

SKILLS FOR HEALTH

STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-15

December 2009

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Foreword



Chair of Skills for Health – Chris Hannah

The renewal of our strategic plan comes at a critical time. The health sector faces rising demand and expectations, at a time when the financial outlook is becoming much more difficult. All employers in the sector face the challenge of significantly improving the quality of service, while also delivering real productivity gains. Our analysis of the main drivers for change; our assessment of skills needs and our discussions with employers, partners and experts all lead to the inescapable conclusion that a vital element in this will be the transformation of the skills, qualifications and structure of the workforce.

Skills for Health is committed to helping and supporting employers to achieve this. Our Strategic Plan sets out the practical ways in which we will do this, working closely with our sponsors, partners and employers in all four UK countries.

During 2009, we successfully completed a rigorous independent assessment process conducted by the National Audit Office. The outcome was that we have been re-licensed by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills as the Sector Skills Council for health.

We are proud of our achievements but take nothing for granted. We will continuously strive to improve our performance, rise to major challenges and work with changing and complex policy contexts across the UK to help sector employers achieve the best outcomes for patients and clients, their organisations and their employees.

Chief Executive – John Rogers

Over the next 5 years, the health sector will have to improve the quality of services in a much more challenging economic climate. There is an urgent need, to deliver services in more effective, productive and innovative ways. This means having people and teams with the right skills, in the right places and at the right time.

The recent independent assessment of Skills for Health showed that we have already delivered a range of solutions and resources that help employers plan, develop and retain a skilled, productive and flexible workforce. These include:

- Developing, implementing and embedding nationally recognised competences within qualifications, to support new ways of working and career frameworks.
- Providing tools, expertise and support in using competences to transform the workforce, improve the quality of front-line services and secure productivity gains
- Brokering and coordinating a £100 million Joint Investment Framework in England to increase skills and qualifications for the workforce at NHS pay-bands 1-1V.
- Year-on-year increases in Apprenticeships, together with the re-design and introduction of new frameworks
- Implementing a new 14-19 Diploma in England – now mainstreamed across the country
- Implementing the sector qualification strategy to bring employers and employees the benefits of more flexible, modular and transferable qualifications

But there is more to do. This Strategic Plan and our annual Operational Plans set out our commitment to support health sector employers develop the skilled productive and flexible workforce they need. Over the life of this plan, we will focus even more on providing our employers, sponsors and partners, across the UK with the services, products and solutions that deliver real productivity and service quality gains for patients and clients.



Section 1

Summary

1.1 This strategic plan sets out our vision of what is needed to ensure the UK health workforce can deliver high quality services which meet people's needs within the resources available over the next 5 years.

1.2 **Strategic Vision**

To develop a high quality, skilled, flexible and more productive workforce – for the whole sector in all UK nations, to raise the quality of health and healthcare for the public, patients and service users

Strategic Aims 2010-15

- ***Develop a more skilled, productive and flexible workforce***
- ***Promote better jobs, careers and sustainable employment***
- ***Develop appropriate employer led qualifications***
- ***Build workforce development capacity and capability***
- ***Continuously improve our organisational performance***

1.3 We have analysed the major drivers for change, assessed the skills needs and discussed our conclusions with employers, partners, and experts to develop our strategic vision and aims. The plan recognises the tight economic conditions and changing policy contexts across the UK.

1.4 Each year we will agree an annual operational plan for each country. These will set out in more detail, what we will do, working with our partners, to deliver these strategic aims. The strategic plan will be reviewed annually, informed by monitoring and evaluation, new research and evidence of impact

Section 2

The context of change - drivers and responses

Healthcare demand - drivers for change

- 2.1 A series of strategic drivers¹ are having an effect on the sector and the UK economy. All four UK countries face similar drivers and demands, but policy responses and mechanisms for delivery vary from country to country

Demographic change

People are living longer. The working age population is falling and the balance between young and old is shifting. This is increasing demands on health systems and health and social care spending. A higher priority will need to be given to meeting the needs of people with age related disorders.

The health and social care workforce is also aging with implications for deploying the workforce differently and emphasis on models of employment that attract and retain older staff.

Economic conditions

The global economic recession has had an impact on funding for health and social care. After a period of unprecedented growth, budgets and resources are set to be significantly tighter from 2011 and over the next few years. Consequently, there is pressure across the sector to deliver far greater improvements in efficiency and productivity – throwing the spotlight on more flexible use of the workforce, better utilisation of skills and a greater return on investment from the workforce.

Lifestyle Risk Factors

Lifestyle risk factors such as obesity; changing patterns of alcohol consumption and sexual behaviour are driving the demand for health care. There is an increasing emphasis on strategies for prevention across government departments.

Shifting disease burden

There is an increasing prevalence of long-term conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, heart failure, chronic obstructive respiratory disease and mental illness. Some are linked to lifestyle and many co-exist, leading to increasingly complex patient needs and morbidity.

There is a drive to manage long-term conditions through greater involvement of service users in supporting their own care and through earlier detection and diagnosis.

Health inequalities

The health gap between more and less affluent groups persists with the possibility that this could be exacerbated by the longer-term effects of the recession, particularly on employment and with the likelihood of further constraints on public spending.

Public expectations

People have rising expectations of the health care sector together with an increasing sophistication and capacity to access healthcare information. This is changing the relationship between health professions and patients. It has implications for the role of

¹ Strategic drivers and implications are derived from a series of Skills for Health commissioned papers by experts in the sector and from ongoing Labour Market research and Intelligence.

self care; greater involvement of patients in decisions about the design and delivery of their care and the adaptation of the service to the demands of the 'information age'

Medical and technological advance

New forms of diagnosis and treatment are contributing to long-term improvements in people's health. Advances in genetics, gene and stem cell based therapies will deliver benefits over the longer term but have implications for future spending and ethical issues for the professions and society.

Globalisation

Healthcare in the UK is increasingly affected by international factors such as workforce mobility, both into and out of the UK, European legislation (for example the impact on Junior Doctors hours of European Working Time Directive) and sophisticated communication.

Combined effects of Government policies

There are many different policies across the UK Governments that have an impact on the funding, commissioning and delivery of services, the drive for quality improvement, human resources and workforce development.

Workforce policies such as the increase in medical student numbers, modernising medical and other professional careers, increasing consultant and GP places and the move to an all graduate entry nursing profession, will significantly affect education funding and commissioning, workforce planning, skill mix and development.

Health care provision – responding to demand

2.2 The way we deliver healthcare currently will need to change in response to the factors set out in the previous section. These changes are likely to include:

- Greater responsiveness to people's needs and expectations;
- The emergence of new models of service commissioning to support more personalised care;
- An increased focus on public health and prevention of ill health – with action to identify people at risk, address risk factors and reduce health inequalities;
- Shifting from care in hospitals towards primary and community based care with more integrated health, social and community facilities offering minor surgery and scanning linked to specialist diagnostic skills. These will require more multi-disciplinary primary care teams supported by effective information systems;
- Better support for self care to help people and families with the knowledge, skills and technology to make healthy choices and manage their own conditions more effectively;
- More use of independent and third (voluntary) sector provision;
- High quality, safe specialist care in centres with facilities able to deliver high technology services, associated support and the best outcomes;
- A greater focus on realising the benefits of health innovations and medical advances.

The Skills landscape

2.3 The education, skills and qualification landscape across the UK is also undergoing radical shifts and reform with an emphasis on 'simplification' to better address changing needs and priorities. These changes are needed to meet the Leitch ambition² for the UK to become world class in employment and skills by 2020.

² .HM Treasury (Dec 2006) The final report of the Leitch review of Skills - Prosperity for all in the global economy – World class skills

2.4 Each country has a suite of policies designed to address their respective skills priorities and challenges. More recently, policy has been directed towards the ensuring sustainable recovery with an emphasis on high technology, low carbon growth across sectors. There is a recognition that:

- I. Education, skills and qualification systems must respond to the demands of employers and better meet the needs of young people and adults to equip them for future jobs and sustained employability
- II. Better utilisation of skills and better targeted investment is needed in the workforce and workplace skills development

2.5 The UK Commission for Employment and Skills have published three strategic priorities focused on *skills, jobs and growth*³. They are further translated in the Commission's recent advisory report to each UK Government 'Ambition 2020'.⁴ Alongside the four UK country policies for education and skills, these priorities have informed our own strategic direction. The UK Commission priorities are to:

- Maximise individual motivation and opportunity for skills and sustainable employment
- Increase employer ambition, engagement and investment in skills
- Build a more strategic, agile and labour market responsive skills system.

³ UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) Five year strategic priorities and business plan summary

⁴ UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) Towards Ambition 2020: Skills, Jobs and Growth.

Section 3

Assessment of Skills Needs

The evidence sources

3.1 The demands, drivers and changing skills landscape demonstrate a pressing case for developing a more flexible and productive workforce. In assessing the workforce implications underpinning this strategic plan we have drawn from:

- Commissioned research, working papers and ‘futures’ scenario planning
- Labour market data, trends and analysis
- Commentaries commissioned from experts in the sector
- Intelligence gathered from employers across the four countries of the UK
- Evaluation and reviews of our products, programmes and services
- Dialogue with sponsor bodies, Government Departments and key partners

[Annex 2](#) provides a further brief synopsis of evidence sources and associated references⁵

3.2 *UK Skills Needs Assessment – a summary*

We have produced a summary of UK skills needs⁶ based on labour market intelligence reports for each country and each English region⁷. Early in 2010, we will also supplement this by publishing four further reports, one for each UK country. The main assumptions and conclusions from our assessment of skills needs are:

- The sector is a large source of employment for the UK - employing almost 7% of the entire working population;
- Following unprecedented growth over the last decade, the workforce is likely to stabilise at its current levels and possibly decline from 2011 in the wake of the recession;
- Reported skills shortages are currently low and declining;
- Reported skills gaps tend to be in technical, practical or job specific areas and more generically in the areas of problem solving, oral communication, team working, customer focus and in management and leadership.
- A large number of health professions currently are included in the Migration Advisory Committee’s, ‘Skilled, Shortage and Sensible’ occupation list - underlining the international interdependence of the UK’s health sector with those of other economies;
- There is slow progress on addressing skills development needs for those without professional qualifications;
- A number of initiatives are helping to modernise the sector and its workforce – the sector scores well on ‘high performance working practices’;
- There is pressure to deliver services through increased specialist and generalist skills – at the same time;
- New knowledge and technology, rising public expectations and resource constraints, suggest the sector is facing its biggest challenge since the inception of the NHS.

⁵ Skills for Health (2009) The Hidden Workforce, Volunteers in the Healthcare Sector in England
Skills for Health (2009) Identifying the movement of the workforce around the sector
Skills for Health (2009) – Working paper – International Comparisons of Productivity

⁶ Skills for Health (2009) Skills Needs Assessment – Summary Report

Section 4

Focus for future action

4.1 *Key principles*

The consistent message from evidence and intelligence sources is that *continuing to do more of the same is unsustainable and unaffordable*. The main actions needed to transform the workforce so that future service needs can be met are:

- **Increasing workforce productivity** to deliver new and changing patient pathways and to support the shift in care from acute to primary and community care settings.
- Demonstrating the contribution that workforce and skills development makes to improving the quality of health care in terms of safety, effectiveness, patient experience and the delivery of patient-centred services
- Addressing the realities of a reducing reliance on junior doctors and supporting changes to the nature and focus of medical and healthcare professional education
- **Filling skills gaps** over the short, medium and longer term through:
 - *less reliance on traditional professional roles (with greater opportunities for new and advanced roles and continuing professional development across the whole health care team);*
 - *bringing in new roles and jobs across the sector at 'Assistant Practitioner' – NHS pay band IV level.*
- **Supporting management and leadership development** at the 'front-line' to ensure that leaders and managers are better engaged, inspired and equipped with the skills they need to drive forward innovation and improvement.
- Creating the conditions for **team working** – with clarity on the role and contributions of each team member
- Systematic approaches to **initial learning, widening participation and progression routes;**
- Supporting and enhancing **continuing professional, personal and career development**
- Developing skills in **helping patients engage in their own care**
- Developing skills to **adapt to and deliver technological change**, use information technology and support patients to access and navigate information effectively.
- **Developing the public health workforce, health professions and** the wider workforce to promote health as well as treating illness;
- Continuing to invest in **literacy, numeracy and language** skills – for employees disadvantaged and excluded from learning in the past.
- Offering **careers, learning, qualifications, jobs and continued employability opportunities** - for young people and those seeking new roles and jobs
- Ensuring **sector qualifications are fit for purpose**, linked to **National Occupational Standards, National Workforce Competences**, new and changing roles and career pathways

- Working with partners, education commissioners and funding agencies to ensure there is a **better alignment between employer priorities, education commissioning and funding decisions for learning and qualifications**
- **Building capacity and capability in workforce planning and development** to better align and integrate workforce, financial and service plans and reduce the risk of imbalance between workforce supply and demand
- Providing **tools, guidance, intelligence and research to inform strategic and local workforce re-design**, help address immediate local needs and support longer term thinking about workforce change and transformation.

Section 5

Strategic vision and strategic aims

5.1 We have analysed the strategic context, the changes in healthcare needs and service delivery and assessed the skills needs across the sector. We have used the evidence, intelligence, expert advice and analysis in discussion with employers and our partners and concluded that our strategic vision:

To develop a high quality, skilled, flexible and more productive workforce – for the whole sector in all UK nations, to raise the quality of health and healthcare for the public, patients and service users

5.2 To realise this vision, our five key strategic aims are to:

- ***Develop a more skilled, productive and flexible workforce***

Focused on the whole workforce, with action to promote workforce competences, their application to workforce re-design and workforce solutions which support better quality of care alongside increased productivity

- ***Promote better jobs, careers and sustainable employment***

Centred on access routes into jobs and roles, careers advice and guidance, skills transfer and verification.

- ***Develop appropriate employer led qualifications***

Setting out our broad intent for the continued development of fit for purpose qualifications alongside better targeted skills and qualification investment

- ***Build workforce development capacity and capability***

Focused on robust labour market research and intelligence and supporting the skills and capacity to develop and implement effective workforce plans.

- ***Continuously improve our organisational performance***

A commitment to improve our own productivity, reduce costs and implement more efficient ways of working

Section 6

How the vision and aims will be achieved

- 6.1 In the table below we have set out what we will deliver for each strategic aim between 2010 and 2015. We have also identified the outcomes and measures of success. We cannot deliver all of this by ourselves. We will work in close partnership with our sponsors, employers and strategic partners in all four UK countries to achieve these aims.
- 6.2 Each year we will translate the strategic aims into annual operational plans and specific actions agreed with key partners and sponsors in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The outcomes, risks and actions to mitigate them will be monitored and reviewed through measures set out in our organisational performance scorecard.

6.3 What we will deliver

Strategic Aim	What we will deliver	Strategic outcomes and indicative measures
<p><u>Strategic aim 1</u></p> <p>Develop a more skilled, productive and flexible workforce</p>	<p>Tools, expertise and support for workforce transformation in the sector</p> <p>Tested products and approaches to workforce re-design and new ways of working which deliver productivity gains in priority services across the sector</p> <p>An up to date, comprehensive database of nationally recognised workforce competences alongside a health functional map with accessible tools and frameworks to support their use and application</p> <p>Tailored workforce solutions that draw on the Skills for Health range of products and are applied to specific employer needs in each country</p> <p>Influence on behalf of employers at country, UK and European level on Government policies that have impact on workforce skills</p> <p>A <i>Skills Passport</i> for Health – comprising a verified on-line CV and record accessible to the whole workforce across the UK</p> <p>A management and leadership action plan (as part of the SSC Alliance) to support a high performance culture across the sector</p>	<p>Directly and indirectly identifiable productivity gains, including quality improvements.</p> <p>% of Employing organisations using Skills for Health tools, products, solutions</p> <p>Robust case studies and evaluation data showing benefits to the public, patients, service users and employers of applying competence based, integrated approaches to developing a skilled, flexible and productive workforce</p> <p>Trends in competence uptake</p> <p>Coverage of the Health Functional Map</p> <p>% of employers attributing quality, productivity and cost improvements to evidenced based outputs from Skills for Health.</p> <p>Delivery of evidence based outputs and impacts providing basis for influence at all levels.</p> <p>Engagement with employers across the sector builds critical mass of employer recognition and support for Skills for Health activities.</p> <p>Transferable skills verification for employers and individuals</p> <p>Inspired leaders and managers incentivised and developed to support skills transformation and investment in the workforce.</p>

Strategic Aim	What we will deliver	Strategic outcomes and indicative measures
<p><u>Strategic aim 2</u></p> <p>Promote better jobs, careers and sustainable employment</p>	<p>Access routes into learning and jobs which allow individuals to progress their long term careers in health from pre-entry qualifications onwards through modernised career structures and frameworks</p> <p>Access to high quality careers, information, advice, guidance and where appropriate, pre-employment experience</p> <p>A range of nationally transferable roles focused on delivery of new and transforming services in speciality and community settings</p>	<p>Influence on workforce policies which promote and sustain jobs, roles and career frameworks across the sector</p> <p>Measurable contribution to economic recovery, social inclusion and improved health for the population currently excluded from employment</p> <p>Number and range of new roles developed and embedded in practice and service delivery in each country</p>
<p><u>Strategic aim 3</u></p> <p>Develop appropriate employer led qualifications</p>	<p>Brokerage and support for employers to deliver the skills pledge in England</p> <p>Brokerage and coordination of a renewed three year Joint Investment Framework with matched funding between employers and the Skills Funding Agency (in England)</p> <p>Sector Qualification Strategy action plans delivered with appropriate qualifications included within qualification and credit frameworks in each country</p> <p>Increased uptake of work based frameworks, particularly apprenticeships across the sector</p>	<p>Follow through of skills pledge commitments in England – supported by local workforce plans</p> <p>Levels of employer investment and range, number of training interventions, qualification starts and completions</p> <p>Alignment between investment in skills and qualifications with improved patient care and service delivery</p> <p>Employer satisfaction feedback on fitness for purpose of qualifications</p> <p>Trends in % of the workforce at each qualification level on Qualification and Credit Framework and Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework</p> <p>Increase in registrations/completions and certificates gained</p>

Strategic Aim	What we will deliver	Strategic outcomes and indicative measures
<p><u>Strategic aim 4</u></p> <p>Build workforce development capacity and capability</p>	<p>Influence and support for the Centre for Workforce Intelligence in England, including significant contributions to the delivery of the Centre’s objectives.</p> <p>An integrated suite of labour market information and intelligence across the UK, including annual UK and country specific Skills Needs Assessment reports.</p> <p>Annual authoritative research programme comprising individual and joint commissions, supported by foresight work, futures thinking and commentaries on priority issues and topics in the sector</p> <p>Accessible workforce information, quality assured tools, programmes, best practice and knowledge which improves workforce planning capability and capacity and supports alignment between workforce, financial and service planning</p>	<p>Recognition as an active and influential member of the Centre for Workforce Intelligence consortium</p> <p>% of employing organisations attributing improved capability to deliver & implement sustainable workforce plans to support from Skills for Health</p> <p>Recognition for leading edge research and analysis valued and used by the sector</p> <p>Correlation between Skills for Health workforce tools, programmes and interventions and improved workforce planning - evidenced through a range of quality & productivity metrics</p>
<p><u>Strategic aim 5</u></p> <p>Continuously improve our organisational performance</p>	<p>Systematic evaluation and benefits realisation of our programmes, products, systems and services to support continuous improvement and evidence of impact, including greater involvement of patients and service users in developing and evaluating our activities</p> <p>Financial balance and control, with improvements in operational efficiency, including action to reduce the carbon footprint in a dispersed organisation</p>	<p>Work streams with resourced evaluation plans identifying benefits and impacts and demonstrating significant patient and service user involvement</p> <p>Skills for Health continue to operate from a balanced financial position, responding to a tighter financial climate through a range of measures to improve productivity, and reduce our carbon footprint.</p>

Section 7

Annexes

Annex 1: About Skills for Health

Skills for Health, established in 2002, is licensed as the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector. Our licence has recently been renewed on behalf of UK Government Departments by The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. We are one of 25 Sector Skills Councils established to improve workforce skills across the economy. Hosted by University Hospitals Bristol Foundation Trust. We are part of the NHS but have our own Board and Stakeholder Council.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills define the aims of Sector Skills Councils as:

- Raising employer engagement, demand and investment in skills;
- Ensuring authoritative labour market information for their sectors;
- Developing national occupational standards and ensuring qualifications meet employer needs.

Skills for Health have the following **purpose and aims**:

We help the whole UK health sector develop a skilled, flexible and productive workforce to improve the quality of health and healthcare.

We do this in two ways:

Firstly, as the authoritative voice on skills issues we:

- Meet, listen and respond to employers and stakeholders
- Understand skills needs and represent them
- Champion effective investment in skills in the sector
- Conduct focused workforce research for employers
- Provide intelligence on the Labour Market to help employers predict workforce trends
- Ensure that employers get the right staff with the right qualifications through influence on education and training supply

Secondly, we offer employers and the workforce proven products, solutions and tools, with the expertise and experience to use them effectively.

These solutions and tools help to deliver:

- A more flexible workforce
- A more productive workforce
- Fewer skills gaps
- Employees with better skills at all levels
- More rewarding jobs
- A better patient experience

They are based on unique workforce competences identified and managed by Skills for Health that are;

- Recognised across the UK
- Transferable
- Quality assured
- Used to develop recognised qualifications based on employer needs

We recognise that to do this we need to work with partners across the sector and in every UK country.

Annex 2

Further evidence sources for Skills Needs and strategic direction

- 1 A series of **working papers** scoping a) current definitions and work on *productivity* in the sector with some early international comparators b) *characteristics of the hidden (voluntary) workforce* and c) analysis of *movement of the workforce across the sector*.

International Comparisons of Productivity

This investigation highlights the practical difficulties of arriving at a satisfactory measure of productivity and the ability to make overall international comparisons of productivity. It raises the possibility of locally agreed and therefore meaningful measures of productivity that may assist providers in understanding the levels of service improvements they have achieved.

The Hidden Workforce

This working paper explored the level and nature of volunteer participation in the United Kingdom's health sector. It estimated that there were around 300,000 volunteers working within the NHS. Across the sector, volunteers can be found in a wide range of roles and arrive into voluntary work for a rich variety of reasons and have a range of expertise. A common skills need theme arising from our investigations is the management of volunteers particularly when services need to be re-structured.

Movement within and around the Health Sector

The sector is relatively stable. Overall it has one of the lowest rates of turnover in the economy with only 2% of the health sector workforce 6,500 people leaving for another sector. The report identifies the most popular destination sectors for leavers. It also begins to explore what level of turnover is optimum for the sector itself.

- 2 **Commissioned 'expert' papers** which have explored factors impacting on the future of healthcare and their implications for the workforce and which have informed our thinking in developing the strategic plan.
- 3 Intelligence generated through **dialogue with employers and stakeholders** in each country and English region. This is also reflected in our plan.
- 4 The health sector's evidence submission to the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) Skilled Shortage and Sensible list, with the Workforce Review Team and NHS Employers.
- 5 A national survey of key employers within the health sector is also being undertaken. This will offer an insight into the views health sector employers have of the organisation and its activities.