

Accelerating FemTech evaluation

Impact of the Accelerating FemTech programme, funded by Innovate UK in collaboration with the Medical Research Council



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Accelerating FemTech Impact

An overview of how the Accelerating FemTech programme supported innovators across two cohorts from September 2023 to March 2025.

33



early-stage FemTech
innovations supported

66.6%



female owned and
managed enterprises

2,962



hours of
bespoke support

145



one-to-one subject
matter expert
sessions delivered

£1m



Biomedical Catalyst
funding awarded to 10
innovators (cohort 1)

97.4%



of participants felt
expert guidance will
help business
development

78.5%

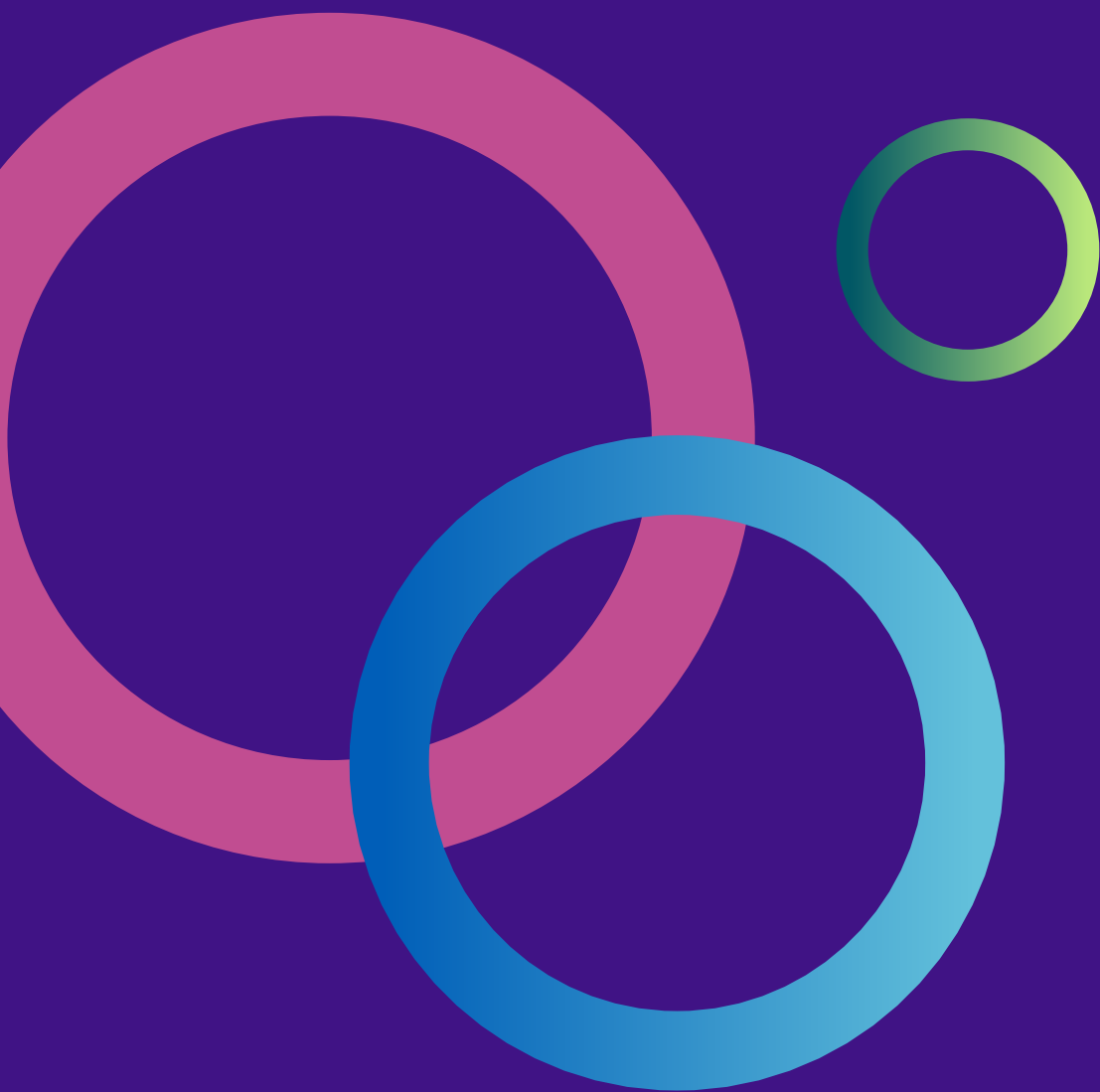


of participants more
aware of important
considerations for
business development

Great



NPS category



Background


Programme overview

In the UK, women consistently spend more of their lives in ill health or disability compared to men, and the life expectancy for women ranges from less than two years to 12 years or more than men across the country.


Recognising the urgent need for a more inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to healthcare, the Accelerating FemTech programme was created to support small and medium-sized (SMEs) companies developing early-stage innovations for women's health. For cohort 2, recruitment efforts were broadened and the number of participants involved in the 10 week programme increased. We recognised that universities are often at the cutting edge of innovation and wanted to tap into that talent to benefit women's health.

The programme was delivered by the Health Innovation Network (HIN) South London and partners across the UK, including those in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. It utilised Innovate UK funding as part of the Biomedical Catalyst, in collaboration with the Medical Research Council.


The first cohort, delivered from September 2023 to December 2023 supported 12 innovations and included three phases of delivery:

 **Inspire:** seven specialist webinars and events for innovators (clinicians, companies and academics) interested in FemTech. Webinar and one-to-one sessions were offered to innovators who took part in the Inspire phase and/or applied to the programme and were not offered a place. This ensured a complete offer to the system, as well as ongoing engagement with the FemTech innovator ecosystem.


 **Accelerate:** a targeted 10 week accelerator programme supporting SMEs from across the UK. At the end of the programme, the innovators were supported to prepare to apply for special closed-call feasibility funding opportunity through Innovate UK's Biomedical Catalyst.

 **Sustain:** Innovators were supported to apply for a special closed-call feasibility study through Innovate UK's Biomedical Catalyst. End of programme feedback was collected and analysed for a final evaluation.

The second cohort, which ran from November 2024 to March 2025 and supported 21 innovations, followed a similar model with an added focus in the accelerate phase:

 **Inspire:** Both a virtual and in-person information session was held with special attention focused on making connections with university partners.

 **Accelerate:** The Accelerate phase of this cohort focused on recruiting a larger group of innovators, aiming to increase applications from the devolved nations and university-based innovators. The programme was supported by partners from eight other Health Innovation Networks and similar organisations in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

 **Sustain:** Innovators were supported to apply for a special closed-call feasibility study through Innovate UK's Biomedical Catalyst. End of programme feedback was collected and analysed for a final evaluation.

Topics covered across both cohorts through webinars and face-to-face sessions:

- ✓ Budget impact analysis
- ✓ Evidence generation
- ✓ Go-to market strategies
- ✓ Intellectual property and investment strategy
- ✓ Introduction to investment, early-stage investment
- ✓ Introduction to legal and intellectual property
- ✓ Regulation and product development
- ✓ The role of universities in innovation
- ✓ User involvement and health equity
- ✓ Value proposition
- ✓ Women's health priorities around the UK

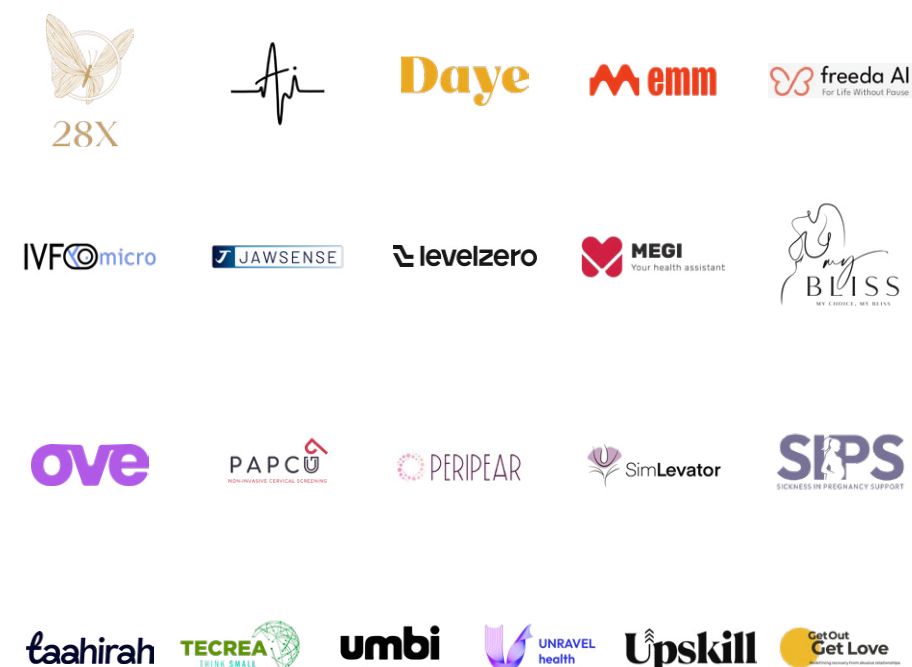
Accelerating FemTech innovations

Across the Accelerating FemTech programme, 33 innovations were supported. 12 UK-based SMEs were part of the Accelerate phase of the first cohort. For the second cohort, the programme expanded to support 21 early-stage companies, university spinouts and entrepreneurial-minded academics focused on women's health.

Cohort 1 | September 2023 - December 2023



Cohort 2 | November 2024 - March 2025



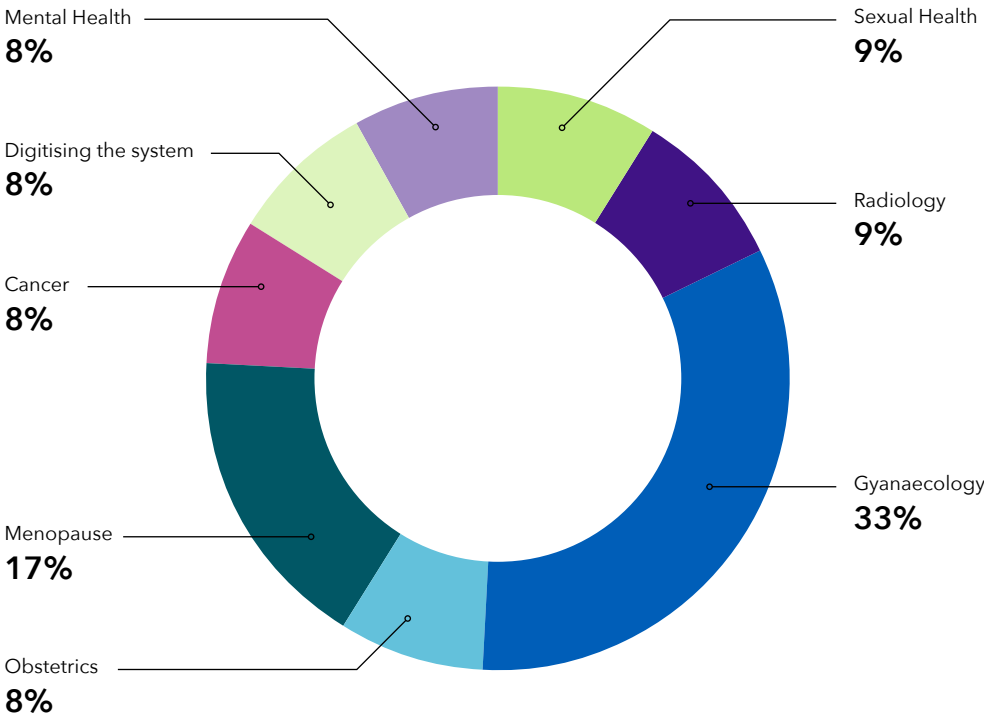
Area of innovation

The Accelerating FemTech programme supports innovations with the potential to address current women’s health challenges.

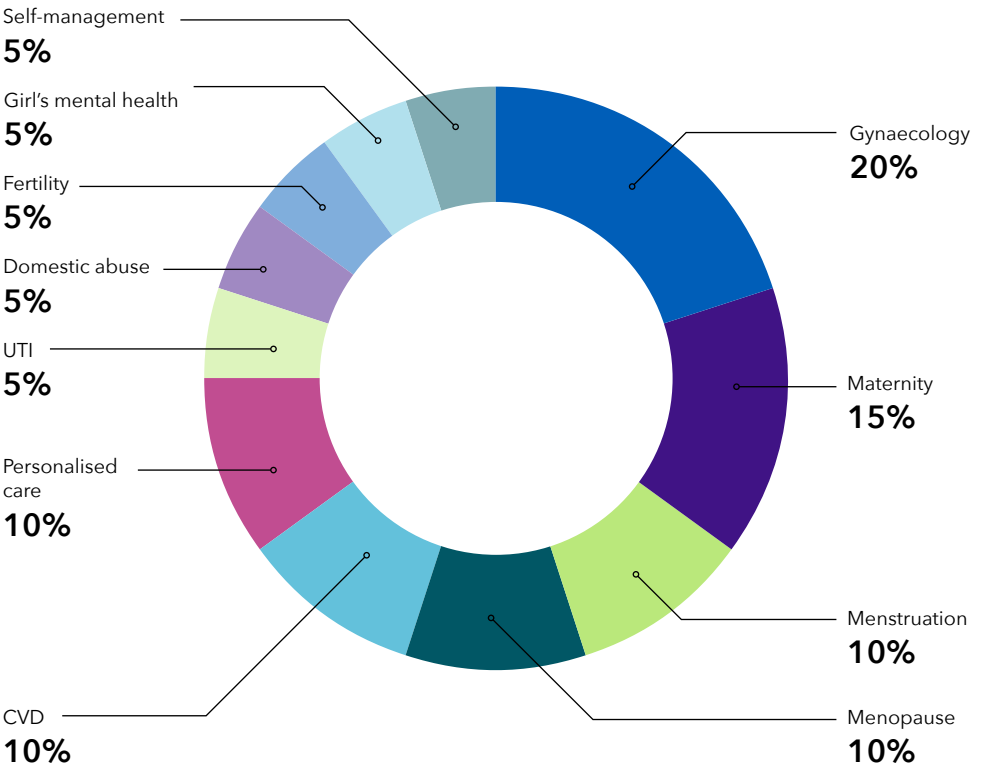
Across both cohorts, the areas of innovation and technology were varied, from AI-driven menopause platforms to hormone monitoring devices.

While gynaecology was a primary focus for both cohorts, cohort 2 showed greater diversity in its innovations, branching into areas like domestic abuse, mental health and cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Cohort 1 | September 2023 - December 2023



Cohort 2 | November 2024 - March 2025



Evaluation aim and methodology

This evaluation reviews both cohorts of the Accelerating FemTech programme to better understand the experiences of participants. It aims to identify the most impactful elements of the programme, key benefit themes and areas for growth. These findings are presented through four sections: recruitment, delivery, impact and reflections.

Data was collected and collated from the following methods to inform the findings reported in programme specific sections:



Primary quantitative data from the end of programme surveys.



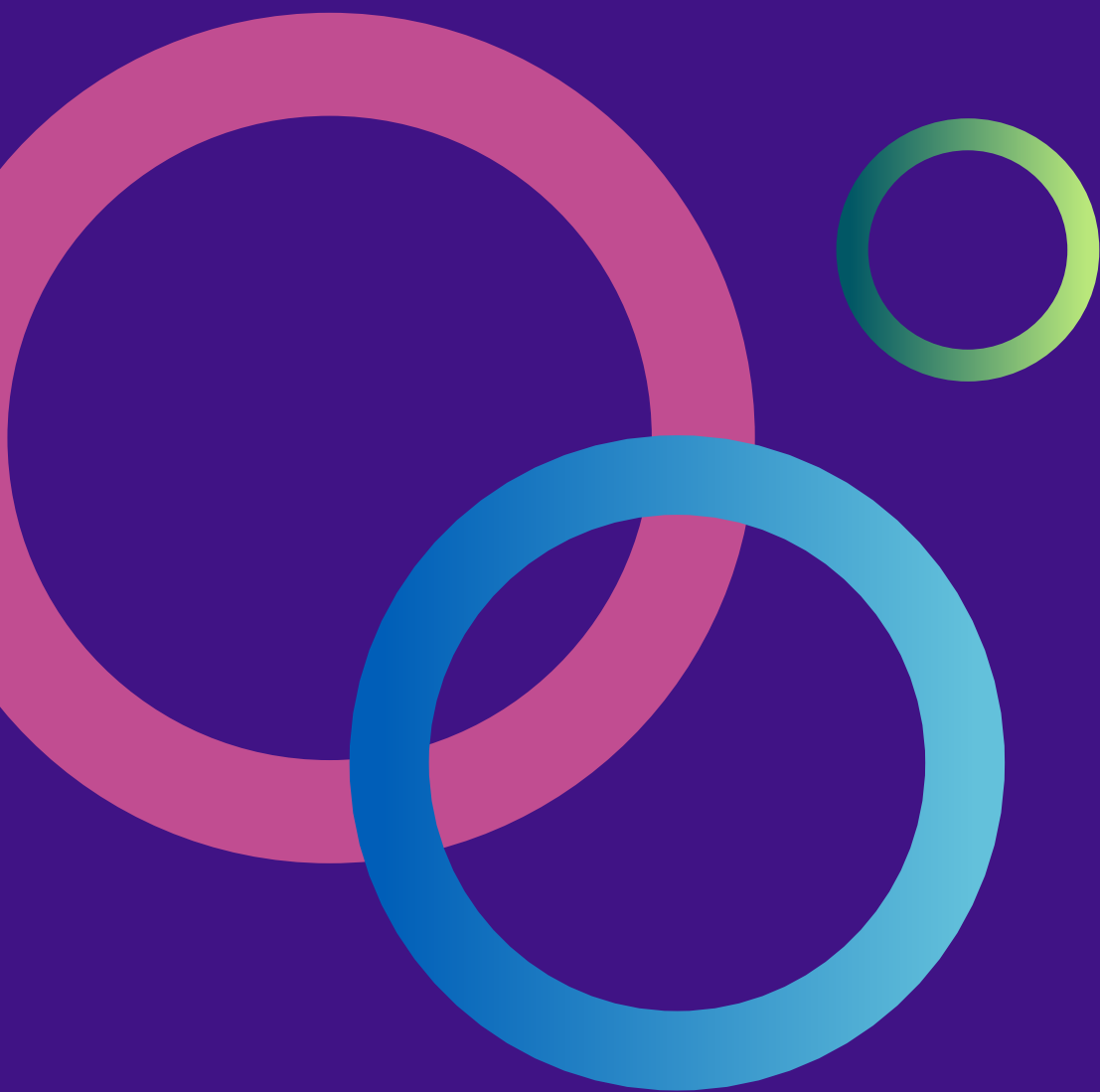
Participant surveys during programme delivery, providing generalised feedback of the events, bespoke support and overall experience.



Group feedback from the delivery team and business coaches during and at the end of programme delivery.

Across both cohorts, feedback was collected following in-person and virtual events, as well as through a final survey, which included a Net Promoter Score (NPS). For cohort 1, a halfway NPS score was also collected.





Findings

Recruitment

Across both cohorts, recruitment was done through a 3 stage process: application, expert review and interview.

Expert reviews were conducted by clinicians and health system experts, and commercial and innovation experts to ensure the highest quality innovations were selected for each cohort. Cohort 1 of the programme saw a total of 86 applications, whilst cohort 2 received 122 applications – the result of a more refined recruitment drive, with targeted and bespoke outreach.

The programme was open to innovators of any gender developing solutions for women's health. Across both cohorts, the proportion of female owned, or female majority led companies at all three stages of recruitment was on average 66.67%. The number of founders from the global majority was slightly lower in cohort 2 (41.7% in cohort 1 and 33.3% in cohort 2), with the recruitment and selection stages including targeted outreach and diverse recruitment panels.

Geographical location and university affiliation was prioritised during the recruitment stage of cohort 2, expanding the offer of cohort 1 which focused on SMEs. A bespoke university outreach plan ensured that 24.5% of applicants listed their innovation as being a university spin-out or having strong links to a university, with 30.5% being invited to interview following external expert review. This was maintained in the selection phase of recruitment, supported by the use of individual scoring thresholds for start-ups and university-based innovations.

41.8%

increase in application numbers between cohorts 1 and 2



17%

increase in innovations from outside London (25% London based innovations in cohort 1 to 43% in cohort 2)



25.4%

listed their innovation as being a university spin-out or having strong links to a university (cohort 2)



Programme delivery

The Accelerating FemTech programme helped 33 early stage FemTech innovations through 2,962 hours of bespoke support, including 145 one-to-one sessions with subject matter experts. There were also three bespoke networking dinners, with 21 healthcare stakeholders, 16 clinical stakeholders and 22 investor organisations represented.

Cohort 1 | September 2023 - December 2023

12 
mentors

1 
bespoke networking dinner
with 21 external stakeholders

21 
subject matter experts who
delivered 85 one-to-one sessions

4.4 
out of 5 average satisfaction
score for virtual sessions

9 
virtual webinars

3 
in-person networking events

5/5 
Satisfaction score for the
regulation session, the
highest rated workshop

Cohort 2 | November 2024 - March 2025

21 
mentors

2 
bespoke networking dinners with
16 clinical stakeholders and 22
investor organisations represented

21 
subject matter experts who
delivered 60 one-to-one sessions

4.6 
out of 5 overall satisfaction score
for the residential days, which
were highlighted as an especially
valuable part of the programme.

9 
virtual webinars

3 
in-person networking events

4.8/5 
Satisfaction score for the
Go-to- Market strategy session,
the highest rated workshop

Programme impact

Participants from both cohorts were surveyed at the end of the programme about the quality and impact of the support.

The Net Promoter Scores for both cohorts were in the Great category (66.7 and 53 respectively). 100% of cohort 1 and 94.7% of cohort 2 said they would repeat the programme. This change in satisfaction is attributed to the wider spread of innovation maturity due to the size of cohort 2. This introduced challenges in delivering a truly tailored curriculum but improved aspects like peer networking and shared learning.

Residential events were well received across both cohorts (4.4/5 from cohort 1 and 4.6/5 from cohort 2) with the chance to network with peers and experts cited as a highlight of in-person events. As a result of the positive feedback from cohort 1, a second networking dinner was added for cohort 2, focusing on investment. Across both cohorts, 3 bespoke networking dinners were held with 21 healthcare stakeholders, 16 clinical stakeholders and 22 investor organisations represented. Virtual workshops were a large part of the programme delivery. The value proposition and evidence generation workshops were popular for cohort 1, with cohort 2 appreciating the health economics and regulation sessions.

Beyond the 10 week curriculum, innovators across both cohorts were also supported to prepare for a special closed-call feasibility funding opportunity through Innovate UK's Biomedical Catalyst. As a result 95.5% of participants felt the programme prepared them for the application, and a share of over £1 million was awarded to cohort 1.

100% 

of participants expanded their network of contacts

77% 

of participants increased their insight and awareness into commercialising new innovations

78.5% 

of participants felt more aware of key considerations important on the development of their product

45.9% 

of participants increased their investment readiness and plans

97.4% 

of participants felt the discussions with experts had provided insights that will help to develop the business

96% 

of participants would repeat the programme

*averaged across both cohorts as the %'s were within 5% of each other between cohorts

Cohort 1 impact

Cohort 1 highlighted that the most valuable parts of the programme for them were meeting experts including NHS representatives, investors and clinicians. Feedback through surveys details that the programme's networking and connections were highly valuable, particularly the mentorship and coaching, peer relationships, and access to industry contacts.

Workshops on refining value propositions, evidence generation, and understanding the NHS structure were also greatly appreciated. Opportunities to pitch ideas and receive support with grant applications were seen as crucial for their development. Additionally, the frequency and quality of in-person events facilitated meaningful connections and enhanced the overall experience of the programme.

83.3% 🔍

of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programme furthered their understanding of product development of product development

83.3% 📁

of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programme furthered their understanding of potential markets

83.3% 📄

of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programme furthered their understanding of regulatory considerations and strategy



Cohort 2 impact

The following key impact areas were identified from cohort 2 participant feedback as the most valuable aspects of the programme:



Expert support: Participants appreciated the availability and expertise of subject matter experts, especially the depth of knowledge and practical support they provided.



Programme structure: The structured approach, including Action Learning Sets, residential days, and workshops, was praised for its effectiveness in delivering valuable content and fostering engagement. The value proposition and evidence generation workshop were popular for cohort 1, with cohort 2 appreciating the health economics and regulation sessions.



Individual support: Personalised coaching and one-on-one sessions with business coaches were highly appreciated. These sessions provided tailored advice and support, helping participants address specific challenges.



Networking opportunities: Similar to cohort 1, networking was identified as one of the stand-out elements of the programme, especially being able to build connections with other founders, subject matter experts, clinical advisors and research partners. The programme facilitated meaningful interactions that fostered collaboration and knowledge sharing and the participants valued the tangible outcomes, like starting conversations with major companies and understanding the NHS landscape. Feedback from participants stated that the in-person events were some of their “favourite parts of the programme,” and one participant citing the most valuable part of the programme as networking during the residential days.



Funding guidance: Learning how to apply for funding and receiving support in grant writing were crucial benefits. Practical workshops and one-on-one coaching were specifically highlighted for helping participants navigate the funding landscape.

94.7%

of participants were satisfied with the quality and suitability of the subject matter experts

100.0%

of participants were satisfied with the quality and suitability of the in person residential days

94.7%

of participants were satisfied with the virtual events

73.7%

of participants were satisfied with the Action Learning Sets

84.2%

were satisfied with the quality and suitability of their business coach

Programme outcomes

As a result of the support from the programme, a number of companies reached significant milestones:

- **10 companies from cohort one received over £1 million of closed-call funding** through a special closed-call feasibility funding opportunity through Innovate UK's Biomedical Catalyst. The fund supports organisations to complete feasibility studies, helping to drive new innovations to make impactful change.
- **MyBliss from cohort 2 was accepted onto the Fortuna Fellowship.** The 12-month Accelerator supports five ambitious female founders to scale their business. It also provides matched funding, aiming to bridge the gap for female founded ventures.
- **Upskill.Health from cohort 2 was highly commended at the Digital Health Rewired Pitchfest 2025.** The final saw 18 start-ups pitch to a live audience of NHS leaders, industry figures and investors across two categories: pre-revenue start-ups and revenue generating start-ups.
- **Over £290,000 SBRI funding awarded** to Unravel Health (cohort 1), Unravel Health (cohort 2) and Birthglide (cohort 2) through Competition 25: Women's Health
- **Megi Health was a finalist for the Global Cardiovascular Awards 2025** in the Digital Innovation Award category.
- **Papcup was the winner of the Hello Tomorrow Global Challenge Emerging Pioneer Award, receiving €25,000 in non-dilutive funding.** Papcup was one of 4,600 applicants worldwide and 80 finalists who after 2 days of pitching took the top spot.
- **Daye published their peer-reviewed publication in the Journal of Clinical Microbiology.** The paper validated the diagnostic accuracy of their product showing fantastic evidence towards validating their product.
- **The Tech South West Spotlight award** was won by Get Out, Get Love.

Case Studies

Following the end of the programme, case studies were completed to showcase the work and success across both cohorts:

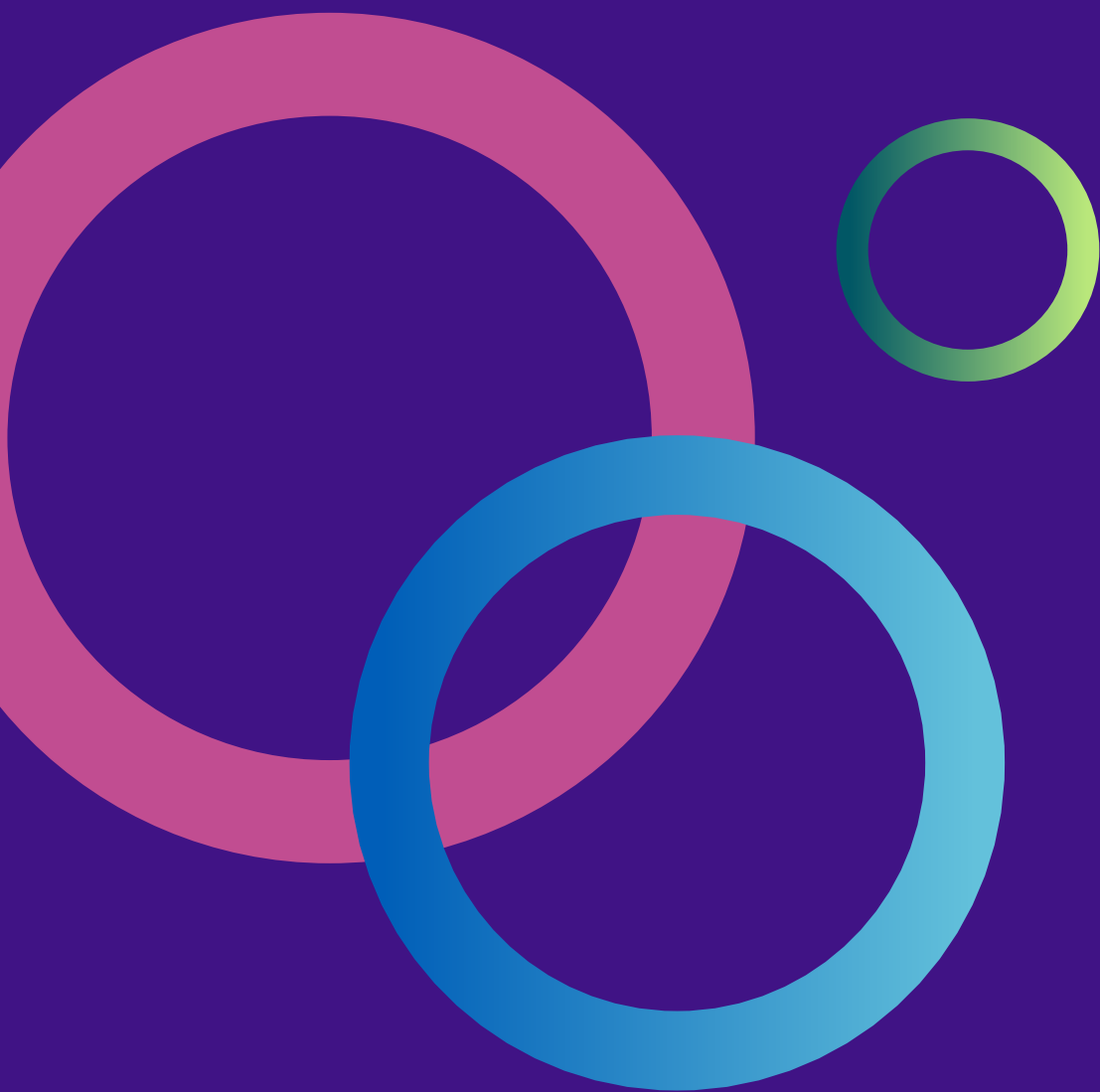


Cohort 1

- ▶ **Bloume:** navigating Pelvic Pain Care: A Digital Approach
- ▶ **Ellescope:** reconfiguring Maternity through Comprehensive Maternal Health Screening
- ▶ **IBEX:** revolutionising Bone Health: Timely Osteoporosis Detection in Post-Menopausal Women
- ▶ **P.Happi:** redefining Women's Intimate Health with Microbiome-Biotech-led Solutions
- ▶ **Plexaa:** revolutionising Breast Surgeries with Preconditioning: The Journey from Hote Water Bottles to BLOOM43

Cohort 2

- ▶ **Peripear:** non-invasive medical device is set to transform preventative perineal care
- ▶ **Simlevator:** Standardising pelvic floor examinations
- ▶ **Taahirah:** empowering Muslim women to manage their reproductive health
- ▶ **Tecrea:** offering more choice to women facing recurrent urinary tract infections
- ▶ **Upskill.Health:** Fixing outdated approaches to training is critical to safe maternity care



Reflections

Areas for growth

The following areas of reflection highlight key areas of growth from the delivery of both Accelerating FemTech cohorts:

Time to digest

The core curriculum of cohort 1 was delivered in a single 10-week block. Participants suggested a two-phase approach for cohort 2 to leverage the programme's full value, allowing learning to be put into practice and disseminated across their teams. This was implemented in cohort 2 with a three-week break halfway through, which was very well received.



Investor readiness

A key ask from innovators at the end of cohort 1 was to have increased networking opportunities, particularly with investors. For cohort two, the second residential day largely focused on raising investment and was followed by an additional bespoke investor dinner.



Peer learning

Participants suggested that further opportunities for informal networking would be welcomed. A founder-led session on fundraising was highlighted as especially helpful and this peer-learning and sharing element can be further incorporated into future support.



Mentor relationship

The mentor offer is an important element of the support, however matching takes place based on limited information and touch points with founders before the programme starts. The short duration of the programme means that the mentor-mentee relationship needs to coincide with the start the programme. To ensure the most impact from these relationships, future support for companies should incorporate additional ways to make the matching process even better. For example, specific guidance produced for both mentors and mentees could be updated, ensuring the purpose and boundaries of the relationship are clear.



Expansion on topics

The programme supports innovations aiming to grow in the public, private and/or direct to consumer health care markets. There are also early-stage innovations requiring medical device registration, with intellectual property considerations. These were two areas that the second cohort, while still highly scored and noted as impactful, would have liked more individualised and focused sessions. This demonstrates the ongoing demand for specialised medical device regulation support through workshops. An additional suggestion from a few Cohort 2 participants was to incorporate more practical components alongside the virtual curriculum sessions, which would aid further upskilling.



A multi-track cohort

When cohort 2 was asked about the potential of a multi-track system for future cohorts, they were largely in favour. The system would allow for a more tailored curriculum of support, as innovators could be separated for events and networking based on characteristics like university spin-out vs. start-up, maturity or target market. Feedback suggested that having a multi-track cohort would also allow for further tailoring of virtual sessions, and more targeted investor engagement.



However, the cohort's feedback about positive connections facilitated across the cohort through networking opportunities signals that there are also benefits from mixing innovators with different experiences, especially maturity and target market. Therefore, a multi-track system would benefit from the addition of some cross-track networking and collaboration, allowing knowledge exchange and connections across the FemTech innovation landscape. This is evidenced by participants citing that networking with others who were more mature was helpful and a draw of the programme.

Conclusion

The majority of participants rated their satisfaction with the programme highly, with many expressing strong appreciation for the support and resources provided. Most participants indicated that they would recommend the programme to others, highlighting its value and impact on their professional growth.

Feedback identified that workshops, one-to-one sessions and the events overall were well received, with the in-person networking opportunities highlighted as an especially valuable and enjoyable part of the programme. The ability to build peer-to-peer connections and learn from other founders at similar or more mature stages was referenced as a welcome element of the programme throughout the feedback.

There was a special focus on university born innovations through the recruitment of Cohort 2, although there were no specific tracks for entrepreneurial-minded academics or university spinouts. Feedback suggested that further tailoring to different maturities or target markets would be helpful, but it would be important to maintain the ability to network and connect as a wider cohort. There was also a demand for additional opportunities for peer-to-peer support and informal networking across the cohort.

Business coach and subject matter expert support was highly regarded, with the bespoke support offered highlighted as an important part of the programme. Introducing more practical components, like pathway mapping and budget impact modelling, alongside the webinar events would further strengthen learning.

The competitive acceptance rate, in addition to the increase in cohort size and applicant pool, highlights the growing demand for innovation support programmes specifically tailored to women's health innovators with the potential of addressing the gender health gap.

The delivery of the programme was a national effort with partners from across the UK. These partners delivered a variety of support including providing business coaches, subject matter experts, mentors and their networks to support the innovators. At a national level, the findings in this report provide assurance around the partnership working approach. The programme's performance linked to the contract and the ability to deliver high-value programmes for future regional and national funding cycles, contributes to economic growth.

Across two cohorts of innovators, the Accelerating FemTech programme has brought together women's health innovators with backgrounds in clinical work, engineering, business and academia to develop and accelerate the impact of their innovation.



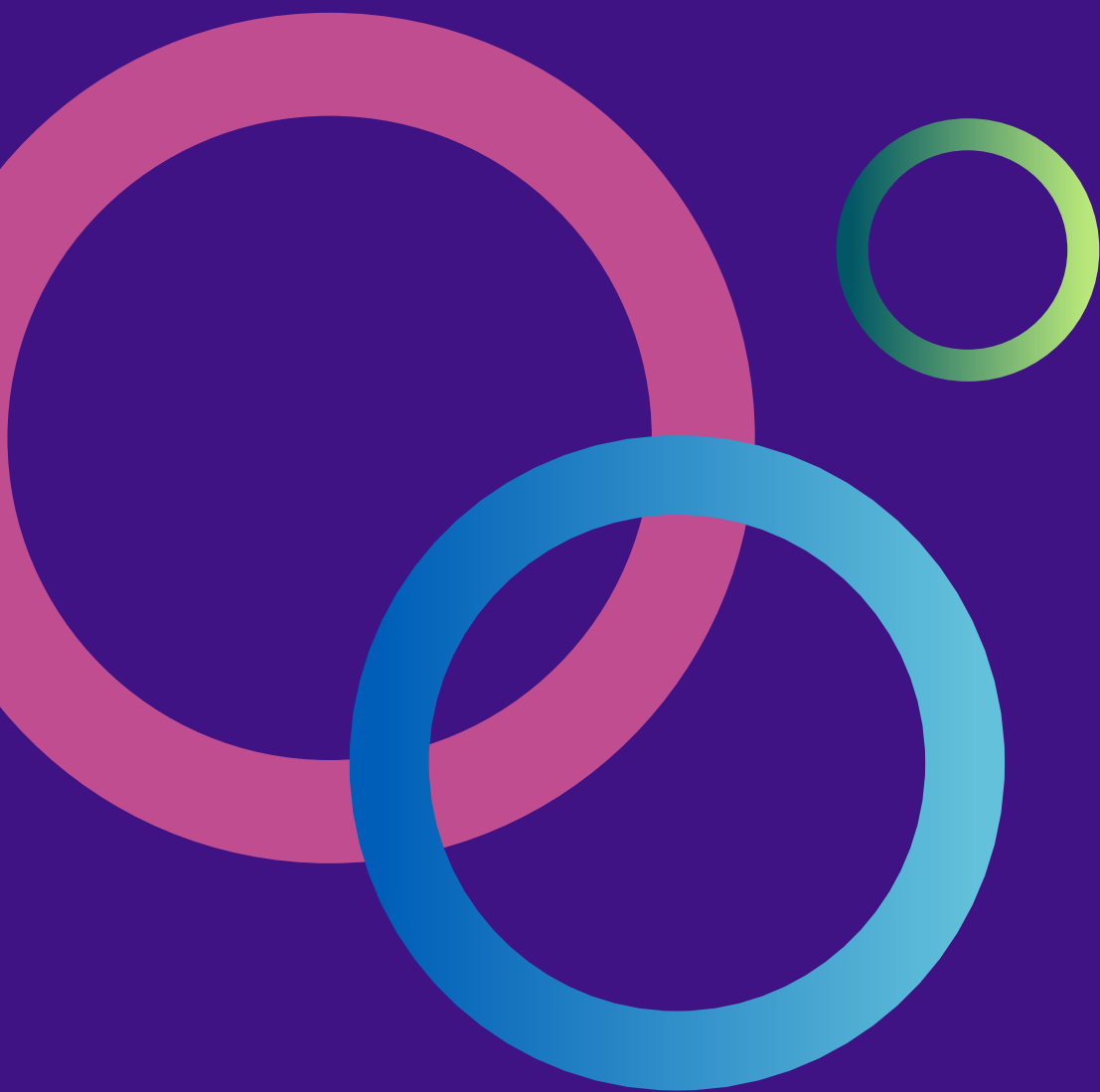
The programme has shown that despite professional background, tailored support for FemTech founders is important for their success and that there is a clear appetite for innovations in women's health.

Through the bespoke support of the programme and early-stage investment through special closed-call feasibility funding opportunities through Innovate UK's Biomedical Catalyst, innovators have been provided an impactful environment to develop, connect and grow.

In this way, the programme demonstrates clear, long-lasting value to the innovators who took part. This movement towards increased innovations in women's health, and investors recognising the need to invest in these innovations, highlights that there is a need for further funding and support, such as innovator support programmes like Accelerating FemTech. Building on our experience of delivering Accelerating FemTech, it is clear that there is an ongoing need to support innovators working across women's health, including those at a later stage.

The Accelerating FemTech programme and its evaluation confirm an ongoing need for tailored support for women's health innovators. Our experiences, impact and expanding network demonstrate that this demand is not limited to early-stage startups, it also extends to innovators who are in more advanced stages of development. We're committed to building on the Accelerating FemTech programme to provide comprehensive support that benefits the entire FemTech innovation lifecycle to ultimately make a real difference to women's lives.





Appendix

Summary of applicant demographics (%)

Cohort 1	Applied (86)	Interviewed (35)	Selected (12)
Gender majority (51% or more) of the ownership and senior management of the business			
Female	58.1	68.6	66.7
Male	16.3	11.4	16.7
No clear majority	22.1	20.0	16.7
Prefer not to say	3.5	0.0	0.0
Business majority (51% or more) owned by a person or persons from a Black, Asian or minority-ethnic community			
Yes	44.2	51.4	41.7
No	51.2	45.7	58.3
Prefer not to say	4.7	2.9	0.0
Business majority (51% or more) owned, or managed by a person or persons with a disability			
Yes	14.0	11.4	16.7
No	77.9	85.7	83.3
Prefer not to say	8.1	2.9	0.0

Cohort 2	Applied (122)	Interviewed (36)	Selected (21)
Gender majority (51% or more) of the ownership and senior management of the business			
Female	69.7	68.5	71.4
Male	17.2	22.8	19.0
No clear majority	10.7	1.6	9.5
Prefer not to say	2.5	2.8	0.0
Business majority (51% or more) owned by a person or persons from a Black, Asian or minority-ethnic community			
Yes	38.5	33.3	33.3
No	54.9	63.9	67.0
Prefer not to say	0.0	0.0	0.0
Business majority (51% or more) owned, or managed by a person or persons with a disability			
Yes	14.7	8.5	9.5
No	77.8	88.5	85.7
Prefer not to say	7.3	2.8	4.7

