

Re-skilling and staff development overtakes budget cuts as employers' top workforce concern

Re-skilling, training and staff development is the most pressing concern for health workforce managers, ahead of budget cuts or maintaining service quality during organisational change, research from Skills for Health shows.

The survey of directors and senior managers from the NHS, independent and voluntary sectors in the UK found that 36% cited skills development as one of their top three workforce issues for the coming year.

Maintaining service quality during a time of rapid change came second (35%), followed by dealing with budget cuts (33%).

With the Department of Health currently consulting on proposals for a new framework to develop the healthcare workforce, the annual research from Skills for Health shows that skills development remains high on health managers' workforce agenda.

Skills for Health chief executive John Rogers said: "At a time when the framework for health workforce development is under review, this annual research from Skills for Health offers a valuable insight into employers' workforce concerns.

“Employers tell us that effective skills development, across the whole workforce, is vital if they are to cope with significant change within the sector over the coming year and we will be reflecting these concerns in our response to the consultation.”

Employers who cited workforce concerns and issues were also asked which workforce development solutions and support could best help them address their challenges over the next year. Responses included:

- Greater availability of standardised training for emerging roles, such as those described in Skills for Health’s library of ‘nationally transferable’ roles
- Cost-effective workforce strategy tools and guidance to support workforce transformation
- Training and advice to help managers deal with organisational change

John Rogers added: “Skills for Health offers employers a wide range of tools and solutions to help them address their workforce skills and productivity challenges.

“We are already working with employers to extend and adapt our offer to further help employers in the coming months, including maximising the benefits of the new Qualifications and Credit Framework.”

Skills for Health is the employer-led skills council for the health sector, serving employers in the NHS, independent and voluntary sectors throughout the UK.

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Notes to editors

- Employers' main workforce concerns and issues for the coming 12 months (%)

	All Employers	NHS Employers	Independent Employers
Base: all			
Training and development including re-skilling	36	38	25
Coping with changes in the industry while maintaining service levels	35	41	7
Lack of finance/budget cuts	33	36	18
Recruiting qualified staff	32	28	54
Downsizing staff/staff cuts/redundancies	24	28	6
Staff retention	20	19	24
Maintaining morale/motivating staff	10	11	6
Ageing workforce, retirement issues, loss of experienced staff	9	9	8
Changes to senior management	7	8	1
None/no concerns	7	4	17

Source: Skills for Health survey of 400 health sector directors and senior managers, September-October 2010

- Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for all health sector employers: NHS, independent and third sector. Since 2002 we've been working with employers to get the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time. We are the authoritative voice on skills issues for the health sector and offer proven workforce solutions and tools – with the expertise and experience to use them effectively. To find out more about our unique competence-based approach to workforce transformation and how we can help you drive up productivity and quality visit www.skillsforhealth.org.uk