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

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NHS Chief Executive’s Review of Innovation

Response from Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, August 2011

Ideas for actions at a national level in the NHS

1. Encourage innovation through regulation and ‘doing the right thing, for the right reasons’. This means being clear about the big priorities for the NHS each year, being clear about why these are priorities, setting clear goals based on these priorities and then empowering local NHS commissioners and providers to come up with innovative ways to achieve these.

2. Recognition that one size does not fit all. Encourage local commissioners and providers to select proven innovations that would have the most benefit in their healthcare economy. Commissioners can implement these with providers through contracting processes, e.g. best practice tariffs.

3. Develop a central innovation resource as part of the NHS Commissioning board that is proactive in scanning for innovations, particularly those that have widespread benefit and are easily replicable. Use an evidence based assessment tool / process to assess costs, benefits and risks of innovations and share this widely, perhaps via regional innovation networks/resources as in point 3 above.

4. Clear steer for the NHS as a whole that innovation is not just developing devices; innovation is anything new that delivers a benefit, be it a new process, a new product, a new service, a new ‘market’ share, a new way of communicating, etc. We need to encourage NHS organisations to think more broadly about innovation.

5. When we come up against an NHS wide problem, gather teams of experts and task them with bringing in learning from other sectors and countries. Also think of innovative ways to generate creative ideas from NHS staff.

6. Create kudos for genuinely innovative NHS organisations which in turn could drive innovation through creating competition for recognition.

Ideas for actions at a local level in the NHS

1. Easy access to good quality data and analysis to demonstrate the business case for innovations within organisations. This analysis is essential when promoting the benefits to other organisations.

2. Reward and recognition for innovators at whatever level that they are innovating and whatever level of an organisation that they work at.

3. Leaders should create a culture of learning from success and failure.

4. Commissioners should set clear goals for innovation for a healthcare economy, and then incentivise or mandate organisations to come forward with ideas and proven innovations to deliver these goals through contractual mechanisms, e.g. CQUINS.

5. Leaders within organisations to set clear goals and priorities for innovation, then provide support, encouragement and resources for staff to come up with innovative solutions that
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deliver these goals. For the interests of innovation, this means moving away from setting specific targets and instead describing an overall goal.

6. Open enthusiastic leadership of innovation, where individuals and teams are encouraged to think differently, try things out and develop networks to bring in new knowledge.

7. Inspirational leaders who inspire staff to think in new and different ways for the purpose of achieving a clear vision and direction.

8. Dedicated resource and expertise to support and encourage innovation, both within organisations and at a regional level. This resource could have a dedicated budget and access to funding mechanisms which can be bid for by innovators. The bidding process must not be overly bureaucratic and lengthy, however successful bidders must then be held to account for how they use this money.

9. Training and development for staff on thinking creatively and innovatively about how they work and what they do. Staff need skills and tools to innovate.

10. Creating local forums for innovation, perhaps based around particular areas e.g. IM&T. Also, putting innovation as a standing agenda item on key local meetings.

11. Developing buddying and mentoring schemes for individuals, teams and organisations to encourage learning and sharing based around particular goals or priorities that require innovative solutions.

12. Organisations should more routinely send groups of staff on fact finding and learning missions to other NHS organisations and other sectors to bring in new knowledge to the organisation related to key priorities.

Ideas for actions by NHS partners

1. NHS managers frequently receive emails and cold calls from private companies selling services and products which they claim have benefits for the NHS. Often these companies are looking for investment and free development resource in the form of NHS staff time to help them develop their product, for their own financial gain. Commercial companies need to consider their approach more carefully and if they are really promoting an innovation that has proven benefits, they need to do this via the local or national innovation networks mentioned previously rather than using conventional sales tactics. The NHS needs to become much more savvy at contracting when agreeing to support companies with testing and developing their products.

2. NHS partners need to develop relationships with NHS regional innovation expertise, resources and networks and not just individual organisations.

3. Academia has a key role to play in encouraging innovative thinking and developing innovation skills through training programmes.

4. NHS partners should be represented at regional and national innovation groups.
General Point

Innovations must have a clear and robust business case before they can be adopted on a larger scale.

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