

Social Charter for the Health Commons Hub

draft, 16th September 2013

“A social charter is a declaration of intent to hold a commons in trust for its beneficiaries. The creation of a social charter is an important step in setting up an effective commons trust to protect a community’s common resources.” [What Is a Social Charter](#)

The function of each section is indicated by the questions prefacing it.

Introduction:

There is no one single initiative or organisation that has the whole picture of what a healthy healthcare system in the future would look like.

The HealthCommonsHub endeavours to serve as a platform that enables the awakening to our collective potential in health & well being. It will act as an attractor and enabler for meaningful conversations that allow us to see the whole ecosystem with it’s co-evolving parts.

The HCH could help grow a global brain for health if it can help develop a universal network.

The signs of our time show us clearly that a new impulse of awakening is felt by many individuals everywhere. All around the world groups, projects and movements grow which want a shift in healthcare towards treating the whole person, co-creation of health, showing compassion in healthcare, working with rather than against nature, becoming sustainable, ...

Together they already form a kind of movement out of which a new larger perspective of what health is can develop which can allow us to grasp at a deeper level what the ways of health are and in what ways health actually matters to our further evolution to the next phase in human history .

What does health and being awake to health feel like?

What does a culture look like in which the health of everyone matters?

What does a society look like where everyone deeply cares about health - health of oneself, of ones community and environment?

We can awaken to our collective potential to answer these questions by understanding where we came from in terms of healthcare , by looking at different values and perspectives out of which different healthcare practices emerged, and looking at the cultures and societies we created based on these. When we question what we have learned to take for granted we realise that a lot of what we find are habits which we cultivate by repetition unconsciously.

When we recognise these habits as filters through which we have come to interpret life, we declutter and free our view and awaken to the world, sensing new possibilities.

We need each other, groups and projects and organisations need each other to develop this collective sensing into what else is possible. A new reality of caring and healing.

We need to become visible to each other to make individual and collective sensing possible and to find out what awakening in this new context means. We can recognise common patterns which we can weave together to become a movement for a healthy healthcare system.

Our Context and the Commons Framework

What is the overall need/opportunity in society that we are called to meet?

While advances in technologies and medical science allowed life expectancy to exceed 80 years in 26 countries, in another 17 countries it is below 55 years. Even in the industrialized world, with higher living standards access to good health varies greatly by region and socio-economic factors.

The International Conference on [Primary Health Care](#) in Alma Ata (1978) declared the "participation of people as a group or individually in planning and implementing their health care" (Wikipedia) as a human right and duty, yet it is widely disregarded everywhere. Many state and market solutions to healthcare have been proven largely inadequate and inefficient. They operate according to an outdated scientific, philosophical and economic model, one that supported the development of industrialization, division of labour and specialisation but became a hindrance to grow healthy thriving communities and fulfilled, and whole human beings.

That's the context, to which a broad range of people-centred initiatives for a healthier, community-powered health system are responding in the UK and internationally. However, they are mostly disjointed and fragmented, lacking a unifying socio-economic-cultural framework necessary to reach critical impact. That defines the need and opportunity, which the Health Commons Hub is addressing by having its work be guided by the Commons, as such a framework.

The Commons is "the social and political space where things get done and where people have a sense of belonging and have an element of control over their lives, providing sustenance, security and independence... Commons are organized around resources that are collectively owned or shared between or among populations. These resources are said to be held in common and can include everything from natural resources to domains of the cultural sphere..." (Wikipedia)

What we have in common is our members' knowledge and experience of producing various health-focused resources, such as community health champion networks, self-care library, community medicinal herb garden/physic gardens, health innovation network, community currency, facilitation skills, governance models, social media and group process tools. The Health Commons Hub is stewarding and making them available to all who can benefit from them.

Vision

What is the emergent future that we feel passionate about working for?

If lived up to our fullest potential, what change could become possible in the world?

We envision a world, where the full development of each individual, including having a healthy life, is recognized as universal human right, and all institutions of society are designed for supporting it.

In that world, democratic and resilient communities organise themselves and connect with each other in the process of co-producing and co-governing the resources essential to their members' well-being.

Those communities at the workplace and the neighborhood are "at the heart of a bottom-up reorganization of society... providing human-centered innovations that contribute to sustainability—and a new civic society." [Sustainability Outlook 2020](#), by Institute for the Future

In that world, communities reclaim stewardship for good health and reduce the exclusive dependence on the dominant, expensive system of medical care.

Moving healthcare out into the community will be challenging and need social organizing, facilitation and confidence building since people have been conditioned to think and act as individual isolated consumers rather than producers and stewards of health. Experts and health professionals will empower people's health decisions rather than control them.

Such a society is not only possible but within the horizon. The Health Commons Hub is working for ushering it in.

Purpose

What is our reason for being, our unique contribution to the future in need of us?

What might we create so that our lives and the lives of the people of the world we serve would be better?

What strategic (and time-bound) objectives does that purpose inspire?

We anticipate that our answer to those purpose-framing questions will evolve over time. Our current purpose is this:

We empower community-centered health initiatives and groups, by providing a social and technical platform for exchange and collaboration. It will be a platform optimized for the health commons to grow from its current seed from into a core paradigm of our health system.

That purpose is also expressed by our motto: *connecting for a healthier health system.*

Values & Principles

What are the guidelines that help us translating our Purpose into assessments, practice, decisions and behaviors?

How we want to relate with one another as we work together towards the shared Purpose?

- Commoning: moving from the Me to the We, by thinking and acting as co-creative collective entities, without surrendering our individual autonomy
- Adhering to the permaculture ethics of [earth care](#) (rebuilding natural capital), [people care](#) (look after self, kin, and community), and [fair share](#) (set limits and redistribute surplus)
- Organising ourselves in ways that foster relationship, participation, creativity, learning, and development

- Embodying openness, transparency and accountability in our behaviour
- Continually enhancing our collective intelligence and seek collective wisdom to guide it.

“Principles typically have high ethical and moral content, and developing them requires engaging the whole person, not just the intellect. The best will be descriptive, not prescriptive, and each principle will illuminate the others. Taken as a whole, together with the purpose, the principles constitute the body of belief that will bind the community together and against which all decisions and acts will be judged.”

[Chaordic Design Process](#)

Descriptive principles are guidelines that we can observe in and extract from our practice. We assume that we will add more principles in this section of the Social Charter, as our practice deepens and expands.

People

Given our Purpose, who are all the relevant and affected parties, all the internal and external stakeholders?

How to map the in a way that would help creating and sustaining mutually supportive relationships with them?

Our primary stakeholders are our members, who can be collective entities and individuals. Currently, they include the following health and commons activists ad educators:

- Alex Laird
- Alyson McGregor
- Anna Betz
- George Pór
- Helen Cooke
- Henk Hadders
- Sue Bell

We also develop co-productive conversations with commons-friendly academics and health professionals in both the public and private sectors.

Organisations, with which we intend to develop a supportive relationship include amongst others:

- [Altogether Better](#)
- [Centre for Sustainable Healthcare](#)
- [College of Medicine Innovation Network](#)
- [Community Integrated Care](#) a national, not-for-profit social and health care provider
- [International Futures Forum Culture and Health](#) fresh thinking for public health in the 21st century
- [NESTA Health Knowledge Commons](#)
- [NHS Alliance](#)
- [NHS Confederation/Social Value](#)
- [NHS Sustainable Development Unit](#)
- [People’s Health Movement](#)
- [Young Foundation & Health](#)

As we, the founding members of HCH further develop the future versions of the Social Charter, our perceptions of who constitutes a stakeholder will typically expand and get refined.

Structure

What organisational and legal forms could be the most effective in helping us pursuing our Purpose?

How are we going to make decisions together?

How are we going to generate and allocate the funds necessary to sustain and expand the operations of the Health Commons Hub?

The Hub is, first of all, a commons and our organisational processes are guided by the [Ostrom principles](#).

Currently, HCH is a project initiated and supported by the School of Commoning, a Community Interest Company, which acts as its fiscal agent until members decide it's time to create a new legal entity to carry out the functions of the project.

We use [Integrative Decision Making](#), as the principal method for deciding things together.

Most of the tools and services of the Health Commons Hub are provided free of charge to all, as our contribution to the gift economy. When we provide anything on top them we charge a modest fee for value-adding services. The revenues from this go to the commons, and its members decide about the proportions in which it should be used for meeting collective needs vs. distributed as dividends among the members who contributed to their generation.

As an organisation we are a community of practice, a commons and a social enterprise, all in one.

Between us we share experience in strategic thinking, consulting, the Art of Hosting, World Café, facilitation, generative dialogue, holistic healthcare, social care, management, teaching, community engagement, online facilitation, and other skills in the field of organisational development and learning.

The Health Commons Hub as a community of practice (CoP)

As a CoP, we support each other's everyday work in organising and connecting community-centred health initiatives.

We are also passionate about exploring in our own lives the possibilities for better health through sharing and reflecting on our diverse practices and experiences.

We develop and validate practices, checklists, and process templates worth replicating, by our members and other stakeholders.

We organise, manage, and steward a body of knowledge from which community members can draw.

The CoP aspect of the Health Commons Hub is the core driver of our collaboration.

The Health Commons Hub as a commons

As a commons, we serve in a clearinghouse function, by collecting, organizing, and referencing the world's shared knowledge about community-led health initiatives, people-centred healthcare, and related resources.

Our main purpose is to create an infrastructure that enables collaboration.

We steward, open-source, and disseminate our knowledge resources, making them widely available to all who can benefit from them.

We invite, partner with, and inspire health activists, policy makers, social workers, visionary leaders in health-related state, business or voluntary organisations, to help generate and contribute to creating resources for the commons.

We are a platform, a nexus of connections for various community-lead health projects and organisations, supporting collaboration across their boundaries.

The distribution of our knowledge resources will take place, primarily, through:

- The Health Commons Hub website and such social media outlets as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, SlideShare, and Google Hangout, including links to community led health projects and initiative, resources in specialized forums, wikis, and blogs
- Interactive newsletter, first quarterly, then, as we build momentum, monthly, including interviews with leaders in citizen-led health initiatives, future-responsive professional organisations and networks and health commons-friendly policy makers.
- Open-enrolment public events

Engaged in the activities above, we are contributing to the incubation and development of the commons as a new type of collaborative organisation in the field of health and wellbeing, which is based on principles of stewardship rather than ownership.

The Health Commons Hub as a social enterprise

Besides our open source, commons-generated content, we, as a social enterprise deliver fee-based, educational and advisory services to health organisations.

Those services will be designed for anybody interested in integrated health and socialcare, collaborative partnerships, supporting compassion in healthcare, sustainable models of health and social care, and how technology can support those qualities. Their intended, primary beneficiaries are leaders interested to transform health and social care.

We charge reasonable fees for our client work, the total revenue from which will be allocated between the needs of sustaining the commons and dividends paid to honor the needs of our members, in proportions decided by our co-governance process.

We are open to partner with individuals and organizations based on shared values, mutual benefits and enhanced contribution to the common good.

The initial form of our social enterprise is an autonomous project having the School of Commoning, a Community Interest Company, as its fiscal agent. When the HCH activities take off and call for the establishment of its own legal structure, we intend to form a Community Interest Company working in partnership with the School of Commoning.

Practices

What activities and services should we engage in, in order to fulfill our Purpose and the strategic objectives driven by it?

To pursue our Purpose to be a platform optimized for the health commons to grow from its current seed from into a core paradigm of our health system, by enabling existing community-centred health initiatives to connect and collaborate, we will:

1. Host and facilitate a **learning community** that connects theory with practice, opens a new space for cross-project conversations, thinks together to create greater impact for change than any one of the groups could alone. It will be supported by tools for policy makers, and as our work evolves, by a **think tank** function.
2. Create a **clearing house**, including a **pattern library** of health movement practices worth replicating – practices at the edge that encourage new thinking and innovative actions. Practices that show that a different way of delivering healthcare is not just possible but more engaging and sustainable. We will also collect and organise ideas about new sets of sustainability metrics for a healthier health system. The clearing house will have a **community knowledge garden** that will serve as a platform for engagement, thus everyone who has something valuable to contribute can do so.
3. Provide **educational and advisory services**, including workshops, seminars, and training to community leaders, health activists, and health professionals, on how to develop commons-friendly practices in the health sector.
4. Build and operate an **ICT infrastructure** to support all of the above and become a **platform** for the disjoint, people-centered health initiatives to connect and become an impactful social force. "Change seekers and change makers need a commons platform for creating all the new interconnections or for 'revealing' those inherent interconnections which have already been created. We need a common platform which makes it possible to bust barriers which stand in the way of lasting system change." (Gordon Feller)

The role of emergent platforms in enabling high level of collaboration across boundaries is described [here](#). Our idea of such a platform is that it should be rich in possibilities for self-

organisation by its individual and collective users with complementary visions, strategies, and resources.

How to Uses the Social Charter

This Social Charter is to provide a basis and a structure for the continued development of Health Commons Hub. It is designed to provide:

- a grounding or orientation for what the Hub is about and how it operates.
- a common, agreed base or framework for the interpretation and evaluation of choices, decisions and actions, and events. To that regard, it has to be appended through periodic, collaborative review.

Each section of the Social Charter is intended to be congruent with and complementary to each other. However, the ever-evolving circumstances may turn parts of it out of alignment. When it is apparent to our community that change to the formal document is called for, then an open process of dialogue will be set up to explore that and make decisions about it. The founding team of the Health Commons Hub will be responsible for managing the process of any change to the Social Charter.