

THE YOUNG FOUNDATION AND HEALTH

Stimulating and supporting innovation within your organisation & system

March 2013

About The Young Foundation

We are The Young Foundation and we are determined to make positive social change happen. We pioneered the field of social innovation with The Open University, Language Line and Care4Care. We work closely with individuals, communities and partners building relationships to ensure that our thinking does something, our actions matter and the changes we make together will continue to grow.

youngfoundation.org

Health at The Young Foundation

We believe the challenges facing the health and care systems require imaginative and radical action.

At the Young Foundation we work with and across the NHS and social care to help create, promote and implement new ideas. We have worked with hundreds of innovation projects and enterprises within and around the NHS. We support them not only to succeed in their immediate goals, but to spread and diffuse their insights widely through the system, supporting the spread of innovation at pace and scale.

We broker new partnerships and relationships, believing the power of communities and broader civil society has huge potential to improve outcomes. Innovators are an undervalued resource within the NHS but, with proper support, we know they can make real change happen.

With a long history of supporting successful and pioneering innovation, the Young Foundation also shapes the future through publishing research and policy papers that prompt new thinking and action on issues such as loneliness, resilience, patient empowerment and the role of communities.

With a network of expert staff and associates across the UK, we can help you with any aspect of innovation in health and social care – from developing a particular idea, to building an innovation culture with your own organisation, to connecting you with people, expertise and innovations that can transform the way you work.



Introduction

The bedrock of the NHS is currently shifting. The future stage has been set by huge structural changes, a need for massive savings, the necessity of working across partnerships and sectors, all combined with a renewed drive to truly put patients at the heart of our culture.

Collectively, it means we need to find better ways of doing things, which is exactly what innovation is about. Innovation enables us to do things more cheaply, more efficiently, in ways that produce better outcomes and that patients prefer.

It is not just about coming up with new ideas, or the latest technology. Innovation is about transforming the way we work, do business and provide care, bringing clinicians together with patients, communities and technology to improve, and save, lives.

So how do leaders create a culture of innovation? The aspiration of innovation is frequently quoted in annual reports and strategy documents, yet making it a reality is less straightforward.

At The Young Foundation we have been helping NHS leaders to stimulate and support innovation and have worked with hundreds of projects, and supported commissioners, providers and SHAs. We have summarised what we believe to be key at achieving this goal.

Setting direction

- How can innovation be integrated into business and strategic planning?
- What are your innovation goals, and are they clearly communicated to the organisation and system?
- How do people know that innovation is important and are they given the time, tools and resources to innovate?
- How can you develop your culture, in terms of risk and reward, to support innovation?

When leaders look for innovative ideas from their organisations, so often they find that the response does not match their aspirations and the ideas put forward are far from innovative. An important first step in encouraging a culture of innovation is clearly communicating what you are looking for: four or five goals expressed as outcomes that leave the 'how' or the means to the creativity of the innovator. It also helps to define what you mean by innovation. We have found that people can get confused between innovation and incremental improvement, clinical and service innovation; defining what you want and all the things that can and should be included will help.

In setting direction, testing out your culture is also important: what does your staff survey tell you about whether staff feel able to offer ideas, take risks, or rate the effectiveness of communication with and from leaders? What more can you do to foster a culture which rewards innovation, acknowledging the efforts of those who try and fail, as well as those that succeed?

Horizon scanning

- What promising projects and innovations are happening elsewhere?

- Who is responsible for searching for and adapting projects that could be useful?
- When funding innovation projects do you balance grass roots new ideas with adapting from elsewhere?

We worked with all ten Strategic Health Authorities supporting the Regional Innovation Funds from 2010-2012, advising hundreds of ground-breaking projects. What is clear is that there is not a shortage of great ideas on the ground, nor enthusiasm to make them happen. More difficult is finding out about what is happening elsewhere and what is ready to spread and adapt.

If you are funding innovation within your organisation you will need a process to find out what else is out there, but with the current changes within the system this may be time consuming, frustrating and difficult. Where should you look?

We put together a list of potential high impact innovations for a PCT cluster last year. We found a range of sources useful and all the original Regional Innovation Fund projects are listed online.ⁱ Other sources we regularly scan are NHS Evidenceⁱⁱ, QIPP case studiesⁱⁱⁱ, HSJ awards^{iv}, the Health Foundation^v and the Kings Fund^{vi}.

Funders of grass roots innovation should consider staging their funding, and give projects with high potential further funding to support spread, as well as ear marking some funding for those who want to adapt ideas from elsewhere.

Choosing and supporting innovation projects

- What mechanisms do you have for choosing high potential innovation projects?
- What support do project leads have in terms of time, resources and skills development?
- How do you ensure you keep track of your projects and help them measure return on investment?

Staff within your organisations may have the desire to innovate and great ideas; as leaders you need a way of surfacing the best projects and choosing and supporting them. The innovators also need help with sharing their idea and networking with others to build momentum. Some of the things that you may do to help include setting up internal ‘challenges’ with a process and timeline for applications, having regular ‘Dragon’s Dens’ or using existing communication channels such as, staff briefing, suggestion boards and the staff intranet. You may need to teach early stage innovation skills such as prototyping and user engagement. Whatever you do, your middle managers need to buy into the approach as they can be critical in supporting and encouraging innovators.

Innovators then need support to help them maximise the chances of success of their project. In our experience, skills development with other innovators, brings real dividends. We frequently work with project leads and help them learn a range of skills. The most important are set out in the following table.

Change management	Stakeholder analysis and influencing	How to achieve diffusion and spread
Business Case Writing	Capturing stories of success and qualitative data	Articulating a ‘pitch’
Project management	Business Case Writing	Understanding system issues e.g. tariff and technology

Further information

- Visit our website and read the ‘How to ...’ guides^{vii}.
- Follow @the_young_fdn or @YF_Health on twitter
- Contact John Loder – john.loder@youngfoundation.org

ⁱ <http://sha-map.org.uk>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.evidence.nhs.uk>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.evidence.nhs.uk/qipp/case-studies-by-workstream>

^{iv} http://www.hsj.co.uk/Journals/2012/11/20/r/k/h/HSJAWARDS_121122.pdf

^v <http://www.health.org.uk>

^{vi} <http://www.kingsfund.org.uk>

^{vii} <http://youngfoundation.org/publications/how-to-guides/>