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Chartered Society
of Physiotherapy

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PRIVATE PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE - THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE

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Introduction



This eResource is an essential guide for physiotherapists working independently. It outlines key considerations for entering private practice, including regulatory requirements, business setup, financial planning, and maintaining professional standards.

Whether you are transitioning into private practice, expanding your services, or starting a new venture, this guide will support you in achieving success.

This resource is co-produced by The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) and PhysioFirst, the UK trade association for chartered physiotherapists in private practice.

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1. Moving into Private Practice?

Defining Private Practice

Any physiotherapist who works for themselves, i.e. is self-employed, or who is employed within a private practice or private hospital setting, is working privately, within the independent sector.

Private physiotherapy practice includes self-employed physiotherapists, those employed in private hospitals and clinics, and practitioners contracting with insurers or commercial intermediaries.

Personal Aptitude

For physiotherapists used to being employed, private practice is very different from working within a large organisation such as the NHS. Working independently can mean working alone without colleagues or a multidisciplinary team around you. This brings certain freedoms, but also responsibilities as you take on aspects of practice previously provided by an employer. It's important to be professional, confident and approachable.

Routes into Private Practice

Many UK physiotherapists now combine working in both the public and private sectors, for example, augmenting their 'day job' income, developing an area of interest in their own time, right through to tendering as a private physiotherapy company for an NHS contract. Support workers may also be self-employed.

- **Sole Trader:** A self-employed physiotherapist managing their own business with unlimited liability.
- **Associate Physiotherapist:** Working in an established practice on a self-employed basis.
- **Partnership:** Running a business jointly with shared responsibilities and liabilities.
- **Limited Company:** Establishing a legally distinct business entity.
- **Private Hospital Employment:** Working as an employee within the private hospitals or independent clinics

Comparison of employed and self-employed terms and conditions:

NHS employed	Employed in private practice	Self-employed, private practice
National salary scales with defined pay bands	Potential for variable and uncertain income, dependent on employment contract	Variable and/or uncertain income, but not limited
National insurance and income tax deducted from pay (PAYE scheme)	National insurance and income tax likely to be deducted from pay	Submit annual tax return. Solely responsible for tax and national insurance
Pension scheme	Pension scheme provided to eligible staff by employer	Allocate and provide own pension
Paid holiday	Will vary depending on contractual agreement	Unpaid holiday. May need to also pay and arrange for a locum
Paid sick leave	Will vary depending on contractual agreement	Unpaid sick leave. Must arrange for cover for patients
NHS indemnity cover	Employer responsible for employee's negligence but physiotherapists should confirm they are included or named on the employer's indemnity policy, as required under HCPC Standards of Proficiency.	Accountable for own acts and omissions. Must hold their own professional indemnity insurance.

In whatever capacity you work in private practice, your employment status and terms and conditions must be made clear by your contract.

2. Regulatory & Professional Requirements

Physiotherapists working in private practice must ensure they comply with all relevant professional, legal, and ethical standards. This includes registration, professional conduct, data protection, health and safety, and equality obligations.

2.1 HCPC Registration

All practicing physiotherapists in the UK must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and comply with their standards (www.hcpc-uk.org).

2.2 Insurance Requirements

All registered physiotherapists are required to have appropriate indemnity for their work (www.hcpc-uk.org)

How you set up your business will affect what insurance you need, and it is recommended that you take your own insurance advice either from the CSP's broker or from another specialist broker regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. You are responsible for establishing the right level of insurance cover and it is essential that you are properly covered.

Businesses comprising private limited companies or partnerships owned entirely by CSP members are included within the CSP Member's Medical Professional Liability insurance, provided annual turnover does not exceed £200,000.00 and subject to policy terms and conditions.

The CSP PLI scheme includes cover for 'silent' shareholders subject to policy terms and conditions. The main caveat is that any silent shareholder must not be a current or former qualified clinician.

Professional Indemnity Insurance (PI):

All practising physiotherapists must hold PI, which covers claims related to medical malpractice. This is included in CSP membership.

Public Liability Insurance:

Covers legal claims made by members of the public for incidents such as accidents at your premises (e.g. slips or trips). This is included in CSP membership.

Business Liability Insurance:

May be required if you operate as a limited company, partnership, or employ staff. This can include employer's liability (a legal requirement if you have employees), property damage, and business interruption insurance.

Employer Liability Insurance:

A legal requirement if you employ anyone; covers claims from employees for injury or illness arising from their work. (Not included in CSP membership.)

Contents or Equipment Insurance:

Optional but may be useful if you operate from a clinic with significant physical assets.

Income Protection Insurance:

Optional but worth considering, particularly for sole practitioners or clinic owners. Provides a regular income if you're unable to work due to illness or injury. Policies vary in cost and cover, so seek advice from a specialist financial adviser to ensure it suits your personal and business circumstance.

Scope of Practice Check:

Always check that your policies reflect your full scope of practice (e.g. spinal injections, thoracic acupuncture). The CSP and Physio First can help you choose suitable providers and ensure adequate coverage.

2.3 Quality Regulators (by nation)

The Care Quality Commission (England), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate (Scotland), and Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (Northern Ireland).

Within the NHS, physiotherapy services are subject to health and care quality regulation as part of the larger organisation's responsibility.

Most self-employed physiotherapists and small physiotherapy practices do not and cannot, register with the Care Quality Commission or the respective devolved countries equivalent organisations.

This is accepted practice because physiotherapists are regulated by the HCPC, and most physiotherapy treatments are not CQC-regulated activities.

However, if your practice includes other health professionals who must register (e.g. doctors or nurses), if you deliver any regulated activities, or if you have a formal business partnership with such providers, you may need to register.

2.4 Business Continuity and Personal Planning

While not a legal requirement, it is good practice to plan what would happen to your business if you were no longer able to work or make decisions.

Having a will or including clear instructions within your personal will ensures there is a named person responsible for managing or closing your business affairs.

This protects your patients, staff, and family from uncertainty and helps ensure a professional, ethical handover of records and responsibilities.

2.5 Data Protection & GDPR Compliance

All physiotherapists must comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 when handling patient and business information. This applies whether you are self-employed or operate through a limited company in both cases, you are the data controller for your practice and must ensure information is handled lawfully, securely, and transparently.

Key points

- Register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and pay the data-protection fee (the registrant will be you personally if self-employed, or your company if incorporated).
- Keep patient information secure, accurate, and only for as long as necessary.
- Provide patients with a short privacy notice explaining what information you hold, why you hold it, and their rights.
- Use password protection or encryption for digital files and locked storage for paper records.
- Check that any online systems (booking, email, or EHR) meet UK GDPR standards and include a data-processing agreement.

Further guidance, checklists, and quick self-assessment tools are available from the ICO at www.ico.org.uk.

AI-Driven Data Processing: If you use AI-enabled tools such as transcription, analytics, or automated booking, ensure transparency in your privacy notice and keep human oversight of any clinical information they handle. See Section 6 for additional guidance.

2.6 DBS Checks

DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are designed to be conducted through an employer. This is because a check may reveal information (e.g. unspent convictions) that an employer or umbrella body must consider when assessing a person's suitability to work in settings that involve contact with vulnerable people, such as physiotherapy. An individual cannot request a full standard or Enhanced DBS check on themselves.

A self-employed physiotherapist can obtain a Basic DBS certificate by applying directly through the DBS website or GOV.UK. This certificate shows any unspent convictions and can be shared with organisations or clients that require evidence of a criminal-record check.

If a self-employed person needs a Standard or Enhanced DBS certificate for example, to work with major insurers, commercial intermediaries, schools, or care homes the application must be made through an organisation that engages or may engage them. This could be a contracting organisation, clinic, or another approved umbrella body.

Some professional or membership organisations can facilitate this process. The CSP cannot act as an umbrella body for private practitioners; however, Physio First operates a full DBS system for members, providing access to Basic, Standard, and Enhanced checks as required.

2.7 Local Authority Requirements

Some local authorities require physiotherapists to comply with rules on changes to premises, fire regulations, parking, and clinical waste disposal.

New premises must meet the requirements of the Equality Act and the Disability Discrimination Act, including accessible design and safe waste management for acupuncture sharps.

Where acupuncture or other skin-piercing techniques are used, additional local authority licensing and/or registration may apply. Requirements and fees vary across the UK, so contact your local authority to confirm what applies in your area.

Some authorities may take your HCPC registration into account when deciding licensing requirements. In some areas, a group practice licence may be available instead of each physiotherapist registering individually.



2.8 Relevant Legislation

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974: The 1974 Act with subsequent additions extended the scope of health and safety legislation to cover all persons at work as well as the general public who may be affected by work activities. A physiotherapist running a private practice is therefore subject to the Act.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Guidance: The regulations are extensive, so it is advisable to check with your local office of the Health and Safety at Work Executive (HSE) to understand your responsibilities under the law.

The Health and Safety Executive provide statutory information on aspects of employment and is a useful source of workplace statistics.

The Equality Act 2010: Under the Equality Act 2010, physiotherapy practices must make reasonable adjustments for disabled patients, what is "reasonable" considers the practice's size and resources.

Smaller practices can focus on low-cost solutions like flexible appointment times, ground floor rooms where possible, clear signage, allowing assistance animals, and providing information in accessible formats.

Where direct access is not feasible due to building constraints or cost limitations, informing patients of accessible clinics or colleagues with appropriate facilities can help meet legal obligations.

The key is to demonstrate genuine consideration of options and to make practical efforts within your means, including signposting to alternative accessible provision where necessary.

2.9. Governance/ Clinical Governance

Clinical governance is the system through which organisations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which clinical excellence can flourish.

Addressing quality and safety to sustain and improve patient care, need not be onerous or complex. It should not be something to fear, nor a costly process that requires buying in external services.

A "Policies with purpose" approach focuses on meaningful, practical policies rather than bureaucratic box-ticking.

Examples of policies to consider, depending on your setup, might include:

- Privacy and data protection policy (especially for GDPR compliance)
- Consent and safeguarding procedures
- Complaints handling
- Lone working or domiciliary visit safety
- Cancellation and payment terms

These are not mandatory for everyone, but they support clarity, risk management, and patient confidence. The CSP and Physio First can offer templates and advice tailored to your practice model.

Key Principles:

- Simple: Policies should be clear and concise, avoiding unnecessary complexity that hinders effective practice or becomes unhelpful in a complaint. The purpose "why" should be evident to all staff.
- Necessary: Create only those policies and procedures that genuinely improve care, safety, or meet regulatory requirements. They must be actionable and realistic for your practice setting.
- Reflective: Ensure policies and procedures reflect what you actually do in practice. Having a policy that is not followed can be riskier than not having one at all, as it demonstrates a lack of consistency or oversight.
- Reviewed: Show a commitment to ongoing education and reflection so policies remain current and effective. Aim for outcomes focussed policies so they stay meaningful.
- Measured: Define what success looks like. Where possible measure what matters to the patient, not just compliance.

3. Business & Financial Considerations

Once your professional and governance responsibilities are in place, the next step is to ensure your business foundations and finances are secure. Understanding how your practice is structured, managed, and funded will help you stay compliant and confident as your caseload grows.

3.1 Choosing a Business Structure

How you set up your business affects everything from how you pay tax to how you protect your assets. There's no single "right" choice; the best option depends on your goals, income level, and whether you plan to employ others.

Sole Trader (Self-Employed):

The simplest route into private practice: you trade as an individual and keep all profits after tax.

Advantages:

Easy to set up, low administrative burden, full control.

Disadvantages:

You're personally liable for any debts or claims.

You will need to register with HMRC, complete an annual Self-Assessment tax return, and pay Income Tax and National Insurance on your profits. If your self-employment income is more than £1,000 in a tax year, you must register for Self-Assessment with HMRC by 5 October following the end of that tax year (the tax year runs 6 April to 5 April).

Sole Trader Employing Staff:

You can still trade as a sole trader while employing others.

In this case, you must:

- Register as an employer with HMRC
- Operate PAYE and workplace pensions (if eligible)
- Hold Employer's Liability Insurance

All employed staff must have written employment contracts setting out hours, pay, leave, and other key terms. Employment law changes regularly, so it's wise to seek HR or legal input when creating or updating contracts. Physio First offers HR templates and access to expert advice to support members with employment responsibilities.

Sole Trader with Associates:

Some sole traders expand by engaging associates who work under the same clinic or trading name. This can be an effective way to grow capacity while maintaining control of your business. However, because associates represent your brand, you may still be held vicariously liable for their clinical actions even if they are self-employed.

Ensure your Professional Indemnity Insurance includes vicarious liability cover for associates and confirm that each associate also holds their own valid HCPC registration and Professional Indemnity Insurance. Clear written agreements are essential to define responsibilities, clinical autonomy, and fee arrangements.

Limited Company:

A Limited Company is a separate legal entity that offers limited liability and may provide some tax efficiencies, particularly for larger or growing practices.

It can also simplify employing staff or expanding your services. However, it involves more administration: you'll need to file annual accounts and confirmation statements at Companies House and pay Corporation Tax on profits.

Partnership or LLP:

Ideal when sharing responsibility and resources with trusted colleagues. A partnership shares profits and decision-making; a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) offers protection for personal assets. Always have a written Partnership Agreement that defines roles, responsibilities, and exit arrangements.

3.2 Naming and Trademark Considerations

When choosing a name, make sure it's unique and legally safe. Registering a business name with Companies House doesn't prevent others from using it only a registered trademark does.

Use the UK Intellectual Property Office (IPO) database to check for existing marks before committing and consider registering your own under Class 44 (physiotherapy and medical services). This helps protect your identity and avoid disputes later.

Avoid names that suggest NHS or CSP endorsement, or that could mislead patients about your professional status or qualifications. A strong, distinctive name builds trust and protecting it protects your reputation.

3.3 Managing Your Finances

Good financial management isn't just about staying compliant it's about creating sustainability and peace of mind.

Tax and Accounting

- Sole Traders pay Income Tax and National Insurance through Self-Assessment.
- Limited Companies pay Corporation Tax and file annual accounts. Company directors and shareholders may also need to complete a Self-Assessment return for salary, dividends, or other untaxed income. Check HMRC guidance for your circumstances.
- Employers must manage PAYE, pensions, and National Insurance contributions.

An accountant familiar with healthcare or small business is a worthwhile investment. They can help you plan tax-efficiently and ensure compliance.

VAT and Physiotherapy: Physiotherapy services provided by HCPC-registered practitioners, which fall within their registered scope and are delivered for the primary purpose of diagnosing, treating or rehabilitating patients, are generally exempt from VAT (you do not charge VAT and cannot reclaim VAT on purchases).

However, if you offer other services such as Pilates classes, sports massage, selling equipment, or fitness-oriented treatments, these may be VAT, especially if they are outside your registered scope or not primarily therapeutic. Always seek specialist advice if your services cross into taxable areas

Setting Fees: Your fees should reflect your expertise, time, and operating costs. Avoid undervaluing your work low pricing can undermine your sustainability and perceived quality. Be transparent about your rates, cancellation policy, and payment terms to build trust from the outset.

Cash Flow and Budgeting: Even profitable practices can struggle if cash flow isn't managed well.

- Invoice promptly and follow up on overdue payments.
- Set aside tax savings regularly (percentage varies by circumstances; confirm with your accountant). As a rough guide, 25–30% of income works for many sole traders.
- Maintain a financial buffer ideally three to six months of operating costs.
- Use accounting software (such as Xero, QuickBooks, or FreeAgent) to track income and expenses.

Funding and Growth: Most practitioners start by self-funding their setup.

Other options include:

- Government-backed Start-Up Loans
- Local business grants or enterprise funds
- Private investment or partnerships

Whatever your route, professional financial advice can save far more than it costs especially in the early stages.

3.4 Summary

A solid business foundation gives you confidence and stability. Choose the right structure, protect your identity, price your services sustainably, and build simple systems that make it easy to stay on top of your finances. With this groundwork in place, your focus can remain where it belongs on delivering high-quality physiotherapy care.

4. Marketing and Patient Acquisition

Even the most skilled physiotherapist needs a steady flow of patients to build a sustainable practice. Marketing isn't about hard selling it's about making your services visible and trusted by the people who need them most.

Private practice success often comes from a mix of visibility, relationships, and reputation. The most effective marketing reflects your clinical values whether that's authenticity, ethical practice, excellence, innovation, community focus, or patient-centred care expressed clearly and backed by evidence.

4.1 Understanding Your Referral Pathways

Private patients come through several main routes:

- **Self-referral:** People finding you through online searches, recommendations, or local visibility.
- **Word of mouth:** Still the most powerful form of marketing. Delighted patients tell others.
- **GP and consultant referrals:** Build relationships with local doctors and specialists who value your expertise.
- **Private Medical Insurers (PMI):** Registration with insurers such as AXA, Bupa, or Aviva can open referral streams but check the fee structure, payment terms, and administrative requirements carefully to ensure it is commercially viable for your practice.
- **Occupational health or employer contracts:** Many companies fund physiotherapy for staff to reduce absence.
- **Sports clubs and schools:** Providing services or being listed as a preferred provider.
- **Community events and partnerships:** Taking part in or hosting local health talks, workplace wellbeing days, sports club screenings, or charity events builds visibility and trust, and often leads to direct referrals.

Each pathway requires a slightly different approach. For example, GP referrals rely on professional communication and trust; self-referrals depend on strong online presence and clear messaging.

4.2 Building Your Online Presence

Your digital footprint is often your first impression. Patients will Google you before booking make sure they find accurate, credible, and welcoming information.

Essential elements include:

- **A professional website:** clear, mobile-friendly, and easy to navigate. Include your qualifications, services, fees, and online booking (or a fast enquiry form if booking isn't possible), plus clear contact options.
- **A Google Business Profile:** ensures you appear in local searches and Google Maps. Encourage patients to leave honest reviews to build credibility and improve search visibility.
- **Listings on CSP's Physio2U and Physio First's Find a Physio directories.**
- **Social media:** (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram) great for humanising your brand and sharing educational content but always stay professional and within HCPC guidance. Have a clear purpose and post consistently; it's better to have no profile than one that looks inactive.

Top tip: Keep your tone warm and informative rather than sales focused. Patients are looking for reassurance, not persuasion.

4.3 Relationship Building

Private practice thrives on personal connections. Developing relationships across your community builds a steady flow of trusted referrals.

Ways to build connections:

- Introduce yourself to local GPs, consultants, and practice managers.
- Attend local business or sports networking events.
- Build links with complementary professionals such as podiatrists, personal trainers, osteopaths, or sports therapists.
- Offer short educational talks or injury-prevention workshops in community or corporate settings.

These activities raise awareness of your expertise and position you as a trusted, approachable clinician.



4.4 Advertising and Promotion

Paid marketing can supplement your organic reach, but it needs careful targeting.

Options include:

- **Google Ads:** can work but get expert help and start small. Search behaviour is changing (more conversational queries/AI results), and ad algorithms update often; without proper setup and conversion tracking, it's easy to waste budget. If you use Ads, set clear local targeting, enable conversion tracking (calls/bookings), and review performance monthly.
- **Social media advertising:** Facebook or Instagram can help reach niche audiences such as sports enthusiasts or local businesses but tends to work best for lifestyle or wellness services (e.g. Pilates, massage) rather than clinical physiotherapy.
- **Local directories or print materials:** leaflets or local magazines can work for smaller communities.

Important: All advertising must comply with HCPC and ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) guidelines avoid misleading claims or unverifiable promises. Always make it clear that your practice is led by a chartered physiotherapist registered with the HCPC.

4.5 Reputation and Patient Experience

Your best marketing is excellent patient experience. Every appointment, email, or phone call shapes how patients perceive your care.

Simple habits make a big difference:

- Communicate clearly, kindly, and promptly.
- Follow up after treatment with a short message to check progress or remind them about exercises builds loyalty.
- Encourage feedback and use it to refine your service.
- Collect testimonials (with written consent) to use on your website or social media.

Patients who feel cared for become your strongest advocates.

4.6 Keeping Marketing Ethical

As a regulated professional, your marketing must reflect honesty and integrity. Avoid clinical claims that cannot be supported by evidence. Phrases like “clinically proven,” “guaranteed results,” or “miracle recovery” undermine professional trust.

Instead, focus on what you can evidence:

- Your qualifications, HCPC registration, and clinical experience
- The types of conditions you treat
- Your approach to rehabilitation and patient-centred care

A good rule of thumb: if you wouldn't say it in a professional consultation, don't publish it in your marketing.

4.7 Summary

Effective marketing isn't about being everywhere it's about being credible, visible, and consistent. When patients can find you easily, understand what you offer, and trust your professionalism, they are more likely to book and to recommend you to others invest in your online presence, nurture your relationships, and let your quality of care be your most persuasive message.

5. Technology, Digital Tools & AI in Private Practice

Technology has become a key enabler in private physiotherapy. Used well, it can simplify administration, enhance communication, and support better outcomes freeing you to focus on clinical care. The aim is not to replace professional judgement, but to use digital tools to work more efficiently and effectively.

5.1 Electronic Health Records (EHR)

Digital record-keeping helps you stay organised, save time, and improve continuity of care.

Benefits include:

- Faster documentation and retrieval of notes
- Integrated scheduling, invoicing, and reporting
- Automated appointment reminders
- Secure cloud backup and data access across devices

Things to check:

- GDPR compliance: confirm servers are UK or EU based and encrypted
- Ease of use: intuitive systems save time during consultations
- Costs: most charge a monthly subscription
- Data security: confirm regular backups and user-access controls

Examples of common platforms can be found on the Physio First website (www.physiofirst.org.uk)

If you prefer paper, ensure secure locked storage and compliance with data-retention rules.

5.2 Telehealth and Remote Consultations

Virtual consultations are now a well-established part of physiotherapy practice. They offer flexibility for both clinician and patient, particularly for follow-ups, exercise reviews, and triage.

Best practice:

- Use secure, encrypted platforms (not personal video apps).
- Obtain and record informed consent, including discussion of limitations.
- Document reasoning for suitability and any risks identified.
- Follow CSP guidance on remote practice and patient safety.
- Blend with in-person sessions when hands-on care is required.

Telehealth extends your reach but should complement, not replace, face-to-face assessment and treatment.

5.3 Practice Administration Tools

Running a business means managing more than just appointments.

Useful tools include:

- Online booking and payment systems: streamline scheduling and reduce no-shows.
- Accounting software: Xero, QuickBooks, or FreeAgent make invoicing and reconciliation easy.
- Secure messaging platforms: allow professional communication with patients or team members.
- Patient-exercise platforms: such as Rehab my Patient or Rehab Guru for video-based home exercise plans.

Start with what genuinely saves you time add sophistication later.

5.4 Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Physiotherapy Practice

AI is emerging rapidly across healthcare, offering tools that can save significant time and enhance efficiency. In physiotherapy, AI is best viewed as a digital assistant, not a decision-maker.

Current examples include:

- Automated notetaking and transcription tools
- Appointment scheduling and billing assistants
- Chat-based triage or information systems (used with caution)
- Outcome-tracking and progress-monitoring apps

Good practice when using AI:

- You remain accountable for all clinical decisions.
- Ensure any AI system complies with GDPR and maintains data confidentiality.
- Be transparent with patients if AI tools are used to support your workflow.
- Verify that clinical content generated by AI reflects current evidence before sharing or acting on it.
- Keep up to date with CSP guidance on digital and AI use.

Used thoughtfully, AI can reduce administrative load and give you back more time for patient care.

5.5 Apps, Wearables & Patient Engagement

Many patients use devices and apps to track activity, pain, or recovery. These can strengthen engagement and provide valuable data if used sensibly.

Encourage tools that:

- Support exercise adherence
- Track activity levels or symptoms
- Provide simple visual feedback

Always integrate this data into your clinical reasoning technology should inform, not dictate, your decisions.

5.6 Data Security & Cyber Protection

With increasing digital use comes greater responsibility for information security.

Essentials:

- Strong passwords and two-factor authentication
- Password management: use a secure, central system (e.g., a password manager) so clinic owners can access all key accounts if staff change roles or leave; avoid shared or undocumented passwords.
- Regular software updates and data backups
- Antivirus and firewall protection
- Clear privacy policies shared with patients
- A plan for responding to data breaches

Consider Cyber Insurance for additional protection against hacking or ransomware incidents.

5.7 Summary

Digital tools and AI can make private practice more efficient, accessible, and responsive but they are there to assist, not replace, professional expertise.

Choose systems that simplify your day, safeguard patient data, and enhance the therapeutic relationship. When used with sound judgement, technology becomes an ally that helps you deliver the quality care your patients deserve.

6. Quality Assurance & Professional Development

Delivering quality care in private practice is about more than maintaining registration it's about reflection, learning, and a commitment to doing things well. Working independently means taking ownership of both your clinical standards and your professional growth.

6.1 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

All practising physiotherapists must maintain and evidence ongoing learning under HCPC Standard 11, which requires practitioners to reflect on and review their practice. The HCPC focuses on impact, not hours how your learning benefits patients and enhances care.

Examples include:

- Attending CSP or Physio First webinars and conferences
- Completing short courses or online learning
- Recording reflections and learning within CPD platforms available through professional membership
- Reading and applying research
- Mentoring or peer supervision
- Measuring outcomes through data or audit

It's not about how much you do, but how meaningfully it improves your practice.

6.2 Peer Support and Supervision

Private practice can feel isolating connection helps you stay grounded.

Consider:

- Peer supervision groups or mentoring (through Physio First or CSP)
- Online networks for reflection and advice
- Case review and feedback from trusted colleagues

Reflection turns experience into improvement.



6.3 Measuring and Demonstrating Quality

Quality assurance shows that your care makes a difference.

Simple ways to evidence this include:

- Collecting patient outcomes and feedback
- Reviewing results and refining approaches
- Comparing your data with peers

The HCPC expects all physiotherapists to evaluate and assure the quality of their work (Standards 13 & 14) and to draw on the best available evidence. You don't need to be a researcher to meet these standards engaging with current evidence, using audit or outcome measures, and reflecting on your results fulfils this responsibility.

Physio First's Data for Impact (Dfi) platform directly supports these expectations, providing a structured way to collect and analyse patient outcomes and demonstrate evidence-based quality.

6.4 Physio First Quality Frameworks

Physio First supports members to evidence and celebrate quality through structured programmes:

Framework	Purpose
Data for Impact (Dfi)	Secure platform for collecting and benchmarking patient outcomes.
Quality Assured Practitioner (QAP)	Recognises individual commitment to measurable results.
Quality Assured Clinic (QAC)	Recognises whole-clinic governance and team standards.

Participating helps you evidence the quality you already deliver and strengthens confidence with patients, referrers, and insurers.



6.5 Business Support & Practice Development

Running a clinic is both clinical and commercial. Most physiotherapists receive limited training in business skills, so seeking business support is sensible, not optional.

Practical options include:

- **Finance & tax:** accountant familiar with healthcare; simple budgeting and cash-flow tracking.
- **HR & employment:** contracts, onboarding, supervision, and advice lines when needed.
- **Marketing & patient flow:** credible online presence, clear messaging, and compliant promotion.
- **Operations & systems:** booking, payments, record-keeping, policies you actually follow.

Physio First provides business-focused resources (e.g., Business Corner, partner offers, templates) that can help you build confidence and make informed decisions.

6.6 Summary

Ongoing learning, reflection, and data-led improvement keep your practice safe, current, and credible. The HCPC Standards 11, 13 and 14 collectively expect physiotherapists to reflect, evaluate, and assure quality and tools such as Dfl, QAP, and QAC make that achievable in everyday practice.

Professional quality isn't about ticking boxes it's about curiosity, reflection, and a desire to keep doing better.

7. Appendices & Further Resources

You're not alone in running a private practice. A wide range of professional, regulatory, and business resources are available to support you across every stage from compliance to growth.

7.1 Key Professional and Regulatory Bodies

Area	Organisation	Website
Professional Regulation	Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) regulates all practising physiotherapists across the UK	www.hcpc-uk.org
Professional Support	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) professional standards, advocacy, policy and education	www.csp.org.uk
Data Protection	Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) registration and GDPR compliance	www.ico.org.uk
Health & Safety	Health and Safety Executive (HSE) / Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI)	www.hse.gov.uk / www.hseni.gov.uk
Care Service Regulators	England: Care Quality Commission (CQC) Scotland: Care Inspectorate Wales: Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) Northern Ireland: Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)	

Note: Physiotherapists are regulated by the **HCPC**, not the above care-service regulators, unless you provide additional regulated activities (e.g. nursing or personal care).

7.2 Professional and Business Support

Both CSP and Physio First provide tailored resources for physiotherapists in independent practice. They share a common goal: to help you deliver safe, ethical, and effective care while supporting the business and professional aspects of running a practice.

Area of Support	CSP (Professional Body)	Physio First (Trade Association)
Professional Guidance	Clinical standards, policy updates, scope of practice, research resources	Practical business advice and templates for private practitioners
Insurance	Professional and Public Liability Insurance (included in membership)	Guidance on additional business insurance and DBS services
Governance & Compliance	Clinical governance and HCPC standards	Business governance, policy templates, and HR advice
Legal & HR	Employment law and representation for employed members	HR templates and helpline for employers and clinic owners
Business Support	Not covered	Business training, partner discounts, and marketing resources
Community	iCSP network, regional groups, and peer mentorship	In Touch journal, Business Corner webinars, and regional events
Quality & Data	Evidence-based practice and research opportunities	Dfl, QAP, and QAC frameworks for quality benchmarking

Most practitioners find that dual membership provides the most complete support combining CSP's professional foundation with Physio First's business and quality focus.

7.3 Additional Business and Learning Resources

- **Local Growth Hubs:** Free business advice and networking for small enterprises
- **GOV.UK:** www.gov.uk/set-up-business for registering and managing your business
- **Small Business Accountants:** Choose one with healthcare experience
- **CPD Platforms:** Record learning and reflection as part of your professional portfolio
- **Physio First Business Corner:** Webinars on business management, employment, and marketing
- **CSP Learning Hub:** Courses and resources for evidence-based practice

7.4 Final Thoughts

Setting up in private practice is both exciting and demanding. Whether you're a sole practitioner, part of a clinic team, or leading a business, your professionalism, compassion, and evidence-based care are what make the difference.

Use the frameworks and support available from HCPC standards to The CSP and Physio First resources to help you grow a practice that is ethical, efficient, and effective.

Above all, remember:

Physiotherapy in any setting has the power to change lives. Independent practice simply gives you the freedom to do it your way.

Where can you find more information?



✉ info@physiofirst.org.uk

☎ 01604 684960

🌐 www.physiofirst.org.uk

📍 Victory House, 400 Pavillion Drive, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN4 7PA



✉ Via our [contact form](#)

☎ 020 7306 6666

🌐 www.csp.org.uk

📍 14 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4ED



PRIVATE PRACTICE READINESS & GOOD PRACTICE CHECKLIST

A quick reference to help you prepare, reflect, and feel confident as you develop and grow your independent practice.

1. Are You Ready for Private Practice?

- I understand how independent practice differs from being employed
- I'm confident making my own clinical and business decisions
- I've planned for periods of variable income
- I'm clear about my goals – flexibility, autonomy, or a specialist focus

2. Professional & Regulatory Essentials

- I'm registered with the HCPC and meet its Standards of Proficiency
- I understand my responsibilities under HCPC Standards 11, 13 & 14
- I've checked whether any national care-service registration applies (CQC, HIW, RQIA, Care Inspectorate)
- I'm registered with the ICO and have an up-to-date privacy notice
- I understand my safeguarding duties and have completed awareness training suited to my client group
- I hold a valid DBS check where required
- I comply with Equality and Health & Safety legislation

3. Insurance & Professional Protection

- I hold current Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurance
- I have Employer's Liability Insurance if I employ anyone
- My insurance covers every setting I work in – clinic, home visits, or online
- I have a clear and accessible complaints process for patients

4. Business & Financial Setup

- I've chosen and registered my business structure – Sole Trader, Partnership, or Limited Company
- I've checked that my business name or trademark is unique and appropriate
- I keep a separate business bank account and accurate financial records
- I understand my tax, VAT, and accounting responsibilities
- I monitor cash flow and plan for time off and expenses
- I have clear employment or associate contracts, with HR advice where needed

5. Governance & Everyday Practice

- I have simple written policies for:
 - Consent and confidentiality
 - Data protection and record keeping
 - Complaints
 - Lone working and health & safety
- I understand my safeguarding responsibilities and know how to act on any concern
- I promote equality and accessibility in my practice
- Patient records are secure and stored for the correct retention period
- My clinic or workspace is safe, hygienic, and well maintained

6. Marketing & Communication

- I have a professional website or online profile that reflects my practice
- All content meets HCPC advertising standards
- I'm listed on recognised directories such as Physio2U or Physio First: Find a Physio
- Fees, terms, and cancellation policies are clearly communicated
- I use social media responsibly and only share testimonials with consent

7. Professional Growth & Quality

- I keep a record of my own CPD in line with HCPC requirements
- I make use of free CPD opportunities offered through my professional memberships – including the CSP, which provides a wide range of clinical and professional learning, and Physio First, which offers clinically relevant and business-focused support for independent practitioners
- I take part in mentoring, supervision, or reflective discussions to support my development
- I gather and review patient feedback or outcome data, and use DfI, QAP, or QAC frameworks to demonstrate quality and effectiveness
- I reflect on how my learning benefits my patients and my practice

8. Ongoing Practice Health Check

- I review insurance, policies, and systems each year
- I keep my CPD and reflections up to date
- I review my fees, finances, and business goals annually
- I take steps to maintain my wellbeing and work–life balance

Keep this checklist close.: It isn't about ticking boxes it's a reminder of the foundations that help your practice run smoothly, safely, and confidently.