

# The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework

## Essential guide for NHS boards

### What is the Knowledge and Skills Framework?

The Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF):

- is an organisational tool for describing the knowledge and skills staff need to apply at work in order to deliver high quality services
- includes an annual system of review and development for staff
- provides a single agreed system of pay progression and as such is an integral and mandatory strand of Agenda for Change
- was developed in partnership by management and staff representatives and enjoys the active support of staff side partners
- applies to all staff employed in the NHS across the UK on Agenda for Change terms and conditions, and meets equal pay requirements.

### How does the KSF help your organisation meet its objectives?

**Through...** the KSF post outlines which help an organisation to identify the knowledge and skills needed to deliver a quality service. It is the only unified framework across the NHS in the UK.

KSF post outlines:

- **link service delivery directly to the people responsible for the different parts of that service**
- **show how the work of different team members interacts**
- **enable you to plan and deploy your workforce effectively.**

**Through...** reviewing individuals' work and related development needs in relation to their KSF post outline and then jointly agreeing a Personal Development Plan to meet those needs. This:

- **ensures staff are developed to meet the demands of the post they are undertaking**
- **helps organisations address any gaps in skills and knowledge and hence improves clinical governance and patient safety**
- **improves staff morale and commitment**
- **helps organisations target and get value for money from expenditure on training and development.**

**Through...** the gateway reviews. The KSF is linked to pay progression at two gateways in each pay band at which incremental progression depends on the outcome of a gateway review. Gateway reviews are an important opportunity to ensure:

- **that people are developing and applying their knowledge and skills in the way that is needed for the post in which they are employed**
- **that the organisation is using its staff effectively and efficiently.**

### Why is the KSF important to NHS organisations?

The KSF is important to NHS organisations because:

- it directly links staff activity, competence and development to employment costs, improved patient care and organisational efficiency
- it ensures that staff are competent to undertake their work and provides an audit process that supports clinical and corporate governance requirements
- it addresses employment and equality legislation.

### Are there any tools to help apply the KSF?

The e-KSF, is a web based toolkit, funded centrally by the four UK Government Health Departments and supports the use of the KSF by:

- enabling organisations to monitor departmental and organisational performance in applying the KSF
- supporting organisations to take action to address any governance, safety or quality issues
- helping managers to effectively manage the KSF development review process for their staff
- helping staff to keep a record of their achievements, learning and development.

e-KSF can exchange data with the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) providing a more efficient and complete solution for developing people within NHS organisations in England and Wales. The Department of Health, the Welsh Assembly Government, the ESR and KSF teams all advise that the KSF should be managed through the e-KSF and ESR as joint systems.

To find out more see [www.e-ksfnw.org](http://www.e-ksfnw.org)

Independent research<sup>1</sup> shows that:

Effective appraisal is associated with:

- improved performance
- reduced patient mortality
- better organisational performance
- enhanced productivity in a range of sectors including the health sector.

Effective training and development has an influence on:

- quality improvement
- organisational and market performance
- team working
- commitment to the organisation and improves:
  - skills relative to the role
  - personal development
  - job satisfaction
  - morale.

People in the NHS who have implemented the KSF say:

“The KSF has genuinely assisted the management of performance of staff; individuals are now taking greater responsibility for their development; a major element of our learning and development strategy.”

“Implementing the KSF across the organisation and looking at the consistency of outlines made us realise that we had really variable practices going on - very different requirements for the same staff groups. We have used this as an opportunity to improve our services across the board.”

“The implementation of the e-KSF tool and integration with Electronic Staff Record (ESR) provides a systematic and immediately accessible means of analysing workforce data and informing service delivery.”

“The assimilation of staff onto Agenda for Change pay and terms and conditions of service in itself will not deliver change ... the Knowledge and Skills Framework will be the vehicle in which we are able to modernise services, engage with staff and develop and retain our workforce.”

<sup>1</sup> Department of Health, April 2006, HR High Impact Changes - An evidence based resource, Written for the DH by DH Workforce Directorate/ NHS Partners/Manchester University, DH, Leeds.

West, M, Borrill, C et al (2002). The link between the management of employees and patient mortality in acute hospitals. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 13 (8), 1299-1310

## The benefits of the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework

Directly links staff activity, competence and development to employment costs, which leads to improved patient care and organisational efficiency.

Enables cost effective use of training budgets.

Investing time and effort in staff and their development, staff morale, recruitment and retention is improved and staff turnover is reduced.

Helps to address:

- employment and HR legislation
- the Age Discrimination Act
- equality and diversity requirements.

Helps organisations to understand what specific learning and development is required to meet both service and patient needs

Provides evidence about consistent focused training for the NHS Litigation Authority audits, Health and Safety Executive (and other regulators).

Focuses managers on the continued development of staff.

Develops governance across the organisation through providing clear information on individuals' roles, responsibilities and development.

Uses a common transferable language to describe the knowledge and skills required to deliver services.

Builds the skill mix of the workforce to drive improvements in patient care.

Designs jobs around patient needs and matches staff skills and knowledge to those jobs - improving overall productivity and job satisfaction.

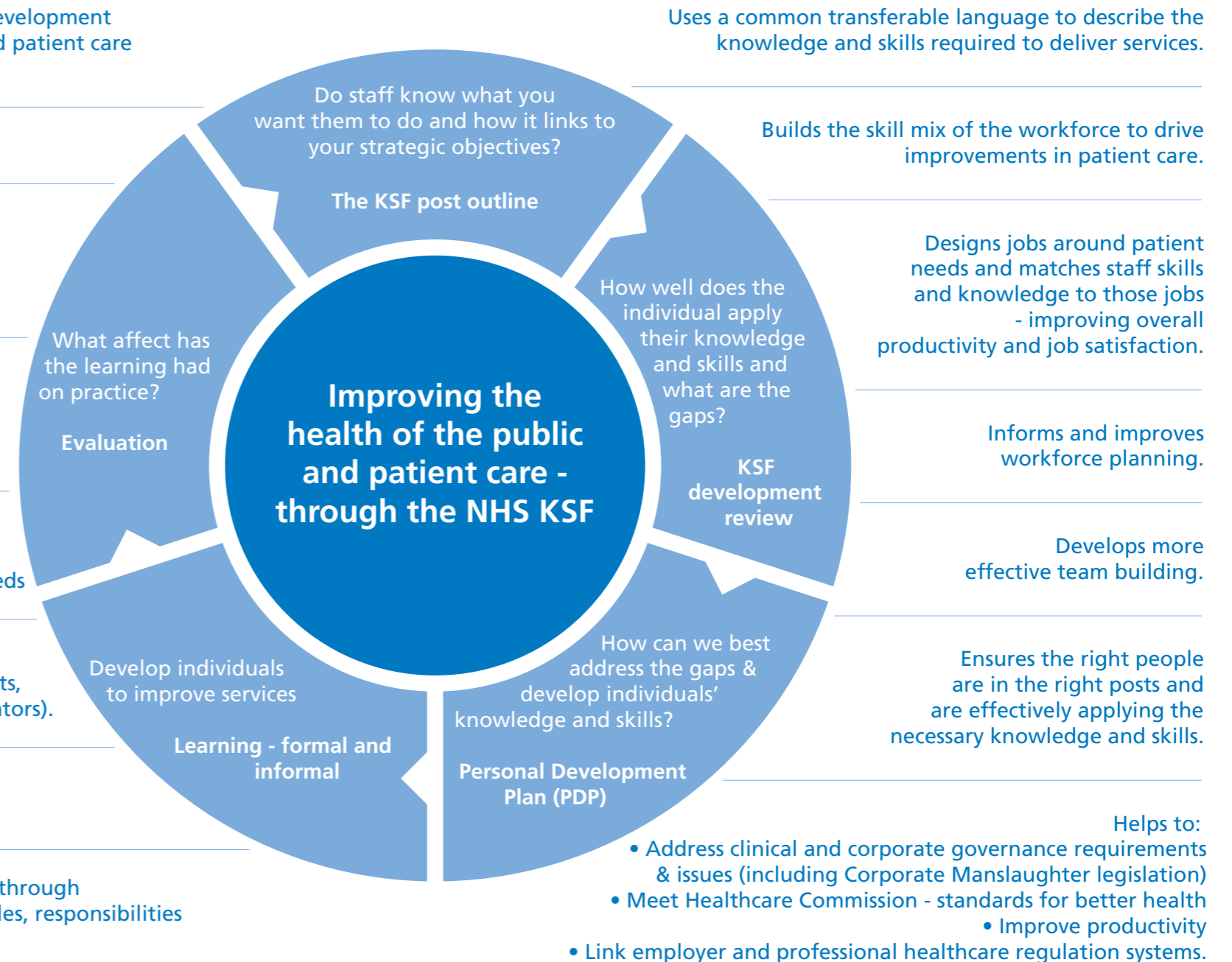
Informs and improves workforce planning.

Develops more effective team building.

Ensures the right people are in the right posts and are effectively applying the necessary knowledge and skills.

Helps to:

- Address clinical and corporate governance requirements & issues (including Corporate Manslaughter legislation)
- Meet Healthcare Commission - standards for better health
  - Improve productivity
- Link employer and professional healthcare regulation systems.



...for patients, staff and the organisation

## How can you help apply the NHS KSF effectively?

The main advice from organisations that are effectively using the KSF is **'keep it simple'**. In addition this checklist will help you to apply the KSF effectively:

- do you have a board-level sponsor for the KSF - accountable to the board?
- is the use of the KSF linked to the strategic objectives of the organisation?
- is the KSF integrated into the organisation's Human Resources strategy?
- do you have joint KSF leads (an operational manager and a staff side lead) - to champion and manage the application of KSF in the organisation?

KSF joint leaders should help to ensure:

- all existing staff and managers paid under Agenda for Change understand the KSF objectives and process
- the appraisal system that you are already operating in your organisation includes the KSF
- managers and reviewers have the skills and knowledge to conduct effective KSF development reviews and if not support them to develop these skills
- KSF post outlines are available to applicants through the recruitment process
- the KSF is incorporated into the organisation's induction process
- all staff are provided with their KSF post outline at induction and understand the requirements of them
- the organisation has a gateway policy which is applied consistently
- the board are able to explain how the KSF supports their strategic objectives
- processes are in place to report quarterly on the application of the KSF to the NHS Staff Council.

## What are the resource implications of applying the KSF?

The KSF documentation, training materials, and the e-KSF system, are provided free of charge to NHS organisations. You will need resources for:

- dedicated project management of the KSF
- creating, and consistency checking the KSF post outlines
- communicating the purpose of the KSF and how it works to all managers and staff
- ensuring that your managers and reviewers have and are using effective appraisal skills
- recording the results of KSF development reviews and Personal Development Plans
- monitoring and reporting on the application and use of the KSF.

## What does full application of the KSF look like?

Your organisation will have fully applied the KSF when:

- ✓ all Agenda for Change posts have a KSF post outline
- ✓ all staff covered by Agenda for Change receive an annual KSF development review and are working to fulfil their own Personal Development Plan
- ✓ you are confident that staff learning and development is focused on service needs and gives overall value for money
- ✓ your operational managers are being supported in enabling staff to develop their knowledge and skills
- ✓ the pay progression system is fully and effectively operational
- ✓ your organisation is seeing the benefits of the Agenda for Change pay system.

Further information is available from [www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org) or by e-mailing [ksf@nhsemployers.org](mailto:ksf@nhsemployers.org)