



Better Skills  
Better Jobs  
Better Health

The Sector Skills  
Council for Health

11<sup>th</sup> October 2010

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## **Liberating the NHS: Commissioning for patients**

### **A consultation on proposals**

#### **CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM SKILLS FOR HEALTH**

Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the health sector across the United Kingdom (UK). Our role covers all healthcare employers – including those in the National Health Service (NHS), independent and voluntary sectors. We are part of a UK network of Sector Skills Councils covering 85% of the UK economy. Our strategic aim is to develop a skilled, flexible and productive workforce for the whole health sector in all UK nations, to raise the quality of health and healthcare for the public, patients and service users. The delivery of this aim is reflected in our Statement of Purpose, which is appended to this response.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. We have not responded to the specific questions but have set out below a more focused response which draws attention to some of the workforce development issues raised by the proposals set out in the consultation document, and which have congruence with our role as a Sector Skills Council.

There are two aspects of workforce development that we believe are important to consider in the context of service commissioning and these are;

- Skills development for commissioners *and*;
- How workforce development and planning is integrated within the commissioning process

Achieving the aims set out in **Commissioning for Patients** will require a commissioning workforce with the right skills and competences and clear role definition.

Skills for Health has an extensive database of National Occupational Standards (competences) which have been used by employers across the health sector to underpin workforce transformation initiatives. These competences include a suite which defines the knowledge, understanding and performance criteria for service commissioners. We believe these could be used across GP consortia as a common building block for role development, and subsequent education and training initiatives, to support these roles. Previous work we have undertaken suggests that there is a need for a wider range of learning and qualifications, at a variety of levels, to support commissioners to develop their skills.

Commissioners will need to assure themselves, through the commissioning process that service providers have in place a workforce with the right skills and competences to deliver effective patient outcomes.

Our competence based approach to workforce development and transformation can be used by commissioners to ensure that providers deliver services using appropriately competent staff with the required skills to meet local service need. This competence based approach has been developed with employers across the health sector and has proved effective in both large scale service transformation and smaller incremental team redesign. It is an approach which is scalable, transferable and future orientated.

Our e-learning resource 'Understanding workforce planning for service commissioners' can be found at:

[http://www.healthcareworkforce.nhs.uk/projects/elearning/service\\_commissioners\\_elearning\\_resource.html](http://www.healthcareworkforce.nhs.uk/projects/elearning/service_commissioners_elearning_resource.html)

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further our approach and contribution to workforce development and transformation, and how this can support the aspirations for commissioning set out in this consultation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Pond', enclosed within a large, thin, hand-drawn oval shape.

**Christina Pond**  
**Executive Director, Standards and Qualifications**

## Appendix

### Statement of Purpose and Aims

Skills for Health is the sector skills council for the health sector. 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 tested 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.