating to find out more about what clinicians need, and supporting innovations to respond to those needs. As such, while several of these stakeholders report knowing the core team well, the majority are also keenly aware of specific programmes and themes through which they have been involved.

"Extremely familiar and on the basis that we work with them both in terms of my role on the AHSN Board, but also we work with them operationally in specific areas."
Industry



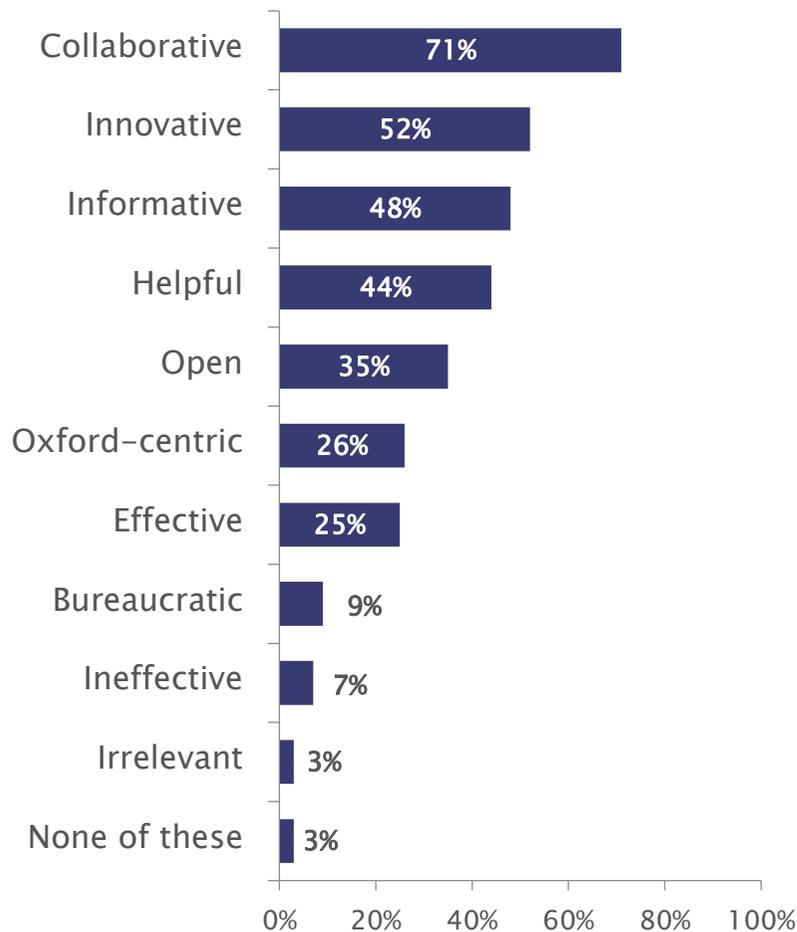
NHS stakeholders are the least likely to say they are familiar with Oxford AHSN, as was seen in the quantitative survey. This suggests that this group may be particularly disengaged with the Network. For those NHS stakeholders who are more familiar with Oxford AHSN, their familiarity tends to be primarily with the wider network, rather than the core team, and tends to be limited to the specific areas of Oxford AHSN's work that align to the stakeholder's specific interests, such as the patient safety programme.

"I'm familiar with the Patient Safety Collaborative... my contact with them is through that, really."
NHS

ASSOCIATIONS WITH OXFORD AHSN – PROMPTED

Oxford AHSN is more commonly associated with positive attributes such as ‘collaborative’ and ‘innovative’ than with negative attributes such as ‘bureaucratic’ or ‘ineffective’.

Words stakeholders associate with Oxford AHSN



When prompted to give their impressions of Oxford AHSN in the quantitative survey via a list of words that could be associated with the organisation, stakeholders are substantially more likely to select positive attributes such as being collaborative (71%) or innovative (52%) than the negative attributes that were tested. This reflects well on Oxford AHSN’s overall working relationships, with half of stakeholders also associating the organisation with being informative (48%), and fewer than one in ten stakeholders associating it with being bureaucratic (9%) or ineffective (7%).

While these findings reflect greater positivity towards Oxford AHSN than negativity among stakeholders, there is room for improvement. For example, one in three stakeholders associate Oxford AHSN with being open (35%), and just one in four associate the organisation with being effective (25%). Increasing awareness among stakeholders of the breadth of work Oxford AHSN is doing, and the impact that work is having, may help to make stakeholders more likely to associate Oxford AHSN with these attributes.

A key challenge for Oxford AHSN is making sure that the organisation is thought to represent the entire Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford region, rather than being Oxford-centric. However, one in four stakeholders currently associate the Network with being Oxford-centric (26%). While a minority, this finding suggests that continuing to take steps to demonstrate its commitment to the entire region will be of ongoing importance for Oxford AHSN.

WORDS OR PHRASES STAKEHOLDERS ASSOCIATE WITH OXFORD AHSN – UNPROMPTED

Oxford AHSN is more commonly associated with positive attributes such as ‘collaborative’ and ‘innovative’ than with negative attributes such as ‘bureaucratic’ or ‘ineffective’.

In the follow up qualitative interviews with stakeholders the majority of unprompted associations with Oxford AHSN were also positive. The Network’s reputation as an innovator comes through most clearly in the in-depth interviews, with more than a third of stakeholders using words like innovation, innovative, entrepreneurial, forward-thinking and visionary to describe Oxford AHSN.

The word entrepreneurial was used primarily by stakeholders in academia and the NHS. This was grounded in a feeling that Oxford AHSN brings a fresh perspective and takes an ‘outside the box’ approach to problem solving. In an example provided by one NHS stakeholder, they were particularly impressed with advice Oxford AHSN provided on how to partner with industry in order to produce innovative healthcare solutions.

The idea of Oxford AHSN as Oxford-centric emerges in the in-depth interviews as it did in the survey, particularly among those working in academia or for the NHS, and among those who are not based in the Oxford area. It is worth noting that while several stakeholders see this as negative, to a certain extent they also view it as somewhat inevitable, partially due to the influence and standing of Oxford University and because of the inclusion of ‘Oxford’ in the name of the AHSN. Several stakeholders do say that Oxford AHSN is taking steps to counter this perception, such as its roadshows, which they think is starting to help. They do, however, anticipate that there is still some way to go and suggest that doing more roadshows and engaging more with other universities in the southern part of the region in particular may help to change these perceptions.

Showing unprompted responses to the question: ‘What words or phrases do you associate with Oxford AHSN?’ in the qualitative interviews

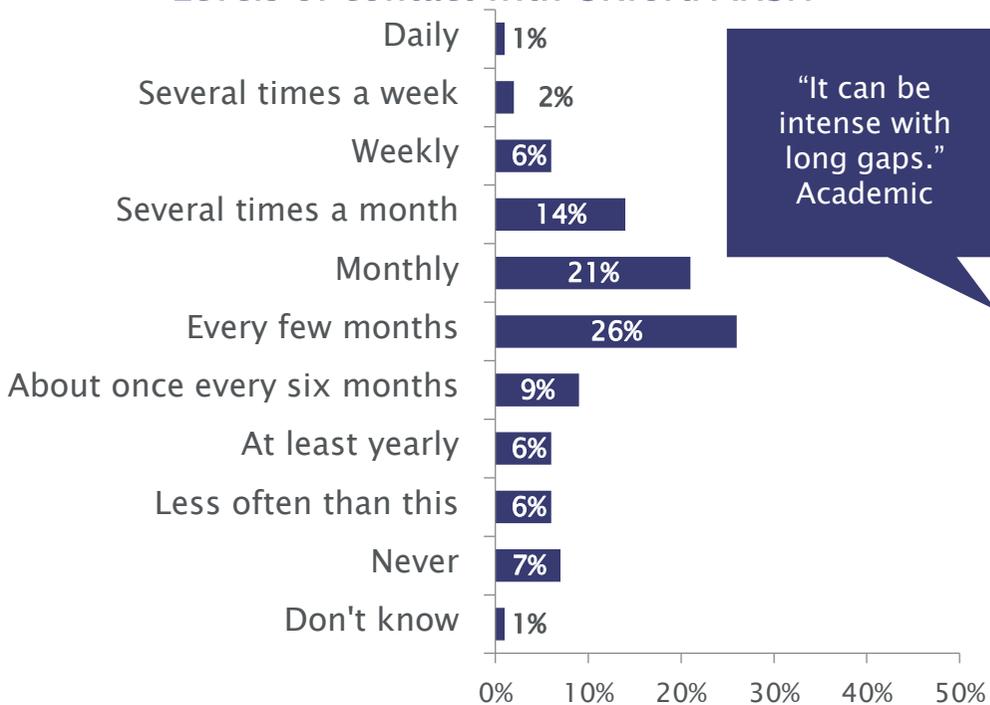


“They’ve approached it from the perspective of, ‘Okay, this commissioning process doesn’t currently accommodate what you’re thinking of, let’s think about how we can find some evaluations that would demonstrate reasons why that commissioning process itself should adjust’.” Industry

STAKEHOLDER CONTACT WITH OXFORD AHSN

Most stakeholders are in contact with Oxford AHSN on a quarterly or monthly basis, or several times a month. The level of contact fluctuates depending on the life cycle of projects stakeholders are working on with the Network.

Levels of contact with Oxford AHSN



“It can be intense with long gaps.”
Academic

“I’ve been there for various events and conferences that they’ve put on, and I do some work together with a couple of their people that do a similar job to me. So fairly regularly, probably once a week.”
NHS

There is substantial variation in the regularity of contact between stakeholders and Oxford AHSN. Stakeholders are most likely to say they are in contact with the core Oxford AHSN team every few months (26%), monthly (21%) or several times a month (14%). This can vary depending on what stage of a project stakeholders may be at. For example, in the in-depth qualitative interviews most stakeholders working in industry or academia say they are in quarterly contact, aside from more intense periods when they are working on specific projects.

In the follow up interviews, NHS stakeholders report having more regular contact with Oxford AHSN than other stakeholders, and this group is the most likely to attend events, be involved in hosting roadshows and to be in daily or weekly contact with Oxford AHSN while working on projects. This latter form of contact usually takes place at a lower level of the Network, rather than being with the senior AHSN team.

Stakeholders with more significant roles within Oxford AHSN, such as sitting on the Board of AHSN programmes, tend to have the most frequent contact. Such stakeholders describe their relationships as being more informal, saying that they can simply call their contact if an impromptu conversation needs to take place.

In the survey, just under half of stakeholders say they are in contact with the core Oxford AHSN team every few months or less often (47%). Increasing the regularity of contact with such stakeholders would be likely to improve stakeholder engagement with Oxford AHSN programmes.

CHAPTER 2: WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OXFORD AHSN



KEY FINDINGS: WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OXFORD AHSN

This section discusses stakeholder's working relationships with Oxford AHSN. It first looks at engagement and communications, before considering how productive relationships are.

Stakeholders rate Oxford AHSN highly in terms of engagement, disseminating information and value add. The AHSN is seen to work productively with academia and NHS providers, but less so with industry and NHS commissioners.

73% of stakeholders say the AHSN core team are effective at engaging with them, and identify the following key drivers:



Strong leadership

Listening to stakeholders, and tailoring communications

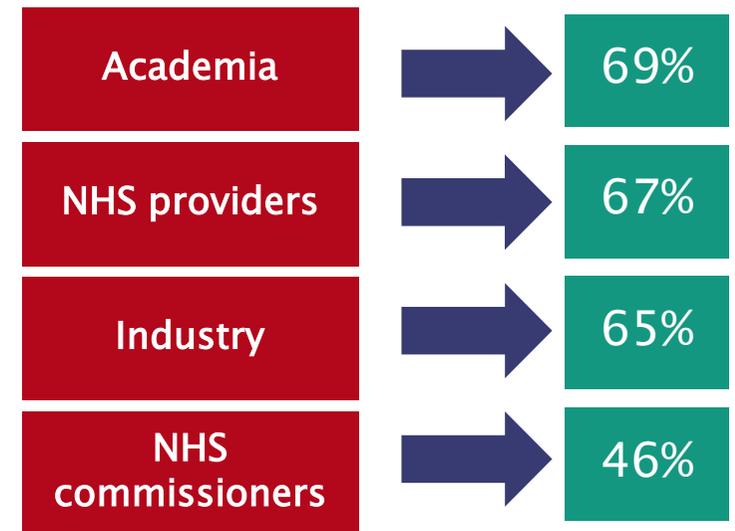


Taking a positive, proactive approach

64% agree that Oxford AHSN adds value to their organisation...

...but only 42% say they feel a part of Oxford AHSN

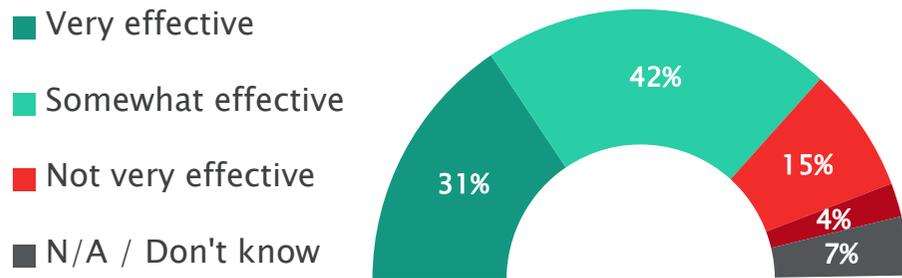
% of each stakeholder group agreeing Oxford AHSN works productively with them



EFFECTIVENESS OF CORE TEAM ENGAGEMENT

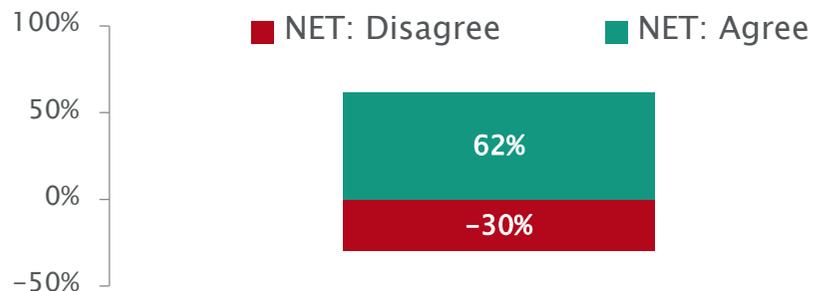
The majority of stakeholders say the core Oxford AHSN team is effective at engaging with them. Perceived effectiveness increases among those who have greater contact with Oxford AHSN.

All who have had some contact with Oxford AHSN
Thinking about your interactions with the core Oxford AHSN team how effective, if at all, is the team at engaging with you?



Stakeholders who have had at least some contact with Oxford AHSN have very positive perceptions of these engagements, with three quarters reporting the core team is effective in engaging with them (73%), compared to one in five (19%) who consider the team to be ineffective. Those from the life science industry are most positive about the core team's engagement, with four in five from this group describing the core team's engagement as effective (84%). Comparatively, just over seven in ten stakeholders working in NHS providers (74%) or in academia (72%) say the same. Perceptions of Oxford AHSN's engagement are most negative among NHS commissioners, one third of whom say the organisation is ineffective in this area (33%*), a substantially larger proportion than NHS provider stakeholders (18%) or academic stakeholders (15%).

All who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN
"The core Oxford AHSN team is effective at engaging with me"



Those who have a higher level of familiarity with, and knowledge of, Oxford AHSN evaluate the core team's engagement more highly. More than four in five (83%) of those who know a great deal or a fair amount about Oxford AHSN report that the core team are effective in engaging with them, compared to just over half (56%) of those who know only a little about the Network. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when a similar question about engagement is asked to all who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN, including those who have not had any contact with the organisation, a lower proportion of stakeholders say the core team is effective at engaging with them (62%). This positive correlation suggests that the core team's engagement strategy is breeding familiarity, and in turn favourability, and should be maintained.

STRENGTHS OF OXFORD AHSN'S CORE TEAM ENGAGEMENT, AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Stakeholders are highly positive about Oxford AHSN's engagement, but say that the most important thing now is for the organisation to engage more widely.

KEY STRENGTHS / AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

GENUINE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Stakeholders feel that Oxford AHSN staff put their stakeholders' interests at the heart of their engagement. In practical terms, this involves passing on tailored, relevant information to stakeholders, and taking on board stakeholders' concerns and requests in return.

"I think they're fantastic. They keep us informed, they participate, they share, they include us in appropriate networks or events."
Academic

PROACTIVE & DYNAMIC APPROACH

Oxford AHSN staff are seen to take a proactive approach, 'thinking outside of the box' rather than waiting for partners to come to them. Stakeholders say this is particularly true when it comes to the organisation's approach to applying innovation, a core objective of the AHSN.

"I would say mutually supportive, as I say, proactive, and actually they're quite inventive with respect to what they're trying to do."
Industry

HIGH QUALITY, PASSIONATE PEOPLE

Oxford AHSN staff are highly praised at all levels, across all stakeholder audiences. Stakeholders mention many members of staff by name, and they praise Gary Ford in particular for his leadership and willingness to be fully involved and engaged with the work of the organisation.

"I think it's worth saying that the leadership is outstanding."
Academic

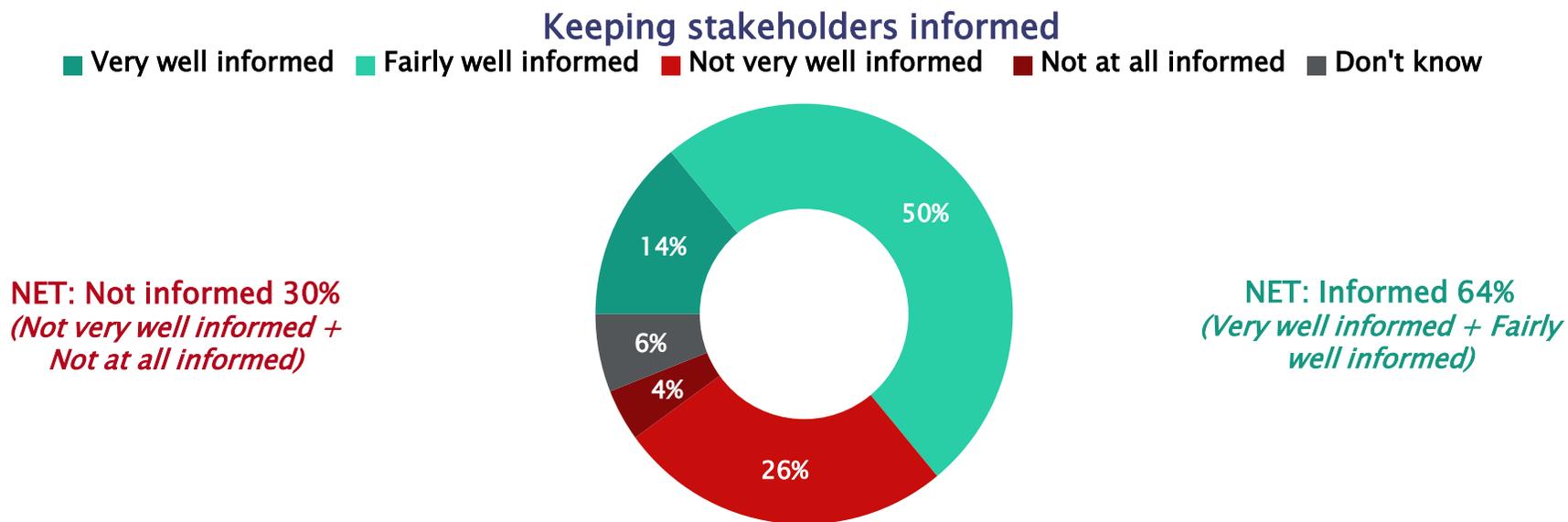
CONTINUE OUTREACH

While stakeholders are highly positive about Oxford AHSN's engagement, some feel greater breadth of engagement could be beneficial. With the size of the Network and the expertise available to it, the challenge is making sure that all stakeholders are aware of – and able to access and benefit from – what it has to offer.

"It's about using [the huge wealth of information the team has] in a way that raises the bar across the whole patch. We're not there yet."
NHS

KEEPING STAKEHOLDERS INFORMED ABOUT THE WORK OF PARTNERS

Around two thirds of stakeholders who have had at least some contact with Oxford AHSN say they feel well informed by the core Oxford AHSN team about its work.



Perhaps as a result of the strong engagement they attribute to Oxford AHSN, the majority of stakeholders who have had at least some contact with Oxford AHSN feel that the core team keeps them informed about the collaborative work of partners in the region (64%). While this is a positive finding, there is room for improvement, with half (50%) reporting to be only *fairly* well informed, while 14% consider themselves to be *very* well informed. NHS Providers are the most likely of Oxford AHSN's core stakeholder groups to report that they are kept well informed by the Oxford AHSN core team on the collaborative work of partners (69%), a larger proportion than either those working in the life science industry (57%*) or for NHS commissioners (50%*). However, due to a reduced number of stakeholders saying they have had contact with Oxford AHSN and therefore being shown this question, the overall base sizes for each group are small and this finding should be treated with caution.

With stakeholders from the life science industry and from NHS commissioners feeling least informed about Oxford AHSN's work, Oxford AHSN may benefit from increasing and targeting engagement among these audiences, in order to ensure they are better informed about the wider work being undertaken across the Network.

COMMUNICATING THE WORK OF PARTNERS TO STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders want to see Oxford AHSN being more vocal about its work and the impact it is having in the region – the success stories are not perceived as being well communicated, a potential lost opportunity.

In the follow up interviews with stakeholders several felt the organisation could publicise its work more effectively. Despite all the work the Network is doing, they say news about its programmes and their impact does not appear to be cutting through across the sector, outside those directly involved with the Network. They suggest that one possible way in which to better engage stakeholders would be to make more of the specific successes it has had, as this could improve the standing of Oxford AHSN across the region, and serve as an advertisement for the benefits of collaborating through the Network. Ultimately, this would be expected to encourage more actors across the system to become involved with Oxford AHSN programmes.

“I think the best way to communicate is through successes.”
Industry

“I think it’s got to demonstrate more on the outcomes... they haven’t been around that long I guess so they’ve got to have a reasonable time frame to show it but like everyone else I think it’s got to be evaluated and have they made tangible differences.”
NHS

The findings from the quantitative phase show that stakeholders from the life science industry and NHS commissioners feel least informed about Oxford AHSN’s work. While it is likely that stakeholders who work for NHS commissioners are less informed due to lower levels of overall interaction with Oxford AHSN, the follow up interviews suggest a more complex picture among industry stakeholders.

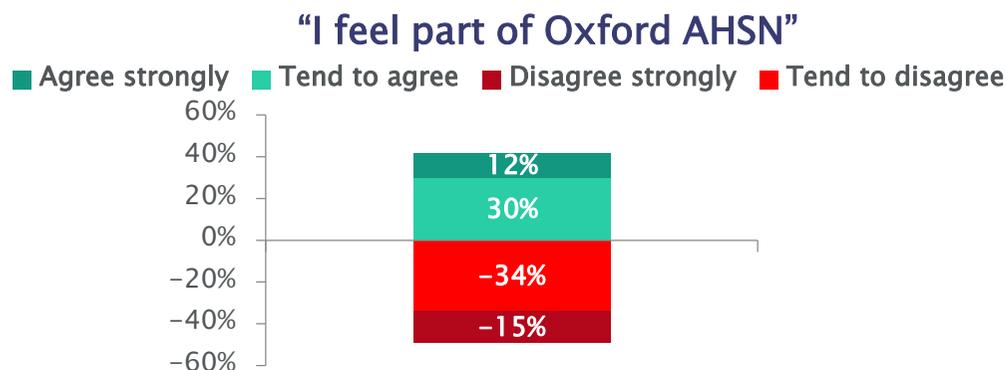
Several industry stakeholders are explicitly positive about the information the core team provide about the work of partners, and the newsletter and the website are praised for these reasons. However, certain industry stakeholders who are less well informed about the work of the Network say that they do not spend time reading the newsletters they get due to the many bulletins and publications they receive. Ensuring that the Network’s communications offer succinct headline news that allow time poor stakeholders to pull out key information will help to create greater cut-through of the Network’s messages among this audience, and ultimately keep them better informed.

“It [the email newsletter] gives the nuts and bolts and, if you want to know more about what’s going on, I think they’re pretty good on the network updates. There are talking head videos, the latest meetings. It’s a pretty good website.”
Industry

“You know, communication is a never-ending journey. I think they do okay but they could do better, possibly by making it more thematic and more succinct.”
Industry

FEELING PART OF OXFORD AHSN

Less than half of stakeholders feel part of Oxford AHSN, with academic stakeholders most likely to say they feel part of the Network, and NHS Commissioners* least likely to report this.



Showing % who say they feel part of Oxford AHSN

ACADEMIA



51%

NHS PROVIDER



46%

INDUSTRY



41%

NHS COMMISSIONER



27%*

The survey findings suggest that there may be some work for Oxford AHSN to do in making stakeholders feel more involved with the organisation. Half of stakeholders disagree that they feel part of Oxford AHSN (49%), compared to two in five who agree (42%). Academics are the most likely to feel part of Oxford AHSN (51% agree), followed by NHS providers (46%). NHS commissioners know less about and have fewer interactions with the Network, and are also particularly unlikely to agree that they feel part of Oxford AHSN (27%*).

Across the in-depth qualitative interviews, conducted among Oxford AHSN’s core stakeholders, a plurality report feeling part of the Network, reflecting these stakeholders status as priority contacts. Senior academics who are positive about Oxford AHSN are particularly likely to see themselves as part of the Network, and while some stakeholders who work in the life science industry or for NHS providers do consider this to be the case, they are more likely to see the organisation as a separate entity.

Those at more senior levels, who have high level interactions with Oxford AHSN’s leadership, are more likely to report feeling part of the Network. One academic stakeholder in particular doubts whether those working at lower levels of their organisation consider themselves part of the Network, due to being less aware of the overall vision and work of the organisation, and lacking established working relationships with the Oxford AHSN team.

“I think that, for me, it is a very open and very engaged process and again with the whole of the AHSN team, from chief exec down.”
Industry

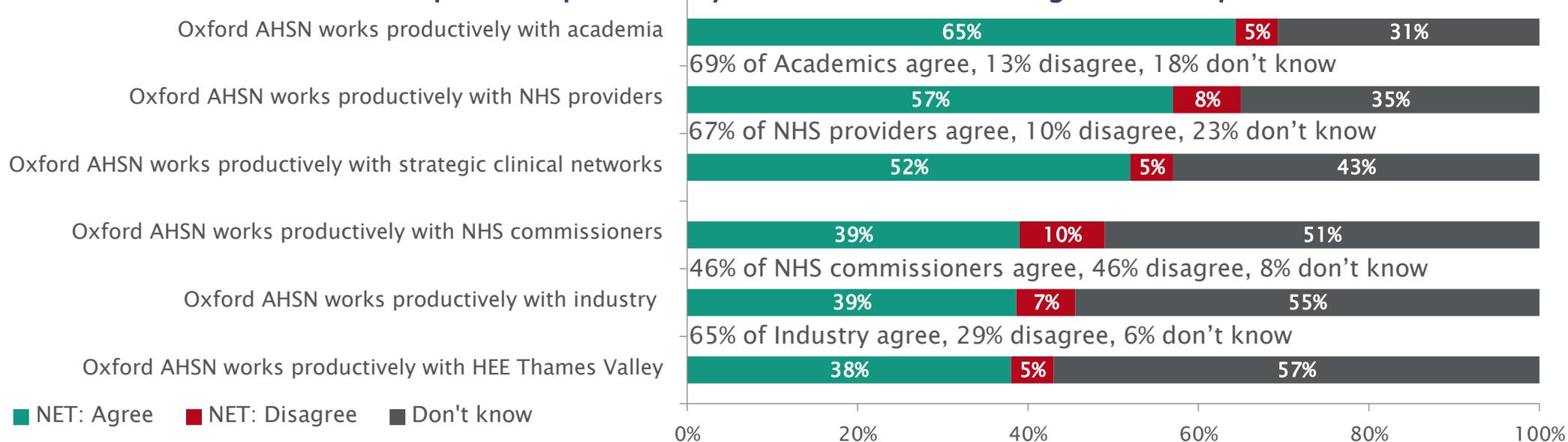
PRODUCTIVE WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

While most stakeholders agree Oxford AHSN works productively with academia and NHS providers, they are largely uninformed about its work with other parts of the sector, in particular NHS commissioners and industry.

A majority of stakeholders feel that Oxford AHSN works productively with two of its main partners: academia (65%) and NHS providers (57%). However, a large proportion of stakeholders do not feel well placed to evaluate how effectively Oxford AHSN is working with different parts of the system, with three in ten stakeholders or more saying they do not know how productively Oxford AHSN works with each tested. This lack of awareness is highest regarding NHS commissioners, industry and HEE Thames Valley, explaining why lower proportions of stakeholders overall provide positive ratings in relation to these groups of stakeholders. Increasing visibility of, and communications on, Oxford AHSN's work with NHS commissioners, industry and HEE Thames Valley in particular could therefore help to give stakeholders a more positive impression of Oxford AHSN as bringing together the whole system, rather than just elements of it.

It is worth noting that for all of the groups tested, stakeholders are most likely to evaluate Oxford AHSN as working productively with their own group. While this is a positive finding as first-hand impressions are that Oxford AHSN is working productively with different sectors, it also suggests that stakeholders could be better informed about the work Oxford AHSN is doing across all parts of the sector.

Perceptions of productivity in Oxford AHSN working relationships



PRODUCTIVE WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The majority of stakeholders talk about the productivity of their relationships with Oxford AHSN in terms of how effectively the organisation manages the collaboration, rather than focusing on impact or outcomes.



When interviewed in depth, most industry stakeholders say they have very productive working relationships with Oxford AHSN, as a result of the core team's strong links across the sector, and its ability to bring together a diverse range of partners. For example, one industry stakeholder stated that for small businesses who do not have an extensive range of contacts this can be invaluable. A further example mentioned related to Oxford AHSN working productively with industry to bring together local actors in medical technology and advanced engineering to create innovative glasses lenses.

"I think it's [Oxford AHSN] doing a good job with small businesses and I think it's improving significantly with larger companies."
Industry

"It's working with us as a Local Enterprise Partnership and the AHSN to look at how we can exploit technological development across sectors, with the life sciences community."
Industry



Academics are also broadly positive about the productivity of their working relationship with Oxford AHSN, again citing the organisation's role as a proactive facilitator of relationships. One academic stakeholder says that sometimes there can be a tendency for academics to be insular, and that Oxford AHSN has acted as a reminder to collaborate, encouraging them to seek partnerships where that might not otherwise have happened. A handful of stakeholders highlight the importance of working with stakeholders from across the region, and not just those based in Oxford.

"I think they're fantastic. I think they keep us informed, they participate, they share, they include us in appropriate networks or events."
Academic



In evaluating how productively Oxford AHSN is working with the NHS, NHS stakeholders think Oxford AHSN is doing well, but they see room for improvement. Oxford AHSN's clinical focus, and the proliferation of projects that have brought tangible benefits, such as setting up a clinical trials unit, are positive reflections of Oxford AHSN working productively with the NHS. However, NHS stakeholders (as well as stakeholders in industry and academia) do note that more involvement and buy-in from commissioners is needed for Oxford AHSN to maximise the productivity of its working relationships with the NHS.

"I think there have been some good successes and they've been supportive of setting up a clinical trials unit, so they've worked very closely with us and our clinicians. Could there be further work with clinicians? Yes, probably."
NHS

CHAPTER 3: ADDING VALUE



KEY FINDINGS: ADDING VALUE

The majority of stakeholders say that Oxford AHSN adds value to their work and the work of their organisation, and that the links it provides to other organisations offers the greatest value to them.

“Oxford AHSN adds value to my work and the work of my organisation”



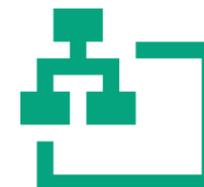
64%
AGREE



23%
DISAGREE



14%
DON'T KNOW



Stakeholders tend to describe Oxford AHSN's main value as coming from the links it has provided with other parts of the sector, as well as to programmes and funding outside the region

The majority of stakeholders say Oxford AHSN is either good or excellent at each of its core activities, including putting on networking and events, providing engaging communications, and listening to stakeholders.

Showing % of stakeholders saying Oxford AHSN is good or excellent at each of the following activities



64%

PROVIDING
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
NETWORKING



62%

HOSTING INTERESTING &
ENGAGING EVENTS



57%

PROVIDING ENGAGING
COMMUNICATIONS



52%

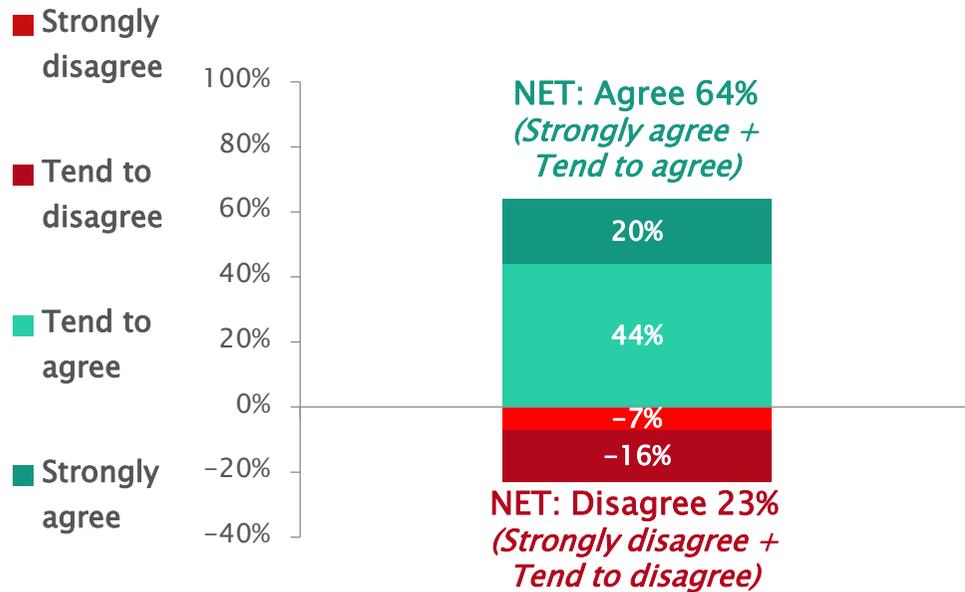
LISTENING TO
STAKEHOLDERS &
PARTNERS

OXFORD AHSN ADDING VALUE

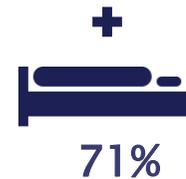
Two thirds of stakeholders agree that Oxford AHSN adds value to their work and the work of their organisation, with NHS providers most likely to say this is the case.

“Oxford AHSN adds value to my work and the work of my organisation”

Showing % who agree



NHS PROVIDER



INDUSTRY



ACADEMIA



NHS COMMISSIONER



The majority of stakeholders feel that Oxford AHSN benefits them, with two thirds of stakeholders agreeing that Oxford AHSN adds value to their work (64%). While the majority agree this is the case across all of Oxford AHSN’s core stakeholder audiences, it is interesting to note that NHS providers are most positive in this regard, with seven in ten (71%) from this stakeholder group agreeing, compared to three in five of those in the life science industry (61%). This may largely be due to Oxford AHSN’s programme objectives being linked to clinical outcomes, which providers are most likely to see the impact of.

DEMONSTRATING OXFORD AHSN'S VALUE TO INDUSTRY & ACADEMIC STAKEHOLDERS

In follow up in-depth interviews, industry stakeholders are the quickest to see the value in Oxford AHSN; while the majority of academic stakeholders also appreciate the value of the Network, a few are more cynical about its ability to support them beyond links they already have.



In the follow up in-depth interviews industry representatives are particularly positive about the value Oxford AHSN has brought them. They emphasise Oxford AHSN's work in providing advice and bringing their companies into partnerships and conversations they could not have facilitated themselves, due to this not being on their radar or not being able to access the relevant groups. For example, two industry stakeholders report difficulties in getting around a table with senior NHS figures, whether to promote a new product or to bring a clinical perspective on board for their work. Oxford AHSN's work in facilitating such meetings has made the organisation a valued partner for these industry stakeholders.

"For small companies it's very difficult to get attention from the NHS and to have the NHS then promote smaller companies. Collaboration with smaller companies and innovation from universities I think is a good thing."
Industry

"I think their integration function, the coalescing of different parties is something that they're attempting to do. It's not easy to do, particularly when you have big and entrenched universities like Oxford University to deal with. I think they're doing a pretty good job."
Industry



Academic stakeholders are divided in the extent to which they see value in Oxford AHSN. Many are extremely positive about collaborating with Oxford AHSN, citing day-to-day examples of how the Oxford AHSN core team has added value to their work, in terms of supporting them with applications for European funding, or helping to set up meetings with others from the sector. While such stakeholders see an inherent value in Oxford AHSN's role as a convenor and collaborator, for a handful of academic stakeholders this is not something that adds value outside of their existing networks, and as such achieving buy-in among these academics may prove to be more of a challenge.

"They're energetic, so they get on and do stuff without people having to tell them a million times to do it, and they're pretty effectively linked in to the decision-making system around health in the UK."
Academic

"They've really driven a bidding process for European funds for us, around setting up a research and innovation centre. They're very good at trying to get in my diary, and then chasing up and getting partners around the table, looking at ideas."
Academic

DEMONSTRATING OXFORD AHSN'S VALUE TO NHS STAKEHOLDERS

NHS stakeholders are most likely to see value in attending events and opportunities to share knowledge with others in the sector.



While facilitation of collaboration and sharing of ideas through events are noted as adding value for around half of NHS stakeholders interviewed, several NHS stakeholders report that it is not clear how Oxford AHSN benefits their organisation specifically. This manifests principally in the perception that collaboration with the partners, in particular academic partners, would occur without an AHSN. One stakeholder also says that while Oxford AHSN does provide training, this is not always effective and is often available internally.

“The more I’ve got to understand and be involved I can see a place for them, and I can see a place particularly with the STP, and the fact that they can be that hub and they’re not as fragmented as the rest of the system.”

NHS

“I think if I asked my chief exec colleagues, what the impact of totally ignoring the AHSN was, they’d probably [give] the answer of zero.”

NHS

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS



Key industry stakeholders who have been heavily involved in Oxford AHSN projects are highly positive about the value it can bring – increased links with industry, communicating the success stories and bringing them ideas of how projects can benefit them.



Much like industry stakeholders, academics who have worked closely with Oxford AHSN are aware of its value, but more broadly this group may be cynical about the need for Oxford AHSN. Providing evidence of what the Network’s unique offering will be important for this audience.



Events and opportunities to share knowledge are likely to be the best way to introduce this group to Oxford AHSN. Given the direct impact Oxford AHSN’s work can have for NHS stakeholders, demonstrating the clinical outcomes of projects is likely to be the best demonstration of the value the organisation can add.

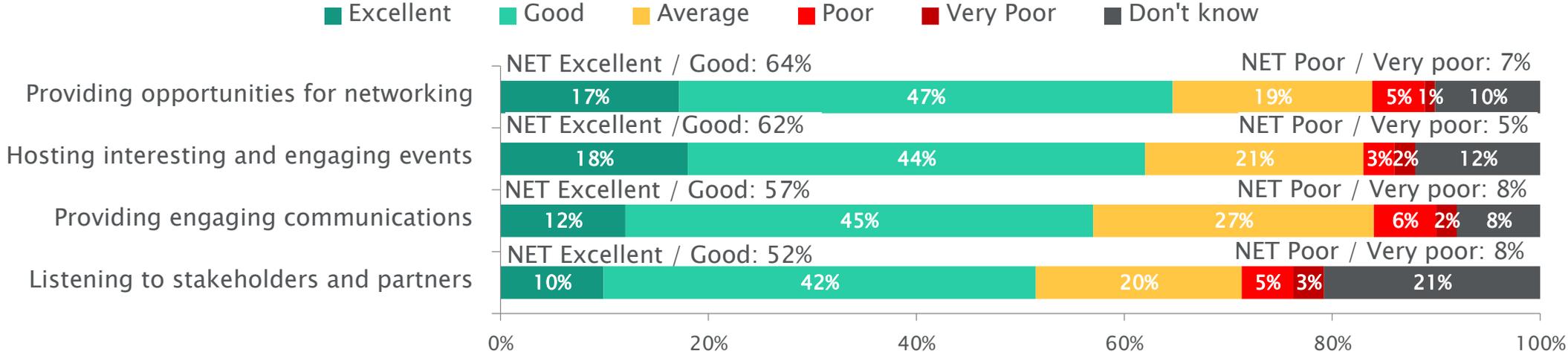
PERCEPTIONS OF OXFORD AHSN: NETWORKING, EVENTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND LISTENING

The majority of stakeholders say Oxford AHSN is good or excellent across its four main areas of activity: providing opportunities for networking, hosting events, providing engaging communications and listening to stakeholders.

The majority of stakeholders are positive about Oxford AHSN’s performance in providing networking opportunities, hosting events, providing engaging communications and listening to its stakeholders. Of these areas, networking opportunities and events are the organisation’s biggest strength, with over three in five stakeholders saying it is good or excellent at both (providing opportunities for networking: 64%; hosting interesting and engaging events: 62%).

NHS commissioners are less positive than other audiences about Oxford AHSN’s activities. For example, two in five stakeholders who work for NHS commissioners rate Oxford AHSN as either good or excellent in providing opportunities for networking (43%*), while seven in ten stakeholders who work for NHS providers say the same (69%). While the limited number of NHS commissioners responding to the survey means this finding should be treated as indicative rather than representative, it does suggest that as well as being less engaged with Oxford AHSN generally, this group also feels that its activities are less relevant to them. Investigating the types of networking opportunities, events and communications that would most appeal to this group could help Oxford AHSN to create more productive relationships with NHS commissioners and incorporate them more into the Network.

Stakeholder ratings of Oxford AHSN activities



PERCEPTIONS OF OXFORD AHSN: NETWORKING, EVENTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND LISTENING

Stakeholders provide many examples of good networking and events Oxford AHSN has provided, and view these as the main strengths of the Network.



PROVIDING
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR
NETWORKING

When interviewed qualitatively, stakeholders recognise that facilitating collaboration and relationship building are a key part of Oxford AHSN's core function, and networking is seen as an important component of its work by all stakeholder groups.

Academic and NHS stakeholders are most likely to have taken advantage of such opportunities. Events are widely praised, with stakeholders from the NHS highlighting the forums run by Oxford AHSN, including the patient safety and clinical services forums as particularly good opportunities to network. Industry stakeholders are generally positive on this point as well but some also say they have not taken advantage of networking opportunities that have been available to them, as a result of only skim reading communications they receive.



HOSTING
INTERESTING
AND ENGAGING
EVENTS

Oxford AHSN-hosted events receive high praise across stakeholder audiences. In particular, the recent series of roadshows held across the region were praised as being innovative, different and helping to counter the perception of Oxford AHSN as being Oxford-centric. The fact that industry, the NHS and academia were all represented at these events is picked out by stakeholders as contributing to their success, and stakeholders also praise that topics were tailored to the region and audience in each case.

Beyond the roadshows, academics cite events relating to the 2023 innovation challenge as positive and engaging. One note of caution is sounded by an NHS stakeholder that Oxford AHSN hosted events can concentrate too much on presentations, saying engagement through workshops or break out groups should also be encouraged.

"They run meetings, facilitate networks. They're pretty good at that. I think since they were created a few years ago, there's a greater sense of networking collaboratively across the AHSN area than would've existed before."

Academic

"They do quite well, in terms of, they run a lot of events and they communicate those events quite widely."

NHS

"The roadshows they held across the region could have been a complete failure but were actually a great success. I think that success can be built on next year to provide an opportunity for more than the very informal, low-key networking that went on."

Academic

"It could have been a bit more workshop-y, a bit more engaging with people about what they would like to see in the future, rather than just a succession of presenters."

NHS

PERCEPTIONS OF OXFORD AHSN: NETWORKING, EVENTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND LISTENING

While stakeholders are broadly positive about Oxford AHSN's communications and engagement, there is room for improvement. Closing the feedback loop is important and needs to happen consistently.



PROVIDING ENGAGING COMMUNICATIONS

As we have seen, the communications provided by the Oxford AHSN core team are generally praised, though engagement is not always high, particularly among industry and academic stakeholders. Several of these stakeholders admit that they receive a lot of communications (from multiple organisations), and as a result they often feel they do not have time to read the Oxford AHSN newsletter.

NHS stakeholders appear to engage more with Oxford AHSN's communications, largely the newsletter, citing them as useful and well presented. It is appreciated that Oxford AHSN is a relatively small and new organisation, so the quality of communications is generally thought to be impressive.

"To be honest I haven't really [seen their communications]. I skim those materials. I haven't really read them in-depth."
Industry

"I would say quite effective. Their material is interesting and easy to read."
NHS



LISTENING TO STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Several industry stakeholders praise the core team highly in this regard, saying that the Oxford AHSN team listens closely to their needs, acts on their feedback, and links them up with other parts of the sector.

Some stakeholders, however, have difficulty rating Oxford AHSN's performance in this area. A handful of stakeholders in academia and the NHS say they feel listened to and engaged with on a day to day level, but that the things they discuss are not always followed up on. One academic stakeholder attributes this to the fact that the Oxford AHSN core team are experts themselves, and therefore have their own ideas and objectives, which can sometimes cause them not to follow stakeholder recommendations.

"They're listening, they're identifying challenges and they're trying to help us solve the problems associated with those challenges, in order to get the big mission done. I mean, that's what you want."
Industry

"I think they're okay. It's the other side of being expert, knowing what they want to do, and having good experience themselves."
Academic



**CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE
OF OXFORD AHSN &
REGIONAL
COLLABORATION**

KEY FINDINGS: THE ROLE OF OXFORD AHSN & REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Stakeholders have a good understanding of Oxford AHSN's role, though beyond collaboration they have differing views of what the ultimate aim of the organisation is:



39%
BENEFITTING
PATIENT CARE



35%
INCREASING ADOPTION OF
INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS &
PATHWAYS



32%
RESEARCH & SHARE
BEST PRACTICE



9%
WEALTH CREATION

While stakeholders don't associate Oxford AHSN as having an ultimately financial objective, they do think improving efficiency and wealth creation should be by-products of the Network.



Collaboration across academia, the life science industry and the NHS is seen as essential by the vast majority of stakeholders

Stakeholders are largely positive about collaborating via Oxford AHSN, though opinion varies by group



Those working in the life science industry are most likely to view collaboration via Oxford AHSN positively



Those working in academia are least likely to say this



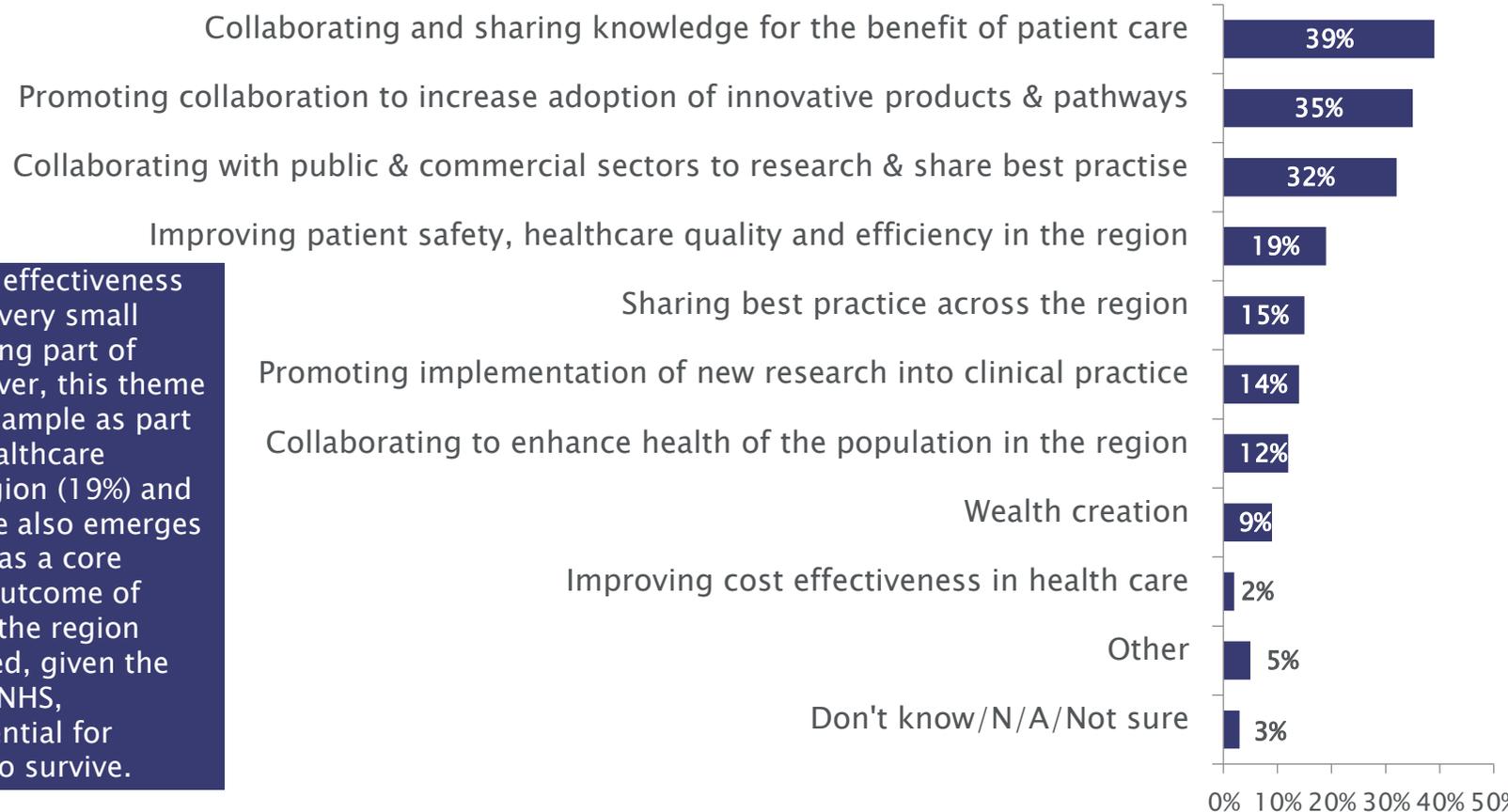
The majority of stakeholders say Oxford AHSN is effective at fostering collaboration, more so with those from industry and academia than from the NHS

STAKEHOLDER DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF OXFORD AHSN

Promoting collaboration is seen to be Oxford AHSN's core role, for the purpose of improving patient care, increasing innovation and sharing best practice.

While the majority of stakeholders say they know at least a little about Oxford AHSN (91%), among this majority there are differing views on what the core purpose of the organisation is. Stakeholders are most likely to mention collaboration, though they see the intended outcomes of this collaboration differently – some believe that the ultimate objective is collaboration and sharing knowledge for the benefit of patient care (39%), while others think the objective of collaboration is to increase the adoption of innovative products and pathways (35%), or to research and share best practice (32%).

Showing stakeholders' unprompted descriptions of the role and function of Oxford AHSN



In and of itself, improving cost effectiveness in healthcare is described by a very small minority of stakeholders as being part of Oxford AHSN's role (2%). However, this theme emerges in other guises, for example as part of improving patient safety, healthcare quality and efficiency in the region (19%) and wealth creation (9%). The theme also emerges in the follow up interviews not as a core objective, but as an expected outcome of improved collaboration across the region covered by Oxford AHSN. Indeed, given the financial challenges facing the NHS, stakeholders consider this essential for Oxford AHSN to deliver if it is to survive.

STAKEHOLDERS' VIEWS ON OXFORD AHSN'S ROLE AND FUNCTION

Stakeholders who took part in the qualitative phase are very well informed about Oxford AHSN's role and purpose, with their understanding influenced by the areas on which they have worked most closely with the organisation.

In the follow up interviews conducted with Oxford AHSN's key stakeholders, a very good level of understanding of the organisation's core purpose was demonstrated. As was seen in the survey, collaboration is the key emerging theme, while innovation, sharing of knowledge and best practice, and improving efficiency are also highlighted as being central to the organisation's role.

"A triangle of the academics working with the hospitals, working with industry to create an output that will benefit patients in the NHS."
Industry

"Innovation research, commercialising NHS activity and linking us with grants."
NHS

"The AHSN has a two-fold role, one is in helping to bridge those gaps between organisations so that the patient pathway between them is smooth. Also, ensuring that that pathway and the experience of the patient is based on the best possible evidence"
Academic

"The main purpose of all of the AHSNs is to translate innovation into practice, and to help the NHS access, and therefore the patient access, new innovation."
Industry

"I think they are there to enhance financial benefits to the patch through wealth creation. I think they're there to reduce variation, and to stimulate innovation."
NHS

Descriptions of Oxford AHSN's role and purpose are largely determined by stakeholders' own roles and backgrounds – for example, those who are involved in some capacity on patient safety projects are more likely to describe this as one of the main objectives of Oxford AHSN, while those who are involved with Oxford AHSN's innovation programmes are particularly likely to highlight innovation and technology as being core components of its work.

That stakeholders view the organisation's aims through the prism of their work is to be expected, to a certain degree, given the broad range of objectives that Oxford AHSN has. This can be used to Oxford AHSN's advantage, in that the sheer range of its work helps to increase its appeal and relevance to different stakeholder groups. However, this means that those who are less familiar with specific areas of Oxford AHSN's work may therefore lack a clear or concise understanding of the organisation's aims and the intended outcomes of its programmes. The organisation should therefore communicate a simple message about who it is and what it is setting out to do.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE REQUIREMENT FOR OXFORD AHSN

Stakeholders are very supportive of Oxford AHSN. The Network is considered critical to developing a more innovative, safe and effective health system by a large majority.

A large majority of stakeholders are very positive about the need for Oxford AHSN and the work the organisation is doing. Only one in ten (12%) say that the Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford region does not require an AHSN to increase collaboration and partnership between clinicians and managers from NHS providers, commissioners, universities and the life science industry, a very positive reflection of the extent to which stakeholders support the idea of having an AHSN.

Most stakeholders also see the value an AHSN brings to the region, with three quarters of stakeholders agreeing that Oxford AHSN is critical to developing a more innovative, safe and cost effective health system in the region (75%).

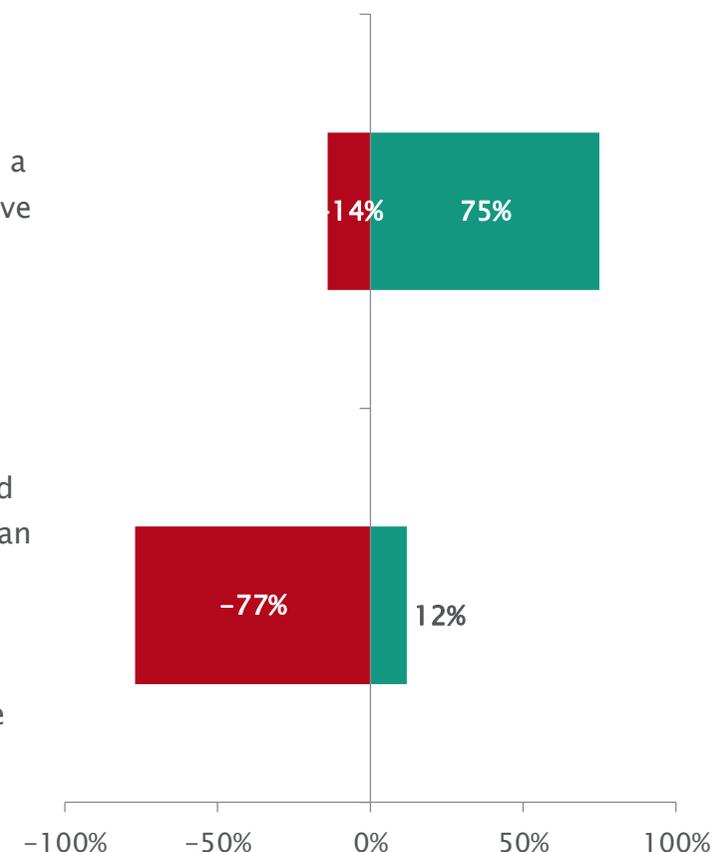
“I think without the likes of the AHSN, small companies would really, really struggle to get any traction with the NHS.”
Industry

Perceived importance of Oxford AHSN

■ NET: Disagree ■ NET: Agree

Oxford AHSN is critical to developing a more innovative, safe and cost effective health system in the region

The Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire region does not require an AHSN to increase collaboration & partnership between clinicians and managers from NHS providers, commissioners, universities & the life science industry



Q10. Thinking about Oxford AHSN, to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN (n=510). Q11. Thinking about the region covered by Oxford AHSN (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford), to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all respondents (n=563) Option 3 Base: Respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN and have had at least some contact (n=469).

MAXIMISING THE REACH OF OXFORD AHSN

In follow up interviews stakeholders' positivity towards Oxford AHSN is also evident, and many stakeholders say they have seen evidence of the Network's impact in the region first-hand.

Stakeholders generally say that collaboration across different parts of the health system does not presently happen regularly or efficiently enough, and they see an inherent value in Oxford AHSN linking up the system more effectively.

Oxford AHSN is seen by the majority of stakeholders as an important part of achieving this aim. Many stakeholders point to ways in which the Network has already instigated collaboration or created positive outcomes in the region, some of which may not have happened were it not for Oxford AHSN. Such examples include the Child and Adult Mental Health Services programme; standardising protocols to reduce morbidity in paediatrics and maternity; and the gestational diabetes project that Oxford AHSN led on.

Those in industry are particularly positive about the role Oxford AHSN has played in linking them up with the NHS, and in a sense they view Oxford AHSN as providing an 'in-road' to NHS bodies that can often be difficult to access directly, due to what they view as time pressures and complicated structures. Those working in the NHS support this view, with one stakeholder saying that, without Oxford AHSN, collaboration simply would not be the top of their agenda, and it places (positive) pressure on them to participate in such projects. Academics are slightly less inclined to say that they view Oxford AHSN as important in providing links to other parts of the health system.

There is an almost unanimous positivity towards Oxford AHSN and its work among those who are familiar with, and involved with, its work, which is testament to the organisation. There is, however, a challenge for Oxford AHSN to widen the reach of the Network among those who are not aware of its work, or may be more reluctant to become involved, or may feel they do not have the time to do so. One stakeholder in particular raises this as a concern – they feel Oxford AHSN could communicate its successes and its regional impact more effectively, to encourage greater collaboration across the region.

"I'm absolutely signed up to the overall objectives of the AHSN."
Academic

"If they weren't there, I think we'd find it really difficult to do that all by ourselves, it wouldn't be top of our agenda, but they almost force us to do that sort of stuff which is good."
NHS

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OXFORD AHSN REGION FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN HEALTH AND MEDICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

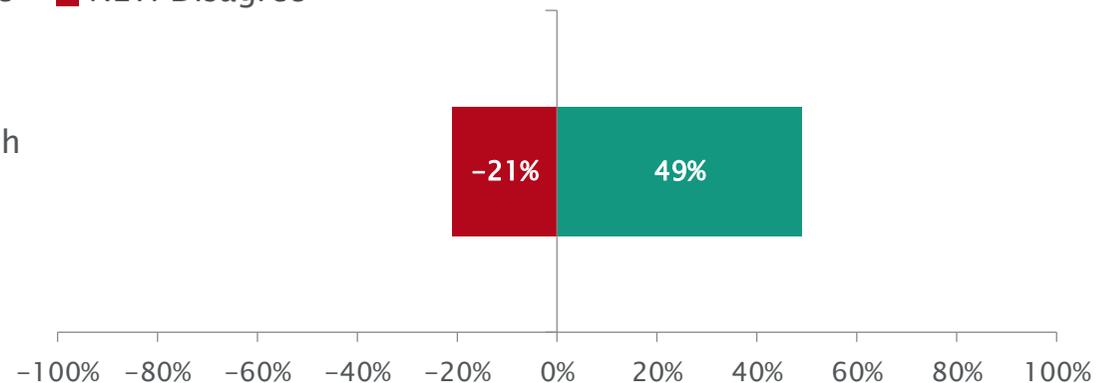
Stakeholders unanimously agree that the region covered by Oxford AHSN is rich in potential, thanks to its strong academic institutions and life science industry.

Across the qualitative interviews stakeholders are highly positive about both the talent that exists across the region covered by Oxford AHSN and the work being done there. Many say that this is bolstered in particular by the academic institutions and the life science industry that are located in the region. With regard to academic institutions, one stakeholder in particular pointed out that not collaborating would mean letting the expertise of those institutions go to waste. Stakeholders' views of the region is further illustrated by the fact that half of all stakeholders agree that the region is the foremost centre for medical science research in the world (49%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, agreement is slightly higher among academics (70%), though over half of stakeholders in the life science industry (55%) and working for NHS providers (45%) also agree this is the case.

Perceptions of the region and Oxford AHSN's standing

■ NET: Agree ■ NET: Disagree

The region is the foremost centre for medical science research in the world



"I think we're in a prime position. I think we've got the people, we've got the culture, we've got the ambition, we've got the infrastructures, we've got the networks. I'm interested in translating innovation and I don't think there's a better place in Europe to do it, to be honest."
Industry

Q11. Thinking about the region covered by Oxford AHSN (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford), to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all respondents (n=563) Option 3 Base: Respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN and have had at least some contact (n=469)

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION IN THE REGION COVERED BY OXFORD AHSN

Collaboration is considered to be important by the vast majority of stakeholders, with as many as three quarters saying it is *very* important.

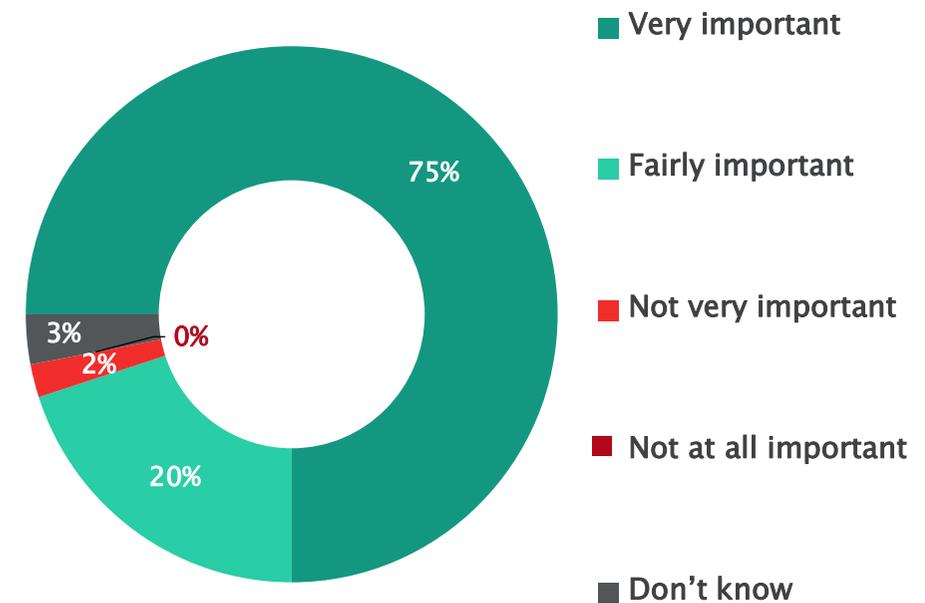
The vast majority of stakeholders say that collaboration in the region covered by Oxford AHSN – including Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford – is important (95%). Only 2% of stakeholders say it is not important, while as many as three quarters say it is *very* important (75%).

In follow up interviews, stakeholders from across different stakeholder groups reinforce this finding, describing collaboration in the region as ‘vital’ and ‘absolutely essential’. They view collaboration as being the means to achieving a large number of potential outcomes, including providing a place to ‘convene, troubleshoot and help plan’; as a means of improving the system and making it more cohesive, preventing quality of care from falling through the gaps; and as a means to improving overall efficiency in the system.

“[Collaboration is...] one of the key factors that’s enabled the NHS to continue to provide healthcare. What we need to be able to do as a nation or as a healthcare system is provide more and better services with the same cash.”
Industry

“The AHSN I think are a world class example of how collaboration should exist in health and social care and with, you know, the local government.”
Industry

Importance of collaboration in the region



Q8. How important, if at all, is collaboration between clinicians and managers from NHS providers, commissioners, universities and the life science industry to health and prosperity in the region covered by Oxford AHSN (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford)? Base: all respondents (n=563)

STAKEHOLDER INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE SECTOR

Stakeholders are varied in the extent to which they feel they have good links with other parts of the sector. Those working in academia feel they have the best connections, while those in industry and NHS commissioners feel the least well connected.

While there is consensus that collaboration across the region is important, albeit to different extents, there are notable differences in how much different stakeholder groups say they currently collaborate (whether through the Oxford AHSN network or via other links they may have).

“My organisation has good links with NHS organisations, Universities and the life science sector in the local region”

Showing % who agree

ACADEMIA



88%

NHS PROVIDER



75%

INDUSTRY



62%

NHS COMMISSIONER



61%*

Nine in ten academics (88%) agree that their organisation has good links with NHS organisations, universities and the life science sector in the local region, while three quarters (75%) of NHS providers say the same. Those in the life science industry are less likely to report this, with three out of five agreeing with the same statement (62%).

This disparity also comes through clearly in the qualitative findings. While this may have implications for the importance stakeholders attach to Oxford AHSN (see page 44), this finding also suggests that those working in the life science industry in particular feel less well connected and may therefore have a greater need for, and be more open to receiving support from, Oxford AHSN to become better connected with other bodies in the system.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION & OXFORD AHSN FOR THOSE WORKING IN ACADEMIA & THE LIFE SCIENCE INDUSTRY

Industry stakeholders are most positive about the role of Oxford AHSN in providing a route into greater collaboration across the system. While many academics also see this as important, a notable minority say that they already have good links and therefore do not see Oxford AHSN as vital in the same way.

Findings from both phases of research show a good deal of variation in stakeholders' attitudes towards collaboration in the region. Depending on their area of work, stakeholders also have differing views on how important collaboration is in general. This is particularly true of those who work in the life science industry, the vast majority of whom are strongly in favour of collaborating. Nine out of ten stakeholders in this group say collaboration is *very* important (91%).

While the vast majority of academic and NHS providers also perceive collaboration to be important for the region, a smaller proportion feel as strongly about the importance of collaboration, with a little more than seven in ten in each group saying it is *very* important (academics: 76%; NHS providers: 72%). These differences are likely to be a result of the way in which stakeholders work, but also a result of how well each group feels connected already – as we have seen, those working in the life science industry feel less well connected than their counterparts working in academia or for NHS providers, and as a result they place greater importance on collaboration, and are very open to creating links with other types of organisations.

This has a subsequent impact on the perceived importance of Oxford AHSN among stakeholders. In the qualitative interviews, those who say they have good links with other organisations in the region outside of Oxford AHSN are least likely to say that they view Oxford AHSN as important to their work and their organisation. While such stakeholders do see the value of Oxford AHSN's programmes and impact in the region, they are simply less likely to say that it is vital as they have links independent of the Network.

In contrast, and for the reverse reasons, those working in the life science industry are markedly more likely than other stakeholders to speak positively about Oxford AHSN and to see the value it can bring them. In this way, Oxford AHSN may find it has more natural advocates among the life science industry, while among certain academics it will be necessary to work harder to communicate the impact and value of its work, and to make the case for them being involved with Oxford AHSN, outside of existing collaborations.

"It's not necessary for the AHSN to exist [for collaboration to happen]. You know, universities, industry and the NHS collaborate all the time anyway, for that to happen it doesn't require the AHSN."

Academic

"[Collaboration [is] indispensable for anybody who's really trying to change the system like we are."

Industry

THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF OXFORD AHSN IN FACILITATING COLLABORATION

More than half of stakeholders say Oxford AHSN has been effective at facilitating collaboration.

While stakeholders broadly agree that collaboration in the region covered by Oxford AHSN is important, a more modest majority of those who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN agree that the organisation has been effective at facilitating collaboration between clinicians and managers from NHS providers and commissioners, and universities and the life science industry (57%). Stakeholders who work for NHS providers or in the life science industry are once again most positive, with larger proportions saying that Oxford AHSN has been very effective in this area (both 16%) than those who work in academia (10%).

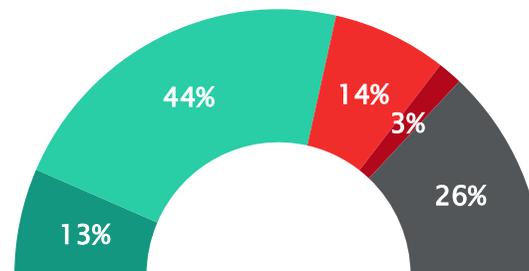
Those working in the life science industry also appear to feel more informed about Oxford AHSN's impact on collaboration, with just 10% of this group saying they don't know, compared to over a quarter of those working for NHS providers (26%) or in academia (32%). This may be a result of this group being on the whole more interested in collaboration, and as a result being more engaged with Oxford AHSN's work.

It should also be noted that this question was asked only to those who say they know at least a little about Oxford AHSN. That a quarter of these stakeholders say they don't know how effective the organisation is at facilitating collaboration across the sector suggests that, despite being aware of its work, a significant minority of stakeholders are not aware of the ways in which Oxford AHSN supports collaboration across the region. This emphasises that communications focussed on how Oxford AHSN works with its partners could have a positive impact on how stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of the organisation in this area.

Effectiveness of Oxford AHSN at facilitating collaboration

NET: Effective 57%
(Very effective + Somewhat effective)

NET: Ineffective 17% *(Not very effective + Not at all effective)*



- Very effective
- Fairly effective
- Not very effective
- Don't know

"[Oxford] AHSN I think are a world class example of how collaboration should exist in health and social care and with the local government."
Industry

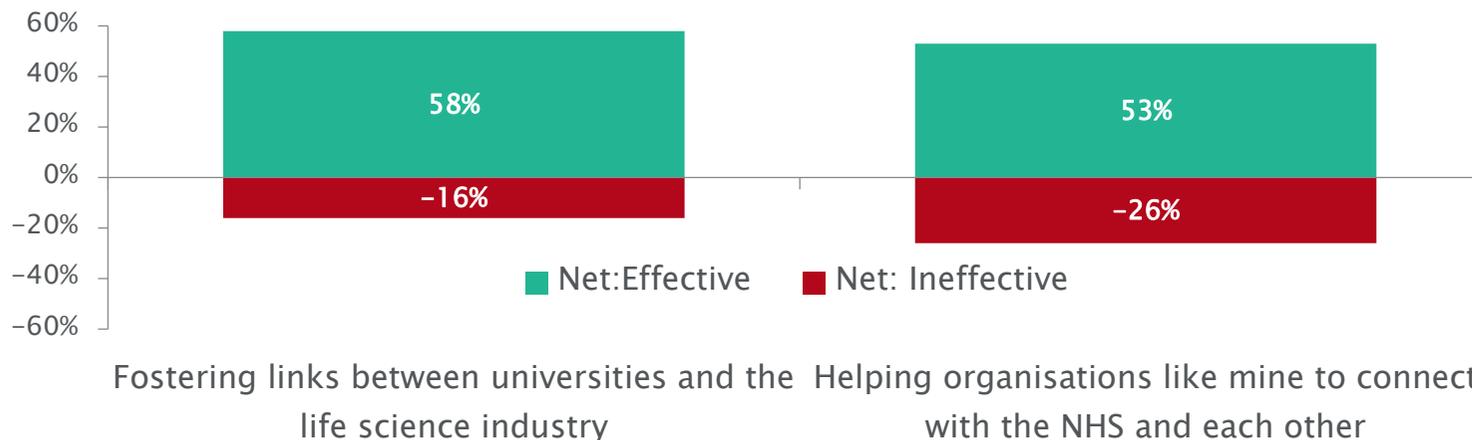
BOOSTING COLLABORATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT ACTORS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

There is room for Oxford AHSN to improve the way in which it manages collaboration between non-NHS stakeholders and the NHS, with one in four saying the Network has been inefficient in this area.

While more than half of stakeholders perceive Oxford AHSN to be effective at fostering links between universities and the life science industry (58%) and helping organisations like theirs to connect with the NHS and each other (53%), there are some marked differences in how well they perceive collaboration with different components of the system to be working. One in four stakeholders who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN say they think Oxford AHSN has been ineffective at helping organisations like theirs to connect with the NHS and each other (26%), while 16% say the same about the organisation's effectiveness in fostering links between universities and the life science industry (16%).

Those working in the life science industry (37%) are more likely than those working in academia (19%) to say that Oxford AHSN is ineffective in helping organisations like theirs to connect with the NHS and each other. However, it is worth noting that a majority of these industry stakeholders say that Oxford AHSN is effective in aiding these connections (57%). Given that those working in the life science industry are generally most supportive of Oxford AHSN, addressing the views of this significant minority is important. Exploring what would constitute successful collaborations for those working in the life science industry, and focusing on helping them to link up more effectively with those in the NHS may help to boost stakeholders' perceived effectiveness of Oxford AHSN in this area.

Effectiveness of Oxford AHSN in boosting collaboration in the sector



“I’d say they are one of the leaders in doing this [facilitating collaboration to support innovation adoption], of those that I have observed.”
Industry

**CHAPTER 5:
PERFORMANCE &
OXFORD AHSN
PROGRAMMES**



KEY FINDINGS: PERFORMANCE & OXFORD AHSN PROGRAMMES

Stakeholders perceive Oxford AHSN's most positive impact to have been in the areas of collaboration and translating innovation and research into practice. The Network is perceived by a small minority of stakeholders to have had a financial impact as well.

“In which of the following areas, if any, has the work of Oxford AHSN had a positive impact?”



58%
COLLABORATION
ACROSS DIFFERENT
ORGANSATIONS



48%
ADOPTING INNOVATION INTO
CLINICAL PRACTICE

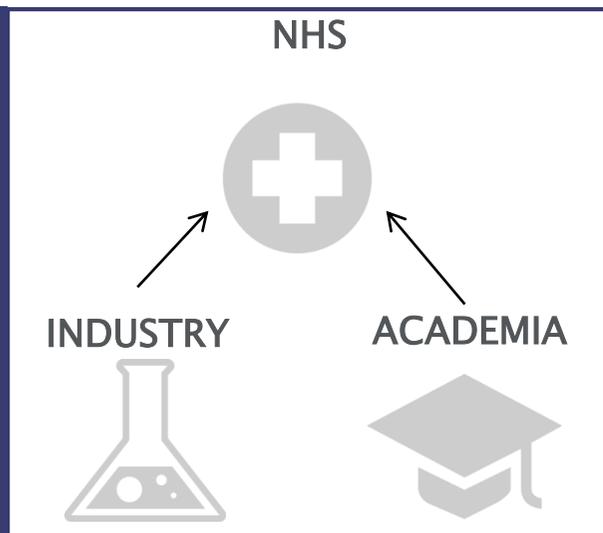


10%
COST EFFICIENCY



8%
ECONOMIC GROWTH IN
THE REGION

Industry and academic stakeholders most want access to NHS stakeholders, but this group appears to be least involved on Oxford AHSN programmes.



Clinical innovation adoption is the programme that most stakeholders are aware of, while informatics is least well known

“Which of the following programmes or themes are you aware of, if any?”

65%
CLINICAL
INNOVATION
ADOPTION



48%
INFORMATICS



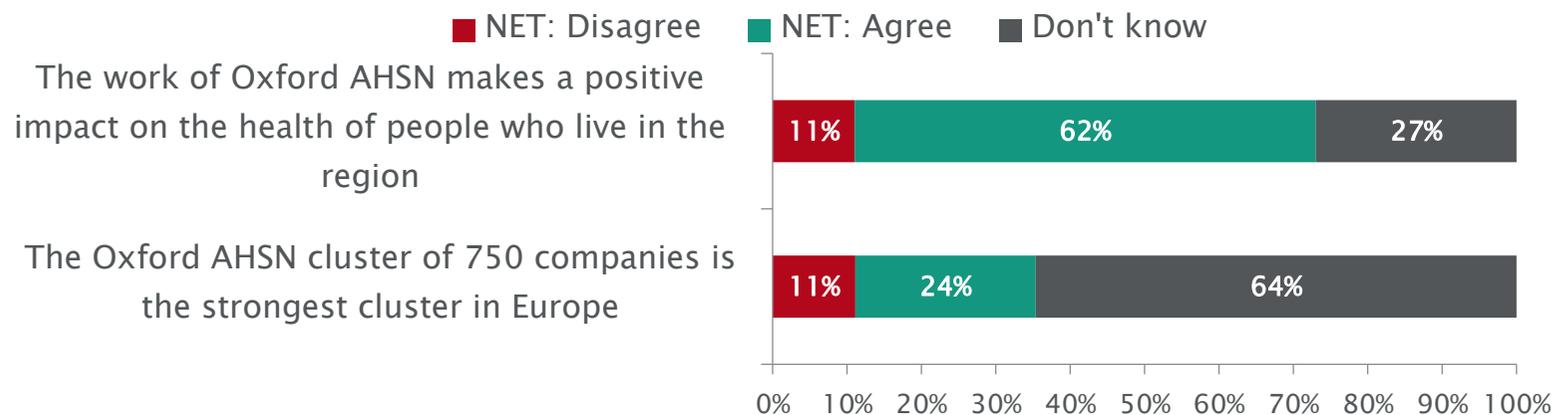
PERCEPTIONS OF OXFORD AHSN'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE

The majority of stakeholders perceive Oxford AHSN's work to be having a positive impact on the health of people in the region, though they say it may take some time before the full impact is felt.

The majority of stakeholders perceive Oxford AHSN to be benefiting the local area and population, with three in five saying that the work of Oxford AHSN makes a positive impact on the health of people who live in the region (62%). 17% *strongly* agree this is the case, while 45% say they tend to agree. The qualitative findings show stakeholders to be very positive about the work of Oxford AHSN, though many note that it may be some time before the full impact of its programmes can be fully measured. This may explain why a higher percentage do not currently *strongly* agree that Oxford AHSN is having a positive impact on the health of those living in the region, and suggests that more could be done to communicate the impact the organisation's work is having on health outcomes.

Stakeholders are very positive about Oxford AHSN's performance in comparison to other AHSNs, and many place it among a group of the country's strongest. In the quantitative phase, as many as one in four say that the Oxford AHSN cluster of 750 companies is the strongest cluster in Europe (24%), though the majority say they don't know if this is the case or not (64%). A few stakeholders suggest that Oxford AHSN should be aligning itself with the other leading AHSNs in the UK, sharing best practice and learning from them, if it is not doing so already.

Oxford AHSN's overall performance



"I think they've been effective, I like the way they work. I'm impressed."
Industry

Q10. Thinking about Oxford AHSN, to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN (n=510). Q11. Thinking about the region covered by Oxford AHSN (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford), to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all respondents (n=563) Base: Respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN and have had at least some contact (n=469).

OXFORD AHSN'S BROADER IMPACT ACROSS THE REGION

Over half of stakeholders say Oxford AHSN has positively impacted collaboration across different organisations, while 12% say it has not had any positive impact in their area.

Areas where Oxford AHSN has had a positive impact



Positively, Oxford AHSN is seen to have had its greatest impact in the area of collaboration across different organisations, with three in five stakeholders who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN agreeing it has had a positive impact in this area (58%). Around half of stakeholders also say that Oxford AHSN has had a positive impact in adopting innovation into clinical practice (48%). Given that these are perceived to be two of the organisation's key aims, it is highly positive that a good proportion associate the organisation with having had a positive impact in these areas (though this may also be what drives stakeholders to describe these as part of the organisation's key aims).

Stakeholders who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN are least likely to be aware of a positive financial impact - one in ten or less say that they think the work of Oxford AHSN has had a positive impact on cost-efficiency (10%) or economic growth in the region (8%), suggesting that more needs to be made of its economic analysis work.

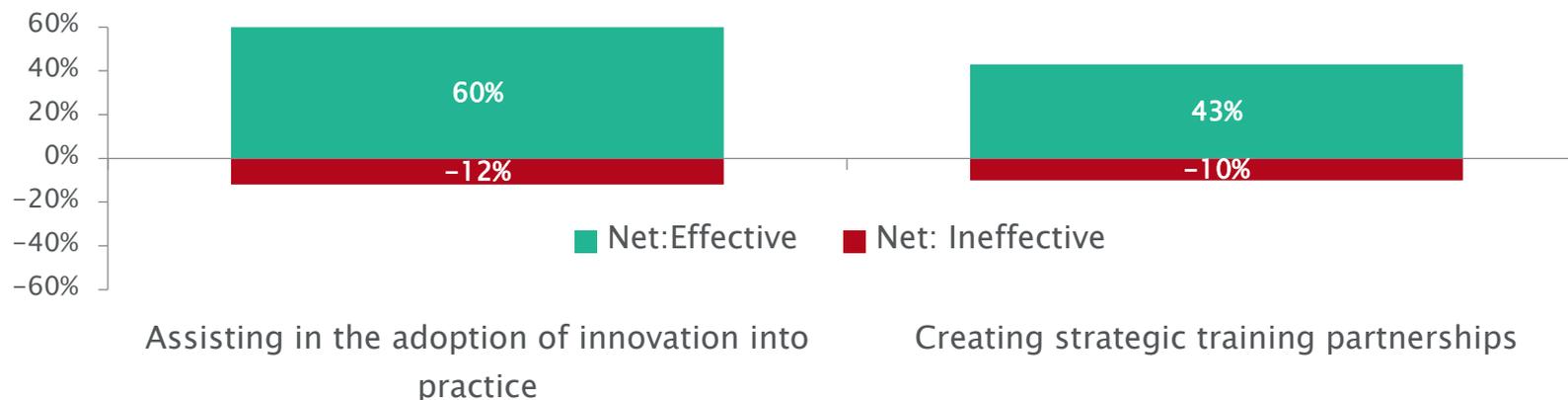
PERCEPTIONS OF OXFORD AHSN'S EFFECTIVENESS IN INNOVATION & TRAINING

Its work on adopting innovation into practice is highlighted as one of Oxford AHSN's biggest strengths by stakeholders taking part in the quantitative and qualitative phases of research.

Innovation emerges as one of Oxford AHSN's main strengths, in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of research. A similar proportion of stakeholders say that Oxford AHSN is effective in assisting in the adoption of innovation into practice (60%) as say it is effective at fostering links between universities and the life science industry (58%). This also emerges as one of the organisation's biggest strengths during the qualitative phase, where many stakeholders who are informed about Oxford AHSN's work mention specific examples of where the organisation has sped up the adoption of new innovations, such as the use of stockings to prevent deep vein thrombosis after strokes. As a result of such initiatives, the area of innovation is one where stakeholders think Oxford AHSN can demonstrate clear examples of having a direct and tangible impact that brings quantifiable value to the region. They do, however, think that the organisation could do more to communicate such projects across the region, creating incentives for more to take part in them.

Stakeholders are significantly more likely to say that Oxford AHSN is effective in the area of innovation than training, with just over two in five stakeholders saying the organisation is effective in creating strategic training partnerships (43%). In the qualitative phase of research, its work on training was mentioned by a small handful of stakeholders, many of whom knew about this work because they had been directly involved in administering or receiving it. If this is indeed a key area that Oxford AHSN wishes to be associated with, benefits could come from advertising such training more widely and communicating its successes in this area.

Effectiveness of Oxford AHSN in innovation and training



“I think the main purpose of all of the health networks is to translate innovation into practice, and to help the NHS access, and therefore the patient access, new innovation. I think the way in which Oxford AHSN have done it is advanced.”
Industry

Q14. How effective, if at all, do you think Oxford AHSN has been in the following areas? Base: all respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN (n=510); for c) Respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN and do not work in the NHS (n=228); d) Respondents who know at least a little about Oxford AHSN and work in academia or industry (n=123)

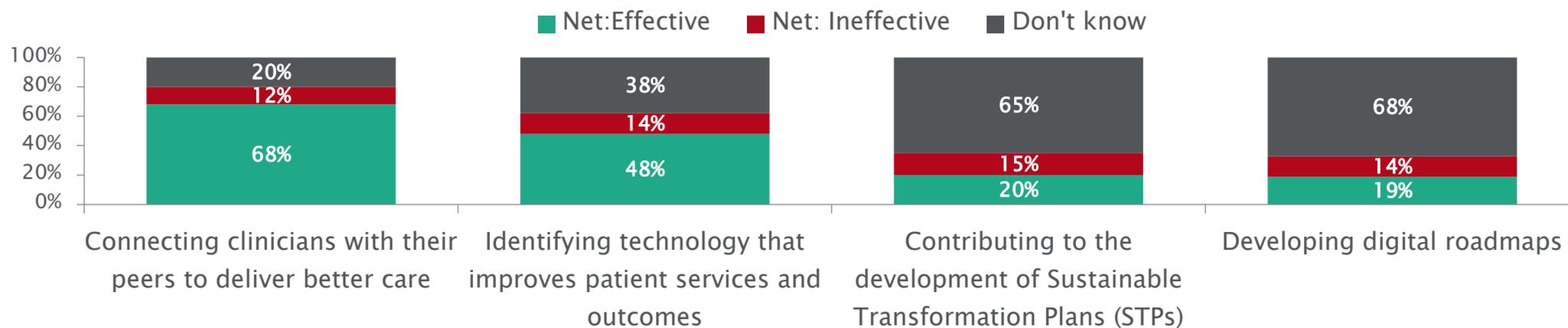
THE CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE ON OXFORD AHSN'S REGIONAL IMPACT

NHS stakeholders agree Oxford AHSN is effective at connecting clinicians with their peers to deliver better patient care, though they are largely uninformed about the organisation's work on other areas, particularly in the development of STP plans and developing digital roadmaps.

Stakeholders perceive collaboration with NHS bodies to be complex, a view that is expressed by those working in the life science industry as well as those working within the NHS itself. However, the participation of NHS bodies in the Network is seen as vital by stakeholders, and improving the overall standards of care in the region are considered to be its ultimate aim. It is therefore extremely positive that seven out of ten stakeholders who work in the NHS say that Oxford AHSN is effective in the area of connecting clinicians with their peers to deliver better care (68%), and that just one in nine disagree this is the case (12%). Illustrating the Network's effectiveness in this area externally should help to demonstrate the overall value that Oxford AHSN can bring to the NHS, and incentivise clinicians to take part.

Despite its positive impact in connecting clinicians in this way, in terms of Oxford AHSN's other clinical objectives, there is room for improvement, as very few NHS stakeholders perceive the organisation to be effective in this area, and many are uninformed about it. Half say the organisation is effective at identifying technology that improves patient services and outcomes (48%), and NHS stakeholders are particularly unlikely to consider Oxford AHSN as effective in the areas of developing digital roadmaps (19%) and contributing to the development of Sustainable Transformation Plans (STPs) (20%).

Effectiveness of Oxford AHSN in certain areas according to NHS staff



INCREASING PARTICIPATION FROM NHS STAKEHOLDERS

While those who are aware of the Network are enthusiastic about Oxford AHSN and its work, NHS stakeholders tend to have had less involvement with the Network, and perceive their colleagues as being uninformed about its work.

In follow up interviews, the NHS stakeholders we spoke to were highly positive about Oxford AHSN and were highly bought into its work. Those working in the NHS have varying perceptions of how high Oxford AHSN's profile is among their colleagues. While some consider Oxford AHSN to be highly visible and available, others say they think the majority of their peers in a clinical setting are unaware of the organisation and say that, if it were not for certain projects they have been exposed to or become involved with, they would be unlikely to have heard of it themselves.

Those NHS stakeholders who are less aware of Oxford AHSN's work still praise the relevance and importance of the Network and believe their peers would find its work interesting and relevant if they had the opportunity to find out more about it. Roadshows are thought to have been one successful way of doing this, and one stakeholder suggests that a similar approach of setting up a stall in their local Trust and speaking to people about the Network's projects might be one way in which Oxford AHSN could boost its profile and reputation among this audience.

NHS commissioners emerge as less involved with, and bought into the idea of, Oxford AHSN, One theory for this is that while Oxford AHSN is highly praised for its clinical focus, this serves to make the Network feel less relevant to commissioners. One stakeholder in particular asked whether having an additional focus on the 'social' side of healthcare might appeal more to this audience.

Demonstrating to commissioners tangible ways in which Oxford AHSN's projects have benefited their peers is a vital part of boosting the appeal of the organisation among this group, as is finding out more about what commissioners want and need from Oxford AHSN, in order to respond to those needs. If commissioners feel they are not accessing things that will truly benefit their region, they will be more likely to seek closer collaboration with the Network.

"I know that it's very hard to do this but to sort of raise their own profile, locally. I think that's, as I say, I think it's a challenge for a AHSNs across the country"
Industry

"You have to talk the language that everybody understands, and I think that was probably one of the biggest problems."
NHS

"I think they struggle to get support from commissioners within CCGs."
NHS

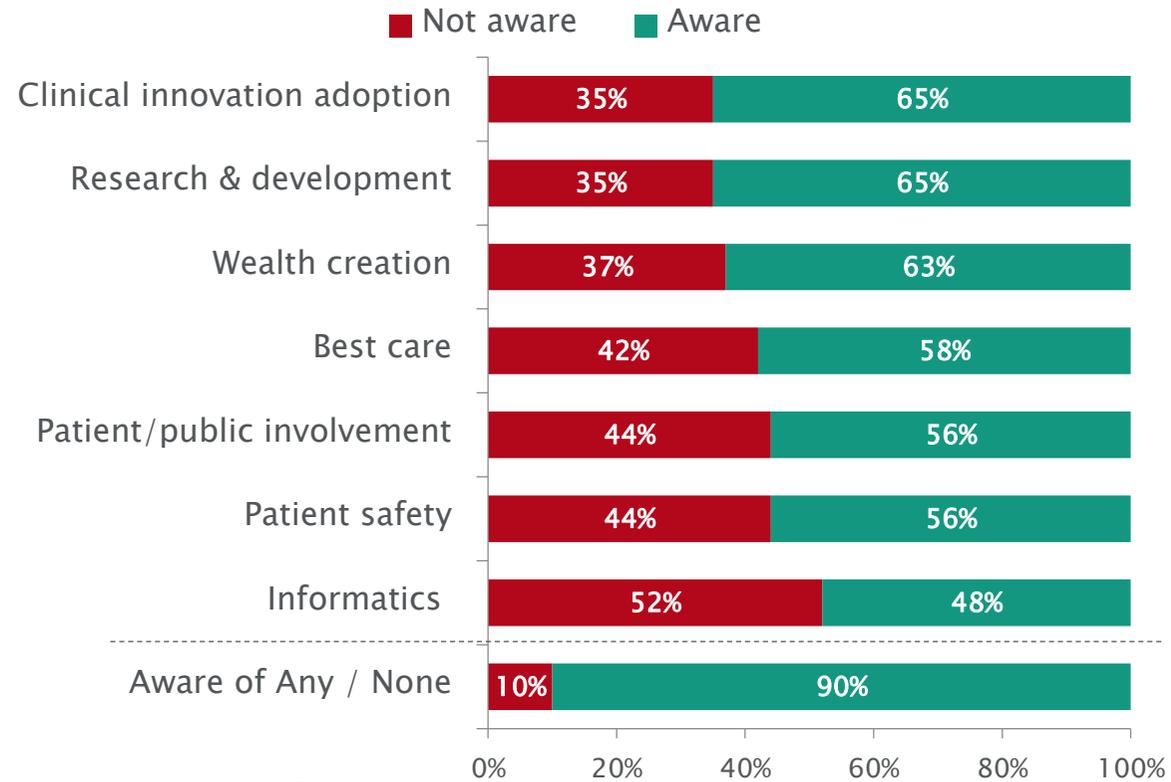
STAKEHOLDER AWARENESS OF OXFORD AHSN'S PROGRAMMES AND THEMES

Nine in ten of Oxford AHSN's stakeholders are aware of at least one of its programmes or themes. The survey and in-depth interviews show clinical innovation adoption to be Oxford AHSN's best known programme.

At least half of stakeholders say they are aware of each of the Oxford AHSN programmes that were tested in the survey, with Clinical Innovation Adoption being the best recognised (65%), and Informatics being the least (48%). The vast majority of stakeholders are aware of at least one of the organisation's programmes or themes (90%), a positive sign that specific areas of Oxford AHSN's work cut-through to the majority of its stakeholders. A slightly higher proportion of academics (13%) than other stakeholders (life science industry: 4%; NHS providers: 8%) say they are aware of none of Oxford AHSN's programmes, again reflecting that this group is the least informed about Oxford AHSN's work.

Despite a high level of awareness of the organisation's different programmes and themes, follow up in-depth interviews with stakeholders show that while awareness is fairly high, knowledge of the work being conducted is substantially lower. Indeed, the majority of stakeholders tend to have a good level of knowledge around one or two programmes that they are particularly involved with, while they may know very little or nothing about the others. Stakeholders tend to assume responsibility for this, saying that if they wanted more information they would know where to go to find it. However, the data shows that overall positivity towards Oxford AHSN increases with awareness. Boosting the overall profile of Oxford AHSN's programmes should therefore be a priority.

Awareness of programmes and themes



"I think that there's a gap...I've not interacted much with the other themes."
Industry

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF OXFORD AHSN'S PROGRAMMES AND THEMES

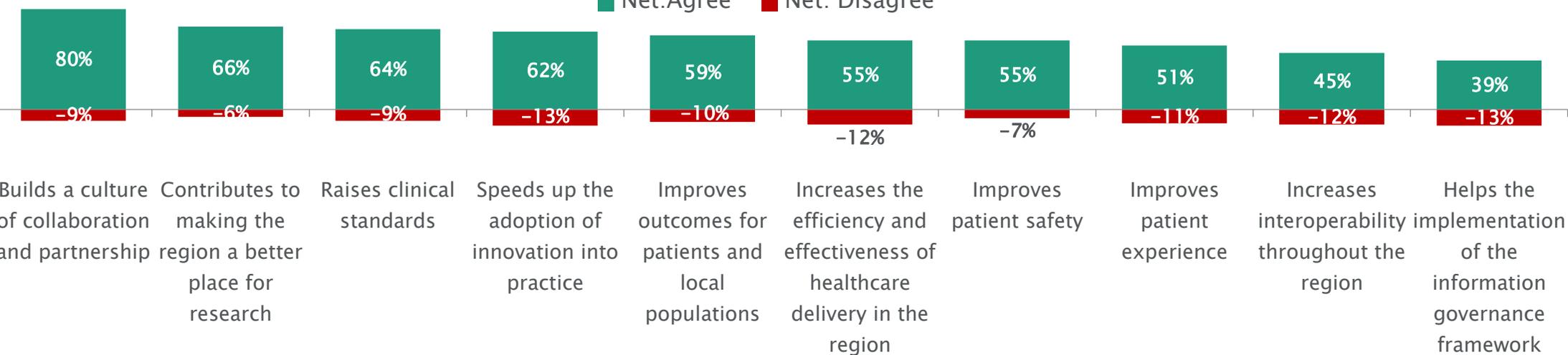
Four in five stakeholders who are aware of its work agree that Oxford AHSN builds a culture of collaboration and partnership, and two thirds agree that it contributes to making the region a better place for research.

The majority of stakeholders are positive about what Oxford AHSN's programmes' have achieved. Oxford AHSN's biggest achievement is seen to have been in building a culture of collaboration and partnership through its programmes and work, with as many as three out of ten stakeholders *strongly* agreeing (31%) and half reporting they *tend to* agree this is the case (48%). Despite showing lesser levels of agreement, it is positive that two thirds of stakeholders also agree that Oxford AHSN contributes to making the region a better place for research (66%) and raises clinical standards (64%).

Despite these broadly positive findings, there are clear areas where Oxford AHSN could improve, with two in five stakeholders saying that the organisation helps the implementation of the information governance framework (39%). It is also interesting to note that, although stakeholders view Oxford AHSN as building a culture of collaboration and partnership, less than half think the organisation is increasing interoperability throughout the region (45%). This suggests that, while the region may be becoming more collaborative, gaps in working relationships may not yet have been closed up and more work could be done on this area.

Oxford AHSN's achievements

■ Net: Agree ■ Net: Disagree



Q18. Taking into account the programmes and work of Oxford AHSN you are aware of, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the network achieves each of the following? Base: All respondents who are aware of at least one of Oxford AHSN's programmes or themes (n=461)

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON OXFORD AHSN'S PROGRAMMES AND THEMES

Stakeholders perceive Oxford AHSN's programmes to be well run and they see the organisation's approach as being strongly evidence led. Clinical innovation adoption and its research and development strands are the Network's best known programmes.

Despite stakeholders having fairly low levels of knowledge about those programmes on which they are not directly involved, they largely view Oxford AHSN's work across these programmes as covering a good range of thematic areas; genuinely listening to and incorporating the views of those involved; being well project managed; and being well supported with data and information.

"I think just keep the profile high and let people know what's going on because I think there's good stuff, the first time I saw it all together I was quite amazed."

NHS

"What we've got there is a team that has got a huge wealth of information, great number of contacts, [and a] great understanding of comparative data between organisations."

NHS

Clinical Innovation Adoption

This programme is known by the largest number of stakeholders in the survey, and is mentioned in the in-depth interviews spontaneously by around a third of stakeholders.

Stakeholders are aware that there are a large number of projects going on within this, including the anxiety and depression network.

"Not everybody in AHSNs is doing network work but in Oxford, the way they've done their clinical innovation adoption has been very strong through networks."

Industry

Research & Development

Most stakeholders tend to know this is happening, but unless they have worked specifically with Oxford AHSN on a research project they tend not to have any more detailed understanding of its purpose.

Two stakeholders from industry and one from the NHS emphasise research they have been working on that has been pushed forward by Oxford AHSN, who they describe as having been instrumental in making things happen.

"Because of their golden triangle position with Cambridge and London, they also operate at that very strong national research and development level."

Industry

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON OXFORD AHSN'S PROGRAMMES AND THEMES

Stakeholders are less informed about other programmes such as wealth creation, best care and patient/public involvement, and struggle to articulate their exact aims.



Wealth Creation

While the majority of stakeholders have heard of this programme, very few have a good understanding of what it entails (besides those who are working with the programme).

In talking about wealth creation, stakeholders tend to be of the opinion that this is likely to be an outcome of Oxford AHSN's work – through collaboration the sector will develop and grow, and this will create jobs for the benefit of the region.

"It's a phrase I've heard a lot and I know they are [working on it]. I don't know what the different streams of that consist of."

Academic



Best Care

While around one in three stakeholders say they are aware of this programme, besides those who are heavily involved with it none can describe exactly what the programme does.

One stakeholder says they are aware of Oxford AHSN's work on early intervention on psychosis, but attributes this to the Clinical Innovation Adoption programme. This reflects the difficulty stakeholders have in keeping up with the different programmes, and what programmes each project falls under.

"Yes, I'm sort of aware of it, but I couldn't tell you what it means, in practice."

NHS



Patient/Public Involvement

Stakeholders broadly agree that patient and public involvement is an important objective, though they question what that will look like in practice, and whether this will overlap with work being done by other sector bodies, such as providers.

A handful of stakeholders emphasise the importance of this objective being about more than just words – they say that currently it feels that patient involvement is being used as a buzz word, but they question the extent to which the patient perspective is truly being incorporated into practice.

"We don't need it sold to us anymore, we need to know how to do it, and it's not moved to that place."

Academic

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON OXFORD AHSN'S PROGRAMMES AND THEMES

Even where stakeholders are uninformed about programmes, they broadly agree these are the right areas for Oxford AHSN to be focusing on.



Patient Safety

Most stakeholders have heard that Oxford AHSN is doing work in this area, and know the programme exists, but unless they are directly involved on the project most do not know what it involves. Even so, stakeholders are positive about the programme and say that this is right to be a focus area for Oxford AHSN.

“It’s a phrase I’ve heard a lot and I know they are [working] on it. I don’t know what the different streams of that consist of.”
Academic



Informatics

While the informatics programme was least known by stakeholders in the quantitative phase, in the qualitative phase stakeholders are found to be broadly aware of the existence of the project and its overall objective of creating greater access to information between different parts of the sector, through technology. Those who are well informed about the project are particularly positive about what the project can achieve, and see this as an important means to increasing links across the sector.

“The informatics one potentially can put Oxford into a super different place with regards to being able to offer outcomes...I think that if that works, it can put them back to where Imperial is and put them ahead of that. So, I think that’s super important.”
NHS

Unless they are involved on a specific project, stakeholders have broadly low levels of awareness about the work going on under each of the different programmes and sometimes they confuse which project is part of which programme. This reinforces the recommendation that Oxford AHSN would benefit from promoting its work, and perhaps most importantly its successes, in these areas more forthrightly among its stakeholders.

PREFERRED AREAS OF FOCUS FOR OXFORD AHSN

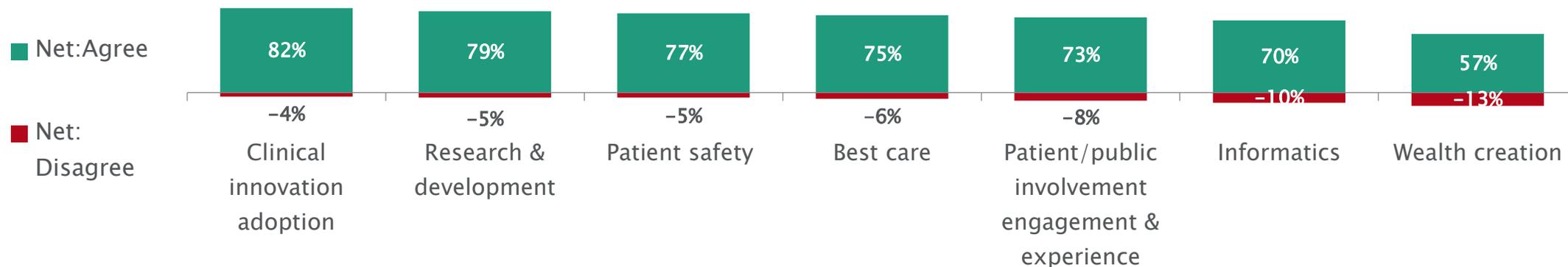
The vast majority of stakeholders agree that clinical innovation adoption is the programme that Oxford AHSN should be focusing on, while wealth creation is least likely to be viewed as a focus for the Network.

The majority of stakeholders are positive about the priority areas Oxford AHSN has chosen, with majorities agreeing that each area of its work is an area that it should be focusing on. For the most part the programmes or themes stakeholders are likely to be aware of are also those that they are most likely to agree Oxford AHSN should be focusing on. For example, clinical innovation adoption and research and development are the programmes and themes that the largest majority of stakeholders say they are aware of (both 65%) and should be a focus for Oxford AHSN (82% and 79% respectively).

However, there are some exceptions to this trend, with wealth creation being one of the programmes and themes stakeholders are most likely to be aware of (63%), but also the least likely to think should be a focus for Oxford AHSN (57%). This is also the only metric where a smaller proportion of stakeholders say it should be a priority than say they are aware of it. This may be due to the fact that many stakeholders consider Oxford AHSN's main focus to be on clinical outcomes, such as collaborating and sharing knowledge, increasing adoption of innovative products, and sharing research and best practice, with wealth creation an expected indirect outcome of this work.

In the follow up qualitative interviews, almost all stakeholders thought these were the right programmes and themes for Oxford AHSN to be focusing on, with the exception of one who reported that they might expect to see prevention included. The main concern for stakeholders is whether Oxford AHSN can continue to focus on all areas to the same degree and whether, in light of a potential decrease in funding from NHS England, the organisation might do better to focus on fewer areas, with the added benefit of being able to demonstrate greater impact in those areas and make a stronger overall case for its existence.

Focus on certain programmes and themes



CHAPTER 6: FUTURE CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

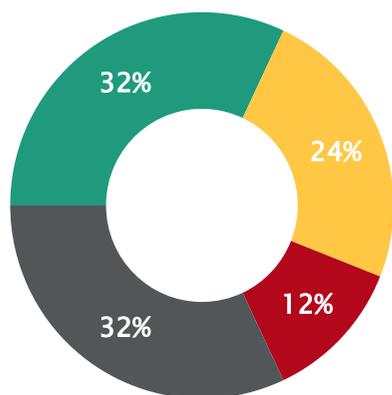


PERCEIVED VALUE FOR MONEY OF OXFORD AHSN

Stakeholders are largely divided on whether Oxford AHSN represents good value for money, with many saying they do not know if this is the case or not.

Does Oxford AHSN represent value for money?

- Good value for money
- Neither good nor poor value for money
- Poor value for money
- Don't know



“It is a lot of money and so I would say there need to be review mechanisms built in and we need to say ‘well what are we getting for that money?’ If it isn’t then we should be spending it elsewhere on something that’s having a direct benefit to patients.”
NHS

“Well I’m surprised it’s so little, actually. I think that, in that case, I think it’s exceptional value for money.”
Industry

One in three stakeholders say they consider Oxford AHSN to be delivering good value for money (32%), compared to one in four who say it is delivering neither good nor poor value for money (24%). A small but significant proportion of 12% of stakeholders feel it is poor value for money.

A similar trend emerged during qualitative interviews:

- **Industry stakeholders** are most likely to agree that Oxford AHSN represents good value for money, and indeed given its high profile, expert leadership team and wide-ranging mission, they say they are surprised it does not cost more to run the Network;
- While **academic stakeholders** say that the overall value of Oxford AHSN’s work is high, the majority say they do not know whether it represents good value for money or not. One stakeholder notes that this is simply how much it costs to run a programme in the NHS, and while it could be less expensive working out of a university, it would not be as effective;
- While a handful of **NHS stakeholders** say that Oxford AHSN represents good value for money, the consensus among this group is that in order to justify that level of spending, there must be a further focus on outcomes.

During the qualitative a minority of stakeholders say they are aware of Oxford AHSN’s economic analysis work. However, they do not have a detailed understanding and say they would like to know more about the financial impact of the Network. Additionally, it is notable that in the survey as many as a third of stakeholders say they do not know whether Oxford AHSN represents good value for money or not (32%). Ensuring that stakeholders are better informed about Oxford AHSN’s work, and about the impact it is having, is essential if stakeholders are to be able to evaluate whether the Network represents good value for money or not.

FUTURE CHALLENGES FACING OXFORD AHSN

The key challenges stakeholders consider Oxford AHSN to be facing are around funding, the political environment and the implementation of innovation.

FUNDING

Across all stakeholder audiences, funding is the challenge that is mentioned most. Stakeholders understand that given national pressures on the NHS, continuing tightening of budgets in Whitehall and the process of the UK's exit from the European Union, funding is unlikely to increase. Several stakeholders highlight that should funding of Oxford AHSN by NHS England be reduced or entirely cut, local partners are unlikely to be able to cover the cost of running all of its programmes. In order to protect its work, stakeholders say Oxford AHSN must clearly communicate the outcomes it has achieved and the impact its existence has had, in order to make the case for continued investment.

"I think that the money will reduce, given the pressures that we've got nationally. I think it will be a challenge for the AHSN given constraints financially to get the results that they need from partners to run their current services, to be honest."

NHS

Linked to funding, another major challenge for Oxford AHSN is the changing political environment. Many stakeholders, particularly those in the NHS, cite the cyclical nature of NHS governance, and question whether AHSNs will be a permanent fixture or may be replaced by a new Government initiative. The example of the Modernisation Agency is mentioned, which had its funding cut. Again, in order to resist a similar fate Oxford AHSN must prove its value through a focus on outcomes. Some stakeholders say the Oxford AHSN core team may also wish to focus on building relationships in central as well as local Government.

"So, my challenge is whether they sustain and they last after 2018 and, you know, tragically, we've seen people like the Modernisation Agency who haven't, and yet, they've been doing great work as well. So, it's the politicisation of AHSNs."

Industry

Around a third of stakeholders also mention the risk of the NHS falling behind on innovation. As a core part of Oxford AHSN's role, stakeholders say it is crucial for the core team to maintain this focus. Stakeholders also suggest that its work in this area could be an opportunity for Oxford AHSN to engage more fully with STPs and take the lead on clinical innovation in this process. This will meet the dual objectives of moving innovation forward in the NHS across the region, while also demonstrating the need for, and added value of, Oxford AHSN.

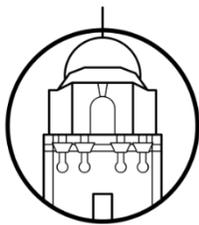
"I think it's, sort of, taking more of a, sort of, front of house role on clinical innovation, and reduction in clinical variation will give them a platform to build on certainly."

NHS

PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR OXFORD AHSN

The key opportunities stakeholders say will be coming up for Oxford AHSN are around taking advantage of its location, seeking greater international collaboration, and playing a role in the development of STPs.

LOCATION



The sheer number and quality of the organisations operating in the region is perceived to be one of Oxford AHSN's biggest opportunities by stakeholders. They highlight in particular the research power and influence of the University of Oxford, and the concentration of biotech companies in the area. By making the most of the Oxford University brand and focusing on the exciting innovations that are being developed across the region, stakeholders believe that Oxford AHSN can stand out as one of the leading AHSNs in the UK.

"I think Oxford is the translational hub of Europe. I think if we get this right, in 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, there will be so many big pharmaceutical companies and biotech in this region. It will be like the Boston of Europe."

Industry

GLOBAL



The potential for Oxford AHSN to collaborate on a global scale is mentioned by around one in four stakeholders as a significant opportunity. This is cited by industry stakeholders in particular, who work on an international scale, looking for innovative technologies. Such stakeholders think that Oxford AHSN could leverage its brand on a global level, attracting a more diverse range of partners and expanding the breadth of innovative technologies and ideas available to be tested in the region.

"[National links are] something that other AHSNs do really well...For instance, when an AHSN says, 'We're linked into China for a piece of data or med-tech.' I don't hear much about the international global links [of Oxford AHSN] and I'm surprised."

Industry

STPs



Some NHS stakeholders mention that Oxford AHSN has an opportunity to play a major role in Sustainability Transformation Plans (STPs). Some say that this is already happening to a certain extent, however they view an opportunity for Oxford AHSN to play a pivotal role in driving STPs forward, which will help them to achieve their own goals around innovations and also demonstrate the vital role they play in the region's health sector.

"I think if we're looking at the direction of travel in terms of these STPs, the AHSN is one of the key enablers in terms of improvement science, evaluation, innovation. It's really important that they stay within this health system, and are contributing to the development and delivery of STPs."

Health



FURTHER INFORMATION

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