

UCLPARTNERS

STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH

LOCAL FINDINGS 2019

BACKGROUND

During summer and autumn 2019, an independent survey was undertaken of England's 15 Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs). This research was commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement, and the Office for Life Sciences (OLS) to explore and evaluate the views of AHSN stakeholders. The research will support commissioners in their reviews of AHSNs, and to provide independent feedback to AHSNs from their stakeholders that include NHS organisations, researchers, private companies, government organisations, patient and public groups and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations.

Savanta ComRes, an independent research organisation, undertook the evaluation. With input from AHSNs and commissioners, Savanta ComRes developed and ran a 10-minute online survey and subsequently conducted 30-minute telephone interviews with up to 10 stakeholders for each of the 15 AHSNs and for the National AHSN Network.

A national report collating the feedback and key themes from across all AHSNs, can be viewed on the AHSN Network website: www.ahsnnetwork.com/ahsn-network-stakeholder-research.

This report summarises stakeholder feedback and themes specifically related to UCLPartners.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 UCLPartners is perceived by stakeholders to offer excellent **quality improvement programmes and support services**, as well as being a **vital mediator** between the NHS and industry.
- 2 A few stakeholders have noticed a high **turnover of staff** which is considered to present a challenge to the AHSN's long term strategy and wider impact.
- 3 Some stakeholders also highlight that, looking ahead, UCLPartners should aim to clearly communicate its USP to differentiate itself from other partnerships.

OVERVIEW

UCLPartners has three areas stakeholders commonly note to be key assets in interview discussions. Firstly, the quality improvement programmes UCLPartners offer have been memorable to stakeholders for their high standard and notable impact on stakeholder innovations. Secondly, stakeholders repeatedly comment on UCLPartners' excellent engagement with them and the supportive culture that the AHSN has fostered. Thirdly, UCLPartners is described as an effective mediator between industry and the NHS. Stakeholders provide examples where they attribute their success in implementing new innovations into the healthcare system to UCLPartners. However, there are a couple of points for UCLPartners to consider going forwards. It has been suggested by some stakeholders that there can be a focus on low impact, short-term projects rather than having a more long-term focus. Additionally, there are opportunities to communicate more clearly to those aware of

UCLPartners around how the AHSN can best fit in with and support their organisation and/or innovations.

WHO WE SPOKE TO

Nine stakeholder groups were identified, and across these, 264 stakeholders identified by UCLPartners were invited to take part; 51 completed the online survey from 21st August to 16th September 2019. This represents a response rate of 19%. In addition to the online surveys, Savanta ComRes conducted follow-up interviews with 7 between 9th September and 13th November 2019, who put themselves forward to discuss their experiences further. Specific quotas were not set for the stakeholders interviewed as interviewees were self-selecting and interviews were dependent on the availability of stakeholders and the feasibility of bookings.

Findings marked with an asterisk () indicates a base size of less than 50.*

Type	# SURVEYED	% SURVEYED	# INTERVIEWED
Health or social care provider	25	49% (+12)	1
Private company or industry body	7	14%	2
Research body or university	5	10%	1
NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	5	10%	1
Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)	0	0%	–
Local government or Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	3	6%	–
National government, agency or Arms Length Body (ALB)	0	0% (-7)	–
Individual patient or member of the public	3	6%	1
Patients group or public group	3	6%	1
Total	51	100%	7

Thinking about your role and organisation as it relates to your engagement with AHSNs, which of the following best describes your organisation? Base: All stakeholders answering on behalf of UCLPartners (n=51).

Percentage point difference to the average survey response rate where difference is more than 5 (n=1,155)

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

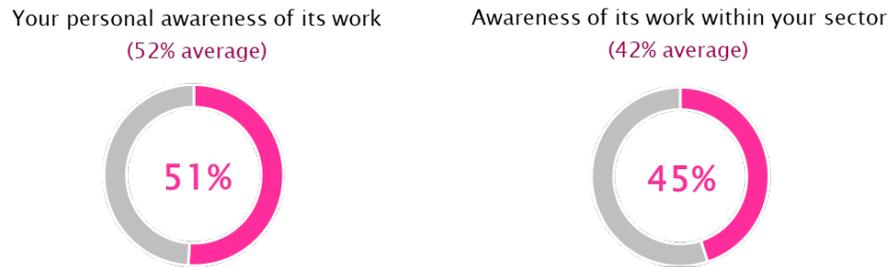
The report includes quantitative findings from the online survey and qualitative findings from interviews with local stakeholders. **The number of online survey respondents are too small to draw reliable conclusions from.** Additionally, comparisons between local survey data and the average across all AHSNs nationally are not necessarily statistically significant meaning higher or lower assessments of an individual AHSN in comparison to the national response rate may be due to the ‘play of chance’. Findings from the online survey at the level of an individual AHSN should therefore be **treated as indicative** only and used with caution.

Insights discussed in this section of the report are based on an aggregated analysis of discussions with participating UCLPartners stakeholders. Therefore, themes described may not necessarily reflect the views of those answering and are not generalisable to all stakeholder types. For instance, **interviews were not conducted with local government or LEPs,**

national government, agency or ALBs, or VCS stakeholders. Additionally, no national government, agency or ALBs or VCS stakeholders completed the survey on behalf of UCLPartners. Recommendations discussed are based on answering and are not tailored to specific types of stakeholders.

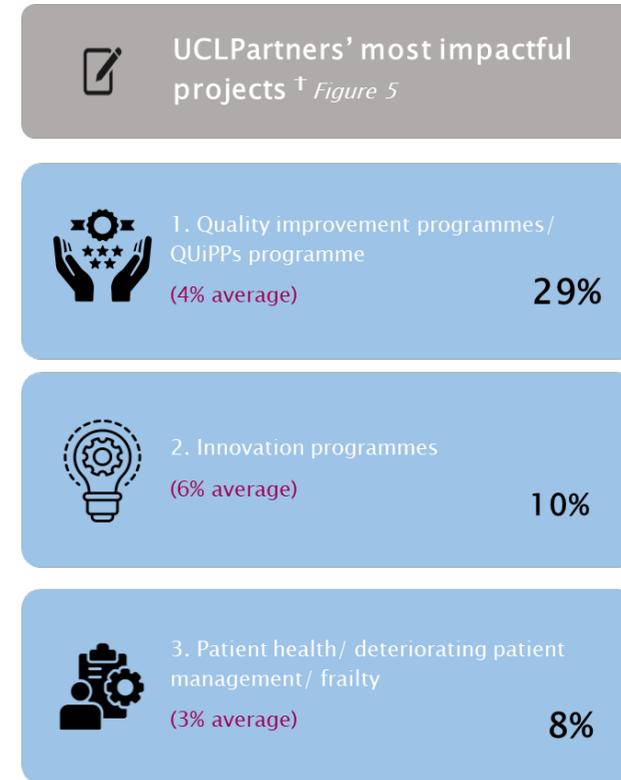
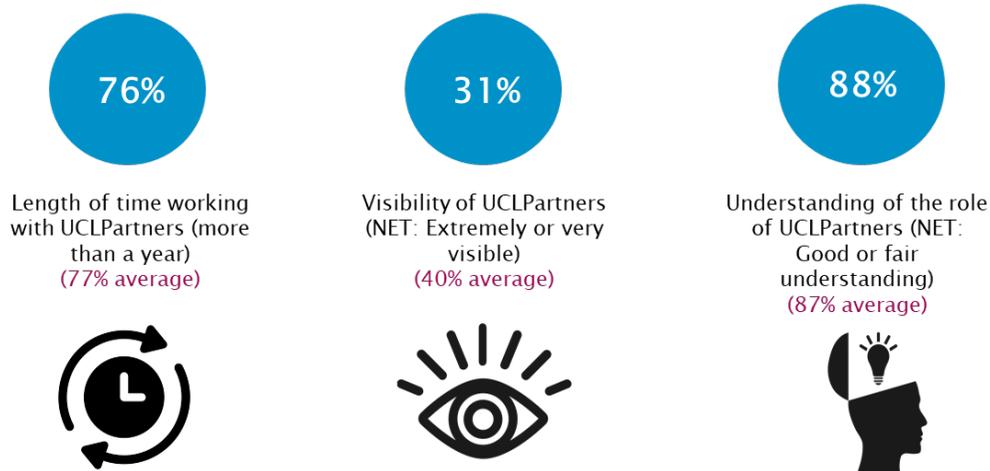
Each local AHSN report has been reviewed by a representative at the AHSN to verify the accuracy of insights and interpretations presented in each report. Savanta ComRes held **30-minute calls** with the representative to collect and incorporate such feedback. AHSNs only saw the findings in the report and not raw data collected in fieldwork.

Awareness (NET: Extremely or very aware) Figure 1



KEY
 '% average' indicates the average score across all AHSNs

Knowledge and Visibility Figure 2



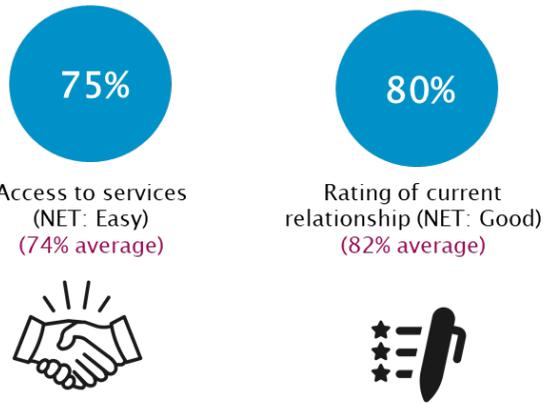
† Open text box question

Figure 1 – Q. Overall, thinking about UCLPartners' work, how would you describe...? Base: UCLPartners stakeholders (n=51)

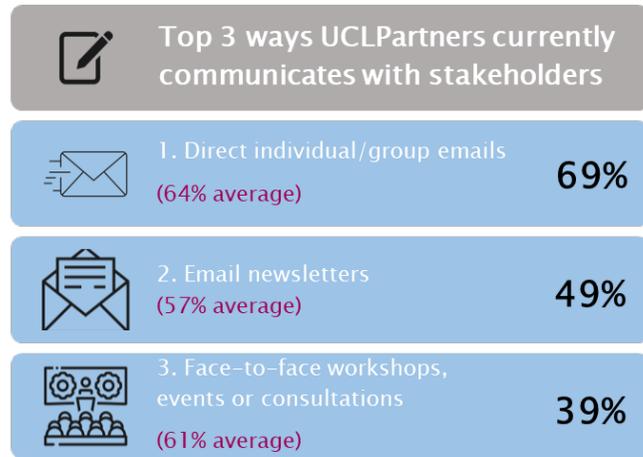
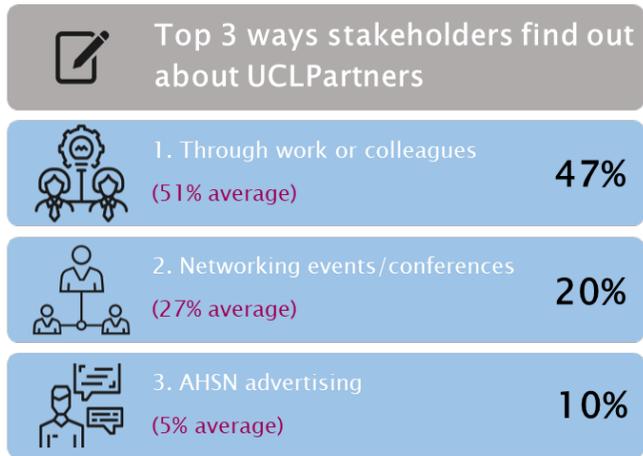
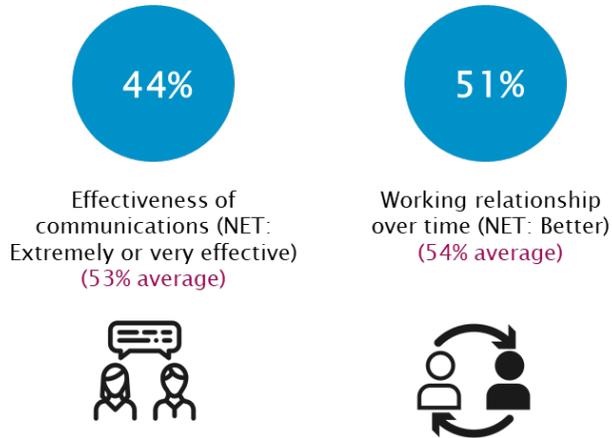
Figure 2 – Q. And approximately how long have you worked with UCLPartners? Q. Thinking about its overall visibility and any engagement you may have had, how would you rate the visibility of UCLPartners in its local area? Q. How would you rate your understanding of the role of UCLPartners? Base: UCLPartners stakeholders (n=51)

Figure 5 – Q. Which UCLPartners initiative, programme or support service would you say has had the greatest impact on your organisation's ability to meet its objectives or your ability to meet your own objectives? Base: UCLPartners stakeholders (n=51)

Working with UCLPartners *Figure 3*



Communication with UCLPartners *Figure 4*



MOST NOTABLE FACTOR DRIVING POSITIVE EVALUATION OF UCLPARTNERS[†]
Figure 6
Improved relationships/ good relationships over time/ established work relationships with relevant people
(29% average)

[†] Open text box question



TOP RECOMMENDATION FOR UCLPARTNERS[†]
Figure 7
Coordinated/ collaborative approach towards learning, sharing, evaluation and roll-out of products/ services
(13% average)

Figure 3 – Q. Overall, how easy did you find it to access UCLPartners' services? Q. Overall, how would you rate your working relationship with UCLPartners? How did you first find out about UCLPartners? Base: UCLPartners stakeholders (n=51)

Figure 4 – Q. Thinking back over the period of time you have been working with UCLPartners, would you say your working relationship has gotten better, worse, or is about the same? Q. Which, if any, of the following ways does UCLPartners currently communicate with you? Q. How would you rate the effectiveness of UCLPartners' communications? Base: UCLPartners stakeholders (n=51)

Figure 6 – Q. You indicated that you have a good working relationship with UCLPartners and/or your working relationship has gotten better over the period of time you have been working with them. Why do you say this? Base: UCLPartners stakeholders who say this (n=43*)

Figure 7 – Q. If you could make one recommendation for improvement for the local AHSN or the National AHSN Network to focus on in the next three years, what would this be? For example, is there a service you think should be expanded, or a new offering that should be explored or delivered? Base: UCLPartners stakeholders (n=51)

AREAS OF STRENGTH AND GOOD PRACTICE

EXCELLENT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES

UCLPartners' quality improvement support services and programmes are held in high regard by several stakeholders interviewed, so much so that one CCG stakeholder quoted UCLPartners' quality improvement services when asked what first came to mind when thinking about UCLPartners. In interviews, UCLPartners is perceived to be well placed to create and employ quality improvement programmes due to their independent viewpoint and excellent quality of support. These programmes can then be further embedded into either stakeholder research projects or the NHS. Evidence for this is provided throughout the stakeholder groups, for example, one stakeholder experienced a shared learning day which resulted in a rolling programme of learning, involving a further twelve additional teams upon creation. In these examples, using UCLPartners' quality improvement services allowed these early intervention teams to build a more sustainable and positive approach to quality improvements within their roles.

*"The **QI collaborative work** – UCLPartners have got a tried and tested method that they use in eight other areas [...] We rang up UCLPartners, they sent two [or] three of their trainers down for a free session. They gave a nice taster session. It was very supportive. That ability to be flexible and attentive meant that we built some momentum. So, we won the contract with them."*

CCG

*"Post-NIA, the examples are very much around the **UCLPartners Patient Safety Team partnering with the Quality Improvement team**, to deliver education and a high degree of liaising between ourselves and our initial launch site. Which is still ongoing, for over a year after the programme, so that really does reflect their commitment to have a long-term partnership with the people they decide to work with."*

Private company or industry body

*"I published part of their improvement fellowship programme, which brought together clinicians from different specialities together over the course of a year, and we had eight or six events about **teaching them factors of quality improvement or patient safety**."*

Research body or university

Data from the online survey strongly supports the finding that quality improvement (QI) is a key strength of UCLPartners. Three in ten (29%) UCLPartners stakeholders rate quality improvement programmes as the initiative, programme or support service that has had the greatest impact on their ability to meet their objectives, compared to only 4% of stakeholders nationally who say the same. The fact that UCLPartners stakeholders are around seven times

as likely to cite QI suggests that, although this is being run in other AHSNs, UCLPartners' offer is particularly memorable to its local stakeholders.

STRONG WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH UCLPARTNERS' STAFF

Stakeholders across the various stakeholder groups interviewed report having a good working relationship with UCLPartners. One interviewee from the private company or industry body stakeholder group relayed how their engagement with UCLPartners rated strongly in comparison to similar accelerator or intermediary groups they had previously worked with. This stakeholder also commented on UCLPartners' cooperative culture they have cultivated, one that suggests they will do whatever they can to help their stakeholders.

*"[AHSN contact] is good at allowing different types of people to attend the meetings, and she **encourages us all**, and nobody is better than anybody else. She gives them as much opportunity to change what they're doing as she gives me to develop my skills."*

Individual patient or member of the public

*"Relationship with the top level is very strong. We've been working well with [AHSN contact], particularly on the **cardiovascular and AF programme** [...] increasingly, as the relationship develops, it looks very much like [a] strong working relationship where we are collaborating."*

Private company or industry body

*"Probably their **approachability**. They're very easy to talk to, they're supportive, they try and think creatively. A lot of conversations you have in healthcare, people think why they can't do something, whereas the people I've worked [with from] UCLPartners has also thought [about] how it can make something work, which is really good."*

CCG

Strong working partnership between UCLPartners and its stakeholders is recognised in the online survey, since the majority (80%) of stakeholders rate their current relationship with UCLPartners as good.

INDUSTRY BODIES PERCEIVE UCLPARTNERS AS AN EFFECTIVE MEDIATOR BETWEEN NHS AND INDUSTRY

Reflecting the national sentiment, many stakeholders value their partnership with UCLPartners because they view this AHSN as effective enablers for their own projects and innovations to progress and grow.

*"Just because you're on the NIA project, doesn't necessarily mean that there's a hospital willing to evaluate your technology. Saying that, there's been a lot of **lobbying done by the UCLPartners team**, to receive higher recognition of the pre-qualification that they put on their affiliate [...] That has resulted in the new procurement framework pre-approving*

UCLPartners companies, and that has been a huge benefit to us [...] it's starting to enable companies like us to be actively adopted."

Private company or industry body

"It's got good strong networks and links with other people from other professions."

CCG

"They also liaise and mediate the relationship between the individual and the broader NHS system. So, it is active, in that they're helping promote the individual and their innovation, as it is about preparing the individual and innovation to engage. I think mentors and liaisons are probably two very fitting words for the NIA team, and the broader UCLPartners team that engaged with us."

Private company or industry body

The results from the survey support interviewees' assertion that UCLPartners is supporting the implementing of new innovations into primary care for stakeholders. Approaching two in three (63%*) CCGs and health or social care providers indicate UCLPartners is effective at spreading evidence-based innovations to patient care.

POINTS FOR UCLPARTNERS TO CONSIDER

STAFF RETENTION, HANDOVER AND LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Despite the majority reporting a good working relationship with UCLPartners, a few stakeholders note in interviews that they have noticed of a high turnover of staff. This has given these stakeholders the impression that UCLPartners has a slightly more short-term focus in terms of investing in projects, that have low to middling impact. Their suggestion here is for UCLPartners to consider its long-term strategy, and it may also be beneficial for UCLPartners to communicate this back up to stakeholders.

"Their impact is too low – you only see benefits when these innovations get put into action and [are] scaled up. Politically, economically and socially, it is very important to channel more money into proven prevention programmes. More money [should be] dedicated to those companies that have established the evidence base and have longer-term arrangements. If the government really believes in the role of this academic health science networks, then properly invest in it."

Private company or industry body

*“None of the people can be on long-term contracts. It’s very much the gig economy. So, you get people coming and going quite a lot. It tends to be rather fragmented. It takes quite a long time to build up the relationships in healthcare. The trouble is, if you’ve got a constantly **revolving door of people coming in and out** of the AHSN because they don’t know whether they’re going to have a budget and how long for.”*

Private company or industry body

LACK OF CLARITY AROUND UCLPARTNERS’ RELEVANCE TO SOME ORGANISATIONS

Some stakeholders interviewed note they can at times be unclear of the AHSN’s relevance and how it pertains to their *organisation* specifically. One stakeholder, from a research body or university, stated that they could not effectively position UCLPartners in terms of relevant activities. They spoke of a general understanding of UCLPartners and recognised that it plays an important part in research and project work. However, this minority of stakeholders had trouble identifying exactly how they went about this generally and how the AHSN directly supports them.

*“I don’t quite understand the way it’s all set up actually, it’s all a bit complicated, there’s so many offices and divisions. It’s always been a **bit vague**. I think it’s a good idea, but it just doesn’t seem very solid to me [...] Well-intentioned, complex, full of opportunity.”*

Individual patient or public group

*“The relevance to general practice is less clear than the larger hospitals and not entirely clear how they link up with local universities like, for instance, the case of **London UCL or the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine**. It’d be a bit clearer if you came and did talks or something at these institutions then they might get more academics engaging with them.”*

Research body or university

Accordingly, approaching one in five (16%) stakeholders didn’t know or found it difficult to say what AHSN programme has had the greatest impact on their organisation. Following quality improvement (29%), this was the most common stakeholder response.

Since the survey and interviews were conducted, UCLPartners has launched a new website, including a suite of new impact case studies and has initiated a new programme of stakeholder communications to ensure greater clarity and visibility of their offer to partners.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

INCREASING VISIBILITY OF UCLPARTNERS

One challenge facing UCLPartners is the low visibility which a minority of interviewees discuss. Frontline healthcare professionals are referred to by health or social care providers as some of the least likely groups to be aware of UCLPartners. This represents an area for UCLPartners to consider, in terms of whether it wants to be more visible among this group and to what extent.

*“I don't think it was particularly well publicised, certainly to the **clinical staff**, but as I say, now I'm more in the corporate role, I'm far more aware of them.”*

Health or social care provider

*“People could be a bit more aware of what they offer. When I was in my previous role, I vaguely knew of them but didn't know what they did, and certainly **didn't understand the context nationally**.”*

Health or social care provider

*“I would guess that there's a lot of stuff they do that I'm not sure about, like how much money they're utilising to do all of this when I've got **pretty limited awareness** of what they do. I'm not your typical GP either. I've got my hand in research and quality improvement and stuff like that, so I suspect the vast majority of just frontline GPs have not got a clue what their AHSN is doing.”*

Research body or university

Low visibility in the local area is supported by the resultant findings of the survey. The average proportion of stakeholders who say their local AHSN is extremely or very visible is two fifths (40%), whereas only three in ten (31%) UCLPartners stakeholders report this level of visibility.

POSSIBILITY TO BECOME AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO APPROACH THE DESIGN AND ADOPTION OF INNOVATIONS

In contrast to the point outlined prior, a few stakeholders have suggested that this could equally be an opportunity for UCLPartners. Being involved with numerous projects, some stakeholders interviewed predict UCLPartners is in a prime position to act as the standardised formula for an academic health science partnership. Stakeholders generally respond well to UCLPartners' approach to innovation. For instance, one health or social care provider praised the meetings held by UCLPartners to allow different providers in the local area to come together and discuss new innovations.

“Through their research on innovation and scale of adoption in healthcare, through the multi-disciplinary seminars on procurement, on clinical evidence, on quality improvement, on NHS improvement, I think they're

*going to **set the bar on how innovations actually get adopted**. I think they're going to become an exemplar, and they're going to set the standard of how other innovations, not just across NHS England, but globally, scale adoptions. I genuinely do."*

Private company or industry body

*"I think often when they have some innovation they're looking at, that's quite interesting, we've learnt quite a lot. It was really good working with them and also representatives from some of the other provider organisations in the area, comparing experiences. It was a new platform and it was under development, so that was really good. They had a named person at the AHSN who was leading on that, I think we all learnt a lot from it. That **pooling of knowledge and experience is really valuable** and having somebody to harness that and bring it all together."*

Health or social care provider

SUMMARY OF POINTS FOR THE AHSN TO CONSIDER

Across interviews conducted, the following points emerged for UCLPartners to consider:

- ✓ Continue providing high standard **quality improvement programmes** for stakeholders to benefit from.
- ✓ Cultivating a **long-term focus** by investing time into more long-term, evidence-based stakeholder projects.
- ✓ **Clarifying the relevance** of UCLPartners with stakeholders and reiterate the wide range of support services and programmes UCLPartners can offer the different types of stakeholder, including the new website.
- ✓ Continue to consider opportunities to **grow UCLPartners' local visibility** and **utilise case studies of innovation implementation** as success stories and examples of best practice to share.