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UK Reviews How NHS CEOs Can Transform Failing Hospitals

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced that Sir Stuart Rose, who turned around the fortunes of Marks and Spencer, will advise how another British institution, the NHS, can attract and retain the very best leaders to help transform the culture in under-performing hospitals.

It will run alongside a separate review into how the NHS can make better use of its best existing leaders, so-called "superheads", who could spread the highest standards for patients across the system by taking on struggling organisations or establishing national networks of NHS hospitals and services.

Sir Stuart, one of the most highly regarded business leaders in the United Kingdom, will advise the Health Secretary on how the NHS can build on existing work to recruit top talent from within and outside the NHS.

Drawing on his experience as a former M&S chairman, he will also advise on how NHS trusts can improve organisational culture, through leaders being more visible and in touch with frontline patients, services and staff.

In a separate review, Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive, Sir David Dalton, will look at how to end the isolation of failing hospitals from the best NHS management and practice – a key finding in the wake of the Mid-Staffs inquiry. Sir David will investigate how to enable the best-performing NHS organisations and most successful chief executives to establish national groups of hospitals or services as beacons of excellence. This could include non-geographical networks of hospitals under one leadership team where one NHS trust has hospitals around the country.

Sir Stuart will particularly look at the problems faced by the 14 trusts currently in "special measures", the programme to turn-around failing hospitals introduced last year, where strong leadership was identified as key to improvement.

Through a series of hospital visits Sir Stuart will mentor NHS leaders and examine the challenges facing doctors, nurses and management boards. He will provide advice in an unpaid capacity until the end of the year when he will submit a short report to the department.

More than 1,300 people from outside the NHS have already applied for 50 places on the NHS fast-track leadership programme that involves study at Harvard, starting in June. This 10-month programme by the NHS Leadership Academy will include executive education by Harvard Kennedy School, an industry placement, and six months delivering a transformational change programme in a top NHS Trust under a Chief Executive mentor.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said, "Everyone wants the peace of mind of knowing their local hospital offers good care - so turning round hospitals where this is not the case is a critical priority for me as Health Secretary.

Good care should never depend on your postcode, which is why new Ofsted-style hospital inspections are so important. But the difference between good and bad care can often lie in leadership, which is why I am delighted that one of the country's most inspirational leaders has agreed to advise me on how we can attract and retain the brightest and best managers into the NHS so we transform the culture in under-performing hospitals.

We can also do more to exploit the extraordinary leadership in our best hospitals by making it easy for NHS super-heads to take over struggling organisations. Sir David Dalton is one such leader, who with his team has turned the Salford Royal into one of the best hospitals in the country. He will advise me what more we need to do to enable our best hospital leaders to take over the running of hospitals in difficulty without compromising the success of their own Trusts."

Sir Stuart Rose said, "Clearly the NHS is a very different institution from M&S, but leadership, motivating staff and creating a culture where people are empowered to do things differently are crucial to the success of any organisation, and I'm looking forward to helping in any way I can."

