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‘Armed Forces’ style recruitment drive required to maximise UK’s healthcare job opportunities

- *New report says the country could benefit from healthcare employment boon with 775,000 new jobs located in every part of the UK over the next decade*
- *Former government adviser urges the Treasury to reset its approach to health expenditure by focusing on economic benefits of healthcare investment*
- *The top 40% of most left behind councils will see their population aged 65 and above increase by over 1.5million in the next 20 years*

Over 775,000 new jobs could be created in the next 10 years if the government backs an ‘Armed Forces’ style recruitment drive highlighting the various private as well as public sector roles available in the UK’s burgeoning healthcare sector.

The proposal for a major publicly funded national campaign is part of a major new report, ‘*The Economics of Health*’, published today by Future Health, a new healthcare research policy centre, set up by Richard Sloggett, a former adviser to Matt Hancock MP, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

The report argues that the Covid-19 pandemic gives the Treasury the opportunity to change its approach to healthcare expenditure. Instead of simply looking at health as a growing cost to the taxpayer through the NHS, Sloggett says it should be seen as a deliverer of high quality regional jobs, and a key part of the Government’s plans to become a global leader in life sciences and technological innovation, which in turn would act as a major driver of inward investment across the UK.

The national recruitment drive would be a critical first step in attracting people from all backgrounds to consider a local job in the health sector, which already accounts for 12% of all jobs in England. The campaign would seek to build awareness of the vast range of careers and opportunities in the sector from dentistry and physiotherapy to medical research and healthcare science.

As the population ages over the next 20 years, the report says local demand for healthcare services and products will increase markedly, creating significant employment opportunities. Analysis within the report looks at how demographic changes are expected to occur in the most left-behind places. It uses a ranking of how “left behind” a council area is based on combined measure of pay, employment, formal education and incapacity benefits, produced by the Institute for Fiscal Studies^{[1](#)}.

Key findings include:

- The top 40% of most left behind councils will see their population aged 65 and above increase by over 1.5million
- Of the 60 council areas that are categorised as the most left behind, six are expected to have more than a third of their population over the age of 65 by

the year 2040. These councils are North Norfolk (40.5%), Isle of Wight (39.1), East Lindsey (38.0%), Craven (35.9%), Tendring (35.3%) and Torbay (34.4%).

The report argues that it should be a national priority to ensure that as the population ages, the UK meets its commitments to increase life expectancy levels and creates a healthier and more productive society. It points to evidence from the Northern Health Science Alliance that reducing the number of working age people with limiting long-term health conditions by 10% would decrease rates of economic inactivity by 3% across the North of England and would reduce the employment gap between north and south.

To seize on these health and economic benefits, the report calls for a re-wiring of Whitehall approaches to the healthcare sector. It makes a number of recommendations including:

- Reforming R&D tax credits to ensure that the UK remains competitive with other global markets in life sciences
- Increasing the national proportions of R&D investment in centres of healthcare research excellence across the UK; currently 60% of health research funding is concentrated in London, the South East and the East of England
- Utilising the new ONS Health Index to set targets for delivering on its ambitions for improving healthy life expectancy
- Central funds assigned for 'levelling up', for example the 'Town's Fund', should include a role for the healthcare sector and have an ambition to improve the nation's health and reduce regional health disparities

Richard Sloggett, author of the report, said, *"The UK's health sector has demonstrated its value and importance during the pandemic. From the discovery of new vaccines and treatments, the collaboration between the public and private sector and our world leading capabilities in areas such as genomics and health technology; the UK is well placed to develop a global healthcare hub that can deliver inward investment and jobs."*

"Our research calculates that with the right support the sector could generate 775,000 new jobs by 2030, with strong growth across the regions and in major cities including Birmingham, Manchester, Belfast, Bristol and Leicester."

"A critical first step is for the Government to support an Armed Forces style national recruitment drive, highlighting the vast array of roles and opportunities available across the healthcare sector; right from dentists to medical researchers, from pharmacists to technicians and from physios to public health practitioners. Supporting our healthcare sector can help us build a stronger and healthier recovery."

Gaëtan Leblay, Managing Director of Janssen UK & Ireland, who commissioned the report, adds, *"This important report shows that access to, and support for innovation is not only critical to the UK's pandemic recovery, it also impacts overall health and wellbeing."*

At Janssen, we strongly believe that industry has a key role to play in ensuring the UK unlocks its potential through impactful collaborations and partnerships, and we are

committed to participating in this effort to improve both the health and wealth of the nation.”

Rt Hon Damian Green MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Longevity said:

“This new report highlights the importance of the health sector as an economic engine for delivering regional growth and jobs and using this to tackle these health inequalities which should now be a Government priority for building back better.”

Michael Wood, Head of Health Economic Partnerships at the NHS Confederation said:

“The pandemic has brought an urgency to how we view the links between health and the economy, both nationally and locally. A critical step in rebuilding and rebalancing our economy will be to place health front and centre of any future industrial strategy – matching the proven excellence of our health innovation with a commitment to addressing inequalities everywhere.”

Dr Séamus O’Neill chief executive of the Northern Health Science Alliance said:

“The Northern Health Science Alliance is pleased to back this new report which spells out in no uncertain terms the essential role of health and health innovation in the UK’s economy, particularly in relation to the North of England.

“The recommendations in Economics of Health offer a guideline for the Government to make the most of the considerable health innovation assets across the country to level up the health and wealth of the UK for the benefit of its population.”

Neil Carmichael, Executive Chair of the Association of Dental Groups, said:

“The Government has recognised the need to recruit more doctors and nurses, but we need more than this. As the NHS integrates care systems a long term workforce plan for the whole healthcare workforce is required; this report makes a strong case for a recruitment strategy.

“NHS dentistry provision is suffering from acute recruitment problems in many areas of the country the Government wishes to level up. Good health enables an individual to participate fully in society and must be a part of levelling up the UK. A national recruitment drive for the whole sector highlighting the opportunities in many parts of the country for those who want to make a difference is part of delivering this.”

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For a copy of the full report or to interview Richard Sloggett contact Nick Faith on 07960 996 233

