

NHS managers: Busting the myths

The NHS Confederation is publishing a series of myth busters, which challenge common misconceptions and enrich debate on topical, sometimes controversial, issues regarding our health and care. The first in this series dispells the myths about the role of NHS managers.

Myth:

There are too many managers in the NHS and the numbers just keep rising.

Reality:

In 2013, **less than 3 per cent** of the total NHS workforce **were managers**. Since 2009 there has been a **decline of almost 20 per cent** in the number of NHS managers.¹ Analysis by respected think tank the King's Fund has indicated that the NHS is **under- rather than over-managed**.²



Myth:

The amount the NHS spends on management **continues to increase**.

Reality:

Management costs **have declined** from 5 per cent in 1997/98 to **3 per cent** by 2008/09.³ Mean earnings for senior managers and managers in 2013/14 were £75,619 and £48,691. In both cases, **earnings had fallen from the previous year**, by 3.9 and 0.5 per cent respectively.⁴



Myth:

Most NHS managers **have no clinical background**.

Reality:

Over 50 per cent of managers⁵ and approximately a **third of chief executives** have a **clinical background**.⁶



Myth:

Most NHS managers are male and senior management is male-dominated.

Reality:

59 per cent of managers and senior managers are female.⁷ In a 2013 survey, **60 per cent of women** reported they **felt female healthcare leaders** had the **same level of authority as men**.⁸

59% ♀

NHS Confederation view:

An integral part of any NHS manager's work is to balance the priorities of **quality improvement** and **financial sustainability**, to deliver **value for patients and the taxpayer**. This balancing act has become increasingly challenging, with rising demand for care meaning more is expected within an ever tighter budget. Under these circumstances, **NHS managers undertake some of the most crucial and high pressured roles in the health and care services** due to the need to balance the needs of senior managers with those of their clinical colleagues. To effectively meet these challenges, more than ever, **our National Health Service needs high-quality management**.



1 Health & Social Care Information Centre.
2 The King's Fund.

3 House of Commons Health Committee.
4 Health & Social Care Information Centre.

5 Written Parliamentary answer.
6 NHS Confederation Census 2006.

7 Health & Social Care Information Centre.
8 Health Service Journal.