



Disruptive thinking to achieve sustainable health and care in Wales

This report represents formal advice from the Bevan Commission to the Minister for Health and Social Care. It is part of a wider programme of work being undertaken by the Bevan Commission.

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Background

The Bevan Commission worked with the Big Innovation Centre (BIC) to explore how to achieve more sustainable health and care in Wales through stronger innovation. The BIC provides an open innovation hub bringing together businesses, public agents and universities, to develop innovation ecosystems using open innovation concepts to co-create tangible solutions.

This report details the outputs of the '**Disruptive thinking to achieve sustainable health and care in Wales**' meeting in May 2015 where a range of representatives discussed disruptive thinking and sustainability of health and care in Wales. It outlines key actions to challenge current thinking and practice to help drive the changes needed.

Introduction

It is evident that resources currently in place are not adequate or being used in the most effective way to meet current or expected future increased demands upon the NHS in Wales. The NHS in Wales is unsustainable and struggling with the pace of change and increasing demand for services.

Demand for healthcare services is increasing globally, primarily due to population ageing, increased prevalence of chronic and complex health conditions and growing patient expectation. Although life expectancy in many countries is rising, an ageing population presents health systems with the challenge of balancing increasing demand with reduced expenditure. The NHS in Wales is not alone in needing to address these challenges whilst providing consistently high quality care in a time of diminishing resource.

Change is needed - we must consider radical options and different approaches to achieve sustainable health and care in Wales. The situation cannot continue in its present form. This thinking and the transformation needed is urgent to ensure that we can manage and meet both current and future demands and improving the quality and safety of services for patients. To achieve this innovation needs to become a core capability of NHS Wales, requiring more disruptive thinking to achieve the substantial and differentiated change needed.

Health priorities; a continually changing environment

Health priorities have changed over the last 100 years. In the early 20th century, the leading causes of death were infectious diseases such as influenza, tuberculosis and diphtheria (Jones *et al*, 2012). As a result of technological advances, in 2015, leading causes of death are heart disease and dementia, with chronic conditions becoming increasingly prevalent (Office for National Statistics, 2015).

The way people interact with each other and service providers is constantly evolving with the advent of new technology (Ham *et al*, 2012). Heart rate and hypertension devices are easily available to buy and use and telemedicine is transforming the way that some patients can access health professionals.

Change needs to be embraced and future needs and expectations predicted and responded to in advance, much in line with other industries. Technology has already completely transformed the relationship between the consumer and provider in these sectors and the potential for health and care to learn from some of these approaches must be explored.

We must move beyond just treating people and managing those with chronic conditions and focus on how we might make the lives of people healthier, focusing on prevention, protection and early intervention. To achieve this we will need to use innovation and collective leadership to engage the support of the public and of professionals in owning the need for change and supporting their own health and wellbeing, and that of others.

Wales; a leader in health innovation

Wales has the potential to become a **leading innovator in health and well being**. There are already many examples of innovation in Wales across all sectors and industries (Appendix 1).

The health and life sciences sector is currently undergoing growth and expansion; we are seeing considerable investment in the biotech and life sciences industries in Wales, the results of which will have significant benefit to the population in terms of education, skills development, health and care. We should consider all forms of innovation, to include; service innovation, business model/ system and human resources innovation, as well as more 'traditional' product innovation.

Creating an environment in which innovation can be fostered and supported is important. Open innovation, where we co-produce new ideas and ways of working together with the public, professionals, government, industry and universities will allow us to create an ecosystem that will support high impact, sustainable change across Wales. **The Bevan Academy (Box 1) for Leadership and Innovation** will provide a unique opportunity to foster and develop this and will need to be supported to ensure this happens.

Box 1: The Bevan Academy for Leadership and Innovation – overview

The Bevan Academy for Leadership and Innovation in health will provide a dynamic learning and development environment and ecosystem supporting inspirational leadership, innovative ideas and new ways of working. It will be an open innovation hub, where people, professionals and organisations can come together to think through, co-create and experiment in finding Prudent solutions in a non-competitive environment.

The Academy will build upon core foundations of research, innovation, teaching and skills development to help inspire people, professionals and the public, to work together to find better solutions together, creating a sustainable, prudent and vibrant NHS in Wales.

Key considerations for sustainable innovation

- **Develop and expand partnership working with industry and the public.** The Bevan Commission recognises the need for stronger partnership working and innovation with industry and the public on health. Greater collaboration is needed to help find the best, responsive solutions at pace and scale
- **Create an environment to support sustainable innovation through the *Bevan Academy for Leadership and Innovation in health*.** This will provide a dynamic environment for health professionals, industry and the public to find innovative solutions together and learning from each other. It will help create a national framework for health innovation, avoid duplication and make use of all resources available across Wales

- **Make more of the innovation that we already have through sharing best practice.** There are many examples of innovation in health and care, however these are often acting in silo's, and are not widely adopted. We must embrace and support an 'Adopt or Justify' culture where ideas and new ways of working are widely shared and adopted. Engagement in the process is important for an innovation to be more successful and therefore sharing the approach is often as important as the solution.
- **Design innovative approaches to adopting good practice.** Often innovation is focused on developing something new, such as a service or product. One of the barriers to successful innovation is working in silos, where ideas from other areas are not considered and best practice is not shared. We need to design innovative approaches to sharing and adopting good practice.
- **Be audacious – the NHS belongs to the people.** We must work with the public to understand their experiences and develop innovative solutions. There is a role for the public to take ownership and engage with the NHS and supporting it by developing sustainable change solutions. The Bevan Commission Innovators outlines how the public, professionals and academics are engaged in developing and delivering innovation.
- **Communicate in the same language as the public to ensure participation and gain trust and commitment.** Messages around innovation, change and health improvement must resonate with the audience. This requires segmenting and targeting audiences with tailored messages, utilising the language and channels that are most understood and used by that target group. Health literacy is fundamental to improving health and well being.
- **Define what we really mean by health, co-creating this definition with the public.** There are multiple definitions of health that can change overtime and vary between individuals within different cultures and life stages. As more people survive into older age, the disease burden changes accordingly and health or well- being may more accurately be described as the ability to cope or exist with disease, rather than the traditional view of it being the absence of disease or infirmity. (WHO 1948). Greater clarity of how health is defined is needed within a wider social model for health involving and empowering people to take greater control over and managing their lives and those of others around them.
- **Involve the public in the funding debate and decision making.** This requires more than consultation but real engagement in decision making and inviting the public to contribute in a variety of ways such as suggesting their own ideas about how to apply a prudent approach to health. The Bevan Commission are currently working with the Institute of Welsh Affairs to understand how crowdsourcing and the use of digital technology might be a useful tool for public decision making.
- **Innovation is not top down, it must be embedded at all levels across organisations.** The Bevan Commission Innovators recognises this and therefore invites NHS employees at all levels of the organisation to engage, suggest and developing ideas for change. Innovation will not be achieved top down, however there should be support and encouragement from health boards and senior managers to help make this happen. Each Bevan Innovator will have a health board sponsor to help overcome barriers and deliver the change. Health Boards and Trusts will need to find ways to embed innovation across their organisations making it easy for people to get involved and put new suggestions forward.
- **Effectively use current data available and meet data gaps.** Identifying which data sources are most useful should help them to be used to best effect to influence service design, delivery,

monitoring and review. Using data to validate decommissioning services or interventions that are no longer meeting need is consistent with a prudent approach to health.

Disruptive thinking; ideas for change

Attendees were invited to build upon the key considerations with more specific examples and disruptive ideas would support sustainable prudent health and care in Wales, particularly addressing those with the greatest health needs. The following ideas emerged:

- **Use of digital technology and mobile devices:** Mobile phones are an effective way of engaging the public – how might we make best use of this? Could we buy phones and give them out? Who could we give them to and how could we ensure they were using them for the means intended? What apps could we use or develop to support the public? How might we build on what the public and industry are already developing and using?
- **Developing partnerships with other industries:** Build relationships with industries such as supermarkets that already collect data about shopper behaviour. How might we best utilise this data to target health messages? Can we develop focused campaigns with supermarkets or other suppliers such as Amazon, addressing broader health issues than simply food and nutrition? Supermarkets are visited by all demographics; can we use these areas as places to engage the public? Industry has a social responsibility, how might we work together?
- **Learn from others:** Welsh Water is unique in its sector in that it is a company limited by guarantee. The company has bondholders rather than shareholders and is a not for profit organisation. How might NHS Wales learn from this?
- **Incentives for innovation:** Give NHS employees £100 that they can then invest in a project for innovation. They would need £3000 to start a project so need to bring together 30 individuals and get their commitment and support. Create a social movement for change with staff and the public rewarding and recognising success
- **Incentives / disincentives for the public:** Charging a fee for those who do not attend their appointments and other forms of incentives or disincentives should be considered. We should learn from the strategies used by other industries such as insurance companies or retail loyalty card schemes.
- **Overcoming financial barriers:** Financial barriers can prevent an innovative project with perceived tangible benefit from being initiated. Crowd funding or social enterprises could be utilised to engage the public and overcome some funding barriers and help engage people.
- **Information and Education:** How can we develop long-term commitment to sustainable health education starting in the early years? Health education should be integrated throughout the life course in formal and informal settings, with incentives, reward and recognition of the need for better health literacy
- **Marketing health and well being:** learn from and work with major industries who invest huge resources into marketing. How might we learn from them and do this better?
- **Listen to our users:** Industry across the board places great emphasis on customer views and feedback to develop product, improve services and generally to improve upon their competitors. What might the NHS be able to learn from this and apply to the NHS?

Future Innovation Goals

Five bold **and audacious goals** that Wales could adopt in its aspirations for future health and care in Wales were identified:

1. **Wales as a global health cluster**, the health equivalent of Silicon Valley – how can we build Wales to be an expert hub for health care, life sciences and biotech industry?
2. **Wales as a global catalyst for innovation** in health and care and entrepreneurship – how can we develop infrastructure and recruit the best resource and talent?
3. **Wales as a base for world leading organisations** – how can we support and invest in the top 25 public and private healthcare organisations to really drive innovation and change in the industry in Wales?
4. **Wales as a leader of big data exploration** – making sense of the data we collect to lead health innovation.
5. **Wales as a population of digital health citizens** – where health ICT is as important commodity as water or energy.

To achieve sustainability in Wales, developments such as the proposed Bevan Academy should be supported to provide an innovation ecosystem where platforms, thought leadership and innovation promotion are implicit. **Wales can become a world leader of health and care innovation.**

Conclusions

Innovation is a powerful tool to help achieve sustainable health and care in Wales. **We need to do different things, in a different way, to achieve different results. It requires us to think differently, act differently and engage with others differently.**

Making this happen is important. Welsh Health Boards and Trusts must engage and support this in practice, embedding it as a part of their organisational culture, using the assets within their workforce and patients, encouraging everyone to find better solutions, new ways of working and ways to make ideas happen in practice.

We should also make sure that where we have already identified innovation, we share and adopt at scale and pace accordingly, avoiding the need to reinvent the wheel and duplicate effort between ourselves. Ideas for change now need to be translated into action. The Bevan Academy will help to provide the ecosystem and hub to enable this to happen, trying out and testing new ideas, sharing ideas and expertise across Wales, bringing together a range of interested parties.

An open innovation approach, utilising shared expertise and assets across Wales to embed innovation will need to become standard practice. Wales has the potential to make this approach work in practice and ***we should be not afraid of failing - but afraid of not trying at all.***

References

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Appendix 1: Examples of Innovation in Wales

Case study 1 Swansea – the first dementia friendly city

Swansea is the first city in Wales to be recognised by the Alzheimer’s Society as a dementia friendly city, whereby there is now better education and awareness of the disease, diagnosis and personalised integrated care and adapted physical environments that are easier to navigate.

Led by the Swansea Dementia Support Community a community ecosystem has been built, engaging individuals, the third sector and local businesses, which is able to collaborate to develop innovative services and initiatives to improve inclusion and quality of life for people with dementia.

Case study 2: Time banking

Time banking is the process by which a period of volunteering is rewarded by a time credit that can then be spent on activities and opportunities at local and national levels. Its popularity in Wales has increased dramatically and as a result there has been a shift towards people becoming active citizens for change.

It relies on partnership working between third sector, public organisations and communities, to maximise engagement, involvement and empowerment of individuals, groups and communities.

Case study 3 Plastic bag policy

Reducing the ecological footprint is a key priority for all governments to increase sustainability. In 2010 the Welsh Government asked the public for their innovative ideas and they came up with the suggestion of charging to help reduce the numbers of plastic bags. In 2009, 350 million supermarket carrier bags were used in Wales, equating to 273 bags per household. Following extensive consultation with the public, a 5p minimum charge was placed on all single use carrier bags, to reduce littering, wastage and cut the global footprint.

Through such innovation widespread change in habit and behaviour was achieved by working towards a shared community-led vision and engaging with shop owners and businesses. Since the introduction, there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of bags being used, suggesting that the people are now in the habit of reusing their bags when shopping. Some retailers are using the money raised from charging for single use bags to support local initiatives, such as the Save the Children scheme Families and Schools Together (FAST). An evaluation of the initiative has shown that the policy is popular within the population, with 70% in 2012 supporting the charge.