

Careers in Healthcare

Signposting, referral and
partnership working

Introduction

This information leaflet has been produced by Skills for Health for those who advise people on career options relating to the health sector. It will be helpful to careers advisers, HR and line managers, supervisors, and anyone else who offers information, advice and guidance to prospective and existing employees, trainees and those seeking work.

In this booklet you will find information on:

- Signposting and referral – what are they?
- Key things to consider
- Working in partnership to develop your Information, Advice and Guidance skills
- Links to relevant information and more sources of support

The information leaflet is one of a series which are on the Skills for Health website. These cover topics such as qualifications, health sector jobs, the voluntary and independent sectors, funding and much more.

Visit www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/careersinformationandadvice to access them.

Signposting and referral - what are they?

Signposting and referral are an essential part of providing effective information, advice and guidance (IAG). When it works well, you can be instrumental in launching people into new challenges and careers. Not to mention helping support your organisation in developing a motivated and skilled workforce.

Knowing how, when and where to signpost and refer staff to other sources of information and support is crucial. The tips and links in this leaflet will help you develop effective signposting and referral skills.

Signposting and referral may include:

- Signposting to other sources of information. For example, an online information source, a particular course, or learning programme
- Signposting or referring individuals to a different source of support within your own organisation
- Signposting or referring to external support or specialist help.

Key things to consider:

- Being aware of signposting and referral options is a key part of an organisation's IAG system.
- Signposting or referral should be based on a clear understanding of an individual's needs and the services that could help
- Ensure you gain the individual's permission before you share any information with a third party as part of the signposting/referral
- Whilst some individuals will be able or confident enough to follow up on your suggestions for signposting or referral, others may prefer you to advocate on their behalf
- Be aware of where your IAG role begins and ends. Knowing when you can offer assistance and when it would be better to signpost or refer an individual is a key skill
- You will be able to respond appropriately and encourage an individual to achieve their potential if you have strong IAG skills and contacts available to you
- To support this process, a set of policies or protocols may help you.

Suggested organisations for signposting and referral:

- **Health Learning and Skills Advice Line.** This is a specialist service providing Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to those working in or considering a career in the health sector. There is a telephone helpline (**08000 150 850**), email an adviser service and the facility to book a callback (England only)

- **Health careers services** [NHS Careers](#) in England, [NHS Careers Wales](#), Careers and opportunities in [NHS Scotland](#) and [Health careers in Northern Ireland](#)
- **Your organisation.** Another department or specialist in your organisation may be able to help, especially if issues come to light that are not directly related to career and learning support. For example: Human Resources; Education and Training, trades unions; occupational health
- **NHS learning centre/library** can support the work and professional development of NHS staff, whilst linking to the [National Library for Health](#)
- **Trade unions.** There may be Union learning representatives in the organisation who can support individuals in their learning journey. See union links in the final section below
- **Health sector professional body/associations** have extensive resources that support individuals in training and their continuous professional development - CPD. See [NHS Careers](#) for links
- **Independent healthcare** organisations may get additional support from groups like the [Independent Healthcare Advisory Services](#)
- **Voluntary and charitable** organisations may get support from [Skills Third-Sector](#), for example
- **Other sources** can include support from outside the organisation at both national and regional level. There is plenty of support from organisations such as [Skills for Health](#) and [Skills Academy for Health](#), [NHS Employers](#), [NES](#) in Scotland, in Northern Ireland [DHSSPSNI](#) and in Wales, [NLIAH](#)
- **Specialist information** from sources such as [ROSE](#) online who work with refugees or Macmillan cancer support online [learn zone](#)
- **Careers services across the UK** [Next Step](#) for adults and information on support for [young people](#) in England, [Skills Development Scotland](#), and their [My world of Work](#), [Careers Wales](#), and in Northern Ireland [Careers Service](#) and [EGSA](#).
- [Jobcentre Plus](#) offers support to employers and to individuals seeking employment within the health sector
- **Local learning provider** For example an adult or further education college, or university. All will have Careers Information and Advice services
- **Prospects** The official UK graduate careers website offering a range of careers services for graduates and undergraduates, including advice via email. Have a look at [Careers Tagged](#) too
- **Private career management/consultancies** The cost of these private providers' services will need to be budgeted for
- **Personal issues** such as debt may come into the conversation – signposting and referral is essential when the issues raised are not in your area of expertise. In this instance a referral to your local Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) might be the right way.

Follow the links below to find out more about the available services.

Health on Net Northern Ireland honni is an online resource for employees for Health and Social Care Services	NHS Education for Scotland e-library , with books, journals and a document request service
NIPEC Career planning for registered and pre-registered staff in Northern Ireland	Learndirect
NI courses online resource for full and part time courses	UCAS for information on undergraduate courses across the uk
Citizens Advice Bureau England and Wales Scotland Northern Ireland	

Working in partnership to develop your Information, Advice and Guidance skills

If you or your colleagues want to develop Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) skills, there are many resources to get you started. In addition, working in partnership can enable the development of good practice; ensure best use of resources and open up possible sources of funding.

- **Local careers services** These partners work with health sector organisations, to help and advise on building IAG skills capability and capacity. Find out how your local careers service can support your organisation in developing the skills it needs. In England, [Next Step](#) provides face to face services. In Northern Ireland the Educational Guidance Service for Adults ([EGSA](#)) can provide support for Careers Information and Advice skills development and run signposting training courses. Contact [Skills Development Scotland](#) and [Careers Wales](#).
- **Professional careers associations/bodies**, for example, the [Institute of Career Guidance](#) (ICG), [National Educational Guidance for Adults Association](#) (NAEGA) and [Careers England](#)
- Professional bodies such as the [Royal College of Nursing](#) and the [Royal College of Midwives](#). For a list of health related professional bodies link to [NHS Careers](#).
- **Trade unions** support and develop union learning representatives and may also enable access to training and, in some cases, funding. Contact [Unionlearn](#) in England; [TUC Wales](#); [Scottish Union Learning](#) and [Northern Ireland](#)
- Local [colleges](#) and [universities](#) may be able to support in terms of training, but also work in partnership to develop staff skills
- **Local health communities** may be able to share expertise, good practice and innovative ideas

- **Government agencies** such as the [Skills Funding Agency](#), local councils and [Jobcentre Plus](#), through their local partnerships, can work with partners to develop skills to meet not only staffing needs but local community needs. In England, another source of partnership work has been with the Regional Development Agencies, which will be replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships ([LEPs](#)) by March 2012

A good example of partnership working is the [Health Learning and Skills Advice line](#) (08000 150 850) which has Skills for Health, NHS Careers and the Next Step service working in partnership to provide and support a free confidential careers information, advice and guidance service to those interested in or already working in the health sector.

Skills for Health is working with the trade unions (including Unison and Unite) and professional bodies (RCN and RCM), through a Joint Action Working group, to develop a contextualized health sector [climbing frame](#) to support union learning representatives in their work to support colleagues.

You may also want to look at:

- **The Knowledge and Skills Framework and Personal Development Review Process** Information on developing IAG skills to support KSF and PDR
- **Supporting your staff's literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) skills** Information on how you can [support LLN skills](#) as part of the IAG process
- **Information, Advice and guidance qualifications** Study for a whole or part of an IAG qualification to support the development of vital skills

Awareness of LLN supports Lincolnshire health employees

Raising Literacy, Language and Numeracy skills in the workforce is enabling a healthcare Trust to embed Skills for Life and create opportunities for learning, development and career progression.

Read the [Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#) case study to find out how opportunities have grown for unregistered staff to become healthcare professionals.

Further Links

Unison in Scotland	Unison in England
Unison in Wales	Unison in Northern Ireland
Unite the union in England	Unite the union in Wales
Unite the union in Scotland	Unite the union in Ireland
Unionlearn	Scottish TUC (unionlearn)
Northern Irish TUC	Welsh TUC
National Guidance Research Forum details new publications in guidance practice, research and policy	Advice Resources for Next Step advisers
International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby	