THE LIFT COUNCIL

Supporting neighbourhood health for 25 years



NHS LIFT

Supporting neighbourhood health for 25 years

A celebratory report to mark the 25th anniversary of the NHS LIFT Programme

THE LIFT COUNCIL

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25
years of
neighbourhood
health

Established in 2001, with public infrastructure in need of radical investment, the **NHS Local Improvement Finance Trust (NHS LIFT)** brought together the private and public sectors to work in partnership to deliver quality primary healthcare and community facilities.

Over the last 25 years, the NHS LIFT programme has delivered 350 high-quality new healthcare buildings across England which continue to serve at the frontline of Primary Care, and which are seen as an important building block to deliver a neighbourhood health service fit for the future.

As key partners across the health sector come together to celebrate the **25th anniversary of the NHS LIFT programme,** this short report looks at the 'Past, Present and Future of LIFT' – it considers the Primary Care landscape before LIFT was created; what the LIFT model has helped to deliver over the last 25 years; and a look ahead to the important role that the LIFT estate can continue to play in supporting the NHS and neighbourhood health.

This report has been created by **The LIFT Council** - the membership body for private investors in LIFT – who work together with **Community Health Partnerships**, the Government owned company and public sector partner in the LIFT programme. We are also grateful to the many NHS teams, community organisations, local residents and industry partners whose support has been critical to NHS LIFT's continued success.

The LIFT Council and its members

Lord Keith Bradley



Throughout my many years in politics and healthcare, it is rare to find a piece of public policy that continues to resonate long after it was first created, but the NHS LIFT programme does exactly that.

LIFT has not only delivered vital health facilities for millions of patients over the last 25 years, it is also a programme that will continue to have a lasting impact long into the next chapter of the NHS.

At the heart of LIFT's longevity is that its health centres continue to evolve, adapt and transform, with the public and private partners working together to find innovative new ways to meet the changing needs of NHS patients and local communities.

Through my own involvement in LIFT across the North West, I have seen at first-hand the wide-ranging role these buildings now play, where local residents can access dentists and doctors' surgeries next to mental health and maternity provision, and where cancer screening and cardiology can sit alongside Council services, cafés, leisure centres and libraries. LIFT has shown us that well-designed and well-maintained health buildings can not only serve at the frontline of Primary Care, but also grow to become vibrant neighbourhood hubs.

On this important anniversary, I offer my huge congratulations to everyone involved in LIFT for their significant achievements. As we now look to the health ambitions of the future, LIFT offers an important springboard for success and a firm foundation for the next 25 years of neighbourhood health.

Lord Keith Bradley

Sarah Beaumont-Smith

Chair of The LIFT Council



It is an honour to mark the 25th anniversary of the NHS LIFT programme and to celebrate the vital role that LIFT has played in supporting the NHS, local communities and neighbourhood health over the last 25 years.

As this report shows, some of the challenges the NHS faced when LIFT was first created in 2001 are strikingly similar to the health landscape of today – once again there is a focus on shifting care closer to the community; there are again ambitious plans to deliver a new generation of neighbourhood health centres; and we are again rightly recognising the key role that public-private-partnership working can play in delivering a health service fit for the future.

So while any anniversary is a great chance to look back on what has been achieved, it is just as important to look ahead, and it is hugely encouraging that the Government has highlighted the "successful" NHS LIFT Programme as an important building block for its future 10-Year Health ambitions.

At the heart of LIFT's success has been partnership working between the private and public sectors so as the Government and NHS now look to new partnership models in health delivery, the experiences and lessons learned from NHS LIFT will be crucial in shaping the next wave of neighbourhood health services.

As we come together to celebrate 25 years of LIFT's achievements, all of the key partners in the NHS LIFT Programme also stand ready to support the Government in ensuring the next 25 years of neighbourhood health delivery continue to be a success.

Sarah Beaumont-Smith
Chair of The LIFT Council

THE PAST

Life before LIFT and the need for radical investment

In the years leading up to the creation of the NHS LIFT Programme, the early 2000s saw large parts of public infrastructure in need of radical investment, with the primary healthcare estate facing particular challenges:

Primary care not fit for purpose through "years of under investment"

A National Audit Office (NAO) report of the time summarised that

> "many GPs' premises are of poor quality. 81% were below the required size in [and] almost half were based in either adapted residential buildings or converted shops".

As a result, primary healthcare was often delivered from outdated buildings that were rundown, expensive to run, with access issues and simply not fit for purpose – a point acknowledged by then-Health Secretary **Alan Milburn MP** who said *"primary care in too many parts of the country is appalling... and we expect modern primary care to be carried out in those circumstances."*

This poor condition was compounded by what the NAO highlighted as *"years of under investment in primary care services",* with a House of Commons Committee report also pointing out the financial constraints the public sector faced at the time:

> "Primary Care Trusts have limited sources of public funds for developing new premises. The main alternative is to commission a private contractor to develop premises, which is not always feasible in deprived areas".

Together these points paint a picture of health landscape blighted by under-investment; with Primary Care facilities not fit for purpose; and a scarcity of funding in those areas most in need, leading to inequalities of health provision.

A new partnership model to drive investment

It was against this backdrop that the NHS Local Improvement Finance Trust (NHS LIFT) was devised by Government in 2001 to remedy the poor quality of the Primary Care estate and attract much-needed investment in new health facilities. Given public sector funding constraints, it was quickly recognised that the private sector had a vital role to play, with **Health Secretary Alan Milburn** explaining that *"What we need is more of a relationship between the public and the private sector in order to get better care, improved premises and shorter waiting times available for more NHS patients".*

As a result, LIFT was designed as a public-private partnership (PPP) model in order to attract private investment, but with clear safeguards to protect public sector interests. Based on some of the challenges and lessons learned from previous PFI models, NHS LIFT created an entirely new PPP approach founded on fairness, flexibility and transparency – each LIFT health centre sees the private sector hold a 60% stake and the public sector 40%, leading to joint management, joint ownership and shared benefits.

An effective approach delivering results where they were needed most

In early 2001 the first 6 pilot areas for LIFT were announced (Manchester, Salford & Trafford, Barnsley, Camden & Islington, East London, Newcastle & North Tyneside and Sandwell) with what the Health Select Committee noted was a clear plan of *"targeting Health Action Zones with high levels of unmet need".*

Within a few years the strengths of the LIFT model, and the benefits of its targeted approach, quickly became evident. NAO analysis in 2005 concluded that

> **"LIFT is an effective means of improving primary health and social care [and] capable of producing value for money. Initial schemes were focused around deprived inner-city areas, where health needs are greatest and prevailing conditions are poorest".**

So as an effective health delivery model, focussed on serving those areas most in need, LIFT quickly established some early foundations for success which have endured over the last 25 years, as set out in the next chapter.



LIFE BEFORE LIFT

> "What we can do is continue to dole out penny packets of public sector cash...or else we can do what we are doing through NHS LIFT, which is an attempt to lever through cooperation with the private sector enormous sums of cash into deprived inner city communities... It is a very important part of the argument about the modern relationship between the private sector and the National Health Service being for the benefit of NHS patients, and being precisely for the benefit of the poorest NHS patients."

Then-Health Secretary Alan Milburn MP, speaking in 2002

Testimonials on ‘life before LIFT’

“Having worked in the NHS in the northwest for over 25 years, I saw at first hand the challenges we faced in Primary Care and some of the transformational impacts the new LIFT buildings offered our NHS staff and patients. 25 years on and these buildings are still at the frontline of neighbourhood health and a vital part of the fabric of community life – it is a legacy everyone involved in LIFT can be proud of.”



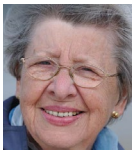
Former NHS director Dave Sweeney

“I welcome LIFT as an attractive new way of improving primary health and social care facilities. This is an excellent example of a department doing something different and new to come up with an effective solution to an established problem.”



Sir John Bourne, then-head of the National Audit Office in 2005

“I’ve been with the same practice for over 50 years, but how things have changed for the better. I used to see my doctor in an old terraced house. The kitchen was the reception, the living room was the waiting room, and my doctor’s office was upstairs.”



Local resident Angela Flower, discussing health provision in Hull before new NHS LIFT facilities were built across the city

“When we set out on this pioneering journey 25 years ago, it was to improve a primary care estate where single-handed GP practices were often situated in inadequate terraced housing, built long before the NHS was created. As an MP in Hull, I saw first-hand the beneficial impact that new NHS LIFT facilities had on redevelopment in the city.”



Former MP Alan Johnson

THE PRESENT

LIFT supporting neighbourhood health for 25 years

From the very first NHS LIFT health centres delivered in the early 2000s, to the latest LIFT building – the Tessa Jowell Health Centre which opened in 2020 – the LIFT Programme has a 25-year track record of supporting neighbourhood health and local communities including:

350

new healthcare buildings delivered across England

9 in 10

LIFT buildings in areas with above-average health needs

1,400+

doctors, nurses and other health professionals accommodated

£2.5bn

of private investment, for just £100m of public money

350 new healthcare buildings across England

The NHS LIFT programme has delivered 350 new healthcare buildings across England, with health centres located in the heart of the community, ensuring millions of patients and local residents can access the care they need in an accessible, convenient location.

90% of LIFT buildings in deprived areas with above average health needs

As the NAO's early analysis of the first LIFT projects stated,

> "Initial schemes were focused around deprived inner-city areas, where health needs are greatest and prevailing conditions are poorest".

This focus has continued throughout the last 25 years, meaning that of the 350 LIFT health centres now delivered, 9 in every 10 buildings are in areas with above average health needs, delivering vital facilities to those that need them most.

An integrated one-stop shop of health and community facilities

LIFT has supported the move towards better integrated care for patients, with LIFT health centres offering a 'one stop shop' of health and social care provision under one roof. Many LIFT centres also integrate a wider range of community facilities, including libraries, leisure centres, Council services, and modern new housing. As a result, the LIFT estate has become a vital, vibrant part of communities and neighbourhoods throughout England.

Improved conditions for thousands of NHS staff

NHS LIFT health centres provide space for over 1,400 doctors, nurses and other health professionals, and have driven significant improvements in working conditions for NHS and care workers through better quality facilities, and by bringing together a wider range of service providers in one location.

Economic benefits and value for money for the public sector

The 350 NHS LIFT health centres have been delivered by securing £2.5 billion of private investment, for just £100m of public money. Due to the building performance risk also being transferred to the private sector, LIFT buildings do not have the backlog maintenance challenges of other NHS-owned estate and have been independently reviewed to demonstrate value for money against traditional NHS estate arrangements.

Social Value, not just bricks and mortar

Key LIFT partners have recognised that 'bricks and mortar' healthcare is only part of the story, and that it is vital to reach out into local communities to further support their health and wellbeing. As a result, the LIFT estate supports hundreds of Social Value initiatives, including award-winning health partnerships with local sports teams; donating land to charitable organisations to help create a community allotment along with other community garden initiatives; partnering with University law departments to offer residents free 'work and welfare' advice sessions; and creating new 'wellbeing hubs' with free space for community groups within LIFT buildings.





CASE STUDY · THE PRESENT

The Centre Manor Park, London

The very first LIFT building to also now become one of the first Neighbourhood Health Centres

The very first LIFT building was Church Road Centre in East London which opened in 2004 and immediately made a difference in bringing integrated care closer to the community – at a Parliamentary hearing in 2005, **then-Deputy Director at the Department of Health, Peter Coates CBE** said:

> "It is policy that we try to bring care closer to home. One of the best examples we saw was the Church Road development where four acute consultants are now stationed regularly in the one-stop shop and able to treat patients locally".

Over 20 years later and the building - now known as The Centre Manor Park – continues to serve as a vital community hub. Indeed, the building has now been identified by Government as one of 27 existing facilities that will be transformed into new Neighbourhood Health Centres. It is a fitting testament to LIFT's longevity that the very first LIFT health centre will also become one of the first new neighbourhood health centres, and underlines LIFT's vital role in future neighbourhood health provision as set out in the next chapter.



CASE STUDY · THE PRESENT

Tessa Jowell Health Centre, London

LIFT's newest building and a testament to public-private-partnership working

As the most recent NHS LIFT building to open, the Tessa Jowell Health Centre in south east London, is a great example of the strengths and benefits of the LIFT model in delivering highquality, integrated health facilities in the heart of the community. Despite huge challenges created by COVID-19, the public and private sector worked together to open the health centre in April 2020 – a great example of how the LIFT model encourages true partnership, with the public and private sector shouldering the challenges together.

The new building brings together a range of vital services from a GP surgery, mental health services, and adult and children's community services, through to state-of-the-art medical facilities such as a renal dialysis unit, and cardiology and respiratory diagnostics. **Primary Care Medical Manager Dr Jonathan Love** said:

> "There's a whole mix of services in the building which means we can work collaboratively and really come up with new solutions for patient care. Without a doubt, this is the future of good health care".



CASE STUDY · THE PRESENT

Parkview Health Centre, London & South Bristol Community Hospital

LIFT supporting wider urban regeneration

While the driving force behind NHS LIFT is to deliver much-needed new health facilities, the programme has also been leveraged to support wider urban regeneration in towns and cities.

Parkview Health & Wellbeing Centre in west London was delivered under LIFT in 2014, helping to integrate a range of local health, social care, and Council services under one roof. But the development went one step further, and was also used to deliver modern new housing for localresidents, including 170 affordable housing units, together with a mini supermarket, and improvements to the adjacent Wormholt Park.

South Bristol Community Hospital, delivered under LIFT in 2012, was similarly ambitious. Built to replace outdated facilities at the old Bristol General Hospital, and to move a range of health services closer to the community, the new Community Hospital also formed part of the wider Hengrove Park regeneration project that will deliver up to 1435 new homes across multiple phases.

THE FUTURE

LIFT's vital role in future neighbourhood health provision

Having delivered 350 quality NHS health centres across England, securing £2.5 billion of private investment for just £100m of public money, the NHS LIFT Programme is viewed by industry as one of the most successful PPP models to-date and an enduring example of partnership working.

The Government itself recognised the positive impact and huge strengths of the NHS LIFT Programme in its 10-Year Health Plan in 2025, which set out that future plans for a neighbourhood health service would "build on the successful NHS Local Improvement Finance Trust programme". Indeed, the existing NHS LIFT estate is already demonstrating the vital future role it will play in the Government's neighbourhood health ambitions and plans for 'three big shifts' across the NHS:

A vital foundation for delivering Neighbourhood Health Centres

- NHS LIFT has supported neighbourhood health for the last 25 years, with 350 health centres located in some of the most deprived communities, echoing a key plank of the Government's 10-Year Health Plan to focus on "the places where healthy life expectancy is lowest".
- As a result, the first 27 new neighbourhood health centres announced by Government earlier this year include plans to upgrade 11 existing NHS LIFT facilities, ensuring the LIFT estate continues to be at the heart of future neighbourhood health provision.

11 of 27

of the first new neighbourhood health centres announced by Government include plans to upgrade existing NHS LIFT facilities



A springboard to shift care from hospital to community:

- The LIFT estate offers an important springboard for Government plans to shift health services closer to the community, particularly in neighbourhoods with above average health needs
- Many LIFT health centres also continue to be adapted to relocate more services out of major hospitals and into the community. Examples include the Accrington Acorn Primary Care Centre, where following the closure of a major hospital, a range of displaced services were relocated into a community setting; and Newton Community Hospital in St Helens where an expanded inpatient ward allows patients to leave hospital and be given intermediate care closer to home.

Accelerating the shift from sickness to prevention:

- A number of LIFT health centres have also been adapted and updated to bring key screening and diagnostic services into a neighbourhood setting, offering vital preventative health services closer to home, and easing the strain on major hospitals and the acute sector
- A number of NHS LIFT buildings already serve as Community Diagnostic Centres, while other parts of the LIFT estate have been adapted and updated to offer preventative services such as cancer screening; CT and MRI scanning; phlebotomy, cardiology and respiratory tests; and mental health provision

Supporting the shift from analogue to digital:

- The LIFT estate is well-positioned to incorporate new technologies to support the planned shift towards integrated, digital-first NHS systems.
- At Jean Bishop Integrated Care Centre in Hull, a digital consultation room offers NHS staff a dedicated space to manage virtual appointments and use AI tools to support consultations; at Marfleet Health Centre in Hull, LIFT partners created a digital model of the building, to test and create a decarbonisation plan, leading to tangible sustainability improvements; and The Reginald Centre in Leeds offers a 'digital hub' to allow patients to book appointments, manage their benefits, and access support to help become more digitally savvy.



CASE STUDY · THE FUTURE

Barbara Castle Way Health Centre, Blackburn

Helping to shift care from hospital to community

Within Barbara Castle Way Health Centre in central Blackburn, several vacant or under-utilised areas created an opportunity to expand local health and care provision, and bring key services closer to the community.

In particular, local Primary Care Networks highlighted the high mental health needs in the local area, and that transport costs were a significant barrier to residents engaging with key services elsewhere. As a result, the LIFT partners, NHS Trusts and Integrated Care Boards repurposed underused building space to create additional local mental health provision, bringing mental health support closer to the population it serves.

Along with an acute mental health therapy service, other improvements include new X-ray facilities; Talking Therapies services; new pods for use by the voluntary sector; and improved spaces for patients and staff. The project underlines how the LIFT estate can support the principles of neighbourhood health delivery, where existing building space can be used more effectively to bring key services closer to the community.



CASE STUDY · THE FUTURE

Jean Bishop Integrated Care Centre, Hull

Supporting the shift from sickness to prevention

The Jean Bishop Integrated Care Centre in Hull delivered in 2018 offers an innovative example of how LIFT buildings are supporting Government's aims to shift from sickness to prevention.

As the first of its kind in the UK, the Jean Bishop centre was built specially to care for older people in the community. Built next to existing housing for elderly people, the Jean Bishop centre offers out-of-hospital-care, (including blood tests, x-rays, and CT scans) along with a range of preventative services, such as falls prevention and keep fit, helping people maintain healthy and independent living in their own homes.

As a result, NHS analysis indicates that the centre has contributed to a 13.6% reduction in emergency hospital attendances for patients aged over 80. Over the same period there was a 17.6% reduction in emergency department attendances for patients in care homes.

13.6% reduction in emergency hospital attendances, patients aged over 80

17.6% reduction in emergency department attendances, patients in care homes



CASE STUDY · THE FUTURE

The Nelson Health Centre, London

Embracing new technologies to support the shift from 'analogue to digital'

In 2026, The Nelson Health Centre in South West London became the first Primary Care Centre to use drone logistics for transporting pathology samples, with samples taken by drone from The Nelson to laboratories at London's St George's Hospital in just three minutes.

By reducing delivery times by 85% compared with road transport, the service is accelerating test results, enabling clinicians to make faster decisions and providing patients with greater certainty about their care.

The innovative initiative demonstrates how the NHS LIFT estate is well-positioned to embrace new technologies, helping to support the shift from 'analogue to digital' and the move towards integrated, digital-first NHS systems.



3 mins
drone flight from The Nelson to St George's Hospital

85%
faster than road transport

A vital foundation for the next 25 years of neighbourhood health



As this report sets out, the LIFT programme was introduced at a time of health infrastructure in need of radical investment, bringing together the public and private sectors to help transform the Primary Care landscape.

As the Government and NHS again look to boost Primary Care through ambitious neighbourhood health plans, the achievements of the LIFT programme over the last 25 years will also be a vital foundation for the next 25 years of neighbourhood health, including:

1 Quality, flexible space that can allow Government to go further & faster in neighbourhood health delivery

The LIFT estate offers modern health space in the heart of the community, ready to be further adapted to support a range of new services and emerging health needs.

The 11 LIFT buildings already earmarked to be transformed into neighbourhood health centres points to the huge potential – it is encouraging that more buildings are also now being looked at, underlining that the LIFT estate can offer Government a fast-tracked way to deliver care closer to communities.

2 An enduring, successful partnership approach, offering important 'lessons learned' for future PPP models

The Government's 10-Year Health Plan recognised the "successful" LIFT model as an important building block for its future neighbourhood health plans, so it is vital that the public and private sector partners in LIFT are consulted and engaged.

The private sector partners – including the many members of The LIFT Council – offer a unique and unrivalled perspective on how best to deliver health infrastructure across England, and stand ready to be an important 'sounding board' to Government in developing new PPP models.

3 Experienced private investors that can continue to be an important partner to Government & the NHS

The overlap between NHS LIFT and future neighbourhood health delivery is not only in the 'bricks and mortar' of our health infrastructure, but also in the key organisations involved – many of the partners & investors in LIFT will also be needed if plans for new Neighbourhood Health Centres are to be a success.

The private partners in LIFT not only look back on a proud legacy of supporting neighbourhood health for the last 25 years, but have a huge appetite to do more, and to continue being an active partner to Government and the NHS in future health delivery.

THE LIFT COUNCIL

Supporting neighbourhood health for 25 years

amp INFRASTRUCTURE

BBGI INVESTING IN GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE

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