NHS Hero Support –A Citizens' Response to the Coronavirus Outbreak

Thursday 2 April, 2020

NHS Hero Support – founded ten days ago by a group of volunteer professionals – is delivering **crowdfunded and donated PPE** to frontline staff, setting up supply chains, and developing new ways to help health teams across the UK tackle the transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

"Since setting up last week, we've delivered thousands of high-grade masks to University Hospital Lewisham, St Mary's Hospital, King's College Hospital, as well as non-hospital healthcare locations, such as hospice and mental health facilities – the care settings that are an area of growing concern," explains NHS Hero Support co-founder Alisa Pearlstone, a medical education specialist, "as a 'pop-up' procurement service we are able to respond quickly, even delivering masks to a surgeon and anaesthetist just half an hour before a scheduled operation," Dr Pearlstone adds.

Today, **NHS Hero Support** – made up of professionals from a variety of sectors, repurposing their expertise to the national effort to slow the spread of the virus – is collecting 15,000 more masks to distribute to a growing list of hospitals approaching this new organisation for support.

"We've found new sources of PPE for hospitals, and while so far it's a drop in an ocean of need, every extra staff member protected can make a life-saving difference to infections, for themselves and their patients," says entrepreneur Rishi Baungally,
whose idea to use his international supplier network kick-started the project."

"This country is one team now," says Project Director Dr Alisa Pearlstone, "the incredible volunteer army that has mobilised since day one of this health crisis is heartening proof of that. NHS Hero Support is part of that movement, doing what it can to provide help where it is needed most," Dr Pearlstone adds.

Developing Innovative Partnerships
Boosting national resilience through innovative partnerships is a key focus of the team, helping to repurpose existing British capabilities towards specific requirements identified to them by health professionals.

"We're set up to respond to needs as they come in," says Rob Fraser, heading up the supply chain for the project, and whose day job is in the conference sector, "as an example, we've got a partnership with UK-based 3D printers to produce protective visors, designed in collaboration with NHS colleagues to ensure they provide the right level of protection for these circumstances, and we've even got a squad of volunteers in place to assemble them," concludes Mr Fraser.

"The people in our growing team are offering their expertise to make NHS Hero Support's end-to-end delivery work, and that's really impressive," adds Maggie Lin, the team's international trade expert, "we have been joined by some amazing festival organisers, who are redeploying event staging delivery services to help with distribution on the ground, and others, such as a ventilator expert helping to track down novel sources of ventilator equipment, and that's only a snapshot," Ms Lin says.

"Having the experienced eyes of professionals from a range of disciplines brings a diversity of thinking to our rolling planning process," says innovation expert Dr Kate Hammer, who advises NHS Hero Support, "conventional ways of working have to be adapted in the face of the Covid crisis, and as part of our work on innovative solutions, we look forward to bringing UK textile manufacturers into this agile ecosystem. Britain wants to make what British healthcare workers need – gowns and scrubs are an obvious place to start," she concludes.

Help for NHS Staff
"We are encouraging health professionals to contact us via our website (www.nhsherosupport.co.uk), and tell us how we can help," concludes Rishi Baungally, "to members of the public I say – our amazing NHS staff are working tirelessly in difficult conditions, and while millions of us show our appreciation with the wonderful 'Clap for Our Carers' every Thursday evening, we can also support them with practical help. So, please consider making a donation to support our work via our GoFundMe campaign (https://uk.gofundme.com/f/nhs-heroes-support)."

"In the 10 days since we launched, we've grown from a proof-of-concept £2000 project, to having the capacity to connect NHS inventory stores and logistics teams that stretch the length of England, with the

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needs of our nurses and doctors on the ground," says Dr Pearlstone, "together with the millions of volunteers helping vulnerable people in our society, supporting the NHS and their local communities, it's truly wonderful what the people of this country have created in such a short space of time," she concludes.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS
1 For further information, please contact:

Email: comms@nhsherosupport
Tel: 07587 585184

http://nhsherosupport.co.uk

2 Photo caption: Rishi Baungally of NHS Hero Support delivering the organisation's first consignment of high-grade facemasks to Lewisham Hospital.

3 NHS Hero Support is a pop-up citizens procurement service, run by professionals from across sectors, working on a pro bono basis to put their skills at the service of the country to help the NHS manage transmission vectors in hospital settings, with the goal of reducing infections and saving lives.

4 We work directly with suppliers and our NHS contacts to ensure the equipment we provide complies with international guidelines for dealing with infectious diseases.

5 Website: http://nhsherosupport.co.uk

6 Crowdfunder: Go Fund Me https://uk.gofundme.com/f/nhs-heroes-support
Please help us to deliver even more PPE to our NHS heroes on the frontline. Every pound you donate helps protect an NHS Hero in their work.

7 Twitter - @nhsherosupport / Facebook - @nhsherosupport

Instagram - @nhsherosupport

Team includes:

- PhD international medical education expert whose healthcare comms company was acquired in 2015 by a leading media and marketing group now servicing 220,000 healthcare professionals
- Chinese-speaking LLM international trade expert
- Senior executive turned consultant in the medical device industry
- MA in Mathematics from Cambridge with 20 years private sector experience
- Internationally known innovation expert, Ivy-League educated
- Serial entrepreneur in a range of sectors, including international procurement
- Medical physicist turned IT project consultant
- Business owners in the event management industry
- Writer and communications specialist, and Oxford graduate

Company Contact:

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NHS Hero Support

T. 07387585184
E. comms@nhsherosupport.co.uk
W. https://www.nhsherosupport.co.uk/

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