

Tips on setting up and running a private practice



Information brought to you by [Laura Tilt](#)



Deciding your own hours, attracting more income and working in a less pressured environment makes running your own private practice an attractive option, but what should you consider before you make the leap?

In this two-part series, I share what I've learned from setting up my own practice.

Part 1 - Things to Figure out Before You Begin...

Full Time or Side Hustle? The first thing to consider is whether you'd like your private practice to be your full-time job or something you do alongside other work. Running a private practice full time is hard work, and you'll need to have a consistent flow of new and regular clients, which will take time to establish.

Depending on your profession, seeing clients 1-2-1 all day can be emotionally taxing, so be as honest with yourself as you can about what you can realistically manage. Running a clinic once a week is very different to doing it every day, and it might be that doing private practice twice a week will work best, giving you space and time to do other work that interests you. It also gives you a chance to test out a private practice without the pressure of needing to make a full-time income from it. Whatever you decide, build in time for admin and marketing too - these activities will need to become part of your skill set!

What's Your Niche? Before you set up your practice think about your USP (unique selling point). Why would someone seek you out and pay for your services? Can you help with a health condition that's infrequently covered by the NHS? Are you a specialist in a particular diet? Or is it your years of experience that means you can offer the type of advice that is hard to find elsewhere?

Try brainstorming what service or appointment options you can offer, and what type of problems you can solve for people. When people pay to see a healthcare professional they're looking to resolve a problem - so by thinking in this way you'll be able to target your services to the right people. Be aware that private patients tend to have high expectations because they are paying for a service - so it's worth spending some time thinking about how you'll make your offering stand out.

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The Nitty Gritty The next thing to consider is where you'll practice. Are you looking to rent a space, or are you going to offer consultations online or from a studio space at home?

If renting a space then location is important - you'll need to make sure the clinic can be accessed by public transport and has space for parking. Renting clinic space can be expensive - but some organisations are set up especially for this type of work and offer hourly rates on a pay-as-you-go basis which is ideal when you're starting out. You might also be able to hire out a room within an existing business like a yoga centre, gym or spa. Do some research first and work out pricing remembering that you'll need to build the cost of the room rent into your service price.

The other option - seeing clients in your own home - is convenient and cost effective. If you offer online appointments you may be able to offer more flexible timings including weekends and evenings which can be a plus point for clients who work full time.

I've found that all options have pros and cons - working in a clinic space outside of home often feels more professional and helps separate work life from home life. Working from home however is undoubtedly convenient and more cost effective. Bear in mind some clients might prefer to see you in person. For some professions, in person appointments are essential.

Money Money Money Finally, what will you charge? Rather than plucking numbers from the air, start with an hourly rate. If you're unsure of what yours should be, work out the hourly rate in your current job, or use a calculator like this or check online for average hourly rates for your levels of experience.

Now work out how many hours each type of appointment will take - remember this isn't just about the time spent face to face with a client, but the prep work, and any notes and follow up afterwards. In some cases this can amount to a total of 3-4 hours. Now calculate the cost per appointment adding in room rental costs and any materials or equipment if needed. Remember too that when working privately, there is no holiday or sick pay allowance, so you may wish to add a small percentage on top to account for this too.

Once you've calculated your appointment costs you can do some research and compare them to other healthcare professionals offering similar services - you will want to be competitive, but don't be tempted to undercharge or put yourself in a position where you are working for a low hourly rate. There's nothing more un motivating than working incredibly hard and realising you've got nothing left after you've paid the bills.



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The Legals Before starting a private practice you'll need to ensure you are covered by the right insurance. Some professional associations offer indemnity insurance as part of their membership (for example the British Dietetic Association) so if you are registered with one, check what's included and give them a call to make sure you will be covered for the type of practice you're planning on running. If not, there are numerous companies that offer insurance for practitioners running private practices.

You'll also need to brush up on the legal requirements surrounding paperwork and notes and how you'll collect and keep client data safe whether it's on paper or stored electronically. Oh, and don't forget to register as a sole trader when you start working for yourself. Even if you continue paid work alongside a private practice you'll need to start your own records of earnings and expenses for tax purposes. Find out more [here](#). (And perhaps most important - get into the habit of putting a flat 20-25% of your earnings aside for tax from the start!)

In part two I'll explain more about getting your practice off the ground and up and running.

