

Improving the NHS

I would like to relaunch today a couple of ideas I have talked about before to improve the service and assist with efficiency.

The NHS issues large number of items to help people with their injuries and to assist their mobility. Many of these items like walking frames, crutches, wheelchairs, and various supports could be reused after a deep clean and checking, but are often left with the patient or the patient's family. The NHS could appoint contractors who would pick these items up from the patient or from the hospital after use, carry out the checks, and return them to the NHS for another patient. This should be cheaper than buying new every time, removes the costs of dumping them as waste, and would be a visible contribution to recycling.

The NHS also uses a large quantity of other supplies every day. There are two issues about this that might be amenable to improved handling. The first is to make more use of suppliers willingness these days to supply just in time, delivering to the ward or surgery that needs the item. Parts of the NHS still have a tendency to double and treble bank stocks, with a central stock, a hospital stock and a ward stock. The more you stock the more chance there is of damage or of things going out of date. It also takes up valuable space. Some pharma products need fridge storage.

The second is to have good dispensing of the product where it is needed, with guidance to busy medical staff as to which they need. Modern stock control and access systems allow precision delivery of the items needed related to a specific task. These systems also keep check of supplies and can ensure re-ordering in good time so there is also back up. Making supplies available to people discharged from hospital could also benefit from better control of stock, so people get what they need in a timely way, but are not burdened with large deliveries which turn out to be in excess of their needs.