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Innovate UK back Open Source SME to drive an open approach for NHS digital health

Leading UK Open Source software integrator, OpusVL, today announced that its consortium has been awarded a £790,000 government grant to develop re-usable Open Source applications for the UK healthcare sector. The sum is the largest Innovate UK research and development grant awarded to an Open Source project[1].

The grant is for the development of processes for creating and delivering Open Source software to the UK healthcare sector as part of a wider open approach, aligned with the mandate of the new NHSx[2] government department. The project includes proof of concept through the creation and validation of an app that calculates the National Early Warning Score, a key predictor of sepsis in hospital patients, which claims the lives of an estimated 46,000 people a year[3] in the UK.

The 19-month project will research and implement a new digital electronic observation (eObs) solution to identify deteriorating patients. Notably, not only does the solution connect through open standards to other hospital systems, the software, design, documentation and all associated components will be made available to the community to be studied, re-used and further developed.

Its ultimate aim is to create a blueprint for clinician-led open software design that delivers the exact functionality – with future flexibility and integrated in to the NHS networks - needed to optimise NHS patient care, while reducing the NHS's £7bn annual software licence renewal bill.

The ground-breaking practical study will work with doctors and nurses to evaluate current NHS working practices, identifying strengths and weaknesses. A best practice approach will then be implemented in the app, before being tested in a cutting-edge hospital simulator. The last stage of the project will be field trials at hospitals in two NHS Trusts, before the final report is delivered.

OpusVL is the lead partner in the consortium, joined by the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, The Apperta Foundation CIC Trust, Open UK and a leading UK University. The combination of academic rigour, clinical partnership and technological expertise harnessed by the consortium for this study heralds a turning point in the NHS's approach to open source software.

Stuart J Mackintosh, CEO of OpusVL said, "We're thrilled to have been given the opportunity by Innovate UK to prove that professional open source is the only viable solution to the NHS's complex software needs. Innovate UK understood that we have ambitious aims to transform the NHS's approach to digital technology, helping to create software that is the perfect clinical fit for today and adaptable for tomorrow saving lives and money simultaneously."

The project launches on 1st April , with trials due to start in May 2020. Project progress will be presented at key UK healthcare events with final research findings published in August next year.

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1   https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784806/Innovate_UK_funded_projects_between_2004_and_7_March_2019.xlsx

2   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nhsx-new-joint-organisation-for-digital-data-and-technology

3   https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sepsis/

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NOTES

- OpusVL is the UK's most established Open Source software integrator, solving business problems with world-class Open Source digital technology solutions.

- Celebrating 20 years in business in 2019, OpusVL was founded by Stuart J Mackintosh and now employs over 25 talented staff at its headquarters in Rugby, Warwickshire.

- OpusVL helps customer meet their goals by developing and supporting perfectly tailored, flexible open software, free of costly licence renewal fees. Its customers are organisations in the private and public sectors whose needs are not being met by 'off the shelf' solutions and those who wish to break free of the limitations and high costs of proprietary software. For further information, please visit https://opusvl.com

- The Apperta Foundation CIC Trust is a clinician-led, not-for-profit company. Supported by NHS England, NHS Digital and others, it promotes open systems and standards for digital health and social care. Apperta shows how the delivery of health and social care can be transformed when data, information and knowledge in IT systems is open, shareable and computable. For more information, visit https://apperta.org/

- South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust provides the widest range of NHS mental health services in the UK. For further information, visit https://www.slam.nhs.uk/

- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provides mental health, learning disability and community physical health services. For further information, visit http://www.cwp.nhs.uk

- OpenUK is the UK open source industry association representing the open source business community across the UK and focused on stimulating the professional UK supply chain. For further information, visit https://openuk.uk