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

Respondent ID: 290

Organisation name: Foundation for Assistive Technology (FAST)

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Respondent ID:
290

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Please choose the description below that best fits your organisation’s main role:
Voluntary/charitable sector

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?

Reviewing the pace of innovation in the area of assistive technology over the past 10 years it is clear that there is a need for leadership organisations to support innovation, in order to make it happen. Such organisations do not usually come from within the NHS directly, the two organisations who have made the greatest impact on the adoption of innovative technologies in assistive technology have been the Technology Strategy Board (TSB) Assisted Living Innovation Platform (ALIP) and NHS Innovations London.

The ALIP programme, using substantial government funding, has undertaken an analysis of the barriers to adoption of innovative technologies and implemented a broad programme of R&D development, consortium building, economic and business modelling, social and behavioural studies and programmes to scale up services. The focus on the challenges facing this market area has been consisent and perceptive and has already yielded significant impact on this market area.

NHS Innovations London have approached the challenges using a different approach, but one that has also been effective, through working with high level champions in the NHS London Trusts, the organisation has provided support and expertise to help reward risk taking and to implement a more rigorous approach to innovation support.

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?

The NHS and Sector Skills Councils need to put in place the human resources infrastructure, the mapping of national knowledge and competence frameworks, to support the adoption of innovative assistive technologies, to support growth opportunities and new enterprise and reward excellence. Support from bodies such as the TSB ALIP has focused on the development of hardware, on interoperability challenges and on market adoption barriers. However the development of national level workforce, training and education programmes are outside the
scope and remit of such organisations. The mapping of national occupational standards underpins
the provision of sustainable educational and training programmes. Over the past 10 years there
have been several attempts to provide educational courses at a range of levels but this is not
sustainable without an agreed workforce and career pathway. This is absolutely the remit of the
NHS and the Sector Skills Councils. Without such support, the lack of a trained and confident
workforce is providing a barrier to growth. FAST is currently being approached by major
companies who wish to enter the assistive technology market but who are hesitating due to the
lack of clarity on the required training and competence required from the workforce, which leaves
them with costs and risks which are barriers to market entry.

Do you have any further comments about accelerating the adoption and spread of innovation in
healthcare?

We would like to be able to follow up interesting comments and case studies. Can we contact
you for this purpose?

Yes

Do you want to be kept in touch with the next steps in this process?

Yes

Do you want to be included in a wider community of interest?

Yes

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?