

SERVICES IN THE UK

The term “services” indicates intangible products such as accounting, banking, cleaning, consultancy, education, insurance, expertise, medical treatment, or transportation.

Sometimes services are difficult to identify because they are closely associated with a public good; such as the combination of a diagnosis and administration of a medicine.

When services are sold ownership is not transferred, and they cannot be stored or transported. Services exist simply because there is a request for them, but they are not an exclusive property.

The most famous public service is the NHS (National Health Service), which was created by the Labour government immediately after World War II. The many services provided by the NHS include hospitals, doctors, nurses, family doctors, specialists and surgeons, dentists, pharmacists and the ambulance service.

Doctors prescribe medicines, the patients pay a small part of the cost at the pharmacy – while in hospitals everything is free, of course. Young people who are still in full time education, the over 65's and the unemployed all enjoy free treatment, tests, specialist consultancies and medicines, including dental treatment and eye-glasses.

The NHS in England deals with over 1 million patients every 36 hours. It covers everything, including antenatal screening, routine screenings (such as the NHS Health Check), treatments for long-term conditions, transplants, emergency treatment and end-of-life care.

The NHS employs more than 1.5 million people, putting it in the top five of the world's largest workforces, together with the US Department of Defence, McDonalds, Walmart and the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

Of those, the clinically qualified staff include 150,273 doctors, 40,584 general practitioners (GPs), 314,966 nurses and health visitors, 18,862 ambulance staff, and 111,127 hospital and community health service (HCHS) medical and dental staff.

The Italian National Health Service was established on December 23rd 1978 and approved by 85% of the Parliament (L.833/78). The NHS is founded on the principles of universal coverage, social financing through the use of general taxation and non-discriminatory access to the health care services.

The Italian health service places the emphasis on cure rather than prevention and treats sickness rather than promoting good health. There's little preventative medicine in Italy such as regular health checks. The public health service has limited resources for out-patient treatment, nursing and post-operative care, geriatric assistance, or terminal illnesses and psychiatric treatment. Inadequate treatment due to staff shortages and long waiting lists as a result of a lack of hospital facilities are frequent complaints made against Italy's health service.

Both countries have a similar 'approval' rating among the national populace for their National Health Service system (about 65% positive). Italy spends much less than the UK and has fewer medical staff, but the United Nations' World Health Organization classifies Italy's services as the second best in the world (after France!) and the UK's system at 18th!!!

To be continued...