Response to NHS Chief Executive’s Open Call for Evidence and Ideas

Respondent ID: 299

Organisation name: Abies Ltd

Type of response: Online
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Please choose the description below that best fits your organisation’s main role:

Private sector (med tech)

What can the NHS and NHS Commissioning Board learn from national and international best practice to accelerate the pace and scale of adoption of innovations throughout the NHS?

I would recommend reviewing my paper: Benson T "Why GPs use computers and hospital doctors do not Parts 1 and 2" BMJ 2002;325:1086-93, which examines some of the critical issues in relation to (a) incentives and (b) scalability in a somewhat anecdotal manner. In particular, the period 1984-1989 was crucial in GP computing, because it was a period when the DH had a policy that "it had no policy', which allowed innovation to bloom.

Also John Kotter’s book "Leading Change" HBS 1996 describes a simple 8-stage process to enhance the probability of success.

What specific actions do you think national NHS bodies, such as the NHS National Commissioning Board, need to take to encourage and stimulate the successful and rapid adoption and spread of innovations throughout the NHS?

In the area of Information Technology, there is a role for the centre in defining stringent interoperability standards, but little else.  IT people do not recognise just how heterogeneous health care is, which is the main reason why one size fits all inevitably fails.

The way that innovative products are procured is deeply flawed.  Existing EU procurement was designed around buying commodity products which both buyer and seller understood well.  By their very nature innovations are new and buyers cannot be familiar with them; also by its nature there are not likely to be many direct competitors.  This means that genuine innovations should be exempt from conventional procurement red-tape.

In IT in particular, conventional procurement processes have an extremely high failure rate.  MP Maria Eagle was addressing the Chief Executive of the NHS in th ePublic Accounts Committee about a succession of disastrous Health IT projects when she said: "If you saw someone walk into a brick wall, pick themselves up and walk into that same brick wall again, and pick themselves up and walk into the brick wall again, would the thought may be cross your mind that they might be
drunk or of unsound mind or would you perhaps conclude that they were incapable of avoiding brick walls?" This was before the NPfIT!

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<td><strong>Do you want to be kept in touch with the next steps in this process?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Do you want to be included in a wider community of interest?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>What specific actions do you think local NHS bodies, such as providers and Clinical Commissioning Groups, need to take to encourage and stimulate the successful and rapid adoption and spread of innovations throughout the NHS?</strong></td>
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