

# Better health and health care for the UK

Our strategic plan





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# The Health Foundation

is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK.

# About us

Our aim is a healthier population, supported by high quality health care that can be equitably accessed. We learn what works to make people's lives healthier and improve the health care system. From giving grants to those working at the front line to carrying out research and policy analysis, we shine a light on how to make successful change happen.

We make links between the knowledge we gain from working with those delivering health and health care and our research and analysis. Our aspiration is to create a virtuous circle, using what we know works on the ground to inform effective policymaking and vice versa.

We believe good health and health care are key to a flourishing society. Through sharing what we learn, collaborating with others and building people's skills and knowledge, we aim to make a difference and contribute to a healthier population.

# Challenging times

The many challenges facing the health of the population – and health care – in the UK have been well documented. The population is growing and more people are at risk of ill health due to factors such as obesity, lack of exercise, poverty and ageing. New treatments and technologies allow better quality care but can add to costs.

This puts extra pressure on health care services at a time when the NHS is receiving on average 1.3% above inflation growth in funding per annum compared to the long run average of 3.7%. There is little sign that growth rates will return to higher levels for at least another five years.

It is generally agreed that current approaches used to improve population health are not stemming the tide of avoidable ill health. Furthermore, current models of health care are not fit for the future or financially sustainable. Significant changes are needed if the NHS is to manage within the resources likely to be available in the coming years. These changes include driving out waste in existing care, accelerating new models of care, while simultaneously developing preventive care and initiatives to improve population health.

A key task is to work out what initiatives, and in what combination, are most likely to help accelerate progress towards a higher quality and sustainable health system – and how progress can be more clearly monitored.

# How we see our role

The Health Foundation is well placed to help meet this challenge. We have invested more than £120m over the last 15 years to help the NHS improve the quality of care for the public. We can draw on what we have learned in quality improvement, person-centred care and safety in the NHS, as well as our developing work in NHS reform and finances, linking what we know works on the ground to national policymaking.

As the second largest endowed foundation in the UK focusing on health, we spend around £30m per year on improving health and health care. Our foundation status gives us the freedom to be independent and provide constructive challenge and fresh thinking, without needing to work to a political or business timetable.

Until recently our activities mainly centred on specific aspects of quality, in particular safety and person-centred care. This work has been primarily oriented to help people delivering care at the front line – through grants to clinical teams to make improvements, fellowships for individuals to develop quality improvement and leadership skills, and research and support for evaluation of quality improvement initiatives.

In 2014 we expanded our remit to cover additional dimensions of quality, including effectiveness, efficiency and access. We also established teams in policy, economics and data analytics to develop our work on national policy relating to the quality of care.

From 2015 we are expanding our scope beyond health care to exploring population health, with a view to developing programmes of work and grants in this area. These developments will help us make a fuller contribution to the challenges ahead.

### **A fresh direction: our plans for 2015–18**

Our overarching mission is broad – we want to turn into reality ideas that improve the health and health care of people living in the UK.

Over the next three years we want:

- to improve health service delivery
- to make health policymaking more effective
- people in the UK to live healthier lives.

To meet each of these aims we plan to:

- test innovations and spread what works
- build skills and knowledge
- develop and share evidence on what works and why.

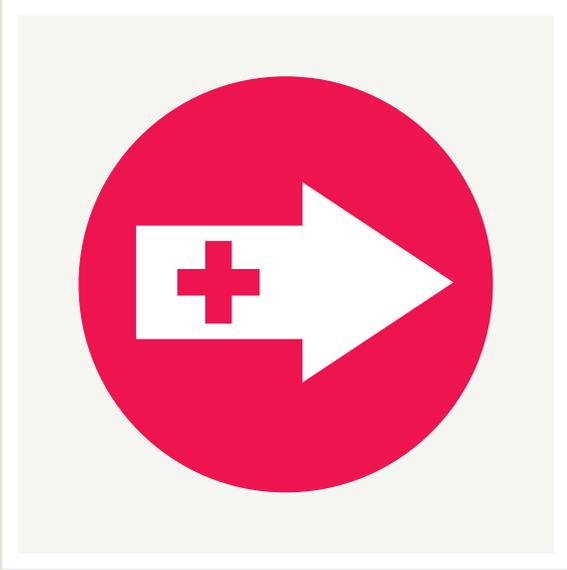
In doing so we will:

- collaborate and partner with other groups
- cultivate key audiences to help promote understanding of the issues and what might be an effective way forward.

“Over the next three years we will work towards better health and health care for the UK. We are expanding our work to improve health service delivery, the quality of policymaking in health and are scoping our role to help people in the UK become healthier.”

**Dr Jennifer Dixon**

Chief Executive



# We want to improve health service delivery

## How will we do it?

### **Test innovations and spread what works**

To make progress, especially in a severely resource constrained environment, it will be important for people working in health care to have the space to design and test new innovations.

Our biggest investment will continue to be through our improvement programmes. Through these programmes we give grants and practical support to front-line teams to help them test and develop innovations, and spread improvements in health care.

We have a rolling series of ‘open call’ grant programmes that encourage and support good ideas coming from the health system at different stages of their development. These cover:

- testing small scale innovations
- testing successful innovations at a larger scale
- spreading what works.

We also have regular ‘directed call’ grant programmes on specific themes such as improving safety, making care more person-centred and improving the flow of patients through the health care system. These programmes are likely to be expanded to cover other important aspects of quality such as effectiveness, efficiency and access.

“Over the next three years, we will continue to support the testing, evaluation and spread of ideas to improve health care. And to invest in the people, organisations and networks that can turn those ideas into reality.”

**Will Warbuton**

Director of Improvement

## **Build skills and knowledge**

We will be working to develop and support leaders across the UK to improve the quality of care. In particular we will be developing leaders to use quality improvement techniques at the front line. This means building skills and knowledge about how to implement quality improvement projects and measure what works. It also involves helping people to develop the necessary leadership and managerial skills.

- **Improve NHS training:** We'll be working with partners such as Health Education England and the royal colleges to include quality improvement skills in the formal training of clinicians and managers.
- **Develop fellowships:** We will develop our fellowship programmes, in particular 'Generation Q' and continue to support our Health Foundation alumni.

We will also be developing Q, an initiative led by the Health Foundation and supported by NHS England, connecting people skilled in improvement across the UK.

- **Provide advice and support:** We will support all kinds of NHS provider organisations to help them develop a culture of improvement.
- **Support networks:** We will support regional and national networks focusing on improvement, such as the UK Improvement Alliance and academic health science networks.

## **Develop and share evidence on what works and why**

Our focus over the next three years will be to develop evaluation techniques that clearly demonstrate which improvements are most effective in different settings, and why.

- **Be an expert centre for evaluation:** We are developing our expertise in real time evaluation of interventions to improve care and health, developing and testing methodologies for evaluation and supporting others to evaluate their work better.
- **Provide advice and guidance:** We will work with partners to give clear guidance on what are good evaluation methods for different interventions, for example emerging new models of care and initiatives to promote person-centred care and improve safety.
- **Share good practice:** We will share and spread knowledge and evidence through a range of means including online resources, regular events, our networks, and our continued investment in the journal *BMJ Quality and Safety*.
- **Invest in improvement research:** We will continue to support improvement research, fellowships and PhDs in order to build expertise in evaluating quality improvement. We are also investigating setting up a new improvement research institute.

“We will continue to invest in improvement research, developing its concepts and sharing insights to make patients’ lives better.”

**Nick Barber**

Director of Research

“By 2018 we will be an expert centre for evaluation of interventions to improve care and health. We will be developing the theory and practice of evaluation, supporting in particular the evaluation of complex interventions to improve quality.”

**Adam Steventon**

Director of Data Analytics



# We want to make health policymaking more effective

What is a coherent and effective set of reform strategies? How can national policy help health care providers achieve better quality of care and productivity? What is the impact of competition? How do regulation or payment incentives promote quality? How can new models of care be effectively encouraged? How can policy encourage more effective population health?

These are just a few of the big questions we will work on to help health policymaking in the UK become more effective.

## How will we do it?

### Develop and share evidence on what works and why

We want to develop the arguments and evidence needed to support better policymaking in key areas of health and social care.

- **Understand the impact of policy reforms:** We will carry out and commission work that helps to build knowledge about the impact of reforms on the quality of health care across the UK. We will also be looking at how coherent overall policy is to achieve the main objectives, such as improving quality and productivity, and accelerating new models of care.
- **Track and compare progress:** To date, our public policy work has primarily focused on England. However, over the coming years we will extend our focus to the other countries of the UK, tracking and comparing health, quality of care, finances and the funding and productivity gap.

- **Fund wider research:** We will fund external research into health care topics such as: system efficiency, value for money, trends in quality, financing of NHS-funded care and key health care reforms in the UK and internationally. In time we will fund research into effective means to improve population health.
- **Monitor quality:** The quality of health and care has been a long-standing focus for the Health Foundation. We will continue to monitor this, for example through QualityWatch, a joint programme with the Nuffield Trust that tracks broad measures to provide independent scrutiny into how the quality of health and social care is changing over time.

### **Test innovations and spread what works**

We will be assessing the extent to which we will invest in testing policy innovations in the NHS such as payment reform, regulatory reform and changes to commissioning or local oversight.

### **Build skills and knowledge**

We want to build the skills needed in the UK to conduct the detailed policy analysis needed to design, model the potential or measure the actual impact of health care policies. We plan to invest in this area, and will carry out preparatory work to assess where we could make the most impact.

“Over the next three years we’ll be looking at the themes at the heart of the policy debate, such as quality and money, system analysis, implementing change and new models of care.”

**Richard Taunt**  
Director of Policy

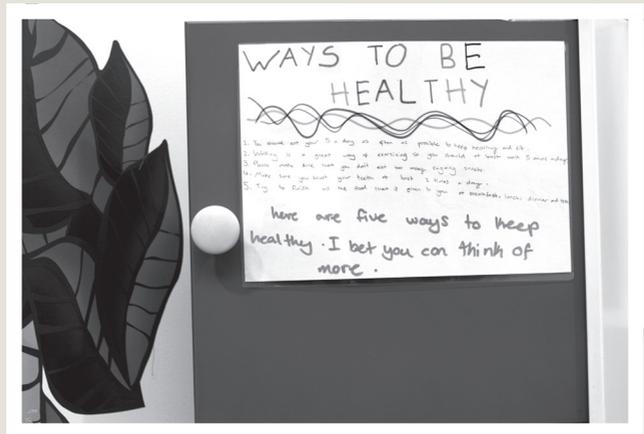
“Meeting the efficiency and funding challenge is one of the key issues for the NHS. We have a team in place to deepen our understanding of the health funding challenge and will be investing in new research with academic partners.”

**Anita Charlesworth**  
Chief Economist

“We will learn from others to develop a portfolio of activities able to make a distinctive impact on the health of people living in the UK.”

**Jo Bibby**

Director of Strategy and Innovation



# We want people in the UK to live healthier lives

For too long, discussions about health have effectively been discussions about health care services. There is now a broad consensus that the things which improve our health mainly sit outside of health services. With preventable illness widespread and inequalities in health between different population groups deep rooted, we will be looking afresh at the issues and developing a coherent agenda for action.

## **How we will do this?**

We are extending our work to look more broadly at the wider determinants of health, the factors that shape where we live, learn, work and play. We want to influence how decision makers think about the health of people living in the UK and what they can do to support healthier lives. We will identify and support evidence-based approaches that can help people to maintain good health and prevent illness.

As this is a new area for us, the first task will be to scope our future work in order to put together a portfolio of activities for 2016 and beyond.

Initially we will be looking at best practice and evidence from the UK and abroad, as well as talking to key players in this area. We want to identify where we can best invest and act to achieve the greatest impact. Given the breadth of the challenge, we will be looking to work in partnership with others where we feel that our collective knowledge and expertise can be combined to greatest effect.

Following our scoping and engagement work we will be kicking off our work in this area with a portfolio of activities up and running by 2018.

“In 2016 we are examining how best we can help the UK population become healthier. Over the long term our aim is to make a real and lasting contribution in this area.”

**Dr Jennifer Dixon**

Chief Executive



# Find out more

For all the latest news and developments from the Health Foundation:

- subscribe to our email newsletter at [health.org.uk/newsletter](http://health.org.uk/newsletter)
- register for email alerts to be notified about our latest work at [health.org.uk/updates](http://health.org.uk/updates)
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