

News release

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## **‘Mythbusting’ guide highlights benefits of independent healthcare careers**

The days when healthcare staff chose to work in one healthcare sector – NHS or independent – at the expense of career progression in the other are long gone, according to a ‘mythbusting’ careers guide launched today by Skills for Health and the Independent Healthcare Advisory Services.

*Careers in Healthcare: A guide to working in the Independent Healthcare Sector* highlights the wide range of training, education and career development options available in the 42,500 organisations that make up the independent healthcare sector.

And it says that closer collaboration and joint working between NHS and independent providers mean that it is easier than ever for healthcare staff to have their skills and expertise recognised by employers -- whatever the sector.

Other ‘myth-busting’ facts about working in the independent sector presented in the guide include:

- The majority of independent healthcare providers offer education and training for staff, with development opportunities ranging from degrees to management and business qualifications
- Many providers help to train and retrain nurses who then work for the NHS – with some, for example, supporting the professional teaching and assessing award, allowing their practitioners to supervise NHS students
- The sector offers a wide range of career opportunities for nurses and other healthcare professionals, ranging from nursing, chiropody and clinical psychology to risk and quality management.

[/more](#)

Skills for Health Chief Executive John Rogers said: “I recommend this guide as essential reading for all staff looking to start or progress a career within the independent sector.

“As the guide demonstrates, career and development opportunities available within the sector have never been greater. Many providers generously invest in staff education and training, and there are a wide range of pathways to rewarding and interesting careers.”

Independent Healthcare Advisory Services Chief Executive Sally Taber said: “The diversity of working in the independent sector offers many opportunities for health and social care staff. This excellent booklet needs to finally put to bed the myths that have existed over the years about the lack of career development in the independent sector.

“Moving the agenda to the next stage both the NHS and the independent sector need to have respect for each others’ strength in order to grow a strong and flexible workforce for the future.”

*Careers in Healthcare: A guide to working in the independent Healthcare Sector* is available to download from [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk) or [www.independenthealthcare.org.uk](http://www.independenthealthcare.org.uk)

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**Media contacts:**

Dominic Moody, Press & PR Manager  
Tel. 0117 910 3853, mobile 0776 818 8994  
[dominic.moody@skillsforhealth.org.uk](mailto:dominic.moody@skillsforhealth.org.uk)

**Notes to editors**

1. The independent health sector includes private, voluntary and not for profit healthcare establishments, and covers organisations ranging from large acute hospitals to sole traders.
2. Research by Skills for Health shows that in England, the independent healthcare sector comprises approximately 42,500 organisations including 8,600 community pharmacies, 7,700 dental practices, 7,700 complementary therapists, 6,600 traditional therapists, 5,600 optometrists and dispensing opticians and 3,500 hospitals, hospices and nursing homes. [Skills for Health, *A Review of the Independent Health Sector in England*, Labour Market Intelligence Report 2008.]

3. The same study shows that independent healthcare providers take a positive approach to developing the skills of their staff: nine out of 10 providers had trained their staff in the previous 12 months. Around two-thirds had a career progression policy (62%) and just over two-thirds had a training/learning plan. In the area of anticipated growth over next two to three years, hospitals (18%) and complementary therapies (12%) predicted 'rapid' growth. [Skills for Health 2008, as above.]
4. Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK healthcare sector, encompassing the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations. Its purpose is to help the whole sector develop a skilled, flexible and productive workforce, to improve the quality of health and healthcare.
5. The Independent Healthcare Advisory Services (IHAS) is a representative organisation for the independent healthcare sector. A member of the Trade Association Forum, IHAS exists to share innovation, knowledge and expertise for the common good.  
Members of IHAS include independent healthcare providers across all four countries of the UK:
  - Independent acute medical / surgical hospital groups
  - Independent acute medical / surgical stand-alone hospitals
  - Independent mental health hospital and clinic groups
  - Independent mental health stand-alone hospitals and clinics
  - Cosmetic treatment providers
  - Healthcare staffing agencies
  - Healthcare locum agencies
  - Charitable bodies and organisations affiliated to independent healthcare
  - Scottish Independent Hospitals Association (in Scotland)
  - Welsh Independent Healthcare Association (in Wales)