

Learning in UK National Health Service (NHS)

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Context for learning

1997: Blair government elected on a 'modernising' agenda.
Promise to address the "under-funding" of National Health Service (NHS)



2000: Published NHS Plan, an action plan to modernise National Health Service

Premise of reform

1948 - NHS was established as "doctor-centred" Previous NHS was under-funded

2000 - Reformed NHS is "patient-centred"

Promises and priorities

NHS Plan promises

- £19 billion by 2005
- power, information for patients
- more hospitals and beds
- more doctors and nurses
- shorter waiting times
- cleaner wards, better food
- improved care for older people
- tougher standards, better rewards for staff

NHS Plan priorities

- target biggest killers, e.g. cancer, heart disease
- pinpoint changes needed to improve people's health and well-being
- deliver modern, fair, convenient services that "people want"

Fulfilling the promises

Key issue: resource management
Will increased funding deliver improvements?

Challenge: Recruit more staff, and use existing staff more effectively

2000–2003 - Massive organisational restructuring

2000 - Health Service of All the Talents Workforce development plan

2001 - Working Together – Learning Together Lifelong learning framework

2002 - HR in the NHS Plan 'More staff working differently' HR strategy

2003 - Agenda for Change Pay modernisation based on job standardisation

Skills escalator

Staff movement up, down, across the organisation 'Start as a domestic, end as chief executive'

- Old-style NHS: rigidly hierarchical, cultures within cultures, lots of demarcation
- New-style NHS: greater flexibility, job redesign (e.g. nurses taking on doctors' work), recognition of value of whole team (cleaner to consultant)

NHS as a microcosm of the UK workplace

- high proportion of nonprofessional staff with low or no qualifications
- denied access to opportunities for development, suspicious of 'learning'
- Wasteful of human resource and individual potential

Health Service of all the Talents Agenda for Change: staff to have access to learning and development as a right

Lifelong learning and 'Skills for Life'

- 1999 survey suggests 20% of UK population have limited literacy/numeracy
- 2001 National Strategy launched to improve adult literacy/numeracy
- NHS is required by government to engage with the strategy
- Of 1.2 million employees, 200,000 lack target qualifications for school leavers
- 50,000 + staff are thought to have limited literacy/ numeracy

Limited literacy/numeracy restricts ability to:

- perform job
- cope with change
- engage critically with workplace issues [[See p. 20](#) for an NHS workplace example]

Learning and patient-centred service delivery

Lifelong learning and development are keys to delivering the Government's vision of patient-centred care in the NHS.

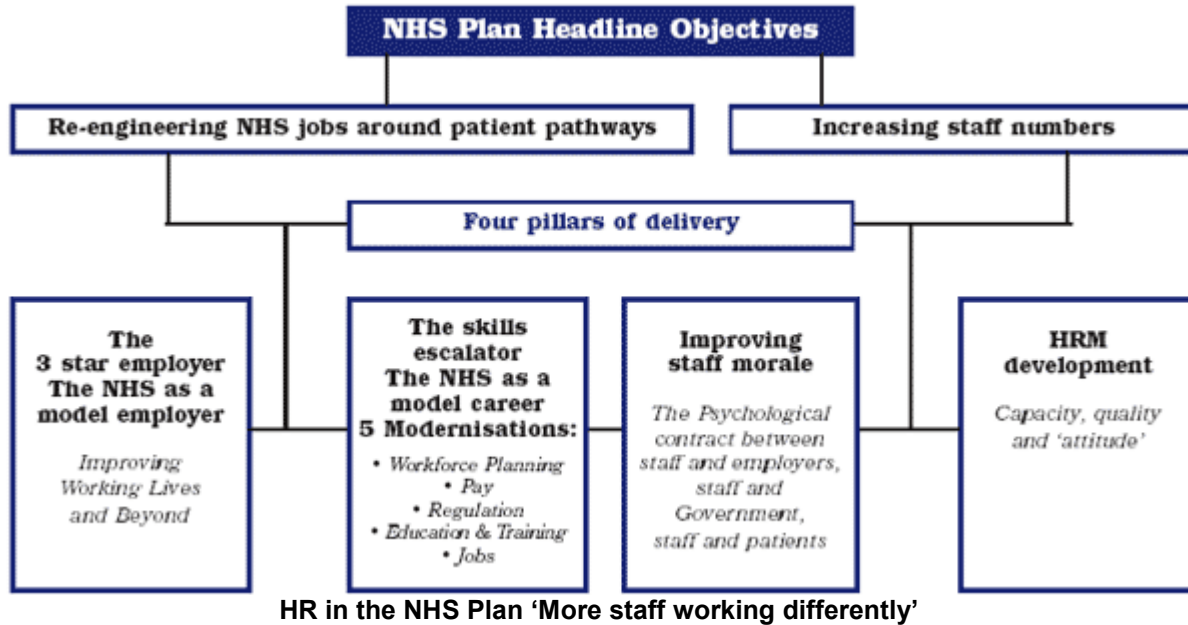
Our main aim is to ensure that the NHS, working with its partners and related sectors, develops

and equips staff with the skills they need to:

- support changes and improvements in patient care
- take advantage of wider career opportunities; and
- realise their potential.

This is not simply a good thing in itself. There is increasing evidence that lifelong learning, as part of good employment practice, lies at the heart of effective organisational performance.

– *Working Together – Learning Together 2001*



NHS University (NHSU) 'Learning for everyone'

A corporate university to support NHS modernisation by unlocking the potential of a 'million hardworking, talented people'

"For far too long education and training in the NHS has been a privilege for a few - the NHSU will make it a right for everyone. Everyone should have access to a professional qualification."

– Labour Party manifesto pledge for 2001 election – to launch in autumn 2003

Provide practical learning for everyone at every level: staff, patients, carers, volunteers
'Bricks and clicks'

Grow the skills needed for modern healthcare

Still evolving

– See www.nhsu.nhs.uk

NHSU launch portfolio

Improving patient care

- Induction to the NHS
First-ever standard induction for NHS
- Communication skills - General and specialised
- First contact (triage)
Supporting new ways of working in the NHS
- Hygiene and infection control HAIs currently cost NHS £1bn plus annually

Supporting staff

- Skills for life, health and work, literacy, numeracy and language skills of staff
- Health informatics Information management
- "Educator" support for educators working in NHS to support learners and learning
- Management Skills
Leadership and management also Junior scholarship program and Foundation Degree opportunities for employees

On the ground

Challenges

- Three tiers of learning
 - Statutory responsibilities – legislated training e.g. health and safety
 - Compulsory – called for by hospital policy e.g. local induction
 - High priority – recognised as valuable e.g. supervisory skills
 - Staff shortages, acute difficulties around release time, lack of back-up staff
 - Equity
 - Resources (e.g. facilities for learning)

Some possible solutions

- Protected time and range of learning opportunities e.g. skills training courses
 - reading
 - e-learning
 - research
 - experiential learning
- Job shares
 - shadowing schemes
 - networking
 - courses
 - work experience
- The kindness of strangers (or is it “With a little help from my friends”)

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