

How are Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Social Investment utilised within the NHS?





Introduction and Aim

In early March 2017, the NHS Sustainability Day Campaign Team undertook a survey of NHS Trusts across England, on behalf of Groundswell CSI Limited, to understand the current views, approaches and use of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and subsequent Investment by NHS Trusts in order to improve efficiency, both in back office enabling functions and front line clinical services. The survey concentrated on: Estate Directors and Facility Managers, to explore how they address CSR within their Sustainable Development Management Plans (SDMP's); and Public Health Directors in order to gain their views on how CSR is used in tackling health inequalities. As the NHS goes through another period of financial uncertainty, both CSR and Corporate Social Investment (CSI) could play significant roles in enabling the delivery of savings, as well as delivering further improvements in patient services and longer-term health outcomes. This report examines the results of this survey and contextualises the current landscape of CSR and CSI within the NHS.

Methodology and responses (CSR)

A cross section of Thirty NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) (6.5%) completed the survey between the 9th March and 31st March 2017. Of the Thirty participants 82% had implemented a Sustainable Development Plan (SDMP) within their organisation, with a further 18% citing no current SDMP in place. It is a mandatory requirement for all NHS organisations, Trusts and CCG's, to have a Board Approved SDMP in place since the launch of the national Sustainable Development Strategy in 2014, and is a key indicator in the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

The plans are integral to an organisation's ability to shape organisational strategies and operational policies in order to improve the environmental performance on the NHS Estates, as well as delivering social and financial benefits to health communities served by those organisations.

The responses to the survey indicate that NHS Trusts are often lacking in either knowledge or resource in this area, and as a result Sustainable Development, along with its financial, environmental and social benefits, are being overlooked.

To date CSR models have been mostly utilised within the private sector, with CSR being routinely referenced by FTSE 100 companies as a key business driver; one that can be used to develop core business activities as well as enabling companies to align their brand with positive social change. Well known strategies used in the UK markets include Plan A from Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's Sports equipment for Schools and more recently the community fair trade strategy undertaken by the Co-Operative Group.

Within the public sector, however, implementing CSR strategies can be difficult. Participants highlighted some of the key barriers as being: stringent procurement processes/frameworks, a lack of overall business knowledge and a gap in leadership teams understanding the

importance of such strategies in achieving the overall organisational objectives. This was supported statistically by the report which showed only 54% of survey respondents cited having a CSR plan in place and, when asked what CSR was taking place, only 10% could give evidence of practices. These practices included;

“Better health at work campaigns, support for local charities preventing ill health”

“Annual events for local business to assist in volunteering opportunities”

“Work experience opportunities within sustainability teams and University placements within sustainability team community projects.”

This evidence indicates that many of the Trusts surveyed saw CSR to engage with staff and/or their local communities and not as a core strategy for redesign that has the potential to deliver significant environmental, social and economic improvements. Moreover, most of statement responses indicated that Trusts only tend to use CSR for social improvement during formal contract tender processes and show the uptake in this area is still minimal; with only 1 in 10 citing its use within their Procurement Frameworks to “improve contractor’s sustainability when conducting a contract.”

Knowing where to place CSR strategies within an organisation can be problematic, as evidenced by our respondents. Within the private sector, the majority of organisations who implement CSR do so within their supply chain and manufacturing processes. An example of this is the Body Shop, whose community trade programmes support sustainable development by sourcing ingredients and materials from disadvantaged communities around the world, whilst adhering to fair-trade principles like decent wages and good working conditions for all. In many ways, the Body Shop has built its success on the core principles of CSR.

We put the question of where CSR could be used within the health service to our survey respondents and the responses received were mixed. 30% said they see CSR best used within behaviour change programmes amongst their staff. This is supported by entrants to this year’s NHS Sustainability Awards, in which the Workforce Development entrants all cited behaviour change programmes and community partnerships within their award submissions. Another key area of CSR implementation was within Catering with recent examples including the Soil Association (Gold) Standards, within which the NHS use criteria to measure organisational levels of local produce sourcing, working with local suppliers and serving nutritionally improved meals to both patients and staff.

The recently published Naylor Review (2016) and the NHS Five Year Forward View Report (2014) set out NHS England’s vision for the changes required with healthcare approaches, with both calling for greater efficiency within the NHS to support a long-term goal of financial savings. There has been significant focus over the past five years on the efficiencies required to be delivered by the NHS, with fundamental structural changes being applied across the system. However, less focus has been placed on how to achieve these efficiencies at a local level. In 2016 Lord Carter’s review of operational efficiency within the NHS started to broach this, introducing standardised high-level metrics and identifying key areas of focus for healthcare organisations. Our respondents noted that more focus was needed to support them in the implementation of Quick Wins – opportunities identified which can be quickly and efficiently implemented to achieve rapid payback – and

Win-Wins: opportunities for collaboration and partnerships to deliver medium term changes. Key barriers cited included long/prohibitive procurement processes, the need for lengthy business plans and lengthy or complex sign-off processes. Examples of opportunities cited in the NHS Sustainability Day Award entries include the replacement of inefficient lighting within a Trust with LED lighting, immediately reducing utility and maintenance cost and reducing carbon.

Methodology and responses (CSI)

Corporate Social Investment (CSI) is defined as social and environmental improvements that also deliver economic benefits. The responses show that CSI is often viewed as a Quick Win to improve services and that the longer-term benefits are broadly not understood.

In order to successfully implement a CSI strategy within an organisation, it is important to establish a clear understanding of its purpose, scope and intended outcomes, as well as how it should be effectively communicated in order to maximise its impact.

Of the Thirty Trusts and CCGs surveyed, only 24% had an awareness of CSI as a strategy, indicating a possible lack of education, knowledge and training on the subject and how it could be utilised to improve operational and cost efficiency within the health service.

CSI opens up many opportunities for delivering Win-Win partnerships and offers the potential to build long term, cross-sector collaborations in which the health service could see investment into areas which would reduce long-term cost pressures and improve outcomes for patients.

Good examples of the Win-Win approach include the National Union of Students (NUS) Green Impact Programme whereby volunteer students work with NHS Trusts to improve staff and patient wellbeing through carbon reduction interventions and Operational TLC – a staff-led behaviour change programme delivering improved patient care outcomes through energy and carbon interventions. Implementing these programmes allows Trusts to improve their environmental credentials whilst positively impacting on their finances, without the need to recruit or train staff.

Another example of where partnership working is proving successful is with local supermarkets and pharmacies offering preventative care advice and treatment for minor ailments, helping to reduce A&E attendances and/or appointments with GPs. Both these examples highlight benefits to both parties, thus qualifying them as Win-Win scenarios.

When surveying our Thirty organisations it was evident that many had little grasp on the use of such practices, with 72% of respondents having little/no understanding of the 'Quick Win' or 'Win-Win' principles.

Conclusion

The survey results indicate that there is a current gap in the knowledge, skills and experience of professionals working within the healthcare system in England, which is preventing the effective adoption and implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Social Investment Strategies. Results also indicate a lack of understanding of the full value of such strategies, a propensity for short term focus for delivering financial cost reduction and a lack of confidence that such strategies have the ability to deliver positive financial and environmental outcomes, as well as supporting the core focus of the NHS – caring for people (patients and staff).

At a time of such significant financial pressure for the NHS, and the wider healthcare system, and where new models of care and efficiency are being welcomed, the opportunities presented by CSR and CSI strategies could offer clear and measurable benefits for the environment, society and organisational finances.

It was encouraging therefore that 67% of respondents stated they believe CSR and CSI is of great importance for the future of efficiency within their own organisations and that the same percentage requested further education, understanding and detailed information on the techniques and strategies they could adopt in order successfully to implement these strategies within their own organisations.

Next Steps

In order to support the adoption of CSR and CSI Strategies within the NHS the 2017/18 NHS Sustainability Day Campaign will incorporate a focus on CSR and CSI training within its regional roadshows and host a separate workshop for health professionals on the subject.

We would like to thank all those who responded to this survey.



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all of us

Groundswell specialises in enabling organisations to improve their economic performance by improving their social and environmental performance. We coined the term 'Corporate Social Investment' to describe the natural next step beyond 'Corporate Social Responsibility': a well-designed and implemented investment in society tends to pay back, not only socially and environmentally but also economically.

Founded in 1989, we have worked with a wide range of global, national and local client organisations in the public, private, academic and non-profit sectors, including the NHS, OECD, DfID, DTI, DEFRA, DCSF, RSA, Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, New Academy of Business, The Ugandan Government, Sustrans/National Cycle Network, WWF, Survival International, The Soil Association, Ford, Allied Domecq, NatWest Bank, Barclays Bank, Toyota, BP, DHL, Trinity Mirror Group, Scottish Power and Carillion and Microsoft.

4 all of us are a mission-driven business working to raise awareness of critical issues in sustainability and health through communication and engagement. We work extensively throughout the health sector on integrated programmes ranging from Antibiotic Guardian to the national NHS Sustainability Day.

Our aim is to share best practice across organisations to enable and empower individuals to take action to embed Sustainable best practice within their own organisation. We support this by creating platforms and networks in which individuals can share their thoughts and experiences, and by supporting the emergence of industry based research - such as this CSR report.

Our mission is to create action through behaviour change;
creating a sustainable future for all of us.

