

The road ahead for the Health Foundation

Our strategic plan



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About us

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

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.

Choppy waters

There are clearly big challenges now and ahead for people's health, and health and social care services.

More people are at risk of ill health due to factors such as obesity, ageing and poverty. We are seeing alarming trends, such as the rise in mental health issues and teenage self-harm, increasing numbers of people with multiple long term health conditions, stalling life expectancy, and inequalities in health that are not reducing despite the wealth of the UK. These point to the need to invest in wider issues that influence health, such as good secure employment, housing, education, and support for children before they start school, as well as effective and efficient integrated health services.

Meantime demand for health and care services is growing, there are huge opportunities from new treatments and technologies, and staffing health and social care adequately is a big challenge. There is pressure to develop the way that care is offered to boost quality and efficiency for patients, as well as to keep funding of health care sustainable to the public purse in the medium to long term.

Public services of the future need to be focused on preventing ill health and improving wellbeing. At the same time health and care services need to be far more efficient, joined up and sustainable. That means accelerating new models of care, harnessing new technologies, better measuring quality and efficiency, and making the best use of the most valuable resource in health and care: its people, patients and service users.

The opportunity

Although achieving change in this context will be difficult, there is significant opportunity. The Health Foundation has one of the largest endowments of any independent foundation in the UK and invests around £37m per year in our mission to bring about better health and health care for people in the UK.

We are independent and can invest for both the long and the short term. Our annual investment in our mission is small relative to the public investment in the NHS, social care and the wider factors that shape people's health. Therefore, we have to make sure we make a real difference.

Our approach is to fund innovations on the frontiers of health and care. This means making bold creative investments that may be riskier than statutory agencies are able to make, rather than funding areas that are the clear responsibility of the public sector.

It also means evaluating promising innovations and policies, tracking overall trends, doing and commissioning research that other agencies may not, and having clear sight on the direction of national and international policy in health care and the wider factors that shape people's health. It means working with external partners to make a bigger difference.

We aim to shape national policy and make a bigger difference on the ground.

“The Health Foundation has a healthy endowment but it is a small fraction of the public investment in the NHS, social care and the wider factors that shape our health. This means we need to be bold with our investments to make a difference.

The next 3 years will see us build on what we already do, contribute more in new areas such as improving health, fund promising innovations, and work with many different organisations for more impact.”

Dr Jennifer Dixon

Chief Executive

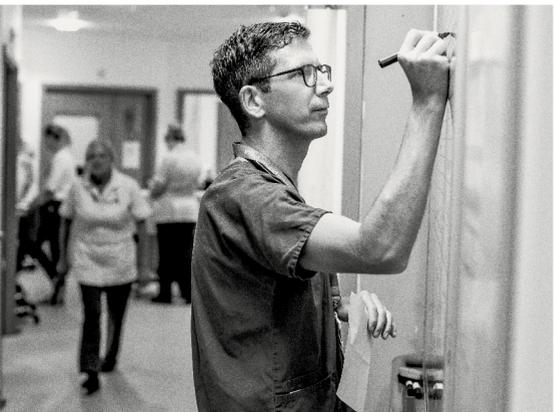
Our achievements so far

There is a strong feeling of momentum at the Health Foundation; a feeling that the investments we have made over the last decade are now bearing fruit.

Since our last strategic plan was published in 2015, we've made good progress.

- We have strengthened our profile and we are helping to shape policy and practice in many important areas.
- We have significantly developed our focus on, and investment in, action to address the social determinants of health.
- We have consolidated our work on quality improvement in health care by building capacity and skills across the workforce, including through the Q community (jointly funded with NHS Improvement) and funding Flow Coaching Academies across England.
- We have developed the field of improvement research, for example through our landmark investment in The Health Improvement Studies (THIS) Institute based at the University of Cambridge.

- Our grant programmes are supporting people across the UK to test and spread innovation, many examples winning prestigious awards for impact. Our unique insights into why innovations do or do not spread is influencing national policy.
- We are gaining significant insights into the quality of care, and factors influencing use of care, through building a strong data analytics function at the Foundation. We are also building skills in the analyst community in the NHS and local authorities. The Improvement Analytics Unit (a joint venture with NHS England) is using innovative methods to evaluate the impact of key national reforms, such as the new models of care programme.
- Our investments in analysis and tracking quality of care nationally and internationally are helping shape strategy in the NHS.
- We have built considerable expertise in analysing the financing and economics of care, including analysis of the workforce. For example, our joint analysis with the Institute for Fiscal Studies on the funding needed for the NHS over the next 10 years helped influence the funding settlement announced for the NHS in 2018.



Our plan for 2019–2021

We will build on these achievements in our new 3-year strategy. We are ambitious about what we can achieve next, building on the success of existing programmes and taking bold steps into new areas.

Our four main aims that will guide our work over the next 3 years are to:

- promote healthy lives for all
- understand the quality of health and care
- support health care improvement
- make health and care services more sustainable.

We will also continue to improve the way we use insights from our work to inform national policy on health and health care in the UK.

Healthy lives for all

The next 3 years will see an increasing focus on understanding the impact of, and influencing further investment in, the social determinants of health.

Improving people's health requires action on these upstream factors, not just treating ill health further downstream. Unlocking greater investment by government and other agencies into tackling these issues will be a priority over the next 3 years.

We will:

- Build the evidence and case for the social and economic value of health
- Use evidence to support action on the social determinants of health
- Mobilise cross-sector action on the social determinants of health through:
 - Supporting the public health leadership system
 - Applying business and economic strategies to improve health and reduce health inequalities
 - A major new initiative: the Collaboration for Wellbeing and Health. This will bring together stakeholders working across the social determinants of health, synthesise evidence, involve vulnerable populations, and coordinate activity on an influential scale.
- Publish our Young people's future health inquiry report and deliver a range of follow-up activity to improve young people's health prospects.

“Only once we all recognise that there are limits to personal responsibility and recognise how the social determinants influence our choices will we begin to implement the changes necessary to make the UK a much healthier place to live.”

Dr Jo Bibby

Director of Health

Understanding the quality of health and care

The Health Foundation is known for its expertise in analysing data on the quality of care. We have already established an innovative programme of data analytics to inform health policy, and carried out quantitative evaluations of key national reforms through the Improvement Analytics Unit. We plan to build on this in-house expertise over the next 3 years.

We will:

- Continue to help organisations use data to improve the quality of care locally, via the Advancing Applied Analytics awards programme and analytical networks, while also influencing national strategy in this area.
- Continue to analyse linked data sets in house, while also creating a Networked Data Lab: collaborating with regional teams to analyse richer datasets and boost local analytical capability. This innovative approach to linking data will help us investigate critical areas for the health of the population and the quality of health care.
- Further expand our collaborations with national organisations to evaluate the effectiveness of changes to how health and care is delivered, with an increasing focus on new technologies.
- Continue to analyse national policies on quality, and track indicators nationally and internationally to see where the UK could do better.

“The scale of the NHS means it generates vast amounts of information, with over 5 million GP consultations and 3 million hospital visits each week in England alone.

This data is a huge asset for the NHS, and there’s real potential to use it to make a difference to patients’ lives.”

Dr Adam Steventon

Director of Data Analytics

Supporting health care improvement

Over the last 3 years, the Health Foundation has made some bold investments in large-scale initiatives to support improvement, including Q and THIS Institute. These already boost the conditions needed to speed up improvement and help to make the NHS more of a learning health care system. We are excited to see how they will develop.

We are also continuing our core work to support health care improvement on the front line, through our grants to support research and improvement projects and our fellowships and networks.

We will:

- Build understanding of how best to support improvement in health care through the work of THIS Institute. Based at the University of Cambridge, THIS is developing the study of improvement as a discipline, building capacity among researchers and carrying out mass applied research quickly using citizen science.
- Develop our work with Q, supported by NHS Improvement. The fast-growing Q Community and accompanying Q Labs will continue to develop a national infrastructure to encourage shared learning and enable improvements in health and care on a much greater scale.

- Help people gain and apply knowledge, skills and experience in improving health and care through our ongoing grant programmes and fellowships, such as GenerationQ and the Flow Coaching Academy. In particular, we're planning a new programme of work focused on building patient and clinical communities.
- Continue to design and deliver funding programmes that test new models and mechanisms for effective spread, such as social franchising, as well as initiatives that test particular approaches stemming from our wider research and analysis work, such as ways of improving continuity of care in primary care.
- Develop the contribution of the health and care system to improving the public's health by investigating the NHS's role in prevention.
- Continue to invest in the peer-reviewed journal *BMJ Quality & Safety*, the journal with the highest impact factor in its category, which we co-own with the *BMJ*.

“With stronger improvement capability – and evidence about how best to build it – the NHS will be better placed to reach its 80th anniversary with organisations that have well developed, systematic approaches to identifying problems, developing and testing solutions, and which are better equipped to deliver higher quality care for all.”

Will Warburton

Director of Improvement



Making our NHS and social care services more sustainable

The sustainability of the NHS and social care system is likely to become an even bigger issue in coming years, given funding constraints, increasing demand, workforce shortages and variation in the quality and productivity of care. We are planning to support the NHS and social care system with research and analysis of the big issues including the following:

Establishing a new Health and Social Care Sustainability Research Centre, based at the Health Foundation

Made up of a network of externally commissioned units with a core team at the Foundation, the centre will aim to provide the robust evidence needed to support better policy and strategic decision making on the long-term trends in demand for health and care, productivity and workforce and funding for the health and care system. At its heart the centre will seek to establish more robust models of these key trends and their implications for services. We hope this will lead to new understandings and encourage policymakers to plan better for the long term. In 2019 we will publish full details of our plans and seek research partners. We expect to invest around £10 million in the work of the centre over the first 5 years.

Helping the NHS prepare for the future through our new Foresight programme

This work will help the health service assess and respond to future trends, from scientific developments to social and environmental change. We will be involving a range of groups, including the public, in understanding these issues and the choices ahead.

“The Sustainability Research Centre is at conception stage and over the coming year we will engage widely with policymakers, researchers and those involved in strategy roles in the NHS and care system across the UK to continue scoping this work. We believe it can make a real contribution to improving health and social care for people in the UK.”

Anita Charlesworth

Director of Research and Economics

We want to make a better Health Foundation

The Health Foundation has grown from 67 to 140 people over the last 5 years. We now have a major 3-year internal programme to develop our people, processes and infrastructure: key elements to help us work effectively and efficiently, drawing on learning from our external investments in these areas. Our office move in 2019 will expand our working space, enabling us to explore new opportunities.



Find out more

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

- Sign up to receive our newsletter and updates from the Health Foundation: health.org.uk/sign-up
- follow us on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or LinkedIn.

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