

Healthtech startups rally to tackle coronavirus in the UK

The UK's healthtech sector has rallied its world-class talent and skills to help in the fight against coronavirus, as startups work side by side with big tech firms to provide new services and technology. From tracking cases to supporting front-line staff, loaning vital equipment and resources, providing online patient care, and gathering and analysing data, large and small tech companies across the country are rising to the challenge to help the government and the NHS.

The rapid switch to digital communication and tools across the sector, in the face of the crisis, is likely to have a profound impact on how quickly digital healthcare becomes part of the healthcare system in the next few years.

According to data from Tech Nation's Data Commons provided by Dealroom.co, the UK healthtech sector has been able to step up because it is one of the strongest in the world, having attracted \$7.7B from global venture capital investors over the last five years. Healthtech is now the second biggest sub-set of the UK tech sector after fintech and there are more than 100 healthtech

companies that are on track to become \$1B businesses.

In six of the last seven years, investment in UK healthtech has been the highest in Europe and the number of companies in the sector has increased by more than 25% since 2015.

Through 2019, the sector received \$2.3B in venture capital backing, almost double that of France, the next highest recipient. The companies in the sector have a combined turnover of £24B and employ more than 127,400 people across 3,860 businesses.

This comes as the Chancellor announced UK businesses driving innovation and development hit by coronavirus will be helped with a £1.25B government support package. The scheme includes a £500M investment fund for high-growth companies, made up of funding from government and the private sector to protect these businesses and enable the unicorns of tomorrow to thrive.

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Caroline Dinenage, Minister of State for Digital

“Over the last month, the UK’s healthtech sector has shown why it is a global leader, quickly using its expertise to develop practical solutions to help the government and the NHS with innovative products and services to respond to those in need. These new technologies will not only help in the here and now but they will also shape the future of healthcare in the UK and indeed across the world. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the startups and tech companies that have switched their entire focus to backing the national effort to tackle this health crisis.”

Matthew Gould, CEO of NHSX

“Tech can help the country deal with coronavirus. Digital tools are vital,

whether they work to collect data or to connect patients with clinical staff. I'm delighted that so many startups and innovative tech businesses have offered their skills, talent and ideas to help us."

Gordon Sanghera, CEO, [Oxford Nanopore](#)

"The scientific community has been quick to use sequencing technologies to understand the transmission of coronavirus, and whether the SARS-CoV-2 virus itself is changing, as well as the effect of other pathogens that are present alongside the virus. This information will also be a vital tool for public health authorities as they manage a responsible lifting of restrictions, in countries across the world. We are committed to supporting scientists using Oxford Nanopore's technology for this important work, and while we do that our R&D teams continue to innovate for coronavirus."

Dr Ali Parsa, founder and CEO of [Babylon Health](#)

"Our mission at Babylon is to put accessible and affordable healthcare into the hands of everyone on earth. Right now we are seeing a huge demand for our services and have been given contracts to serve 8% of the population of England with our digital-first coronavirus Care Assistant. We are determined to help play our part across all our communities globally. As we are seeing through the course of this pandemic, while the burden of healthcare is global, the solutions have to be localised to meet the specific needs and culture of each country."

Wais Shaifta, Chief Executive Officer, [Push Doctor](#)

"Push Doctor is and always has been passionate about supporting digital technology throughout the NHS. Our partnership and collaborative approach with the NHS over the past few years has allowed our partners to see the benefits of telemedicine and digital healthcare overall. I am proud to see a number of digital providers collectively coming together to support the crisis and ensuring our heroic NHS staff are exposed to the virus as little as possible."

Baroness Joanna Shields, CEO, [BenevolentAI](#)

"Life sciences and technology companies have a duty to mobilise resources for the public good in this global health emergency that has already claimed so many lives. That's why we turned our AI drug discovery and development platform toward understanding the body's response to coronavirus and exploring existing medicines with the potential to address the life-threatening complications of the disease. We're pleased that the Eli Lilly drug we identified as a potential treatment for its anti-viral and anti-inflammatory properties has already been moved forward to clinical testing in America and we look forward

to the results.”

Gerard Grech, Chief Executive of [Tech Nation](#)

“We are seeing scale-ups making huge leaps that would normally take months or years, in just a few weeks. The UK’s healthtech sector has grown in size and value in recent years and has taken an increasing level of investment from venture capital backers. That puts the sector in a strong position right now and it is brilliant to see the sector using its resources to step up to the challenge.”

Julia Hawkins, partner at [LocalGlobe](#)

“For a long time, we have been talking about the potential for better use of data and AI in healthcare and digital delivery of care and tools to support front-line clinicians. Now we are getting the chance to use these for real on a mass scale. The crisis is giving healthtech companies the chance to show what they can do and the response from the many companies who have got involved demonstrates that we do have the talent and skills here to build globally significant healthtech companies.”

Jacob Haddad, CEO & Co-Founder, [accuRx](#)

“NHS staff need to have safe, reliable and intuitive ways of communicating with patients and colleagues, and the crisis has made this need more acute than ever. Building a video consultation product over a weekend was one of the first ways that we were able to achieve that and we have already released a range of other features to support frontline staff. GP practices and hospitals are being forced to make these changes to stay safe and maintain routine services. When the pandemic is over, we will have seen a decade of digital transformation take place.”

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