

BOOSTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEERING IN HEALTH

The NHS is facing huge challenges. The great improvements in life expectancy in recent decades present us with fundamental questions about the way we organise health and care services. An estimated one in four people live with a long-term condition, and loneliness and social isolation are increasingly common problems for older people. Public service delivery models have yet to adapt to the pressing need for care and support options beyond institutional settings and traditional approaches.

Part of the answer must be to make better use of community resources and get greater levels of co-production in services. This will pave the way for the design of a greater range of options, offering choice, flexibility and the chance to respond to complex needs in a more sophisticated and person-centred way.

1. Set up a Crick Institute for people powered health.

- The government has signalled its commitment to life sciences research with the cutting-edge Francis Crick Institute. We should make the same commitment to the social determinants of health: patient self-management and peer support, volunteering, family involvement and environmental and behavioural influences.
- The government should lead the creation of an equivalent to the Crick Institute – the Institute for People Powered Health – using seed-funding to launch a partnership of academic, charitable and government institutions undertaking ground-breaking research and development into community participation in health and care pathways. The institute should support design of evidence-based, effective care pathways focused on prevention and which have a significant role for community engagement.

2. Launch People for Health – a national volunteering programme for the NHS.

- To meet the NHS' challenges, we need a national body of volunteers in health services, empowered to make real impact. This should offer rewarding and varied roles for volunteers and structured skills development opportunities.
- The building blocks for such a programme are already in place – from hospital volunteering schemes, such as King's College Hospital Volunteers, to the St. John Ambulance and Community First Responder schemes. A national programme would bring these under a common umbrella and develop a range of other high-impact opportunities for volunteering – such as reserve support for services in times of high need and a Health Corps trained in first aid and emergency response. They could be complemented with digital technologies, such as the Good SAM app that links registered first aiders with people who

need emergency help. In this way, we can create a health volunteer force that reflects the diversity of the communities the NHS serves.

- The programme should ensure that it is sensitive to what motivates people to volunteer in health – often a passion to support local people and areas.
- 3. Launch a Million Peer Initiative to kick-start a pledge to give everyone with a long-term health condition access to peer support.**
- A £40 million investment should be made over the next three years in a Million Peer Initiative, so that one million people each year can participate in peer support, and to strengthen the evidence for this approach.
 - A new suite of digital peer resources should be created to embed these support networks online.
- 4. Create a Digital Health Innovation Fund to find new technologies that support carers and the cared for.**
- Digital technologies offer clear opportunities for innovations that match people looking for support with those willing to provide it. This could range from low level help such as doing shopping through to providing respite care to give a main carer a break, or creating an Emergency Care Bank to provide help in times of crisis.
 - The Government should lead a programme to find ways of using digital technologies to support carers and the

cared for. This could be a grant fund to support initial innovations, with the opportunity for promising models to be piloted in the test-bed sites proposed by the NHS. This fund could form part of the work programme of the new Institute for People Powered Health.

5. Establish a fund to help patient associations collect and harness patients' insights and experiences.

- Patient associations play a vital role in facilitating peer support and disseminating information to patients and their families and carers. There is scope for patient associations to take this work further by leveraging the experiences and insights of their members to build a body of collective intelligence, in the same way that online platform Patients Like Me allows patients to rate the effectiveness of medications and the ease of adhering to their treatment regimens.
- A fund would stimulate innovation in this area by giving patient associations the opportunity to bid for grants and non-financial support (for example, access to developers and design expertise) to build collective intelligence. This could include mining and making use of data already captured or building new platforms, apps and tools. This fund could form part of the work programme of the new Institute for People Powered Health and should appeal both to large patient associations and smaller organisations with more limited resources.