


How to expand an NHS private patient unit: Practical guidance

03 July 2025  Carly Caton

When an NHS trust is looking to increase revenue from its private patient unit (PPU), there are several ways it may wish to do so.

There are various legal, regulatory and commercial issues to consider. It's important for trusts to identify these early on and factor into plans to ensure the expansion is structured in a way that is beneficial for all parties involved.

What are the different ways of expanding an NHS private patient unit?

When a trust is looking to increase the revenue it makes from its PPU, there are several ways it may wish to do this. Some examples of this are set out below.

- **Increase capacity:** Is there a way to increase capacity of the PPU by adding beds, consulting rooms or treatment rooms? A standalone private hospital could be built either alone or in partnership with a private partner.
- **Diversify or add services and enhance offering:** Are there any services that can be added that you are not currently providing through your PPU but have capability to do so? Enhancing the PPU offering can attract more patients who may traditionally go to a private provider outside the NHS.
- **Expand geographically:** Can you expand the business by opening new satellite facilities elsewhere – either alone, partnering with other existing healthcare providers or by acquiring existing facilities?
- **Develop partnerships:** Are there partnerships you could develop with other healthcare providers, such as private hospital providers or private clinics to offer joint services and share resources? There are a number of ways of doing this, ranging from entering into services arrangements to full corporate or contractual joint venture models, and running the private business together jointly. Examples of the latter can be found at [The Christie Private Care](#), a joint venture between The Christie NHS Foundation Trust and HCA Healthcare UK, and the [Harborne Hospital](#), a partnership between University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and HCA Healthcare UK.
- **Invest in technology:** Are there any [technology](#) investments that could enable the PPU to improve patient care and increase efficiency so as to treat more patients without requiring further space? For example, an electronic patient record system or telemedicine services.
- **Marketing and branding:** Is there a marketing or branding campaign that the PPU could carry out to attract more business, either alone or jointly with others? For example, Healthcare London, hosted by the [Independent Healthcare Providers Network](#), is a partnership of London PPUs and private providers that acts as a gateway brand for overseas providers to join the London private healthcare market.
- **Develop a referral network:** Is there an opportunity to grow a referral network with other healthcare providers, such as GPs or specialists, to increase patient referrals (while being mindful of any regulatory constraints)?
- **Grow international services:** Can the PPU increase its revenue from offering [international services](#) and looking to attract more patients from other countries? This can include partnering with other international healthcare providers or offering specialised services for medical tourism.

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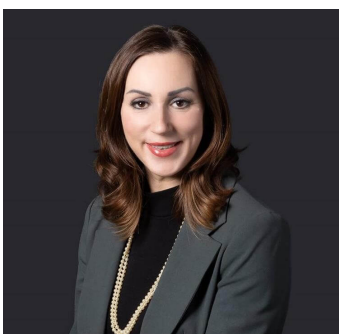
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