

A ROAD MAP TO RESET OUR SHARED FUTURE

Supported by



November 2020

About NHS Reset

COVID-19 has changed the NHS and social care, precipitating rapid transformation at a time of immense pressure and personal and professional challenge. One message from leaders and clinicians across the UK has been clear: we must build on the progress made to chart a new course.

NHS Reset is an NHS Confederation campaign to help shape what the health and care system should look like in the aftermath of the pandemic. Recognising the sacrifices and achievements of the pandemic response, it brings together NHS Confederation members and partners to look at how we rebuild local systems and reset the way we plan, commission and deliver health and care.

NHS Reset is part funded through sponsorship by Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Limited. Find out more at www.nhsconfed.org/NHSReset and join the conversation #NHSReset

About the NHS Confederation

The NHS Confederation is the membership body that brings together and speaks on behalf of organisations that plan, commission and provide NHS services in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. We represent hospitals, community and mental health providers, ambulance trusts, primary care networks, clinical commissioning groups and integrated care systems.

To find out more, visit www.nhsconfed.org and follow us on Twitter [@NHSConfed](https://twitter.com/NHSConfed)

About Novartis

At Novartis, our purpose is to reimagine medicine to improve and extend people's lives. We use innovative science and digital technologies to address some of society's most challenging healthcare issues. We discover and develop breakthrough treatments and find new ways to deliver them to as many people as possible.

We strive to change the practice of medicine. We aspire to approach things differently - to make discoveries that take medicine in new directions. We look to tomorrow to inspire us today. Never satisfied with the status quo, we imagine what's next.

We are passionate about what we do and the impact we have on patients and societies.

We are Novartis, and we are reimagining medicine.

To find out more, visit www.novartis.co.uk

Key points

3

- Although close collaboration has often posed challenges for the health and care sector and its partners, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown there is scope and appetite for effective joint working.
- In September 2020, leaders from the NHS and the independent sector came together in a virtual roundtable to discuss how to capitalise on the progress in collaborating that has been achieved during the pandemic response so far.
- Roundtable participants identified a positive culture, empowered leaders and a good understanding of the uncertainty that exists currently in the health and care system as critical preconditions for successful collaboration.
- Participants also identified practical steps that leaders can take to give collaborations the best possible chance of success. These include developing appropriate business models and problem statements, and making sure that staff at all levels know they have permission to work in new and different ways.
- This report summarises the main findings of the roundtable discussion and sets out an initial framework to help the NHS and its external partners achieve closer and more effective collaboration.

Foreword

4



Chinmay Bhatt

**Managing Director
of Novartis
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The COVID-19 pandemic has presented exceptional challenges to healthcare, at a level not seen for generations. The extraordinary pressure and urgency on healthcare providers, government, regulators and the pharmaceutical industry to address these issues has sparked countless examples of new collaborative ways of working.

Collaboration at this level has driven innovation in the fight against the virus and allowed the healthcare service to rapidly adapt to continue to deliver services. This report highlights the determination of industry leaders to drive forward this progress in collaborative working to benefit patients beyond COVID-19. By identifying barriers that have prevented these changes in the past, the report presents seven key steps that are likely to be fundamental in facilitating successful collaborations in the future.

At Novartis UK, we are committed to working across the sector to sustain these new ways of working. By working together on the practical steps for ensuring successful collaboration recommended in this report, we can unleash the power of innovative ways of working and unlock the potential of the UK life sciences sector so it is the best place in the world to discover, develop and deliver new medicines for patients.

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Introduction

Improving the ability of NHS organisations and partners in other fields to collaborate has been a goal of leaders working within and alongside the health and care sector for some time.

Successful collaboration can lead to faster adoption of new technologies and approaches as well as supporting important research and development objectives.

There are well-known barriers to maximising the potential of collaboration. But the response across the health and care sector to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that these barriers can be overcome.

In September 2020, leaders from the NHS and the independent sector came together in a virtual roundtable to discuss how to capitalise on the progress in collaborating that has been achieved during the pandemic response so far.

The roundtable discussion explored the following questions:

- Is there a shared purpose for successful collaboration?
- What preconditions are necessary to realise successful collaboration?
- What practical steps can be undertaken to achieve successful collaboration?

This briefing, which forms part of the NHS Confederation's NHS Reset campaign, summarises the main findings of the discussion and sets out an initial framework to help the NHS and its external partners achieve closer and more effective collaboration.

The challenge

6

Much has already been written about the difficulties faced by NHS organisations and partners in other sectors such as the pharmaceutical and IT industries when embarking on collaborative projects.

In 2019, a report from the NHS Confederation and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry identified 'hard' barriers to collaboration such as capacity issues, poorly aligned incentives, lack of resource, inability to scale up activities and a lack of clarity about the nature of the goals that partnerships are ultimately working towards.

'Soft' barriers included a lack of trust, misperceptions about the motives of different parties, challenges relating to leadership and culture within organisations and concerns over whether 'permission' was required from NHS leadership when developing new partnerships.

In the face of these difficulties, progress has often been frustratingly slow, even when NHS and partner organisations have made collaborative working a strategic priority at the most senior levels.

Is there an identifiable shared purpose for successful collaboration?

Following the arrival of the COVID-19 virus in the UK early in 2020, the necessity of responding to the pandemic created a new urgency for the NHS and connected sectors, such as pharmacy and IT, to work more closely together.

Priorities have become more closely aligned and participants in our roundtable spoke of a renewed appetite to drive forward collaboration to achieve shared goals.

Participants identified an appetite to capitalise on innovations in digital collaborative working as a particularly clear illustration of

this shift in priorities. Working with partners in the digital sector has meant that appointments can be shifted online at speed and new uses of technology in healthcare have enabled clinicians to maintain contact with patients while physically distancing.

But participating leaders also warned that while the health service had been given permission to focus on achieving its objectives around mitigating the impact of the pandemic during the acute phase of the COVID-19 response, it will be more challenging to collaborate successfully as the financial pressures that NHS organisations have become used to operating under resume.

Maintaining a shared understanding that collaboration has to benefit both partners was viewed as key to maintaining progress.

What preconditions are necessary to realise successful collaboration?

Participants identified a **positive culture, empowered leaders** and a good **understanding of the uncertainty** that exists in the health and care system at present as the critical preconditions necessary for successful collaboration.



Fig 1. Parameters to underpin better collaboration

Positive culture

Leaders told the roundtable that identifying partners and creating a positive culture meant moving beyond the historical 'suspicion' of the pharmaceutical sector that has existed in some parts of the NHS, and ensuring that partners in social care and local government were involved in partnership work, as these sectors work more closely together with the NHS under the auspices of local health and care systems.

Empowered leaders

Overcoming challenges to successful collaboration was viewed as partly a leadership problem. One participant asked: "How do I, as a leader, change the nature of the leadership I give?" It was felt that leaders must 're-craft' organisational models and support the workforce so that staff understand what is expected of them in relation to working with partner organisations.

Leaders spoke of the inhibiting effect of bureaucracy, hierarchy and fear on middle managers. Enablers of middle management are enjoyment and empowerment and these must be brought to the fore if all levels of the organisation are to play a role in taking forward effective collaboration.

Understanding uncertainty

Participants agreed that it was crucial to understand the large amount of uncertainty and change underway in the English health system at present.

As well as managing the pandemic, health and care leaders are in the process of embedding new system-working approaches across England, under the integrated care system programme. From commissioning organisations to foundation trusts, NHS leaders are shifting towards a more collaborative outlook, and working more closely with partners in local government and social care than ever before.

Practical steps for achieving successful collaboration

Participants viewed ensuring robust plans were in place and fostering a new working culture as practical steps for embedding the progress in collaboration seen in recent months.

Dedicate sufficient time and energy to planning

It is helpful to spend some time developing novel business models that are able to work within the balance of localism and centralism that exists within health systems. Roundtable participants felt that all partners should have a good understanding of how local powers and accountabilities work in practice.

Part of this approach requires an understanding that sometimes novel approaches will not deliver the intended outcomes. Rather than viewing these as simple failures, they can be treated as learning opportunities, providing a better understanding of what does and does not work to inform future programmes.

Approaches such as whiteboarding and envisioning can be used as part of this process. Drafting a high-quality problem statement upfront was viewed as an important step in setting out the parameters of challenges to be addressed in collaboration. Participants suggested that partnership between the NHS, service users and the pharmaceutical industry was potentially a valuable way to ensure the development of problem statements that add real value to planning processes.

Give staff permission to work differently

In order to embed collaborative practices across organisations, participants felt that thought leadership should be further developed within organisations as a skill.

Leaders suggested that decision-making should be devolved to the tactical, operational level wherever possible and 'industrial strength' project management should be deployed so that staff at all levels are clear about roles and tasks.

Achieving a shared language was viewed as being important, alongside a clear value proposition. Moving to the next stage of partnership working would require lots of 'big conversations.'

Leaders felt that while in normal times it was easy to have these discussions 'face to face over a coffee,' being able to have similarly productive conversations in scheduled online meetings would be more challenging. More thinking was necessary to find approaches that would work for this purpose.

Some saw an opportunity to encourage these behaviours using the NHS internal business model, for instance via CQUINs for partnership.

Recommendations: a framework for action

Although close collaboration has historically posed challenges for the health and care sector and its partners, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that there is scope and appetite for deep and effective joint working.

By ensuring that a positive culture is in place, that leaders are empowered and that all participants in a collaboration understand the levels of uncertainty that individual organisations are working within, a suitable climate for collaborative working can be achieved.

Practical steps that leaders can take to give collaborations the best possible chance of success include focusing considerable effort on developing appropriate business models and problem statements, and making sure that staff at all levels know they have permission to work in the new and different ways described in these plans.

Ensuring momentum is maintained at the most senior levels, with clear value propositions and the development of shared languages, will require thought and effort during times when frank, face-to-face conversations are not possible because of physical distancing requirements.

The following steps are important for ensuring successful collaborations and offer an initial framework for the NHS to achieve effective partnership working:

- 1. Create the right environment** for equal, open dialogue.
- 2. Engender the right culture for collaboration** by empowering staff at all levels to be curious.
- 3. Work with partners who have a common mutual interest**, in order to define a high-quality problem statement.
- 4. Ensure robust collective accountability** arrangements are in place to support finding the right solutions.
- 5. Ensure that the creativity and the problem-solving mindset** seen in the response to the pandemic are embedded in a mainstream operating approach, minimising bureaucracy and hierarchy and empowering staff with permission to act.
- 6. Use stories and examples to highlight the benefits of collaboration**, remembering that not every initiative will be successful.
- 7. Create a movement within and across organisations** to normalise external partnership.

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