



Career Planning for Everyone in the NHS

The Toolkit

Edited by Ruth Chambers

*With contributions from
Wendy Garcarz, Neil Houston,
Anne Longbottom, Kay Mohanna
and Fiona Taylor*

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About the authors

Ruth Chambers has been a GP for more than 20 years. Her previous experience has encompassed a wide range of research and educational activities and she has been involved in promoting career development for many years. She is currently a part-time GP, Head of the Stoke-on-Trent Teaching Primary Care Trust programme, and clinical dean at Staffordshire University. Ruth has researched and written about the need for careers support services in the NHS and run career guidance skills training around the UK. She ran a support scheme for doctors and dentists in Staffordshire for nearly ten years, with career counselling as a component resource. One of her most formative experiences was an in-depth career review that led to her diversifying within an academic/clinical career.

Wendy Garcarz is an education and development specialist with a proven record of accomplishment in primary care. She has 20 years' experience in education and training management in both the public and private sectors. She has spent the last ten years working in primary care, developing primary care clinicians and support workers in service commissioning, continuing professional development, strategic planning and service innovations. Wendy is the Chief Executive of 4-health, an organisational development consultancy specialising in sustainable change through workforce investment. She and her colleagues work with all types of healthcare organisations. wendy@4-health.biz.

Neil Houston left school intending to become an accountant, but before setting foot in an office changed course and applied to study medicine. He now works half-time as a GP in a rural practice in central Scotland. He has a number of educational and quality improvement roles and works with primary care teams as an associate adviser in professional development. He has recently been involved in developing and evaluating a career guidance programme for primary healthcare professionals.

Anne Longbottom began her working life in a bank in Birmingham where she quickly progressed to working with managers in assessing individual and corporate lending proposals. Following a career break to bring up her son, she rejoined the jobs market in a local primary school and began working in a local further education college in the Faculty of Caring Services. Here she gained a valuable insight into working in care settings. Her desire to ensure that all staff within an organisation had the opportunity to develop and progress began to flourish. Anne now works within the NHS to promote learning and development for staff who traditionally have found it more difficult to access training opportunities. Anne is an active member of the Guide Association and a mentor for new leaders.

Kay Mohanna has made several changes in her life and career without the benefit of objective careers advice or guidance. She undertook research as the Royal College of General Practitioners' Midland Faculty young practitioners' fellow in 1997–98 to reveal the need for career support for GPs in the early years of practice, producing a resource booklet as an output of her post. During her academic career as a Principal Lecturer in Medical Education at Staffordshire University, Kay has met and helped many doctors with their career development. Their experiences illustrate their need

for interested careers advisers with objective and up-to-date information about alternative career pathways. Kay has co-authored a book with Ruth about medical career guidance, and run national seminars for doctors aiding their career decisions.

Fiona Taylor spent 20 years as a GP then psychiatrist, and now runs a career consultancy with a special interest in doctors' careers. Her professional and personal life has tended to be colourful from an upbringing among one of Africa's most primitive tribes, being GP to the homeless, repeatedly acting as hostess to the royal family, to working as psychiatrist to the criminally insane. Her main interest is in helping people create or move into jobs that suit them. These are jobs where they will perform well and be motivated and satisfied. fiona@calm.uk.com.

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Glossary of terms

Career counselling: is an umbrella term for the process of enabling somebody to evaluate their current situation and identify what steps are needed in order to change. It will usually include identification of a person's strengths and weaknesses in relation to work options and may also include careers information.¹

Careers guidance: is personal and directive, and provides *advice* within the context of the opportunities that are available.¹

Careers information: covers the facts about the qualifications and experience needed for alternative career pathways and the opportunities that there are for career progression. That is, the number and type of posts available at a particular level and in a particular specialty, and details of the qualifications and training necessary.¹

Coaching: is the process of motivating, encouraging and helping an individual to improve their skills, knowledge and attitudes in a framework of goal setting and achievement.²

Mentoring: is the process whereby an experienced, highly regarded empathic person (the mentor) guides another individual (the mentee) in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning and personal and professional development.³

Reflection: is the process whereby people actively deliberate on their performance or the care they deliver and identify their strengths and weaknesses (as individuals or in groups).

Skills escalator: is an approach to developing careers in the NHS through a supportive culture and infrastructure. The vision of a modernised NHS is for staff to have a range of options for developing and extending their careers, supported by learning and development opportunities. Getting people on the escalator means attracting a wide range of people to work within the NHS by offering advice and help and a variety of career and training step-on and step-off points. Enabling staff to move on the escalator is about encouraging staff to renew and extend their skills and knowledge to gain stimulating careers through a strategy of lifelong learning.⁴

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Introduction

You wouldn't be reading this book unless you were wondering if there is anything you can do to enhance or change your career. You may just be seeking reassurance that you are reasonably content in your current job, or alternatively wanting to review your whole career, feeling that working in the NHS is not for you. You might just want to check out what other opportunities there are for your future career. You could be finding that the other pressures in your life in combination with a busy job in the NHS are just too much. More flexible working hours might help you cope with looking after young children or elderly dependants, or struggle with physical or mental ill-health, or other unsettling personal events.

The material in this book has evolved to help people like you plan their careers in the NHS. What you learn could help you to enable colleagues to plan and develop their careers too, if that is part of your work role and responsibilities as line manager or tutor or appraiser.

We need to recruit and retain additional doctors, other independent contractors such as dentists, pharmacists, optometrists, nurses, allied health professionals, managers and other staff. NHS staff with low morale may opt for early retirement or part-time working. The challenge for the NHS is to create a working environment that encourages you and your colleagues to stay working as long as possible. The expertise of managers and others may be lost in NHS reorganisations where there are no obvious alternative career pathways, and support for career development is inadequate.

As each NHS reorganisation and innovation occurs with newly created opportunities for health professionals in leadership and management, there is an incipient drain of the health professional workforce away from their clinical posts. New clinically based career opportunities have sprung up with the shift to more community-based working for hospital consultants and nurses, and more specialist roles for general practitioners (GPs), nurses and allied health professionals with special interests. Information about these opportunities is not easily available to all.

Many health professionals undergo multiple transitions during their career pathways. Yet there is little known about the sources of careers information they access, and limited availability of good careers guidance, support and advice services.¹ Health professionals and managers may be in posts to which they are ill suited. They may have pursued different career pathways if appropriate careers advice had been readily available earlier on, and throughout their careers. And for many, their career objectives and career progress is central to their personal morale and job satisfaction.^{2,3}

Career planning

Career planning is a must at all stages of a health service career, for students or young professionals uncertain of their career paths, for established clinicians faced with a range of career opportunities and dilemmas, or when thinking of retirement. A first step is to learn more about yourself. To discover your personal strengths, career and job preferences, motivation and priorities in life, you should know how you want to balance the time you spend between work and leisure, and between time and effort of work and income. You should understand what levels of responsibility, challenge and interaction with other people suit your personal style.^{4,5}

