

# Thinking caps on

**Pfizer colleagues across the country have been bringing their mental powers to bear to help local charities overcome a host of problems**

**W**hen most colleagues volunteer their time to help out in the community, it usually involves rolling up their sleeves and getting dirty. However, a new Pfizer initiative allows them to use their brain rather than their brawn.

The Thinkathon is a week-long series of brainstorming and problem-solving sessions that took place in May at 12 locations across the country, said organiser Melanie Heaver, who is based at Pfizer's site at Walton Oaks, where the initiative originated in response to requests from colleagues.

"At each location, from Glasgow and Belfast to Sandwich and Walton Oaks, Pfizer colleagues volunteered their time and business skills to help a local charity with a problem," she said. "Many of the charities don't have the resources or the time to tackle problems such as how to create better services, raise more funds, or strategic planning for the future."

The charities chosen, none of which had commercial links with

Pfizer, were all local and small. "Each session was professionally facilitated and had the capacity for up to 60 colleagues," said Melanie. "After introducing the charity, volunteers were presented with the challenge. Eight hours later, they presented their solutions."

## **A local solution**

In Kent, the chosen charity was the Canterbury Oast Trust (COT), which provides homes, care and occupational opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. The Trust also runs the South of England Rare Breeds Centre and Country Farm Park in Woodchurch near Ashford, which is where the Thinkathon took place.

"Pfizer has supported the work of the COT and Rare Breeds Centre over many years," said Kevin Charles, Pfizer Public Affairs Manager, who took part in the Thinkathon event. "The challenge for the Thinkathon volunteers was to find new ways of attracting visitors

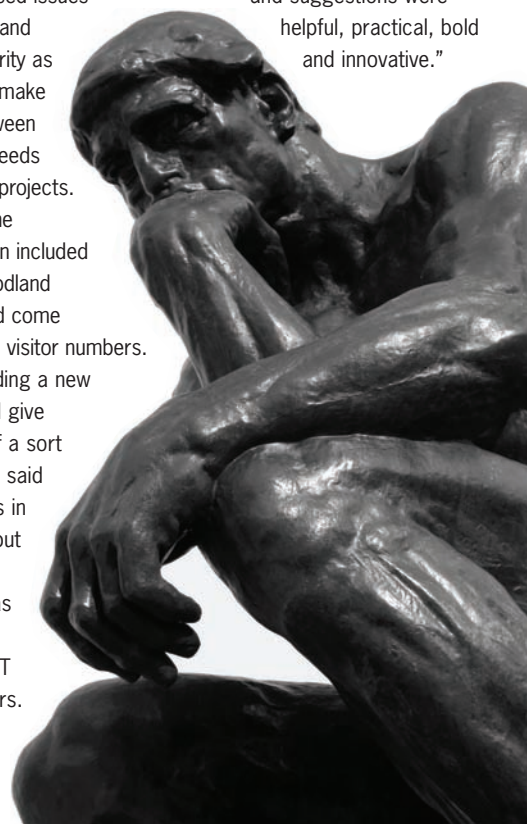
to the Centre and, therefore, increase revenue."

The group addressed issues around the branding and marketing of the charity as many people do not make the connections between the COT, the Rare Breeds Centre and its other projects. Ideas generated in the brainstorming session included the creation of a woodland adventure playground come campsite to increase visitor numbers.

"We looked at adding a new attraction that would give visitors the option of a sort of weekend retreat," said Kevin. "The Centre is in a beautiful location but its remoteness is an issue, however, it has huge potential."

Rita Mathur of COT praised the volunteers. "It was an excellent opportunity for the Trust to have an

impressive collection of brains all focussed on the issues. The ideas and suggestions were helpful, practical, bold and innovative."



research also involves looking at the largest database of twins in the UK to help us better understand the genetic links involved in pain.

The success of our science is ultimately dependent on the quality of the people we recruit. Pfizer is proud of its support for young people considering a career in science and technology. In our feature on the government's 'Backing Young Britain' campaign you can learn more about Pfizer's investment in the scientists of tomorrow. We profile the work of Cath Cole, an industrial trainee working with Pfizer as part of her biochemistry degree, and celebrate the success of a young Pfizer medicinal chemist, Danny Ho, awarded the prestigious 'Young Chemist in Industry' award by the Society of Chemical Industry.



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# Healthcare for all

After a hard-fought battle, President Obama has succeeded in implementing a raft of changes to the country's healthcare system, bringing relief to millions



The American government does run two main national programmes but only for those that meet the specific criteria: Medicaid, for those on a low income, and Medicare, for those who are aged 65 and over, or who meet other special criteria. However, this approach has led to a significant number of the population either having no cover at all or being underinsured.

The changes mean that medical coverage to some degree will now be extended to an additional 32 million Americans by 2019. In addition, health insurance subsidies for families will be expanded while a tax on expensive health policies will be delayed.

#### Additional benefits

It is hoped that increasing access levels will result in a range of benefits including: improved adherence to prescribed medicines by older patients in particular, who may not have been able to afford the treatment previously; an increased focus on disease prevention; better management of chronic illnesses; and the continued protection and reward of medical innovation.

"As long time supporters of healthcare reform, we are pleased that the House [of Representatives] has passed this legislation to provide healthcare coverage for tens of millions of Americans in need. We're especially pleased that the bill provides provisions that support continued innovation by the pharmaceutical industry," said Anthony Principi, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs at Pfizer.

The reforms will be funded through a number of channels. For its part, the pharmaceutical industry in the US has pledged over \$100 billion over 10 years. Most of this will come in the form of increased rebates in Medicaid, prescription medicine discounts for Medicare beneficiaries

and other industry fees designed to meet patient needs.

#### Examining costs

The changes have also led to the establishment of a non-profit, public-private entity to examine relative health outcomes, clinical effectiveness and the appropriateness of different medical treatments. However, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute does not have the power to mandate or even endorse coverage rules or reimbursement for any particular treatment.

"While approximately only 10 cents of every dollar spent on healthcare is used to pay for prescription medications, we strongly believe that increased access to life-saving medicines can drive down healthcare costs," said Mr Principi.

#### ! How does it add up?

According to data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in 2007 the US spent around 16 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on healthcare whereas the UK spent 8.4 percent of its GDP. In comparison, France spent 11 percent and Germany spent 10.4 percent of its GDP on healthcare.

When it comes to annual per capita costs OECD data show that, in 2007, the US spent \$7,290 while the UK spent \$2,992, France spent \$3,601 and Germany laid out \$3,588.

However, in terms of the percentage of the total expenditure dedicated to public health the figures tell an interesting story. While the UK directed 81.7 percent towards public healthcare, the US only managed 45.4 with France and Germany allotting 79 and 76.9 percent respectively.

- OECD (2009), "Total expenditure on health", Health: Key Tables from OECD, No 1
- OECD (2009), "Total expenditure on health per capita", Health: Key Tables from OECD, No 2
- OECD (2009), "Public expenditure on health", Health: Key Tables from OECD, No 3

Earlier this year, the US government passed a Bill agreeing to make changes to the country's healthcare system that will result in more people, who previously did not qualify for coverage under any of the national health systems, being able to access affordable healthcare.

Unlike the UK which has the National Health Service that is open to everyone normally resident in the country and funded through taxation, in the US, the majority of healthcare is funded through private health insurance, placing the onus for coverage on the individual.