

Briefing

April 2018 Issue 275

Making the changing skills agenda work for the NHS

Who should read this briefing?

The NHS Confederation and NHS Employers are working together to support NHS boards and the HR community to understand the changing skills agenda in England, and what it means for the future of the health and care workforce.

How we can support you

The NHS Confederation and NHS Employers are best placed to support you to safeguard and grow your future workforce, through:

- understanding the changing policy context
- providing developmental sessions on how to influence local decision-making
- sharing good practice
- brokering relationships with local partners.

Localisation of skills policy

Skills are at the centre of the government's devolution agenda. Local leaders are seeking to develop their own economy by aligning the needs of high value local employers with the focus of their schools and further and higher education providers. To support this, the government is increasingly handing responsibility for prioritising, financing and directing many aspects of local skills provision to metro mayors, combined authorities and local enterprise partnerships (LEPs).

The NHS, as the largest employer in every area of the country, has a unique opportunity to shape these plans, ensuring that health and care remains an attractive, open sector for local talent.

The Industrial Strategy and skills

The [UK Industrial strategy](#) white paper published in November 2017 sets out the government's long-term plan to create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power. Skills form a critical part of this strategy.

To achieve the objective of 'generating good jobs and greater earning power for all' the Industrial Strategy prioritises developing a technical education system that stands alongside higher education, including T-Levels, further apprenticeships and the creation of institutes for technology. All will impact on the future health and care workforce. Further to this, skills advisory panels will soon be rolled out across the country, producing rigorous

analysis of the current and future supply and demand for skills and to help local areas form a clearer understanding of their skills requirements. It is imperative that the NHS is involved as these initiatives develop, and that our local workforce action boards are aware of this changing context.

Engagement so far

In 2017/18 NHS Confederation and NHS Employers:

- briefed HR directors (HRDs) on how the local growth agenda is changing the way local skills provision is funded, organised and delivered
- communicated relevant policy developments in the skills agenda directly to HRDs, for example further education area reviews
- introduced regional HRDs, collectively and individually, to their respective local enterprise partnerships and combined authority skills leads
- led developmental sessions for regional groups of HRDs on how to influence the skills agenda, metro mayors, combined authorities and local enterprise partnerships
- represented the views of HRDs nationally to other sector representative bodies
- shared case studies of collaborative local working, for example how the Humber LEP is actively supporting its local health and care economy through a focus on skills and employment.

What others have said

“The NHS is competing with many other sectors for its future workforce. We have to work differently, develop new local partnerships, and establish ourselves as the employer of choice. The NHS Confederation’s local growth advisor helped the HR directors across Greater Manchester to understand the context surrounding devolution of skills and significantly, how to best influence new policy to ensure our future workforce.”

Andrew Maloney, Director of HR and Corporate Affairs, Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust and Chair, Greater Manchester NHS HR Directors Network

“How the NHS works with external partners such as the new Metro Mayors and Local Enterprise Partnerships in future is hugely important. Responsibility for reaching out sits with our leaders and this is why the NHS Confederation and NHS Employers are working closely to support board members to better shape local strategies.”

Danny Mortimer, CEO, NHS Employers and Deputy CEO, NHS Confederation

Further information

For more information on the skills agenda please take a look at the NHS Confederation [website](#) pages on local growth.

To discuss the work of the NHS Confederation and NHS Employers in your locality, please contact Michael Wood, NHS Local Growth Advisor at michael.wood@nhsconfed.org

