



AI analysis

NHS ConfedExpo 2025: Event report

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Summary

The NHS ConfedExpo 2025 brought together thought leaders, policymakers, and healthcare professionals to share ideas for creating a more efficient, equitable, and patient-centred NHS. A key theme was the urgent need for integrated care and cross-sector collaboration. This approach was seen as essential to tackling longstanding challenges like long waiting times, growing financial pressures, and declining public confidence. By dismantling silos and encouraging partnerships between the NHS, local authorities, voluntary groups, and private providers, the system can better pool resources and expertise. Emphasising neighbourhood-based health services and community care was central to this vision, promoting personalised support tailored to local needs while easing the burden on hospitals and bolstering the system's resilience.

Technology and digital transformation featured prominently in the discussions. Speakers showcased the growing role of AI, data analytics, and digital tools in enhancing operational efficiency and delivering more precise care. Lessons from the pandemic proved that the NHS can rapidly adopt and scale innovation. However, to fully integrate technology, continued leadership, workforce training, and investment are needed. AI-powered diagnostics, predictive models, and automation of administrative tasks offer significant potential to improve clinical outcomes, free up time for healthcare workers, and enhance patient safety. Ensuring equitable access to these technologies remains a critical priority for the NHS's digital future.

Another recurring theme was the need for a cultural shift focused on quality, safety, and staff well-being. Speakers urged that patient safety and quality care must be embedded in every decision, especially as the NHS undergoes reform. Adopting a systems-based approach to learning from errors—moving away from a culture of blame—was widely supported. Emphasising transparency, listening to frontline staff, and applying lessons from other industries were recognised as steps toward embedding safety and quality into daily NHS operations.



Fundamental system reform was also a major topic, especially in the context of the upcoming 10-year health plan. The plan aims to decentralise services, put patients more in control, and embed care within communities. This requires solid infrastructure—flexible operating models, effective funding mechanisms, and workforce adaptability. Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) were highlighted as central to managing resources efficiently and driving the shift to neighbourhood care. Aligning financial incentives and redesigning contracts to encourage collaboration across sectors will be key to achieving strategic goals like outcome-based commissioning, improved service delivery, and stronger community health outcomes.

The role of the NHS in supporting economic growth and social well-being was also emphasised. Integrating health and employment systems through local partnerships was identified as vital for reducing inequality and improving prosperity. Speakers called for greater collaboration between the NHS, local authorities, and employers to ensure no community is left behind. By addressing barriers to employment and supporting good job practices, the NHS can improve both public health and economic participation. Localised, trust-based approaches and clear accountability across sectors were seen as crucial for creating impactful, sustainable change at the community level.

Prevention and early intervention rounded out the major themes of the conference. A shift from reactive to proactive care was championed as critical to the long-term sustainability of the NHS. Tackling chronic conditions, multi-morbidity, and rising costs requires coordinated action across health, housing, education, and social services. Empowering patients and communities to engage in their own health was seen as key to making prevention work. Case studies demonstrated that preventive approaches can reduce hospital admissions, enhance patient outcomes, and deliver cost savings. The conference concluded with a shared commitment to building a future NHS that is not only more effective, but also more equitable and resilient—one that invests in health, not just healthcare.



Takeaways

Collaborative integration

The importance of working across different sectors to deliver holistic, patient-centred care was a recurring theme. Breaking down bureaucratic barriers and fostering partnerships are essential to address health inequalities and improve patient outcomes.

Digital transformation

AI, digital tools, and data platforms have the potential to revolutionise healthcare delivery. Technology can enhance operational efficiency and improve patient care, but must be balanced with human elements to empower staff and patients.

Quality and safety

Quality and patient safety should be central to all healthcare decisions. A systems-based approach to learning from safety incidents and improving organisational culture are key factors in prioritising quality and safety in healthcare management.

Leadership and workforce

Empowered and resilient healthcare leaders are crucial for driving change. Trusting local leaders, releasing ambition, and preparing workers for an AI-powered world are essential components for creating conditions for success within the NHS.

Proactive prevention

Shifting from a sickness-based model to proactive and preventive care is fundamental. Community-based delivery and continuous engagement with communities are vital strategies to address health inequalities and improve population health.

Topics

Health, community, and patient care are pivotal themes in today's discourse on enhancing societal well-being and healthcare systems. Health is recognised as a fundamental element for economic growth and community inclusiveness, with a strong emphasis on integrating mental health services, improving preventative measures, and leveraging technology to optimise patient care and minimise inefficiencies. Addressing health inequalities in underserved communities is deemed critical, advocating for collaborative efforts across public and private sectors to foster trust and achieve sustainable health outcomes.

Community plays a vital role in improving health outcomes and addressing disparities. There is a shift towards supporting community mental health services, holistic wraparound support, and engaging often-overlooked voices. Emphasising a community-centric approach to healthcare, speakers advocate for local leadership, co-production, and meaningful dialogue.

Patient-centred care focuses on holistic approaches, integrating services, and empowering patients and families as partners in healthcare, stressing the importance of single patient records, timely interventions, and clear communication to enhance patient experiences.



Top 3 Topics unpacked: What was said about ...?

Health

Health is seen as a cornerstone for societal well-being, economic growth, and community inclusiveness. There is a strong focus on integrating mental health services, improving preventative measures, and leveraging technology to enhance patient care and reduce inefficiencies. Addressing health inequalities, particularly in underserved communities, is critical, with an emphasis on collaborative efforts across public and private sectors.

Speakers advocate for neighbourhood-centric health models and the importance of research and innovation in transforming healthcare delivery. They stress the need for a clear, adaptable framework that allows local freedom to deliver outcomes, while fostering trust and collaboration to achieve better health outcomes and sustainable healthcare systems.

Community

Community is seen as integral to improving health outcomes and addressing inequalities. Discussions highlighted the importance of supporting community mental health services, holistic wraparound support, and involving often-overlooked voices. Emphasis was placed on shifting resources from hospitals to community settings, enhancing local leadership, and partnering with voluntary sectors. The need for co-production, meaningful dialogue, and leveraging community assets were also underscored.

Overall, the speakers advocated for a more community-centric approach to healthcare, viewing it as crucial for equitable growth and effective public health interventions. They believe that by empowering communities, engaging residents, and fostering collaboration, society can achieve better health outcomes and a more resilient healthcare system.

Patient

Patient-centred care is a recurrent theme, with a focus on holistic approaches, integration of services, and empowering patients and families as partners in healthcare. The importance of single patient records is highlighted, enabling better data management and seamless care. Emphasis is placed on collaboration between healthcare providers, communities, and patients to improve outcomes and experiences.

Improving patient experience is crucial, with discussions on timely interventions, kindness, and clear communication. Addressing systemic inefficiencies, enhancing digital infrastructure, and prioritising prevention are seen as essential steps towards delivering effective, equitable, and compassionate care for all.

Delivering system change

Successful health system change relies heavily on integrated care and collaboration across various levels and sectors. Effective partnerships among healthcare providers, local government, and the voluntary sector are crucial for driving meaningful and sustainable improvements. Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are essential in managing funds to ensure effective spending, while strategic outcome-based commissioning, better use of population health data, and fostering place-based partnerships contribute significantly to impactful change. Trust and equitable collaboration, along with the integration of strategic views on funding and infrastructure projects, are vital for improving health outcomes and ensuring a collective effort among stakeholders.

A holistic approach that considers both physical and mental health is necessary for comprehensive support. System-wide ownership and the participation of various sectors, including the NHS, voluntary sector, social care, and local communities, are essential. Long-term, stable funding and workforce expansion are crucial for sustaining and improving care delivery. Simplification of governance structures and financial flows, patient-centric care models, and educating patients about new care models are key components. Inspired leadership and the ability to innovate and learn from failures are deemed essential for driving meaningful change.

Collaborative efforts across healthcare and community sectors need to focus on proactive programs and initiatives. A shift from reactive to preventive models, involving primary and secondary prevention measures, is vital for addressing health inequalities. Localised strategies tailored to specific community needs play a crucial role in achieving equitable health outcomes. Empowering patients and local communities to take part in healthcare planning and decision-making processes ensures better alignment of services with population needs. Coordinated leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and the freedom for local systems to innovate are imperative for successful delivery of health system change.

Leading through change

Effective leadership in challenging times is characterised by a blend of pragmatism, resilience, and adaptability. Leaders must empower and enable their teams to deliver high-quality care, underscoring the importance of accountability at all levels. Continuous learning and a willingness to confront difficult issues are crucial traits, as leaders who are not learning cannot inspire their teams to do so. The ability to balance multiple inputs, maintain focus on quality and operational performance, and take bold steps in reforming systems are essential for driving positive change. Collaboration and collective effort are vital for navigating complexities and fostering improvements in healthcare services.

In times of uncertainty, leaders must be ambitious, brave, and inclusive, providing a clear vision and galvanising energy within communities. Effective leadership requires fostering open discussions, building strong partnerships across sectors, and supporting local systems with flexible governance structures. Embracing technological solutions to address legacy issues and improve patient care is necessary, as is engaging with the workforce to adopt digital solutions and change the organisation's risk appetite regarding technology. Leaders must create spaces for collaboration, invest in long-term planning, and ensure sustainable improvements in patient outcomes and healthcare costs.

Leadership in these times also involves cultural humility, active listening, and continuous learning, particularly through reverse mentoring to incorporate lived experiences into policy-making. Advocating for fair funding, workforce expansion, and integrating mental health into the broader health system are important aspects. Leaders should aim to drive systemic change through coordinated efforts and address unwarranted variation while maintaining accountability. Transparency, open communication with the public, and nurturing modern leaders capable of delivering outcomes are crucial for building trust and driving ambitious reforms.





Partnerships in practice

The importance of integrated care and collaboration among diverse stakeholders was emphasised across multiple discussions. Effective partnerships necessitate the inclusion of healthcare providers, local government, voluntary sectors, and community organisations. Trust and shared objectives are fundamental to forming successful collaborations, as is treating all partners as equals. Localised approaches tailored to community needs, leveraging the strengths of each organisation, and integrating services holistically were recurrent themes. Place-based partnerships that focus on community-specific challenges and solutions were highlighted as particularly impactful.

Several mentions underscored the value of involving non-traditional partners such as industry, schools, housing organisations, and social enterprises. The integration of these sectors can drive innovation and enhance efficiency, while addressing broader social determinants of health like housing and poverty. Interoperability solutions and coordinated services are crucial for overcoming barriers and ensuring seamless care delivery. The role of clinical champions and multidisciplinary teams was noted as vital for driving adoption of innovations and improving patient outcomes. Co-designing initiatives with local communities and maintaining transparent communication are essential for sustained collaboration and meaningful health improvements.

Strong leadership and coordinated efforts across various sectors are necessary to tackle health inequalities and ensure comprehensive care. Investment in relationships, governance structures, and innovative partnerships can foster effective collaboration. Public-private partnerships were seen as instrumental in driving transformation and sparking innovation within the NHS. Sustained funding for the voluntary sector and involving communities in decision-making processes were critical for building resilient, inclusive health systems. Overall, effective partnerships require curiosity, openness, and a shared vision to deliver high-quality, patient-centred services.

Making safety routine

The discussions highlighted the need to integrate quality and safety into everyday healthcare decision-making and practices. It was emphasised that safety failures account for a significant portion of healthcare spending, underscoring the necessity for patient safety to be central to all decisions, whether operational or financial. Without prioritising safety, financial and operational improvements would remain elusive. The role of regulatory bodies in protecting service users and supporting improvement was also acknowledged, with a focus on patient experiences across entire pathways rather than within individual institutions.

The potential of AI in enhancing patient safety was discussed, particularly its ability to provide predictive analytics for risk management and prevention. AI's core function of pattern recognition can be utilised to monitor and assess patient data continuously, ensuring timely interventions and minimising medical errors. AI applications in hospitals, such as flagging potential risks based on patient profiles before incidents occur, significantly improve safety measures. AI's support for clinical decision processes enables staff to focus on complex cases where human judgment is crucial.

Overall, the conversations stressed the importance of integrating safety into all aspects of healthcare operations, from decision-making to patient interactions. Emphasis was placed on collaboration, transparency, and continuous learning from incidents to create a safer healthcare environment. Additionally, the integration of advanced technologies like AI was seen as a promising avenue to enhance safety measures, streamline productivity, and maintain high standards in patient care. The combination of human judgment and technological support appears to be pivotal in making safety a daily reality in healthcare.





Equity in innovation

The need for inclusive and equitable healthcare was a recurring theme throughout the discussions. Emphasis was placed on addressing persistent racial inequalities and the challenges faced by underserved populations such as trans and non-binary individuals. Effective anti-racist initiatives and creating a culture that values and supports everyone were highlighted as essential. Collaboration and integration among various stakeholders were deemed crucial for ensuring that health innovations reach all communities and reduce disparities.

Several speakers underscored the importance of shared decision-making, patient empowerment, and inclusive public engagement strategies. By involving communities in co-designing health initiatives and leveraging local insights, the aim is to improve access and health outcomes for all populations. Strategies such as localised approaches, coordinated services, and flexible governance structures were recommended to meet people where they are and support them holistically. Investing in community-based services and engaging with local communities were identified as vital components for delivering inclusive and equitable mental health support.

Advanced technologies like AI have the potential to reduce health inequalities, but they must be implemented ethically and cautiously to avoid exacerbating disparities. Comprehensive, inclusive data collection and transparent processes are necessary to address inherent biases in AI and ensure fair, representative decisions. Trust-based partnerships and inclusive community engagement strategies are essential for leveraging the benefits of AI while mitigating risks. The discussions also highlighted the importance of research reaching diverse populations geographically and demographically, with a focus on strategic targeting to address specific population challenges and reduce the time from discovery to patient impact.

Digital NHS in action

Digital transformation in healthcare is revolutionising care delivery and decision-making by enhancing efficiency, streamlining operations, and improving patient outcomes. Several discussions highlighted the implementation of electronic patient records, federated data platforms, and health apps, which are pivotal in modernising healthcare services. These tools reduce administrative burdens, facilitate better coordination of care, and enable healthcare professionals to focus more on patient care. The integration of such technologies is essential for achieving ambitious healthcare goals and ensuring patient-centred care.

The adoption of AI and other advanced technologies like genomics, smart diagnostics, and wearables is significantly influencing clinical practices. AI-assisted diagnostic tools and virtual wards, for example, enable faster and more accurate diagnoses, bringing specialist expertise to community settings and reducing hospital admissions. The potential of AI to provide detailed health information and enhance patient safety through predictive analytics was a recurring theme. However, careful implementation is necessary to avoid embedding undesirable practices and biases, ensuring equitable benefits across all communities.

Leadership and substantial investment in digital infrastructure are crucial to support this transformation. Effective collaboration, standardisation, and practical adoption strategies were emphasised to ensure successful implementation of data-driven approaches. The importance of training healthcare professionals in using these digital tools and frameworks was noted, along with the need for public-private partnerships to drive innovation. Continuous investment in digital literacy and access is essential to leverage the benefits of digital transformation inclusively, enhancing service efficiency, accessibility, and overall patient experience.



Perspectives



Matthew Trainer

– on the disruptive impact of AI on expertise:

For the first time, we can access expert-level knowledge without needing to hire the expert.



Naser Turabi

– on patient-centred healthcare transformation:

Put patients at the heart of shaping this revolution — it's the only way we can catch the falling knife.



Peter Ellingworth

– on inclusion and health equity:

Fifty-one percent of the world doesn't look like me — and that's exactly why we have work to do.

Potential future topics

Integrating mental health into primary care: bridging the gap for better outcomes

This session will explore the integration of mental health services within primary care to provide more holistic and accessible care. Experts will discuss strategies for overcoming barriers and creating seamless pathways for patients, ensuring mental health is treated with the same urgency and importance as physical health.

Participants will hear case studies and best practices from regions that have successfully integrated these services. The session aims to highlight the benefits of a unified approach to mental and physical health, improving patient outcomes and reducing overall healthcare costs through early intervention and comprehensive care.

Harnessing genomics: the future of personalised medicine in the NHS

This session will delve into the transformative potential of genomics in personalised medicine within the NHS. Attendees will learn about the latest advancements in genomic research and how they can be applied to tailor treatments to individual patients, enhancing efficacy and reducing adverse effects.

Discussions will focus on the practical implementation of genomic medicine services in routine care, including the establishment of genomic innovation hubs. Experts will address challenges such as patient consent, data privacy, and the need for skilled professionals to interpret genomic data, ensuring ethical and effective integration into the healthcare system.

Empowering the voluntary sector: building sustainable health partnerships

This session will examine the crucial role of the voluntary sector in supporting the NHS and improving community health outcomes. Speakers will highlight successful collaborations between voluntary organisations and healthcare providers, showcasing how these partnerships can address health inequalities and provide essential services.

Attendees will explore ways to foster stronger connections and mutual support between the NHS and voluntary sector. The session will cover strategies for sustainable funding, co-production with communities, and leveraging local insights to create more resilient health systems through continuous engagement and trust-building.

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