

Value-based procurement essay series

The case for accelerating adoption of value-based procurement in the NHS

Rebuilding responsibly from COVID-19

Two years on from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our perspective on healthcare has shifted significantly. Now more than ever, we understand the impact that delayed surgeries can have on people's lives, the importance of tackling burnout in the workforce, and the role that personal protective equipment plays in preventing infections for both healthcare professionals (HCPs) and patients. While these issues have been longstanding in the health service, COVID-19 has brought them to the fore, and increased the pressure put on staff and processes to deliver safe care.

It is our responsibility to help strengthen and rebuild the system in a sustainable way. The NHS needs to build back from the pandemic better protected than when it entered it. This applies to HCPs, patients, and the processes that help the health service function. Our main aim now is to promote safety and efficiency within the NHS to enable more patients to be seen and to reduce the pressure on staff. There are many ways to embed this, but as this series of essays has shown, value-based procurement (VBP) has the potential to be very effective in delivering these aims, and protecting productivity in the NHS.

Value-based procurement as a win-win for everyone

VBP should be a key component of health service recovery because it is a win-win for everyone, improving conditions for HCPs, patients and hospital management. Without the hard work of HCPs throughout the pandemic and beyond, we would not be in a position to rebuild the NHS effectively. Protecting staff should remain a priority going forward. By ensuring HCPs are equipped with the highest quality surgical and protective equipment, we are reassuring them that they are safe, while they do the work to keep us safe. VBP enables this because it accounts for the value of products beyond cost per unit, and considers how the product reduces risk for HCPs across the pathway.

This has implications for patients too. By working with staff to understand which products deliver the best patient outcomes, VBP embeds patient experience into its measurement framework, meaning that financial and procurement decisions truly consider the impact on patients. Through this essay series, we have learned how the implementation of VBP prioritises products that have been shown to reduce the chance of patient infection, thereby improving the patient experience, and preventing long hospital stays. If VBP can promote optimal patient outcomes, whilst simultaneously ensuring staff are safe and

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protected, this alone is a compelling argument for integrating VBP into the way the NHS manages resources.

Of course, in the context of the COVID-19 recovery, protecting productivity in the health service is crucial, and this is where VBP can make a visible impact. When procurement teams, finance managers and clinicians work together to measure the value of products and services, the result is that hospitals promote efficiency across their organisation, leading to overall cost and time savings. By accounting for how the product provides better protection against surgical site infections, or saves time in the operating theatre by reducing theatre set-up time, VBP invests in all areas of the organisation and consequently delivers a measurable benefit. This is invaluable as we seek solutions to reduce the elective care backlog, but it can also release time for staff, who continue to face pressure to keep up with increasing demand in the NHS.

Mölnlycke's role in protecting productivity

At Mölnlycke, we recognise that the role of industry is to provide the right tools to tackle the backlog, and we want to maximise our impact. By accelerating the adoption of VBP across the NHS, suppliers, Trust management, clinicians and procurement teams can work collaboratively to identify potential savings across their organisation. This partnership is vital to promoting greater productivity, as it encourages a whole-system approach based on shared learning.

To promote this, over the last year Mölnlycke has worked with HCPs to understand the challenges facing the NHS, developing reports such as the 'Time to Act' study of SSIs in the UK, to a Quality Improvement Programme aiding HCPs to reduce infections in their organisations. This engagement with HCPs and key stakeholders in the health service has consistently highlighted the merit of VBP, and the role it must play in delivering efficiencies across the NHS. It is therefore imperative that we incorporate VBP into our outlook for a sustainable recovery, so we can deliver on the needs of staff and patients.

So while providing the health service with high-quality products is important, we know it is about more than this: we have to understand what is driving challenges in the NHS, such as reducing the backlog or tackling SSIs, in order to provide the best solutions to support Trusts to deliver improved outcomes. VBP prioritises these solutions, helping HCPs work smarter, not harder. For example, using tools such as the Operating Theatre Efficiency Partnership Programme, Mölnlycke can help staff identify potential efficiency savings, letting staff spend more time with patients, reduce overtime or create time for staff training. By embedding a value-based approach across the NHS, there is a huge opportunity to address the elective care backlog, whilst delivering healthcare that promotes staff wellbeing and improves patient outcomes.

Where next for value-based procurement?

The argument for accelerating the adoption of VBP across the NHS is stronger than ever. VBP has the potential to transform service delivery by ensuring patient outcomes, improving staff capacity and supporting efficiencies are considered in the procurement process, and that decisions are not simply made on a cost per unit basis. VBP is a critical asset as we begin the COVID-19 recovery, and so it is more important than ever than we continue this discussion across the country, and prioritise the implementation of VBP in the NHS. As organisations embark on this journey, Mölnlycke will continue to act as a partner to the NHS, working in collaboration with the health service to provide the tools to enable value-based procurement and drive forward the COVID-19 recovery.

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