

Trust PPUs are missing out on £1bn

NHS trusts are missing out on an income stream of around £1bn a year through lack of developing the potential of private patient units (PPUs), according to a new analysis.

It found they rarely collaborate and share best practice and there is a major opportunity for growth that is largely being ignored

Housden Group commercial healthcare consultancy found few trusts engage meaningfully with their neighbours to ask for or to offer help with either private patient services management or business development.

But according to its managing

director Philip Housden, an *Independent Practitioner Today* columnist, there are huge opportunities for partnership activity.

He says: 'Only in the South-west have trusts maintained their regional network of peer-group support to share best practice.

'Several London trusts have from time to time made contact, but no meaningful grouping has been in place for several years. This lack of contact is to the detriment of the sector and means valuable knowledge gets lost.'

He argues that an on-site PPU offers several advantages to consultants.

These benefits are:

- Convenience for them – and their trust employer;
- Compelling governance and patient safety drivers;
- A 24/7 infrastructure including critical care;
- Specialist nursing and extensive diagnostic imaging.

Writing in this issue of *Independent Practitioner Today*, the PPU expert says lessons have to be re-learned about collaboration between trusts.

Mr Housden states that relationships with the private medical insurers are not based on mutually recognised value and trusts are

unable to negotiate contracts and tariffs from a position of any strength. He says the sector is significantly undervalued across the NHS and underplayed to the market in general.

'Outside of central London, few private hospitals have critical care capability and this leads to many trusts admitting insured patients as NHS cases for complex high-value procedures and tests.

'The true value of this missing potential income stream is not known but estimates certainly put the opportunity at perhaps £1bn a year.'