

Innovation & Learning Must Remain at the Heart of Health & Care Following COVID-19



Georgie Adams,
NNNG Communications Officer

No one could have anticipated the seismic shock the healthcare system would face in 2020. It is now time to showcase new thinking, share ideas and generate debate about the future of nutritional care.

There is a need to act quickly to capture and evaluate the range of innovations that have taken place and understand what it would take to sustain and scale them – before the opportunity to ‘reset’ is lost. Re-starting services, encouraging the public back, managing rehabilitation and addressing a mental health crisis are just some of the many obstacles ahead. What does this mean for nutrition support? How can we as health professionals respond to change? How do we lead our teams and navigate the many challenges associated with a ‘new normal’?

We are told a whole system response is needed. Inequalities need to be addressed. There is a need to understand, translate and adapt the best of COVID-19 related innovations and initiatives into every day practice, maintaining momentum, sharing what’s working and improving people’s care. The following documents assist with embracing the challenges and changes ahead.

Adaptation & adoption

A good overview provided by NHS Horizon, authored by, allows busy health professionals to review their current working practices with those that have changed or evolved: <https://nhshorizons.passle.net/post/102gasl/the-importance-of-local-adaptation-in-innovation-spread-and-adoption>. Ketley is keen to promote the benefits of a spread challenge; scaling new ideas and pathways. When it comes to new ideas, from experience, we know that they either stay in our heads or never actually leave a team meeting and find their reality in practice. The last few months have shown that what usually takes 20 years in the NHS has taken four weeks, when it comes to creating new ways of working.

Rebuilding the NHS

Multidisciplinary team working and nutrition are inseparable and necessary for accessible and achievable outcomes. It’s good to appreciate the vision and focus taken by our medical partners. Recognising the importance of identifying reset priorities, returning and providing NHS services (with COVID-19 precautions) and using new ways of working, aligned with quality improvement projects and pathways, are all featured in an Royal College of Physicians project: www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/rebuilding-nhs

The road to renewal

Healthcare professionals remain adept at responding and managing NHS change – year-round demands and pressures prepare each of us of its reality. COVID-19 has introduced a whole new layer of complexity. The King’s Fund neatly summaries how health and renewal can be reconciled as one whole, within a variety of interpretations and environmental settings: www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/covid-19-road-renewal-health-and-care. We know all too well regions vary in their size, density and demographic. Social deprivation, inequalities and ethnicity remain central to the debate for providing unity and equality at the very point of delivery.