Identifying the need for standards
Founded in 1999, Independent Vascular Services (IVS) Ltd specialises in the provision of comprehensive vascular services to both NHS and private sector hospitals. It is the largest independent provider of vascular ultrasound services in the UK, performing more than 60,000 investigations a year.

In the summer of 2014 IVS became the UK’s first vascular laboratory to gain UKAS accreditation under the Royal College of Physicians’ (RCP) Improving Quality in Physiological Services (IQIPS) programme.

IQIPS covers the range of physiological diagnostic specialisms, including audiology, cardiac physiology, gastrointestinal physiology, neurophysiology, ophthalmic and vision science, respiratory and sleep physiology, urodynamics and vascular science.

The journey
Richard Pole, Operations Director at IVS, led the successful IQIPS accreditation project within IVS. He says: “We had already been registered with the Care Quality Commission in 2012 and had also achieved ISO 9001 certification for quality management systems in 2013 so were used to external regulation.

“However, with 26 standards divided into four domains - Patient Experience, Facilities, Workforce and Resources, Safety and Clinical - the depth and breadth of the IQIPS standards initially appeared daunting.”

Following a six month review of each aspect of the service at all eight IVS sites, five were submitted to the IQIPS assessment process.

Richard Pole continues, “The assessment visits were comprehensive and in depth - the assessment teams looked at everything! They reviewed policies, watched scans and questioned patients and consultants what they thought about our services, they looked around our facilities and quizzed staff on our policies and protocols.”

Benefits
Achieving accreditation has the potential to differentiate an organisation in the market place and give it a competitive advantage over its peers.

Richard says: “After 18 months of hard work by everyone within IVS, I am delighted that we have been granted IQIPS accreditation. We want to provide the best vascular services in the UK and achieving this badge of quality is something we are particularly proud of.

“Independent external recognition and affirmation of our good practices proves the quality of our services. This gives our clients confidence that when they award us a tender that we are going to provide high quality ultrasound services. More importantly, this confidence is transferred to patients and fellow health care professionals.”

The recognition that accreditation brings can also be used to influence development of a market sector, as Richard explains: “The accreditation certificate also brings kudos to the NHS hospitals where we are based. Hopefully this can be used as leverage for change when we encourage our NHS partners to invest in better facilities.”

In addition to the external benefits of accreditation, the assessment process can also benefit an organisation internally.
“Accreditation has driven up quality and supports sharing of good practice”

“In addition to raising standards, achieving IQIPS accreditation has increased morale amongst the staff and recognition amongst fellow professionals,” Richard says.

“Overall I have to say that accreditation has been a positive experience. It makes you look at your service with a more analytical view and as a result, I feel our service has ‘grown up’ through the process.

“I would recommend any vascular lab to engage with this process and to become accredited. It has driven up the quality of our services and supports the sharing of good practice.”

www.iqips.co.uk

“Independent external recognition proves the quality of our services”