



Spark Newsletter

Issue No. 2 2025

Spark Summit – National Innovation
Awards – Meet Our New Fellows –
Design on the Frontline



Welcome

Welcome to the Summer 2025 Edition of the Spark Newsletter

As the summer draws to a close, we're delighted to bring you the latest edition of the Spark Newsletter, a celebration of innovation, and the people driving change across our health service. We have been very busy in Spark these last few months and we are excited to update you!

This edit, we're proud to reflect on Spark Summit 2025, our most successful Summit to date. It was an inspiring gathering of healthcare professionals, change-makers, and innovators from across the country, all united by a shared commitment to improving patient care through creativity and collaboration.

In this edition, you'll meet the exceptional recipients of the CEO's Choice Innovation Award, and learn about the winners of our National Innovation Awards, the HSE Bright Sparks Awards. We will also introduce you to our new National Innovation Fellows, who bring fresh expertise and passion to our programme.

We're also delighted to share updates on some of our initiatives - Spark Ignite, Spark Impact and Spark Seed, and lot, lots more!

Thank you for being part of this movement. Let's keep building, together.

Warm regards,

The HSE Spark Team

Spark Summit 2025

On 11th June, the HSE Spark Summit lit up the Dublin Royal Convention Centre. It was, without question, our biggest and best event yet!

With over 600 attendees, this sell-out conference brought together frontline clinicians, patient partners, service users, policy-makers, and system leaders, all united by a shared passion for innovation in healthcare.

The atmosphere was electric: a packed venue, vibrant conversations, and a powerful sense of momentum driving real change across the system.

We were honoured to welcome leadership from the health service and government, including Dr Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, Minister for Health, DOH Secretary General Robert Watt, HSE CEO, Bernard Gloster, Damien McCallion, Deputy CEO and Dr Colm Henry, CCO. Their presence underscored the importance of frontline innovation - and gave them the chance to meet some of the brightest minds shaping the future of healthcare in Ireland.

What our Attendees said

Feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive:

97% would recommend Spark Summit to a colleague.

97% felt more inspired to engage in an innovation project after the conference.

What our attendees said





CEO's Choice Innovation Awards

A highlight of the Spark Summit was the presentation of the highly prestigious “CEO’s Choice” Innovation Awards, personally selected by HSE CEO Bernard Gloster. This year, two exceptionally deserving recipients were chosen for their projects that improved access to care.



The SitWell Pathway

Linda Keogh, Senior Occupational Therapist, Children's Disability Network Team Longford, CHO 8 Disability Services:
“The SitWell Pathway - Timely, Tailored Custom Seating for Children with Complex Needs”

This project transformed custom seating services for children with physical disabilities in Longford's Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT). Previously, families faced 240 km round trips to Dublin clinics, with 6–12 month waits and significant financial and emotional strain.

Using Design Thinking, local Occupational Therapists were trained to run child-centred clinics in the community, cutting waits

to 8–10 weeks and removing travel burdens. The model saved €390–€585 and 13–15 hours per child while cutting carbon emissions sixfold. With minimal investment, it has expanded to Adult Disability Services, and the team is developing a guide to help other CDNTs adopt this approach and improve access for rural families.



Bright Sparks

National Innovation Awards

Spark Summit also plays host to our National Innovation Awards - the HSE Bright Sparks Awards.

This year there was a record-breaking number of applications, with projects shortlisted across 12 categories.

Virtual Obstructive Sleep Apnoea Identifier Pathway

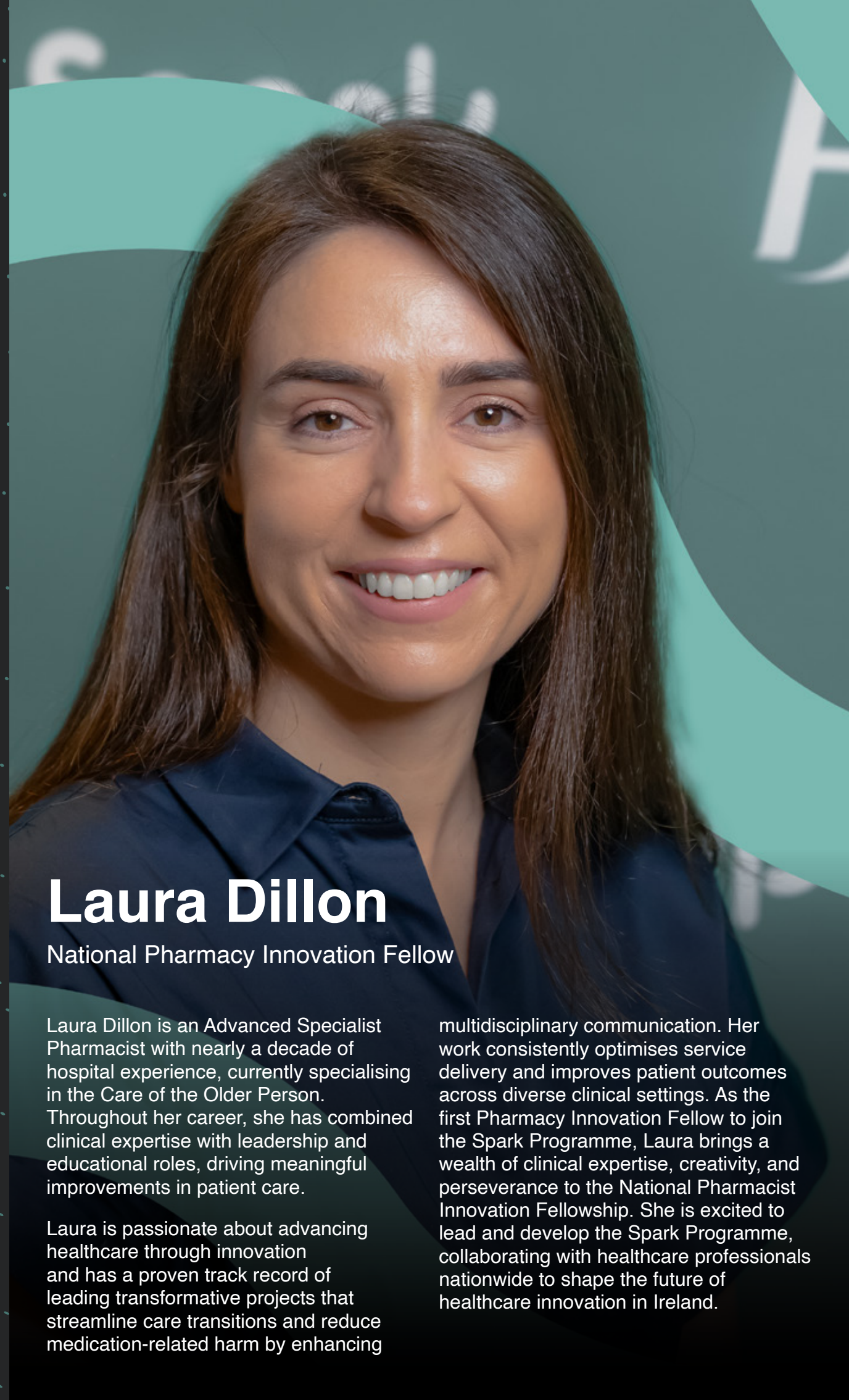
Dr Laura Piggott, Specialist Registrar in Respiratory Medicine, St. James' Hospital, Dublin 8: *"Virtual Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA) Identifier Pathway: A Whole New World?"*

Obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) diagnosis in Ireland traditionally took up to three years, causing patient anxiety and straining resources. With Spark Productivity Boost funding, a new digital pathway was developed: patients use the myPatientSpace app for symptom screening, receive home sleep study kits, and have virtual consultations with specialists.

Among 112 patients, average referral-to-treatment time dropped from three years to 5.5 months. The approach saved €1,000 per patient, reduced staffing needs, cut travel, and lowered carbon emissions. With strong results, this scalable model offers promise for nationwide OSA care transformation.

Winning Projects 

Introducing Our New National Innovation Fellows



Laura Dillon

National Pharmacy Innovation Fellow

Laura Dillon is an Advanced Specialist Pharmacist with nearly a decade of hospital experience, currently specialising in the Care of the Older Person. Throughout her career, she has combined clinical expertise with leadership and educational roles, driving meaningful improvements in patient care.

Laura is passionate about advancing healthcare through innovation and has a proven track record of leading transformative projects that streamline care transitions and reduce medication-related harm by enhancing

multidisciplinary communication. Her work consistently optimises service delivery and improves patient outcomes across diverse clinical settings. As the first Pharmacy Innovation Fellow to join the Spark Programme, Laura brings a wealth of clinical expertise, creativity, and perseverance to the National Pharmacist Innovation Fellowship. She is excited to lead and develop the Spark Programme, collaborating with healthcare professionals nationwide to shape the future of healthcare innovation in Ireland.



Una Rogers

National Nursing and Midwifery Innovation Fellow

Una is a Community Midwife Manager within the maternity department in Galway University Hospital. With 11 years' midwifery experience and a passion for woman-centred holistic maternity care, Una has focused her career in the labour ward and antenatal settings.

This has given Una the opportunity to innovate and reform midwifery work practices in both scheduled and unscheduled care. Una has led a Quality Improvement Project (QIP) that

involved using technology to assist with interpretation services to improve patient outcomes and satisfaction rates as well as lowering the financial impact of hiring in-person translators. This successful QIP only served to ignite a passion for innovation projects. Una is looking forward to joining the Spark team as a new Fellow and further develop her innovation skills.



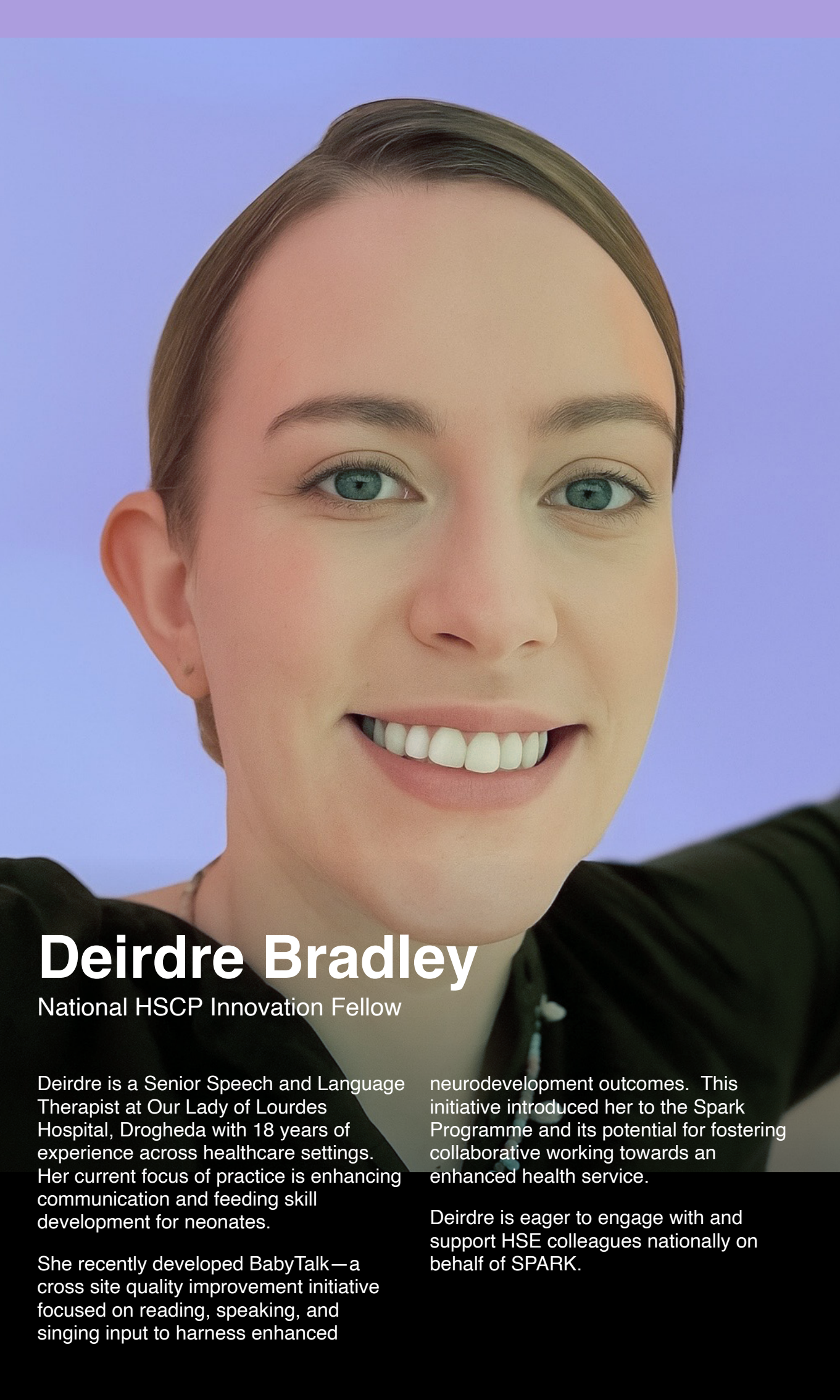
Dr Seán O' Malley

National NCHD Innovation Fellow

Dr. Seán O'Malley is a Dermatology Registrar in St. James's Hospital and one of the incoming National NCHD Innovation Fellows. With over seven years' experience of clinical medicine, he has a lived understanding of the challenges faced in frontline healthcare and the crucial role innovation plays in this ever-changing landscape, be it at the bedside or nationwide.

Alongside his clinical work, Seán sits on the board of directors for Clann Mór, a registered charity in Meath supporting people with intellectual disabilities to live independently, furthering his enthusiasm

for system design and leadership. With several post-graduate qualifications and international publications relating to healthcare economics and policy, and the ethics, governance and application of artificial intelligence in healthcare, Seán is strongly passionate about new and innovative approaches to how we provide healthcare services. As such, he is excited to build on his experience by supporting healthcare innovators to integrate novel ideas and technologies for the benefit of both patients and health professionals in Ireland.



Deirdre Bradley

National HSCP Innovation Fellow

Deirdre is a Senior Speech and Language Therapist at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda with 18 years of experience across healthcare settings. Her current focus of practice is enhancing communication and feeding skill development for neonates.

She recently developed BabyTalk—a cross site quality improvement initiative focused on reading, speaking, and singing input to harness enhanced

neurodevelopment outcomes. This initiative introduced her to the Spark Programme and its potential for fostering collaborative working towards an enhanced health service.

Deirdre is eager to engage with and support HSE colleagues nationally on behalf of SPARK.



Dr Caoimhe Glancy

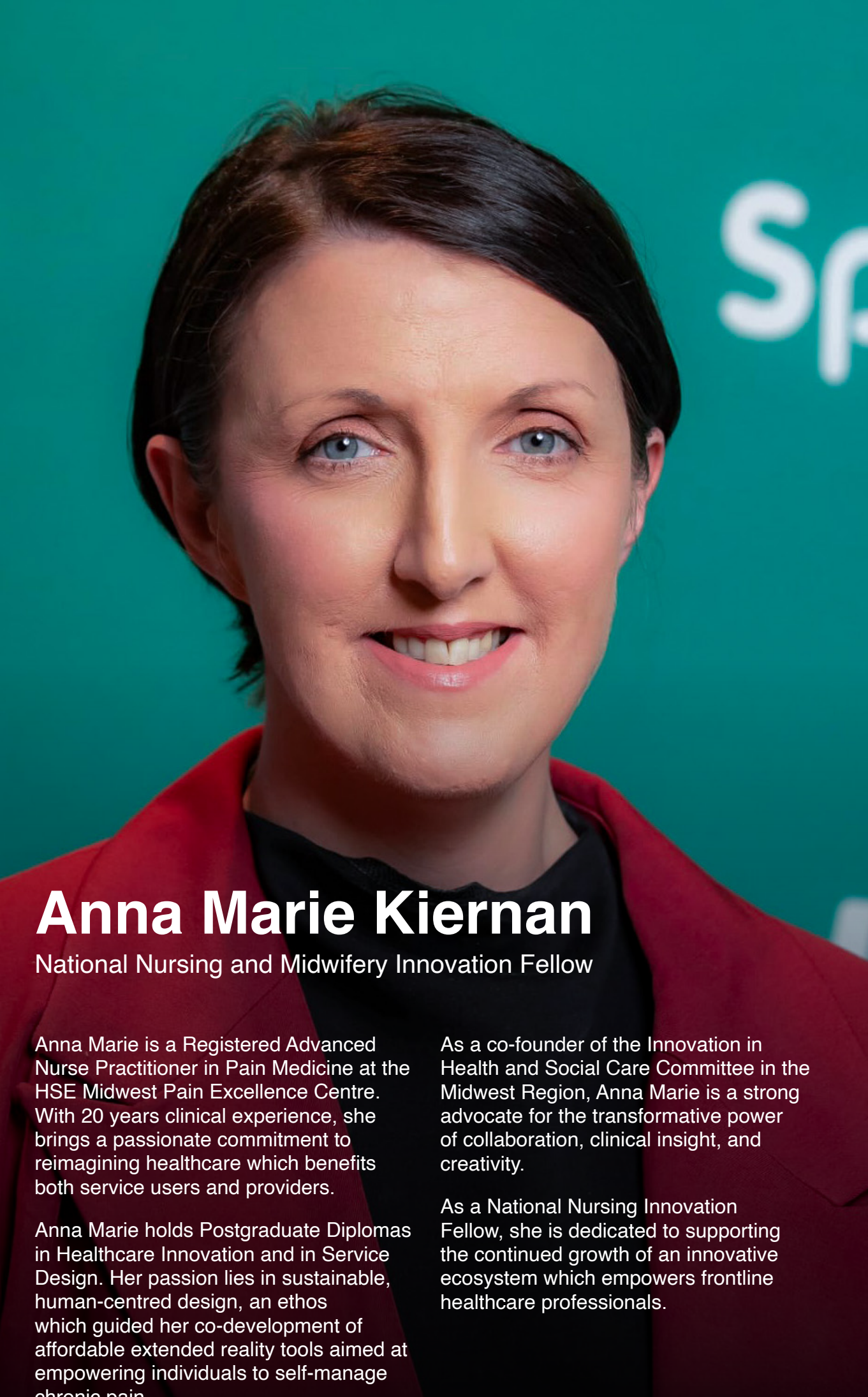
National NCHD Innovation Fellow

Caoimhe is a Psychiatry Registrar and has just completed her Basic Specialist Training in Psychiatry. She has always had an interest in quality improvement projects and believes that small service enhancements can create lasting and meaningful impact.

During her time on the BST, she also undertook a yearlong Postgraduate Diploma in Service Design at NCAD, funded through a Spark bursary. This experience taught her the value of innovation and service design in

healthcare, with a focus on creating human centred, efficient and empathetic care experiences.

In her role as an NCHD Fellow, Caoimhe looks forward to supporting healthcare innovation through service design. Caoimhe believes this approach can help transform fragmented systems into more seamless, supportive journeys that improve patient outcomes as well as both patient and staff satisfaction.



Anna Marie Kiernan

National Nursing and Midwifery Innovation Fellow

Anna Marie is a Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Pain Medicine at the HSE Midwest Pain Excellence Centre. With 20 years clinical experience, she brings a passionate commitment to reimagining healthcare which benefits both service users and providers.

Anna Marie holds Postgraduate Diplomas in Healthcare Innovation and in Service Design. Her passion lies in sustainable, human-centred design, an ethos which guided her co-development of affordable extended reality tools aimed at empowering individuals to self-manage chronic pain.

As a co-founder of the Innovation in Health and Social Care Committee in the Midwest Region, Anna Marie is a strong advocate for the transformative power of collaboration, clinical insight, and creativity.

As a National Nursing Innovation Fellow, she is dedicated to supporting the continued growth of an innovative ecosystem which empowers frontline healthcare professionals.

Spark Ignite 2025

Spark Ignite 2025, delivered in partnership with Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI), offered a unique opportunity for Irish healthcare workers to develop innovative, commercially viable solutions to real-world healthcare challenges.

In April of this year, twenty healthcare innovators gathered at the Guinness Enterprise Centre for an intensive learning day with leading experts in innovation and design. Speakers included Dr. Mike Twomey, Senior Clinical Research Manager and Clinical Evaluation Lead at Health Innovation Hub Ireland, Ms. Claire McElvanna, HSE Spark National HSCP Innovation Fellow & Social Entrepreneur and Martin Ryan, Lecturer in Product Design at the National College of Art and Design.

Through a series of interactive workshops, participants explored the empathy-driven Value Proposition Canvas and learned

how to co-create solutions using practical product design principles.

After the training day, attendees had the chance to put their new skills into action by pitching their ideas to an expert panel and compete for the Spark Ignite awards for 2025. The quality and breadth of ideas this year were exceptional. Three outstanding projects were ultimately selected and we wish them every success on the next stage of their entrepreneurial journeys.

Spark Ignite 2025 Winners

Flowtube

*Federico Lo Giudice,
Advanced Nurse Practitioner*

Ultra Sound Cannulation

*Dr. Declan Sheppard,
Consultant Radiologist*

FOCUS Health

*Dr. Killian Dervan,
Cardiology Registrar*

Winning Projects 

Spark Impact 2025

This year marked our second ever Spark Impact funding call, inviting applications for innovation projects that were collaborative, scalable, and transferable to the national stage. We were blown away by the response, receiving 250 applications from healthcare workers eager to tackle some of today's most pressing healthcare challenges.

[Project Details](#)



In March, we hosted three days of live pitching events, where a panel of expert judges heard from shortlisted applicants across a wide range of areas including AI and automation, digital solutions, climate and sustainability, and cancer services to name a few. We look forward to supporting the successful applicants over the next 12 months as they begin implementing their innovation projects.



Spark Seed

The ever-popular Spark Seed is getting a makeover! This funding initiative, which offers up to €5,000 in seed funding for frontline innovation projects, will be back, better than ever, in Autumn 2025. Stay tuned to our website and social media channels for updates on its relaunch.

DOTFL

The Design on the Frontline (DOTFL) Student Scholarship is a national initiative by the HSE Spark Innovation Programme that empowers design students to collaborate with frontline healthcare professionals to solve real-world healthcare challenges.

Each DOTFL scholar receives a bursary to develop impactful, human-centred solutions.

Top 3 DOTFL Scholars of 2025

Lotus: Home Limb Rehabilitation
Amber O'Hagan

AdrenaPod
Conan Connaughton

Elithiya: A Softer IUD Experience
Isabelle Bentley Curran

[Project Details](#)





Design Thinking Workshops

Don't miss your chance to join our free, online Design Thinking Workshop - essential for anyone wishing to apply for funding initiatives through the Spark Programme.

Spark Network Day

On 25 February 2025, over 100 healthcare professionals gathered for the Spark Innovation Network Meeting.

The day featured real-world stories of human-centred design, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and local innovations - from pharmacy robotics to OT-led reablement.

Sessions also explored the role of data, AI, and sustainability in shaping care. The event closed with reflections on shared progress, highlighting that meaningful change grows from connection and collective vision.

This full-day, interactive workshop (via MS Teams) will help you master person-centred problem-solving and learn how to pitch your ideas effectively.

CPD points are available for attending one of these workshops.

Two dates remain for 2025:

10 September

12 November

Secure your place 



First Ever ANP/AMP Design Thinking Study Day

In partnership with the HSE Spark Innovation Programme, the ONMSD National Specialist and Advanced Practice Group hosted a study day for over 100 Candidate and Advanced Nurse and Midwife Practitioners, along with healthcare managers from across Ireland.

The day introduced participants to design thinking, a human-centred approach to solving complex healthcare challenges. Blending theory with hands-on activities, attendees learned to map patient journeys, identify pain points, and co-create solutions.

Design thinking aligns closely with nursing and midwifery values, emphasising empathy, deep listening, and patient-centred care. Participants explored practical tools to improve services, with real Irish healthcare examples bridging theory and practice.

For many, it was their first experience of design thinking. The day sparked enthusiasm for fresh approaches to problem-solving and leadership.

As one attendee shared:

“This gave me real tools and ideas to go back with fresh thinking, and I loved meeting other candidates too.”

ANPs and AMPs are ideally placed to lead innovation in a changing healthcare system. This study day marked an important step in embedding design thinking into clinical leadership.

Spark Annual Report 2024

Our 2024 annual report captures the breadth of work within the HSE Spark Programme and showcases just some of the amazing achievements of frontline innovators. Access the full report here.

Annual Report 

Read Listen Watch

Service Design and Service Thinking in Healthcare and Hospital Management

This insightful book brings together global perspectives on how service design and design thinking are being applied to improve healthcare delivery. With practical case studies and thoughtful frameworks, it explores how human-centred approaches can drive innovation in hospital and health system management. A valuable read for healthcare professionals seeking to embed innovation into everyday practice, it highlights how better-designed services can lead to better outcomes for patients, staff, and systems alike.

Available from the HSE Health Library.

Read Here 

AI in Healthcare Miniseries

In this three-part podcast miniseries from PMIxHIMSS, industry leaders share how AI is improving outcomes, streamlining operations and supporting clinicians in meaningful ways. Whether you are leading digital strategy or working directly with patients, these conversations offer timely insights into what it takes to implement AI responsibly and effectively.

Listen Here 

Building a Culture Where Innovation Thrives with Ben Bensaou

What if every employee had permission—and a process—to contribute game-changing ideas? In this episode of Build a Vibrant Culture podcast, Nicole Greer sits down with Ben Bensaou, professor, innovation expert, and author of Built to Innovate, to explore the systems, habits, and cultural practices that embed innovation into an organisation's DNA. Learn how small ideas can spark massive organisational transformation.

Watch Here 

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