Working together for NHS patients
NHS Partners Network is an alliance of independent – both commercial and not-for profit – healthcare providers. It was established in 2005. Members of the network provide non-emergency elective operations and diagnosis for NHS patients.

Since the first independent sector treatment centre (ISTC) opened in October 2003, independent providers have improved patient care through increasing access to services and brought innovation into the system. To date, ISTCs have provided more than 110,000 elective procedures for NHS patients and independent sector contracts had delivered more than 280,000 diagnostic tests. On top of this, existing independent hospitals are treating thousands of NHS patients and are fully involved in the Government’s Free Choice initiative.

The NHS Confederation seeks to reflect the whole of the new NHS. Its members have voted to bring independent providers of NHS services into the NHS Confederation as full and equal members. NHS Partners Network represents many of the larger elective and diagnostic independent providers. Bringing NHS Partners Network and the NHS Confederation together is therefore a natural evolution in the development of the UK healthcare system.

NHS Partners Network helps its members by:
- influencing policy and the public debate, providing the distinct voice for its members
- developing solutions with all those providing health and healthcare, to benefit NHS patients and the public
- supporting leaders through networking, sharing information and learning.

Membership and governance of NHS Partners Network

Membership of NHS Partners Network:
1. Alliance Medical
2. BUPA Hospitals
3. Capio
4. Clinicenta
5. Care UK/Mercury Health
6. Nations Healthcare
7. Netcare UK
8. Nuffield Hospitals
9. Partnership Health Group
10. UK Specialist Hospitals

NHS Partners Network key priorities

Our over-arching goal is to ensure that independent providers are able to play a significant role in improving access, quality and choice for NHS patients.

A strong voice for our members
- working with ministers, the Department of Health and wider regulatory bodies to provide a stable framework and clarity of direction for all organisations involved in healthcare
- communicating the role of the independent sector in the provision of NHS services to the public, NHS colleagues and stakeholders.

Standards and regulation
- working for common regulation, with fewer but better regulatory standards, underpinned by a meaningful and common dataset which focuses on patient safety and outcomes
- focusing on principles that underpin effective working between sectors so that NHS and independent confidence is maintained
- promoting and developing a high-performing and motivated workforce across all sectors to deliver the best possible care to NHS patients.

Procurement and commissioning
- encouraging a consistent, transparent contracting process to create innovation and fair competition
- working for commissioning that focuses on patient outcomes
- developing cooperation across sectors, including through partnership working and more formal arrangements such as joint ventures.

NHS Partners Network is run by an executive committee chaired by Richard Jones of BUPA. Four subgroups are responsible for driving forward the work programmes, which are: Planning and Resources; Political and Media Relations; Standards and Regulation; Procurement, Commissioning and Marketing. The Executive meets four times a year and there are regular meetings of the full membership, as well as a formal annual general meeting.
Message from Richard Jones
Chair of NHS Partners Network

NHS Partners Network was launched in 2006 to ensure that patients, clinicians, commissioners and the public have a better understanding of how independent sector providers are working alongside traditional NHS providers in the interests of NHS patients.

Our members have improved productivity and improved patient access through efficient and effective patient care in treatment centres and hospitals. The House of Commons Health Select Committee found that: “ISTCs have embodied good practice and introduced innovative techniques.”

There are now 23 ISTCs delivering services to NHS patients, whose satisfaction was measured to be 97 per cent across Wave 1 schemes in March 2007. Some 150 independent hospitals are also accredited to provide services through Patient Choice. Increasing capacity has enabled the NHS to reduce waiting times, which means earlier access for patients to elective and diagnostic procedures.

Today, patients should have a choice of four providers for elective procedures. Not only do ISTCs increase the choice available, but additional independent sector-run services such as walk-in centres have delivered much-needed increased capacity into the health service. From July 2007 the NHS will progressively roll out the policy of Free Choice. Patients will be able to choose from any provider able to satisfy Healthcare Commission regulatory standards and charge commissioners in line with NHS tariff.

We are proud of our partnership with the NHS. We are determined to see that partnership strengthen and succeed in the interests of NHS patients. By becoming part of the NHS Confederation, NHS Partners Network will work closely with commissioners and providers across the service to achieve these aims. Our joining with the NHS Confederation not only marks a coming of age for the independent sector, but also an important transition for the NHS itself as it embraces the benefits for patients arising from a plurality of providers.

Richard Jones, Chair of NHS Partners Network.

Message from Dr Gill Morgan DBE
Chief Executive of the NHS Confederation

The NHS is becoming increasingly complex. For commissioners, this means being able to develop care pathways that may include traditional NHS organisations, the third sector, commercial organisations or social enterprises. Getting things right for patients means working across all these boundaries as patients do not care who provides their care, so long as it is joined-up and personalised.

I believe that to deliver this vision, all the different sectors must be talking with each other and defining their common values. Bringing NHS Partners Network into the NHS Confederation is an important step in that direction.

The NHS Confederation’s affiliate scheme for independent providers was launched in 2004 to reflect the increasing diversity of service providers in the modern NHS. Our NHS members have now voted in favour of independent providers joining them as full members. In our tenth anniversary year, it is a reflection of the difference these providers have made and of a time of significant change in the health service that our members have welcomed independent providers into the Confederation.

Like their NHS colleagues, the independent sector makes significant and wide-ranging improvements to the lives of NHS patients in their care. And independent sector treatment of NHS patients is of course not a new phenomenon. NHS GPs, ophthalmic and pharmacy services have all largely been provided by independent contractors since the formation of the NHS in 1948.

As we look forward, all providers of care to NHS patients face challenges as they respond to increasingly complex patient needs.

Dr Gill Morgan DBE, Chief Executive of the NHS Confederation.
The members of NHS Partners Network have been making important contributions to improving services for NHS patients

Personalisation: putting people in control of their own health and care

Tees Valley Treatment Centre
Tees Valley Treatment Centre in Middlesbrough is a direct result of an independent provider and a primary care trust (PCT) working together to deliver healthcare into the community. Having identified areas of high demand, Middlesbrough PCT approached Capio Healthcare to establish a day case surgery unit within an existing primary care development. One Life, based in the town centre, is comprised of a GP surgery, pharmacy and PCT screening and diagnostic services.

The addition of Capio’s new day case surgery unit and outpatient unit (shared with the PCT) completes the patient experience for the local community as they now have access to both primary and secondary care services under one roof. However, the benefits go further afield as all patients from County Durham and Tees Valley can take advantage of Choose and Book to select the treatment centre for their procedure. Patients also benefit from access to short waiting times and select a convenient appointment time: a win–win outcome for all parties.

Shepton Mallet Treatment Centre
UK Specialist Hospitals’ Shepton Mallet Treatment Centre (SMTC) provides inpatient joint replacements. With timely education and support the patient is in control of their journey – leading to a below average length of stay.

From first contact the patient is put in control when they choose the date for their appointment. This is run as a one-stop clinic with surgeon, nurse and physiotherapy assessments, imaging as required, and the start of the patient’s education programme. The required equipment aids are then ordered and delivered one week prior to surgery. This one-stop visit allows for prompt and timely decision making, and most patients leave having chosen their date for surgery.

Mobilisation starts on day one and is individualised to meet mobility targets. The average length of stay for both hips and knees at SMTC is four days and approximately 5 per cent only of patients require any community or ongoing physiotherapy care. This is due to the education programme, the type of anaesthesia and pain relief used, as well as intensive physiotherapy support.

Rapid and convenient access to high-quality, cost-effective care closer to home

BUPA Hospital Leicester
BUPA Hospital Leicester was one of the first BUPA sites to use the NHS directly bookable Choose and Book system. In February 2007 the hospital introduced orthopaedic appointments onto the system, allowing Leicester GPs and patients to choose appointment times and book online. In the run up to this a quick reference guide was created for practice staff for booking online and a direct number was provided for help from the hospital’s patient choice team. The programme will now be rolled out for other specialties.

The additional capacity offered by the BUPA Hospital Leicester has allowed patients waiting for surgery to be accommodated quickly. BUPA Hospitals are committed to bringing the reality of the choice of a private hospital to more NHS patients. The first ever jointly branded NHS and independent sector patient choice advertisements have been placed by BUPA Hospitals in the national GP trade press with regional patient advertising to follow shortly.

St Mary’s NHS Treatment Centre
Working in partnership with Portsmouth City Teaching Primary Care Trust, Care UK/Mercury Health built and now runs a community based, multi-purpose ISTC, which includes a minor injuries unit and walk-in centre. The centre works closely with the A&E department at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth, as part of its integration with the South East Hampshire emergency network. The minor injuries unit is an entirely nurse-led facility and NHS staff are seconded and rotated as part of the unique network partnership.

The minor injuries unit and walk-in centre provide an alternative to GP and A&E services. The minor injuries unit and walk-in centre can treat up to 130 patients a day and so should take some of the pressure off NHS services in the Portsmouth area.
Using innovative techniques to achieve quicker recovery times for patients

Boston and Gainsborough NHS Treatment Centres in Lincolnshire, run by Capio, have recently implemented new techniques for general anaesthesia, to improve comfort and recovery times for patients.

TIVA/TCI (total intra-venous anaesthesia/target controlled infusion) is a technique recently incorporated into the organisation’s protocols. TIVA/TCI dramatically reduces patients’ symptoms of post-operative nausea and vomiting (PONV). By decreasing the level of anaesthesia, this technique also lowers the risk of anaesthetic reaction.

The process significantly lessens the time before patients regain consciousness – therefore cutting their recovery time – and also reduces the time before discharge, so the overall journey time of the patient is substantially lower. Monthly key performance indicator reports have demonstrated this improvement, and the many benefits to the patient and the unit were realised immediately on adoption of the new techniques.

Peninsula NHS Treatment Centre

Partnership Health Group’s Peninsula NHS Treatment Centre has introduced an innovative blood conservation service that processes and cleans a patient’s own blood during and after surgery and then re-transfuses it to the patient. This has now spread to the rest of the NHS to become standard medical and nursing practice in the management of the care plan for the patient.

The process helps patients to recover from surgery more quickly and effectively – up to three days quicker after knee and hip surgery. By treating a patients’ own blood in this way, their haemoglobin levels are enhanced and so recovery time is quicker, reducing the likelihood of hospital readmission. On top of this, blood stocks are used more responsibly, while patients benefit from a minimised exposure to allogenic blood.

Working in partnership with NHS statutory organisations

New GP Practice and Walk in Centre in Dagenham

Dagenham in East London is recognised as an under-doctored area, with a high need for primary and community-based health services. The local PCT was unable to attract a GP to a new local improvement finance trust (LIFT) scheme in Broad Street, so commissioned Care UK to operate a GP practice and NHS walk-in centre on the site. The practice was the first of its kind in the UK to be run by an independent healthcare company on behalf of the NHS.

The practice and walk-in centre are designed to bring health services closer to the local community. In order to improve access, the practice opens until 8pm on weekday evenings and between 10am and 2pm on Saturdays. In addition, the walk-in centre opens from 7am until 10pm on weekdays and 10am until 6pm at weekends.

The service has proved a success, with over 1,500 patients registering with the practice in the first ten months and the walk-in centre proving popular with local residents.

Bodmin NHS Treatment Centre

Bodmin NHS Treatment Centre in Cornwall was approached by the Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust to assist in managing over 900 endoscopy cases, which were likely to breach the Government’s 18 week waiting times. The team at Bodmin arranged additional sessions at both the treatment centre and at Capio’s Duchy Hospital in Truro. As a result, the NHS trust met their target with no cases breached, and NHS patients were able to be seen quickly in a location convenient to them.

Following this successful arrangement, a consultant endoscopist from the NHS trust gave a presentation during a joint advisory group on gastrointestinal endoscopy-accredited course hosted at Bodmin – the first to be held in an ISTC. At the event the national lead endoscopist and Capio’s specialist advisor also contributed to the sharing of skills between Capio and the NHS.
Support for NHS Partners Network

"NHS Partners Network is an excellent opportunity for independent providers to get together and build on experience in delivering the 18 week target. The experience of the NHS Confederation in developing support for health partners will be invaluable."
Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Health

"The independent sectors, including the voluntary and commercial sectors, are already vital suppliers to the NHS. The NHS is now ready for all willing healthcare providers who meet NHS standards and terms to give NHS patients maximum access to quality healthcare. I look forward to NHS Partners Network responding to this challenge."
Andrew Lansley, Shadow Secretary of State for Health

"There is a useful role for private sector involvement in healthcare. NHS Partners Network becoming part of the Confederation means it can play a key role in sharing best practice through cooperation."
Norman Lamb, Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Health

"NHS Partners Network is a unique forum for promoting and supporting independent providers of elective and diagnostic treatment services. I look forward to working with it as independent providers are increasing capacity, choice and innovation."
Michael Seitz, Interim Commercial Director General, Department of Health

"It will be important for members of NHS Partners Network to work closely with NHS primary care trusts to provide the flexibility and breadth of services they need to meet local needs. It is this commitment to partnership working that I hope the Network will promote as part of the Confederation."
David Stout, Director, PCT Network

"There are many issues on which different providers can work together in common cause. The inclusion of NHS Partners Network in the NHS Confederation is a positive development that promotes engagement between providers."
Sue Slipman, Director, Foundation Trust Network

"The NHS Confederation puts patients at the heart of everything it does. Patients have already benefited from reduced waiting times and greater choice. The priority for NHS Partners Network will be to work with sectors across the NHS to ensure even greater positive outcomes for patients."
Peter Mount CBE, Central Manchester and Manchester Children’s University Hospitals NHS Trust

"NHS Partners Network becoming part of the NHS Confederation will benefit our members and the patients they serve. By working together within the Confederation, we can work closely to spread best practice and cooperate when influencing decision-makers, to ensure patients receive the best care possible in a modern NHS."
Malcolm Hanney, Chair, Bath and North East Somerset PCT

"Independent organisations have already developed a strong culture of partnership working as significant providers of mental healthcare in England. NHS Partners Network has a wonderful opportunity to develop this culture in new areas of independent provision for the benefit of patients."
Steve Shrubb, Director, Mental Health Network

THE NHS CONFEDERATION
The NHS Confederation
29 Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DD
Tel 020 7074 3200 Fax 0870 487 1555
Email enquiries@nhsconfed.org
www.nhsconfed.org
Registered Charity no. 1090329

© The NHS Confederation, 2007
This document may not be reproduced in whole or in part without permission.

Further copies can be obtained from:
NHS Confederation Distribution
Tel 0870 444 5841 Fax 0870 444 5842
Email publications@nhsconfed.org
www.nhsconfed.org/publications

© The NHS Confederation, 2007
This document may not be reproduced in whole or in part without permission.