“We want to empower staff to engage more with technology”

In autumn 2012, the prime minister announced dedicated capital investment called the Nursing Technology Fund to support nurses, midwives and health visitors to make better use of digital technology in all care settings.

The fund was launched in December 2013 and invited NHS organisations to bid for money to buy technology that would support staff in delivering safer, more efficient and more effective care. We want to empower our dedicated care professionals to engage with technology in a way that is both meaningful and helpful to them, which is why we are delighted there was such a positive response to the call for applications.

The first round of applications saw 74 trusts awarded funding totalling almost £30m, which has enabled them to put in place some really exciting and innovative initiatives. These include voice recognition technology for a paediatric intensive care unit (see p15); electronic observation systems that allow nurses and clinicians to record clinical data at the point of care, and resource-scheduling software; Milton Keynes Hospital Foundation Trust, which was granted £646,000 for its project to enable the monitoring of vital signs and early warning scores at the bedside in real-time; and Devon Partnership Trust, which was awarded £204,000 for video consultations for nursing staff to equip patients and develop proper therapeutic environments for remote consultations in a community mental healthcare setting.

Nurses and midwives have a central role to play in transforming NHS services; making best use of digital solutions is a key component of this. We need better, more integrated and preventative person-centred care. We need to support people in their communities and homes. Reducing the need for hospital care and technology is a key enabler to make this happen.

The focus of the second round of applications shifted from technical solutions to technology-enabled services. Eligibility was also expanded and 62 organisations, including local authorities and voluntary, community and social enterprises, as well as NHS trusts and foundation trusts, have been awarded funding totalling almost £35m, to be spent across 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Successful applicants include Marie Curie Cancer Care, which was awarded £1m for its connected nursing project to enable mobile access to digital care records, digital capture of clinical data at the point of care, and resource-scheduling software; Milton Keynes Hospital Foundation Trust, which was granted £646,000 for its project to enable the monitoring of vital signs and early warning scores at the bedside in real-time; and Devon Partnership Trust, which was awarded £204,000 for video consultations for nursing staff to equip patients and develop proper therapeutic environments for remote consultations in a community mental healthcare setting.

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The fund has empowered nurses, midwives and health visitors to offer care in ways that were not possible a decade ago, and it will continue to support improved working practices with the potential to transform patient care.

Beverley Bryant is director for strategic systems and technology, NHS England.

For more, see bit.ly/NursingTechFund

Being receptive to change and open to new ideas is vital to becoming an effective professional, but when change is in the form of new technology it can seem complex and daunting.

This week in practice we present a range of technological innovations and explore how they change the world of healthcare as we know it. The aim of all of these projects is to improve systems of care such as record keeping, administering blood products and communication to promote patient safety and good delivery of care.

Taking on change, particularly in the form of technology, requires good communication in teams. This week also includes the second part of our series on how to build effective teams. To use new technology effectively, all team members need to be on board.

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