

Skills for Health warns on management and leadership skills gaps

Increases in skills gaps, especially in leadership and change management, pose a growing threat to the health sector's future effectiveness, a new report from Skills for Health warns today.

The *UK Sector Skills Assessment 2011* presents a wide-ranging review of the health sector's skills and workforce needs against a backdrop of rapid organisational and technological change, financial constraint and rising demand for services caused by an ageing population and increases in long-term conditions.

It says that these trends will require unprecedented improvements in quality and productivity, and warns that failure to tackle growing management and leadership skills gaps will hamper the introduction of necessary workforce transformation measures.

Skills for Health head of research Ian Wheeler commented: "Skills gaps are always a cause for concern and are particularly worrying at a time when the sector is undergoing significant change.

"Management, teamworking and problem-solving skills in particular are set to become much more important as employers embark on large-scale workforce transformation.

“It is vital that health employers continue to invest in skills development, if they are to realise the vision of a flexible and productive workforce continuing to deliver high-quality care.”

Figures from the assessment show that 32% of employers in England report gaps in management and leadership skills, while in both England and Scotland gaps in ‘problem solving’ skills were reported by 44% and 47% of employers respectively. ‘Teamwork’ also featured highly with 40% of Scottish employers and 41% of English employers reporting this as a skills gap.

The assessment also highlights the importance of tackling literacy and numeracy skills gaps. In England, 20% of health sector employers reported skills gaps concerning literacy, while 15% reported skills gaps concerning numeracy.

The *Skills Assessment 2011* is part of a suite of skills and labour market intelligence reports and briefings produced by Skills for Health to support effective workforce planning and skills development throughout the sector.

It draws on extensive ‘scenario planning’ activities conducted with health employers from the NHS, independent and voluntary sector throughout the UK, which looked at the sector’s emerging skills priorities towards 2020. Alongside enhanced management and leaderships skills, it is anticipated that these will include:

- Continued development of workforce planning capability in the sector, to assist with changes to a highly complex set of services
- Growth in the demand for those willing and able to undertake roles at Career Framework levels 3 to 4 (Assistant Practitioners) and at level 7 (Advanced Practitioners)
- Ongoing development of new skills sets in the light of new opportunities to exploit technology

- Ongoing willingness of health care professionals to deliver care in areas that require multi-disciplinary working within diverse teams
- Growth in the skills and volume of those working in a range of non-traditional health care providers and community settings
- Development of health skills for non-health specialists to assist family carers and to facilitate self-care

Skills for Health offers employers a range of proven tools and solutions to help identify and address skills gaps as part of a competence-based approach to workforce transformation. These include organisational profiling tools, and courses and workshops to help building workforce planning capacity.

*** *UK Sector Skills Assessment 2011 is available as a free download from www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/lmi***

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Notes to editors

1. Skills gaps are said to exist in an establishment when the employer indicates that staff at the establishment are not fully proficient in carrying out their duties.
2. 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