



Better Skills | Better Jobs | Better Health

“Workforce planning – can we face the future without it?”

The health sector employs almost 2.3 million¹ people, and workforce spend accounts for an estimated 70 per cent of the NHS healthcare budget². Employers are faced with financial challenges, increasing demands being put upon services from people living longer with more complex conditions, the development of new technologies and new drug therapies. It is now more important than ever that organisations analyse how they are using their workforce and ensure that they use that workforce in the most effective and efficient way to provide good quality healthcare.

Workforce plans are required to ensure that people with the right skills, competencies, and behaviours are able to meet patient needs both now and in the future. The overarching aims should be focused on creating a sustainable workforce that is centred around patient need, provides quality outcomes and is both deliverable and affordable.

At [Skills for Health](#), we have a proven track record of working with employers to review their workforce planning processes and support them to develop operational and strategic workforce plans. Plans are developed working in partnership with a range of personnel across organisations including of a diverse mix of clinical staff, finance, learning and development and human resources professionals.

Over the last 18 months Skills for Health has worked with a number of organisations to develop robust workforce plans and is well placed to help the health sector (and beyond) with developing robust plans to ensure service sustainability for now and the future. These have included:

- 1) Working with Oxford University Hospitals Foundation NHS Trust (OUH) to review its workforce planning processes and support them to develop divisional level workforce plans and a strategic five-year organisational workforce plan. For the first time ever, OUH have a workforce plan that is linked to service development, is based upon evidence of best practice in workforce utilisation and provides a clear rationale for change linking with their financial projections and assumptions. A key outcome of the work was building capacity and capability within OUH in order that they could build on the current plans to develop and embed workforce planning into their business planning cycle year on year.
- 2) Working with States of Jersey-Health and Social Services Department (HSSD) to develop a strategic workforce plan for its entire health and social care economy in light of substantial shifts in service provision from acute hospitals to primary and community care. This work has also developed operational workforce plans for every service area and has clearly articulated scenarios and new ways of working that will ensure effective delivery of services for the future. The work has also supported the Outline Business

¹ Labour Force Survey (2015) 4 quarter average Q1 2015 to Q4 2015.

² NHS five year forward view (Forward View) (NHS England et al 2014)

Case for a brand new acute hospital facility and this shows Skills for Health's ways of working support capital planning and investment decisions for major projects

- 3) Working with BANES Enhanced Medical Services+ and the 27 GP Practices within Bath & North East Somerset to develop a comprehensive workforce development initiative aimed at supporting the sustainability of general practice given the major challenges being faced. The work focused on identifying, alongside practices, key workforce priorities which were felt could have maximum impact within the locality. As a result 5 areas were developed in detail (including sharing back office functions, increasing the supply of Practice Nurses, and freeing up clinical staff time through development of a Personal Assistant role) and which provided practices with a comprehensive set of tools, resources and guides which are supporting workforce change within primary care.
- 4) Working with Health Education West Midlands in order to develop strategic workforce frameworks for integrated working across 5 health and social care local economies. The work used a 'scenario planning' approach which challenged stakeholders to explore, using a set of 'possible futures' and population analysis, how both services and the workforce would need to change to support integrated working in the future. As a result of the process each locality has been provided with a set of strategic workforce priorities, linked to key actions, which will form the basis of future planning for an integrated workforce across the West Midlands.

At Skills for Health, we utilise the [Six Steps Methodology to Integrated Workforce Planning](#) as a means to develop a comprehensive and integrated workforce plan for a clinical pathway, organisation, individual service (clinical or non-clinical) or team. The Six Steps Methodology is based on:

- defining the plan
- mapping out the service changes needed in response to demography, epidemiology and organisational priorities
- defining the workforce required to meet patient needs in the future
- exploring how to maintain an effective workforce supply
- action planning
- implementation, monitoring and review.

The model integrates finance and service planning and incorporates evidence of best practice, the use of workforce data, national and international benchmarks, available tools and professional judgement.

Workforce planning can be scaled to whatever the need be; strategic; looking at how health economies plan their future, or scaled down for specific services or teams at a more localised level.

A key element of effective workforce planning is a review of how roles are used now and how existing and new roles can be used in the future to improve productivity, efficiency and service quality. A key element of Skills for Health's approach to workforce planning aims to:

- alleviate recruitment issues and supply shortages
- create additional workforce capacity

- develop attractive and interesting roles and careers to support retention
- improve patient outcomes
- improving workforce utilisation, by ensuring staff with higher level skills have the time to undertake the most complex activities

The Six Steps recognises not only the importance of the design of the workforce for the future but also in the importance of the development of the current workforce. 60 percent of the workforce that are employed now will still be employed in the healthcare sector in 10 years' time so it's crucial we recognise them as valuable asset, investing in their development so they can adapt according to changing needs. Workforce plans provide the means to systematically identify priority areas of skills development required to meet those changing needs.

No-one can foresee the future but more effective integrated workforce planning puts us in a much better place to respond to the challenges the healthcare workforce faces now and in the future.

Skills for Health has the expertise to provide support for organisations when evaluating the impact of workforce planning interventions. We are able to offer webinars and masterclasses to enable your staff to become effective in evaluation and we can provide evaluation services to your organisation to evaluate impact and return on investment.

Skills for Health is well placed to work with all types of organisations around the important subject of workforce planning and its approach and methodology can be shaped to support the needs of all.

For more information, visit [Workforce Development & Consultancy](#)