

# Workforce Solutions

in the West Midlands

Skills for  
Health

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Welcome to the final issue of Workforce Solutions in the West Midlands. Read on to find out what's been happening in healthcare workforce development, new ways of working and productivity issues in the region. We believe you'll find information and solutions that will be of value to you in your area. We hope you enjoy this edition, so take a look and tell us what you think.

## What is the Exemplar Project?

**NHS West Midlands and Skills for Health, the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector, have been working together on a joint exemplar project to develop a suitably skilled workforce to meet the evolving healthcare needs of the local population.**

The two organisations came together in 2006 to develop workforce solutions that will contribute to productivity improvements and education and training. Priority areas for the project include Long Term Conditions, Maternity services, Emergency and Urgent Care, Theatres, and the workforce impact on productivity.

The exemplar project is of value to a wide range of groups including those with national interests around partnership working, productivity, learning development, and workforce review. Read on for more detail about individual projects and their achievements.



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**NHS**

**West Midlands**

# Who are NHS West Midlands and Skills for Health?

NHS West Midlands is one of the largest healthcare employers in England, with a workforce of 126,000 staff delivering services to 5.3 million people across the region. There are 16 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), 1 Care Trust and 27 NHS Trusts within the SHA area.

Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector (the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations). Its purpose is to implement solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.

Working in partnership, managers from both organisations and various healthcare providers have been exploring how to apply national competence based career and education frameworks. The aim is to improve quality, value for money, fitness for purpose and patient care. All but one of the projects have now finished, and this newsletter highlights the main findings and results.



# Overarching Evaluation

The Exemplar Project was an ambitious undertaking, and this was compounded by a series of challenges including restructuring and continuous changes in management at all levels within both organisations. In spite of this, a strong partnership was formed with significant learning achieved by both organisations and positive results.

The Exemplar was evaluated by an independent research organisation. It was found that two of the eight overarching goals were achieved and six other goals were partially achieved. Given more time, it is likely that most of the remaining (unmet) overarching goals could be achieved as well.

The Exemplar delivered the following strong benefits to the partners:

- A new maternity support worker role with potential productivity gains
- The potential for service/workforce change
- Improved project management skills
- Enhanced engagement with Trusts/PCTs
- Better understanding/use of Skills for Health products in the service setting
- Promoted Skills for Health and tested its tools/intellectual property
- Built strong relationships and partnership working.

# Understanding the region's Theatre workforce

NHS West Midlands, Skills for Health, and representatives from national and regulatory bodies joined forces to define current skills for theatre staff within Skills for Health's career framework.

With Theatres being a critical area of healthcare delivery, it was important that the results from the project would help to address workforce issues such as the inability to transfer qualifications, team inflexibility and patchy understanding of what the workforce looks like.

With this in mind, the partnership work aimed to achieve better utilisation of the workforce and improved patient flow through theatre areas to help sustain reduced waiting times.

To date, there have been significant achievements:

- Competences of theatre workforces scoped, based on data collection and analysis of nine Acute Trusts
- Identified productivity and workforce demand relating to theatres and patient pathways
- Created competence profile of the non medical theatre workforce at various career levels and identified potential for a new career level 4 role to improve competence mix and productivity
- Better understanding of use of competences for planning theatre workforce within pilot sites

- Clearer understanding of sourcing training and education which is fit for purpose, so staff do not undertake inappropriate courses
- Recommendation as to how Trusts can improve patient flow, by using day case operating theatres instead of main theatres for all day case procedures.

This was an ambitious project which involved gathering and analysing a huge amount of data. In time, and with continued support from the participating organisations, the project will lead to a number of benefits:

- Improved staff career progression, training and development
- Easier identification of knowledge gaps and necessary training and development to remedy this
- Better educated and more competent staff leading to improved patient care.

The project has set a good foundation for individual organisations to build on and improve the effectiveness of their theatre workforce.

**If you would like to find out more about the project and how its lessons might be useful in your organisation, please contact: [roger.whittaker@westmidlands.nhs.uk](mailto:roger.whittaker@westmidlands.nhs.uk) or [elise.shepherd@skillsforhealth.org.uk](mailto:elise.shepherd@skillsforhealth.org.uk)**

## Long Term Conditions Career Framework nears completion

This is a two year project which is due to complete September 2009, using Skills for Health tools, Workforce Projects Team's Six Steps Methodology to Integrated Workforce Planning and NHS West Midlands workforce planning process. The project has attracted interest from the LTC Darzi Clinical Pathway Group within their workforce plans and they are keen to see the final outcomes of the project.

Although it is some months from the end of the project, there have been significant achievements to date:

- A clear workforce planning methodology has been tested and this has enabled gap analysis of current provision versus future need. It has highlighted areas for staff development, new and extended roles and opened up discussion around potential career pathways within LTCs.
- The initial stage of the benefits realisation process has been completed and key stakeholders and benefits identified. This is being further tested by the pilot site between May and July 2009, to show potential benefits for Commissioners, providers, services users and patients.
- The project has provided the pilot site with demographic and workforce information to inform their LTC education and training plan.

### To find out more contact:

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## Potential unlocked in maternity services

Maternity services in the NHS are undergoing change underpinned by development of new roles in the workforce. The Obstetric Theatre Maternity Support Worker (OTMSW) project developed across the two pilot sites of the University Hospital of North Staffordshire and Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust has been meeting this challenge.

It delivered fantastic results, helping to equip Maternity Support Workers to work in the Obstetric Theatres and up skill them in the delivery suite and postnatal ward area. The result is a more flexible workforce and better maternity services for mothers and babies in the region.

The project was successful on the two pilot sites with a total of seven learners, showing that the programme is transferable and can be applied in Maternity units with differing existing staffing configurations. All learners have achieved scrub competences within six months and the project has seen several major achievements:

- It has released midwifery hours back into the Delivery Suite
- Helped to provide a fit for purpose, knowledgeable skilled workforce trained using a competence based programme
- Staff have received evidence based theory input through the programme which has helped them deliver best practice clinical care
- Enhanced continuity of care in the Delivery Suite, Operating Theatre and through the woman's immediate post natal period on the ward
- Provided a step on the skills escalator for Maternity Support Workers, therefore improving the working lives of both the Midwives and the Support Workers
- Added flexibility to the workforce as the OTMSW's can work either on the wards or in the Obstetric Theatre.

Although it has been a challenging piece of work, it has been well worth the effort, producing a clearly defined new role with measurable cost savings and productivity benefits, as well as spin off benefits relating to risk reduction and clinical governance issues. Heads of Midwifery are now beginning to include this role in their workforce planning for the future and it has generated interest outside the region, with other SHAs showing a strong interest in the role.

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## Emergency and Urgent Care Project

NHS West Midlands and Skills for Health worked in collaboration to develop a competence based career framework for non medical clinical professionals working within Emergency & Urgent care.

Using Skills for Health tools together with the data collected from the project's survey, the project has seen several major achievements:

- Developed a competence based career framework for Emergency & Urgent care workforce for the West Midlands region
- Mapped competences along three common patient pathways identified across the Emergency & Urgent Care settings – life threatening, urgent and non urgent patient pathways
- Workforce profiles created enabling Trusts to build a clear picture of the patient's journey and the competences required by the workforce along those pathways
- One workforce planner not involved with the project will soon be using the identified competences to inform

their planning for urgent care services, within the West Midlands region.

The results of the project will have a positive impact on the regional workforce. The framework can be used to help planners commission education and train existing staff, to develop a more highly skilled and flexible workforce.

In time, staff trained with the right national workforce competences will be able to move across different facets of emergency and urgent care settings, improving their own employability and aiding their career progression, both in the region and across the UK.

The project involved many challenges, in particular the volume of data collected and its subsequent analysis in the given timeframe. Nevertheless, through partnership working demonstrated throughout the project, it has provided clarity and structure for this diverse workforce and will enable patients to receive high quality care by staff with the appropriate skills for their journey through the emergency services.

### To find out more, contact:

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## Productivity Improvement Programme

The productivity improvement programme (PIP) is an ongoing piece of work that aims to enable organisations to use workforce, financial and service resources to best effect.

The programme has achieved good buy in from Trusts and PCT provider organisations in the region and has made a huge step forward in the move to a pathway approach to planning, delivery of care, and workforce productivity.

Bespoke and highly developed benchmarking tools have been produced for community and Mental Health services which enable an in-depth level of workforce analysis that has not been previously available.

The work that has been done provides huge potential benefits to workforce planning with respect to exploring the skills and competences of staff across the whole care pathway.

With the work that has been done in the other projects of the Exemplar, there is now the opportunity for those outcomes to link in to the productivity improvement programme and to inform future workforce planning.

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## Project Managers and participants – what was their experience?

*“Exemplar will be an ‘initial starter for 10’ and could act as a good introducer for how Skills for Health can have an input within a SHA area, together with evidence to demonstrate it.”*

*“[Exemplar] gave us a better understanding of the SHA culture (which is one of change) and the need to plan the project and respond in a culture of change.”*

*“My approach to new projects has changed. Exemplar helped me better understand the challenges involved in bringing two organisations together. It also highlighted the importance of having good planning and rigorous organisational and reporting structures in place.”*

*“The partnership nature of Exemplar meant very good relationships forged between the NHS project managers themselves, and we were able to learn a lot from each other, i.e. skills mapping or how to use the tools on the Skills for Health website.”*

Missed an earlier issue of Workforce Solutions in the West Midlands?  
See [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk) for your online copy.

## Coming next

Individual summaries will soon be available outlining the achievements and outcomes of each project in more detail. If you would like to pre-order a copy, please email [wmwsnews@skillsforhealth.org.uk](mailto:wmwsnews@skillsforhealth.org.uk)



## Get in touch

We hope you enjoyed this last edition of Workforce Solutions in the West Midlands. If there are any areas you would like to discuss, please get in touch. Email: [wmwsnews@skillsforhealth.org.uk](mailto:wmwsnews@skillsforhealth.org.uk)

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A joint partnership project



Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector (the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations). Our purpose is to implement solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.