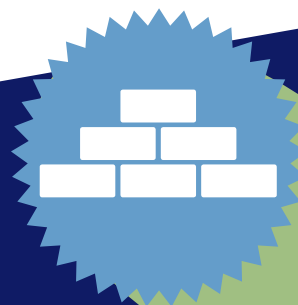


In conjunction with



OCTOBER 2018



PRIVATE PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE

– THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE

www.physiofirst.org.uk
www.csp.org.uk



CHAMPIONING PRIVATE PHYSIOTHERAPY

Introduction

This eResource is an essential guide to private physiotherapy practice. It sets out what you need to know to negotiate the field of private practice, firstly by working through the various ways of moving into private work and the aspects relating to your professionalism. Then, how to professionally set up your service or business. The aim is to support you in making a success of your private practice work.

OCTOBER 2018

Contents

What we cover in this resource	4
Are you moving into private practice?	5
Regulatory and professional requirements	9
Setting up your practice	17

What we cover in this resource

This resource covers the essential aspects of professionalism and business practice needed for successful private physiotherapy practice in the UK. It is not exhaustive – we also advise that you take appropriate financial, insurance and legal advice.

It is relevant to any physiotherapist or groups of physiotherapists, whether setting up in private practice or taking up private work in any other capacity. It may also be useful to those developing or redesigning a private practice. It is suitable for both non-members of Physio First and existing members.

The decision to set up in private practice requires your commitment to deliver a first-rate service of the highest possible professional standards. This resource will help you in planning and preparing so that you can successfully enter the world of private practice.

The resource is co-produced by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and Physio First.



The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) is the professional, educational and trade union body for the UK's 57,000 chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and support workers: www.csp.org.uk



Physio First is the trade association for chartered physiotherapists in private practice and a dynamic professional network of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. We have almost 3,000 members across the whole of the UK: www.physiofirst.org.uk



Are you moving into private practice?

The definition of 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.

This is irrespective of scale – for instance, whether you see the occasional private client, provide a clinic or class in addition to your employed role, or work for yourself full time. You could join an existing private practice as a self-employed director, partner, associate physiotherapist, or as a support worker or healthcare support worker who undertakes some delegated physiotherapy tasks.

Personal aptitude

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

Moving 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.

The CSP does not recommend that you enter private practice immediately following graduation as a physiotherapist. We recommend that all new graduates undertake a period to consolidate your learning across a range of specialties in a structured environment, which offers continual learning and clinical supervision by experienced physiotherapists.

Ways into private practice

Any physiotherapist may accept private business from people referring themselves to you. Referrals may come from other professionals such as a GP, consultant doctor, physiotherapist or other healthcare professional; a healthcare intermediary company, legal firm (medico legal work), insurance company or private organisation or company on behalf of their employees.

Routes into private practice include the following:

Become a sole trader

A sole trader is a physiotherapist who sets up and owns their own business. They may decide to employ other people but they are the only owner. A sole trader has unlimited liability. As a sole trader, your business is owned entirely by you, and its growth and functioning is determined by you.

Become an associate physiotherapist

The term associate physiotherapist usually applies to a self-employed chartered

physiotherapist who contracts with one or more practice principals (private practice owners) to treat patients at their premises, in return for an hourly rate of pay or a set percentage of the treatment fee.

Working as an associate physiotherapist in an established practice can provide a good introduction to the running of a private practice. Practice principals sometimes advertise associate vacancies in Physio First's journal *In Touch*, in the CSP magazine *Frontline*, on the Physio First members' LinkedIn forum and on various job opportunity websites.

Start a partnership

Before entering into a partnership, it is advisable to work with the proposed colleague for a period of time so that you can both establish whether you can work together. It is also essential that you engage a solicitor and/or an accountant to draw up a partnership agreement.

Set up a Limited Company

Some private practitioners, including practitioners who work alone, run their practice as a Limited Company. This can have some business advantages, but we advise that you take advice from a qualified accountant about this before setting this up. A Limited Company will also require its own professional liability insurance to protect the business from being open to legal action.

Physio First members can [click here](#) to view FAQs which explain the difference in insurance requirements for trading as a Limited Company, partnership and sole trader.

Take employment in a private hospital

It is sometimes possible to be offered work in a private hospital. Unlike other forms of employed work, this can involve negotiation between you as the physiotherapist or support worker and the management of the private hospital with regard to your contracted remuneration, working hours, holidays, pensions and insurance. Advice on these factors is available from the Employee Relations and Union Services at the CSP [here](#).

Buy an existing practice or start a new practice

Purchasing an existing practice could be the start of your journey into private physiotherapy or a way of developing and redesigning your existing business. Whether you have experience of private practice or not, it will be necessary to undertake a very careful assessment of what it is you are proposing to buy. We advise that you arrange a consultation with a solicitor, an accountant and/or bank manager before entering into any binding agreement. Practices for sale are advertised in the CSP's *Frontline* and, sometimes, in Physio First's journal *In Touch*.

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	Accountable for own negligence

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



Regulatory and professional requirements

Regulation: The Health and Care Professions Council

‘Physiotherapist’/‘physical therapist’ are protected titles, regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) www.hcpc-uk.co.uk. To work as a physiotherapist in the UK, you must be registered with the HCPC and comply with the [HCPC Standards](#).

Your HCPC registration provides evidence to external bodies of your being appropriately regulated. For instance, in terms of local authority licensing for private practices, and during commissioning processes.

Insurance

Registration as a physiotherapist is conditional on holding professional indemnity insurance – see www.hcpc-uk.co.uk. Professional Liability Insurance (PLI) is provided for physiotherapists who are members of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP). If you hold Practising Member CSP membership, your individual professional activities within the scope of practice of the profession are covered by the PLI scheme, subject to the terms of the policy. However, if you are delivering services through a private limited company/partnership, employ people, take on students or are involved in activities outside the scope of physiotherapy practice, you will require additional insurance.

The CSP produces information and guidance papers on the current PLI insurance scheme, together with various optional insurance covers. This is essential reading for those in or considering private practice. There is more information on your CSP insurance [here](#).

Support workers can take out Associate Member CSP Membership, which provides cover for them to carry out tasks delegated by a registered health and social care professional. [Click here](#) for more information.

The extent of insurance required by any private practitioner will depend upon a number of factors and individual circumstances. It is essential that you are properly covered. You are responsible for establishing the right level of insurance cover – [click here](#) for more information.

Physio First offers [business support and advice](#), including on insurance.

The CSP advises that in the first instance you take advice from the CSP Insurance Broker (see links above), or another specialist broker regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Scope of practice: What can you offer?

The HCPC requires that physiotherapists work within the scope of practice of the profession, and their own individual [scope of practice](#).

Data regulation and GDPR

All self-employed physiotherapists must be registered with the ICO: ico.org.uk as they hold and process sensitive data in the form of the patient record, or patient notes. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has recently changed some requirements relating to data – [click here for more information](#).

Members should consider publishing a privacy notice informing patients how they treat personal information.

Quality: The Care Quality Commission (England), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate (Scotland), 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 private sole trader physiotherapists and private physiotherapy practices do not currently need to register with the Care Quality Commission and the respective devolved countries equivalent organisations. This is currently accepted because physiotherapists are regulated by the HCPC. However, if your practice includes other health professionals who do have to be registered, such as doctors and nurses, or if you have any formal business partnership with them, you may need to register.

In addition, some activities are subject to regulation, and it is possible that some private physiotherapy businesses could be included. For instance, if your service removes tissues, cells or fluid from the body – most likely in the form of taking bloods, or using specialised equipment to monitor certain bodily physiological functions.

These practices should contact their respective country's health and social care regulatory organisation for quality, to determine their requirements:

England: www.cqc.org.uk

Scotland: www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Care-Inspectorate

Wales: hiw.org.uk

Northern Ireland: www.rqia.org.uk

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA)

The MHRA is a useful source of information, and you can sign up for email alerts [here](#).

Local authority requirements

Some local authorities require physiotherapists to comply with rules on any changes to premises, fire regulations, parking, etc and new premises must be set up in line with the [Equality Act](#) and the [Disability Discrimination Act](#) and the processes for dealing with clinical waste, such as acupuncture sharps.

The Health and Safety at Work Act

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. As such, a physiotherapist who runs a private practice is likely to be affected by the Act. The regulations are very extensive, and it is advisable to check with your local office of the Health and Safety at Work Executive with regard to responsibilities under the law.

The Health and Safety Executive provides statutory information on aspects of employment: www.hse.gov.uk as well as being a useful source of workplace statistics.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

Some commercial intermediaries require practitioners to have a Data Disclosure & Barring check if treating children or vulnerable adults. For more information [click here](#).

Physio First has negotiated with a company, Due Diligence Checking Ltd, to provide this service for members if required. For more information [click here](#).

Professional conduct and responsibilities

[**The CSP Code of Professional Values and Behaviour, 2011**](#) defines the professional values and behaviour that the CSP expects of all its members.

[**The CSP Quality Assurance Standards, 2013**](#) support members' day to day activity, defining CSP expectations of practice.

The Standards cover all aspects of practice and service delivery for all CSP physiotherapists, wherever they work. They provide a useful 'touchstone' that members can return to as needed.

Both the CSP Standards and Code and the HCPC Standards are in the public domain and open to broader audiences as well as CSP members. These include individuals receiving services from CSP members as service users/patients/clients, carers, employees of CSP members, prospective CSP members and the public generally.

The CSP provides detailed information papers and resources covering all aspects of professionalism. These include Scope of Practice, Duty of Care, Consent and Record Keeping as well as information on Chaperoning, Concurrent and Subsequent Treatment, Social Media, and Lone Working. They can be accessed on the CSP website's [**Professional guidance**](#).

There are further sections on workplace issues, including those relating to health and safety, [here](#).

They are useful when setting up your private practice policies, whether as a single/sole practitioner or one with a large practice employing numbers of staff.

Workplace support

The CSP – through its Employment Relations and Union Services Directorate (ERUS) – provides [full legal support, advice and representation](#) to any member in private practice who is the subject of a referral to the HCPC. If you are contacted by the HCPC, or if you self-refer to them for any reason, you should contact the ERUS enquiries team immediately to access that support.

ERUS can also advise members who are employees in private practice on their employment rights and responsibilities, and can assist you with any difficulties in the workplace, as for CSP members employed in the NHS or by any other organisation.

ERUS can also assist you in determining your employment status, if this is unclear. Self-employed CSP members who join Physio First can access additional support and advice from them, as the CSP professional network specialising in private practice.

Peer support

Private practitioners working alone may experience isolation without regular peer support. Developing practice procedures and methods of working that relate to service delivery, including service development and evaluation, and continuing professional development (CPD), including keeping up to date with the profession's evolving evidence base and its implications for practice, is important for meeting regulatory and professional body requirements.

The CSP recommends that you identify and establish your peer support, and continue to develop this as you develop your career. This can also help you with evidencing your CPD, if required by the HCPC. [Click here](#) for more information.

As well as maintaining personal professional links, you can use the [CSP's networks](#) as a source of support – both online and in person.

Physio First also offers access to Regional Officers who hold networking and education events in your local area. To find your local Regional Officer [click here](#).

Business planning

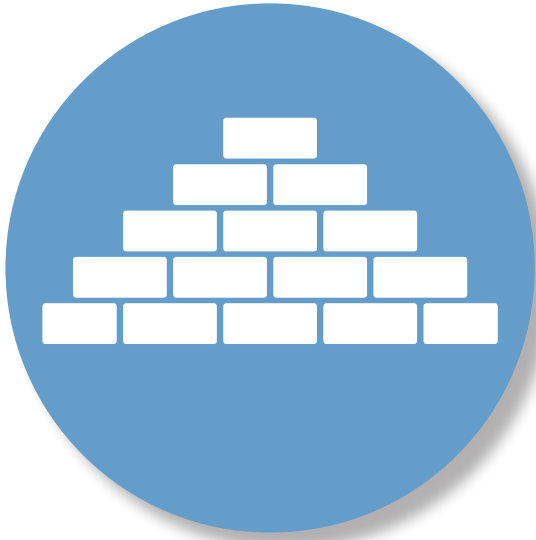
Before starting in private practice, it is important to develop a business plan. Put simply, the better the plan, the more successful the business.

Your plan should include:

- The reason and aims for setting up as a private physiotherapist
- How much it will cost, how you will fund it and your accounting procedures
- How you plan to legally and professionally structure the business and clinical aspects of your practice, and ensure the professionalism of your practice
- Depending on the structure of your service, who will take on what tasks and responsibilities.

Most people running a business in trade or industry go through some form of training in business management. Physio First recommends that any chartered physiotherapist wanting to build a well-managed, successful practice seeks the appropriate background knowledge and training or support, to maximise their business potential.

Physio First has a strategic commercial partnership with Painless Practice who offer members a series of training courses that help you develop your business plan. [Click here](#) for more details.



Setting up your practice

You've now explored how you'll enter private practice. You'll also need a good awareness of your professional responsibilities. What else do you need to consider when setting up your new venture?

Check your existing contract

If you are already in a contract, with the NHS or another organisation, check there is no clause that prevents you from setting up your own business in the same geographical area.

Know your locality

Does your local area already have a private physiotherapy practice? If so, it is essential to understand whether it will sustain another. Competition is healthy and while there is no bar on setting up a practice near another private practitioner, it can be very helpful to avoid any perceived or actual encroachment.

Communication with other professionals in the vicinity at the outset can often open opportunities. It's also useful to do your research. What other businesses, social service and NHS provision, residential homes, and sports facilities are in the area? Do you understand the age, wealth and density of the population in your chosen location? What are the population needs? This level of understanding will determine the type of clinical work available. It is helpful to be aware of the demographic of your chosen area. Physio First members can find out more about their area by [**contacting their Physio First Regional Officer.**](#)

What are your start-up and running costs?

These fall into two main categories:

1. Capital expenditure

Usually this is money spent on assets intended for use on a continuing basis in the practice activities, for example:

- Major equipment purchases
- Car
- Leasehold or freehold premises.

You should also allow for the reduction in value of items such as equipment, car and leaseholds (depreciation) which will have to be replaced out of income or further capital injections, and that freehold premises have to be maintained.

2. Running costs (daily practice expenses) which may vary and depend on the size of the practice premises, numbers of staff, etc.

You will also need to consider how you intend to fund:

- Fixed costs, e.g. rent, utilities and broadband
- Consumable supplies such as couch roll, tape and acupuncture needles
- Admin, legal, financial and IT support
- Council regulations, e.g. change of use, licences (for acupuncture), waste disposal e.g. sharps, etc
- Practice and/or building insurance
- Public liability, professional indemnity insurance.

Where will you operate?

The structure of your premises

Your premises should enhance your professional image. There should be sufficient space to allow the practice to run efficiently and preferably allow for possible expansion. Planning permission may be required for a change of use to any building, and you will need to register with your local council if you are providing acupuncture, injection therapy, etc as part of your scope of practice.

Accessibility

Think carefully about accessibility when choosing your premises. Patients requiring treatment may have disabilities, and therefore consideration must be given to:

- Regular public transport serving the area
- Parking facilities in the immediate vicinity
- Stairs and steps with rails (ramps may be required for wheelchairs)
- Access through doorways
- Access to toilet facilities
- Adequate fire exits.

For more information, you can review the [Equality Act 2010](#) which sets out the responsibilities and requirements of the business owner with regard to accessibility.

Security of tenure

This is a legal phrase that is used to describe one's right to occupy the space. It is an important consideration that can be overlooked. One common example is where a private clinic is established in a GP surgery or leisure centre and agreed on the strength of a handshake or an exchange of letter or email. The right that the physiotherapist has to occupy the room (or rooms) designated to them may emerge as a 'licence to occupy' which is the lowest form of security of tenure available. It offers little or no protection against eviction. In this example, where ownership or the priorities of the owner changes, the practitioner may find themselves evicted with no right of redress, even after years of running a clinic from that location. Security of tenure is also a powerful consideration for anyone contemplating purchasing a clinic.

Additionally, a business address is a valuable element of goodwill when it comes to selling a practice. A practice based at home is much more difficult to sell.

Planning permission

Premises can be rented, leased or purchased. If setting up in practice involves a material change in use of the premises, or requires structural alterations then planning permission must be sought under the Town and Country Planning Act 1976. Physiotherapy practice premises are usually listed under 'surgery premises' and can require as many as three car parking spaces per treatment room under planning guidelines. Professional doorplates/signage may require the landlord's or council permission.

Where the property is leasehold or rented, tenants' improvements may revert to the landlord, or the building may need to be returned to the original state if altered.

So, before starting up in practice you should contact your local council planning office. Also, a local fire officer should be invited to inspect the premises and advise on the necessary fire precautions.

Domiciliary service

You may decide that a domiciliary service, where you visit patients in their own home, is more suited to the type of practice you wish to run. There are some important considerations to bear in mind. Travel time and car depreciation expenses need to be built in to your treatment fees, and you may be working alone so should be aware of personal safety issues (See CSP [Lone Working](#) and [Chaperoning](#) papers). Additionally, portability of any equipment and the ergonomic stresses of adapting to a patient's home situation may be onerous on your personal health. You are advised to put in place risk assessments to help you with these potential issues.

Purchasing your equipment

There are some basic requirements in equipping a private practice:

Medical equipment

Equipment can be bought, acquired on hire purchase, or leased. Some of the larger equipment manufacturers may be willing to let prospective purchasers try out new items on a short trial basis. This is particularly useful when contemplating one of the more expensive items of equipment. Equipment need not be new, but care must be taken to ensure that any second-hand or reconditioned equipment is electrically sound and in good mechanical order with a full-service history.

Equipment for sale can be found in classified ads in the *Frontline* (CSP) and *In Touch* (Physio First) magazines.

Non-medical equipment

Treatment rooms and patient areas should give an immediate impression that is both professional and functional.

Consumables

Consider where you will store bulk items – such as paper rolls, tape, etc.

Clothing/uniform

What you wear is a personal choice, but it must look professional and be hygienic.

General maintenance

All equipment must be maintained in good working order by having a regular maintenance/service agreement. It is essential to have a recognised service engineer to check equipment and treatment rooms before starting a practice. The need for efficiently functioning equipment is obvious, but it is also important in relation to the patient's safety and your liability under the Health and Safety at Work Act, the requirements of which must be fulfilled at all times, e.g. fire precautions, non-slip flooring, etc.

Physio First members can access exclusive discounts on services and equipment from strategic commercial partners. To see a full list of Physio First commercial partners [click here](#)

Finance

Raising finance

Setting up a private practice involves a capital outlay to cover the costs of acquiring the premises, equipment, accessories, a car, office furniture, etc. The expenditure will vary according to individual circumstances; there are several sources of finance to cover this initial outlay:

1. Savings

Personal money can be invested in the business.

2. Bank loan or current account facility

The actual interest rate charged is usually governed by the current Bank of England base rate, which can vary considerably, and in times when rates are high can throw a strain on your ability to keep within the agreed borrowing facility. The financial stability and standing of your practice may also materially affect the interest rate payable.

3. Finance companies

Most finance companies offer a variety of schemes for obtaining equipment. Often a small initial deposit is required, the balance being repayable over three to five years. Due to the variety of schemes available for purchase or leasing, it is advisable to consult an accountant.

In addition to the initial outlay, you will have regular day-to-day expenditure as part of the business. Although this is normally met from income, there will be shortfalls from time to time and almost certainly during the period of first starting up the practice until your appointments diary is full. To overcome this difficulty you should consider arranging an overdraft facility with your bank. You will need a well-prepared cash flow forecast showing a month-by-month breakdown of estimated income and expenditure to negotiate this service.

Creating a budget

Having established your financial commitments, the next step is to produce budgets to cover both capital and revenue costs. A business plan is an essential tool to all self-employed professionals. It will also give the bank confidence that you are a serious business owner. The bank will certainly want to see these if you seek to borrow money; it will also demonstrate the potential viability of your practice.

Capital budget

First, you should list the cost of your capital outlay: premises, fittings, equipment, etc. This will show whether you can cover these costs yourself or whether you need to borrow.

Annual budget

Secondly, list your expected annual expenditure, as shown in the business plan, basing your assumption of income on what you are likely, rather than what you hope to receive. Bear in mind the delay involved in being paid for work undertaken when dealing with Private Medical Insurers (PMIs) or commercial intermediaries, as this will affect your cash flow.

Setting your treatment fee

This is something of an art that is down to the individual but given that it is the basis for your annual income, it is very important to consider. The CSP does not set business fees. The judgement comes from not charging too much to price yourself out of the market or charging too little to undervalue your service.

Consider:

- What do your competitors charge?
- How many appointments a day are you planning to do?
- What is your break-even point; before tax? After tax?
- You might consider not printing your fees in your publicity material until you have proved its adequacy. However, you must make patients aware of your fee structure before you commence treatment.

Insurance costs

Professional liability insurance

Payment of the full annual subscription to the CSP automatically provides cover for professional liability, i.e. in cases where a patient receives injury arising from, or during treatment.

See the full section on Insurance, on [page 10](#).

Public liability insurance

Cover for patients is included in the CSP annual policy. You are advised to take advice from a professional insurance broker for any required top up. Cover for non-patients should be arranged by the individual practitioner, usually as an extension to the buildings policy, or as part of a package of surgeries cover.

If you are looking for advice or quotes on insurance, we recommend contacting Graybrook, the CSP insurance broker, directly via www.graybrook.co.uk/business-liability.

Physio First has a partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), who offers insurance service advice. Members of Physio First can join the FSB without needing to pay the joining fee. [Click here](#) for details.

Insurance of contents and professional premises

If your premises are part of your home, cover can be obtained under your usual householder's policy. However, the insurance company must be informed that part of your house is used for commercial purposes, and that a certain part of your house will have to be accessible to the public. If domiciliary visits are to be undertaken it is necessary to negotiate additional cover for items of equipment such as ultrasound, portable plinths, etc which will be removed from the insured premises and be at risk in transit, as well as at third party locations.

Motor insurance

It is advisable to check with insurers and licensing authorities that both insurance and licence are adequate for business use.

Personal health insurance

As your income as a private practitioner is dependent on continued good health it is only prudent to consider some form of personal accident and sickness insurance, and possibly critical illness cover. Ask your insurance broker for details of various schemes and a personal quotation. The cost of such precautions should be built into your cash flow projections.

Physio First members can benefit from cash plans from Simplyhealth, [click here](#) for more details.

Managing your accounts

Due to the various taxation and accounting complications, we advise that you consult a chartered or certified accountant, and an independent financial advisor before setting up in private practice.

Pension

Physiotherapists in private practice should take out an individual pension plan. You may allocate part of your earnings for retirement annuities or death benefit and obtain tax relief on that provision. Your insurance adviser will be able to suggest the most competitive and attractive contract. You might want to consider flexibility in the plans to reflect fluctuations in income.

Taxation

The private practitioner should register as self-employed with HMRC and be liable for tax through the self-assessment system if fully self-employed, partly self-employed, or if a portion of work is carried out in the employment of an outside body, e.g. the NHS. A limited company could be subject to Corporation Tax also.

Taxation calculations

Taxation income is assessed on annual profits and payments made annually by 31 January on income earned in the previous tax year. Expenses incurred wholly and exclusively for the purposes of the practitioner's profession can be set against profits. Such expenses may include:

- Premises including heat, light, council tax
- Laundry and cleaning
- Car and travelling expenses
- General administrative costs such as postage, phone and computer costs, stationery, practice consumables
- Staff costs and expenses, e.g. secretarial
- Professional charges – accountant and solicitors
- Professional subscriptions
- Cost of post-registration courses
- Medical journals, books, etc
- Hire purchase of equipment
- Repairs and renewals of equipment
- Advertising
- Insurance
- Capital items, fixtures, fittings.

Professional advice on personal taxation, timing of the accounts year, etc. is essential to ensure proper advantage is taken of the permissible benefits under the tax laws.

National insurance

If a person is working entirely in private practice, then there is a liability to pay Class 2 and 4 contributions. These contributions allow you to claim benefits such as sickness benefit. Class 4 contributions are effectively an extra tax on any profits between certain limits and are also paid through self-assessment. If you work for an employer, e.g. the NHS, then the remuneration you receive would be subject to Class 1 contributions. If you work both as a self-employed practitioner and as an employee or are a limited company then advice should be obtained from a chartered or certified accountant to avoid overpayments.

Information on current rates for personal allowances, tax and national insurance rates can be found [here](#).

VAT

The supply of professional services by a registered physiotherapist is zero rated for VAT. This means that there is no requirement to register for and charge VAT to patients, even though the turnover of your practice may exceed the registration limit. Equally, you are not able to recover VAT charged on items of expense connected with your practice. This must be taken into account when developing your business plan.

Employing staff

Where a physiotherapist in private practice employs staff, income tax and national insurance contributions will have to be deducted under PAYE arrangements (your accountant will advise you).

Physio First members benefit from a preferential rate of joining fee to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) whose advice on the obligations on employers for such matters as unfair dismissal, redundancy pay, trade union membership, contracts of employment, etc is invaluable. [Click here](#) for further information.

Holidays and sickness

It is advisable to arrange locum cover when holidays or sickness causes absence from the practice. This minimises inconvenience to patients and helps maintain continuity of treatment. Extra provision should be made to extend existing insurance arrangements to cover a locum. Locum agencies advertise in Frontline.

Arrangements with colleagues who are local to you can also offer flexibility and cover. Care needs to be taken to ensure that any locum is recognised by the various private medical insurers.

Attracting and supporting your patients

How will you acquire new patients and keep your existing patients engaged with you?

Create a marketing plan

Creating a marketing plan will allow you to work out a clear way of reaching your market and identifying what you offer, what makes you different and why patients should choose you. It will allow you to understand the kinds of patients you are targeting, define your brand, get your message right and create a plan you can follow.

Painless Practice offers a range of marketing seminars that help you to promote your practice and acquire and keep new patients. To find out more [click here](#).

Sources of patients

As autonomous practitioners, physiotherapists can accept patients/clients without a referral, i.e. patients/clients can self-refer for treatment.

Where do physiotherapy patients come from?

- GPs, consultants
- Word of mouth
- Health insurers, e.g. BUPA
- Medico legal/commercial intermediaries
- Other professionals – dentists, podiatrists/chiropractors, chiropractors/osteopaths, yoga/pilates teachers etc
- Business groups
- Contacts, social media and your marketing activity.

Online advertising

CSP-registered physiotherapists can be located through the CSP directory Physio2U, on the CSP homepage: www.csp.org.uk and members of Physio First are automatically listed on the Physio First [Find a Physio directory](#). These services enable members of the public and other health professionals to locate a physiotherapist with a particular clinical speciality in their area.

Private medical insurers

Who are the private medical insurers (PMIs), and how do they impact on your business?

- BUPA
- AXA PPP
- Vitality
- Nuffield
- Simplyhealth.

The PMI will normally have a direct contract with their client (the patient) who has chosen to purchase health insurance from them. To receive a patient referral from a PMI you will be required to be registered with them and sign up to their terms and conditions. Patients with PMI cover will be required only to attend the practice indicated by their particular company. As with most other insurances, there may be an excess figure that is not covered by the policy and which the patient is required to pay to you themselves. The number of treatments provided may also be subject to restriction. Most insurers request online billing.

Some PMIs require physiotherapists to have a minimum of three or five years post-qualifying experience before they will accept them onto their provider lists.

Commercial intermediaries

A commercial intermediary is a broker that often acts as a third party between the patient and the PMI, and puts patients in touch with a practice registered with them for patient referrals. Companies currently offering this service include IPRS, Speed Medical, PhysioMed and Nuffield Fusion.

The terms offered by these companies usually restrict the number of treatment sessions allowed to the patient and the fee reimbursed to the physiotherapist. Payment terms are longer, and the admin required can be onerous. You should consider the potential effect on your cash flow if you bid for this type of business.

Health care professional referrals

If your patient has been referred to you by another health professional, you should liaise with the original referrer as appropriate. (See CSP [concurrent and subsequent treatment paper](#)).

The benefits of Physio First membership

Being a member of Physio First opens the door to a wealth of unique professional support and information. We work together to champion evidence-based, cost-effective private physiotherapy with Physio First members in the healthcare marketplace.

Receiving the latest marketplace information

If you are working in private physiotherapy, it is essential that you keep up to date with all the latest information that is relevant to both the clinical and business aspects of your practice. Clinical updates might include the latest research and CPD opportunities, while business will cover any financial or legal updates that may affect you.

Physio First members receive details on business developments specific to all physiotherapists through the e-newsletter [The Core](#) and up-to-date, research-based clinical information via *In Touch* magazine. Membership of Physio First also includes access to breaking news on all aspects of issues that might affect or target private physiotherapists.

Data collection

For all chartered physiotherapists, there is a requirement from the HCPC for your continued professional registration to collect data and measure outcomes.

Members of Physio First can take part in Data for Impact, an online, standardised, data collection tool created by Physio First in collaboration with the University of Brighton. Input and analyse data on your practice, patients, treatments and outcomes. Once 50 data sets have been recorded you receive your own report that can be used for CPD.

Quality Assured Practitioner and Quality Assured Clinic

The Quality Assured Practitioner (QAP) scheme is available to full and affiliate members of Physio First who work in musculoskeletal (MSK) physiotherapy and have submitted sufficient patient outcome data into the Data for Impact tool to achieve the QAP mark.

A Quality Assured Clinic (QAC) scheme is also available to a private physiotherapy practice where all MSK practitioners are Physio First members and are all QAPs or are working towards that status. All their physiotherapy staff are inputting sufficient patient outcomes data using the Data for Impact tool. These practices will show that they are achieving quality standards across the whole clinic.

**QUALITY
ASSURED**
PRACTITIONER



**QUALITY
ASSURED**
CLINIC



To find out more about becoming a QAP/QAC member, [click here](#).

Practice profiling survey

Physio First runs its own research strategy in which all members can take part and contribute to new and ongoing projects.

Members are invited to complete our unique practice profiling surveys which enable us to benchmark your business against other private physiotherapists and the healthcare marketplace in general.

Once published, if you have participated in our survey, you have full access to reports that provide valuable information to our profession and our customers. The reports will also help you to develop and market your own businesses.

Access to our member-only LinkedIn forum

Talk to other private physiotherapists on the Physio First member-only LinkedIn forum.

This is the ideal arena in which to link up with other like-minded private physiotherapists and talk about burning issues and share opinions.

Our Physio First private LinkedIn community shares ideas, responds to queries and exchanges advice. If you need answers to a business challenge or support about a patient problem there's probably someone in our LinkedIn forum who has already faced the same issue – and found a solution. So, don't be afraid to ask!

Want to know more?
To explore the benefits available to you [click here](#). Or contact us
on 01604 684960 or minerva@physiofirst.org.uk.

In conjunction with



CHAMPIONING PRIVATE PHYSIOTHERAPY