

Securing Excellence In Commissioning NHS Dental Services

Frequently asked questions

1. What is the single operating model about?

Securing Excellence sets out a single operating model for the NHS Commissioning Board (NHS CB) to commission NHS dental services. From 1 April 2013, all NHS dental services, wherever they are provided, will be commissioned by the NHS CB. This will include dental services provided in high street dental practices, community dental services, general hospitals and dental hospitals. This provides a unique opportunity to design and develop dental services in a more joined up way. The operating model sets out how the NHS CB intends to do this along consistently defined pathways of care explaining how each part of the system will relate to this process.

2. Who is the Securing Excellence document aimed at?

The document is aimed at NHS commissioning staff, dental clinicians, dental contractors, CCGs, patients and the public – all those involved in the new commissioning system. For patients and the public, it outlines who, in the new clinical commissioning system, is responsible for ensuring good access to NHS dental services and who to approach when they feel their experience of the service they received was not as they had hoped. This continued input from patients and the public will help commissioners and contractors improve services as part of a continuous service improvement process.

3. What difference will it make to patients?

Commissioning of all dental services will be the responsibility of one national organisation – the NHS CB. This helps to identify more clearly who is accountable. In addition, rather than having 151 PCTs commissioning services the NHS CB will produce in consultation and co-production with key stakeholders a national primary care strategy which will set out what the NHS CB's priorities are for NHS dental services and the standards which patients can expect when they visit their local dentists. It will also help contractors to understand what is expected of them and the standards they should be aspiring to as contractors.

4. How will the NHS CB ensure greater clinical input into dental commissioning?

In the past, PCTs were responsible for commissioning NHS dental services. This was undertaken in different ways by the 151 PCTs with some involving clinicians, for

example dental public health advisors, in this process and drawing on the local Oral Health Needs Assessment while others did not involve clinicians to any great extent.

One of the key principles of the new clinical commissioning system for the NHS is to place clinicians in the commissioning driving seat. To ensure clinical input into the dental commissioning process, it has been agreed that local groups of dentists will be set up to work with the 27 area teams of the NHS CB. These are referred to as Local Dental Networks. This concept has been piloted over the last year and work is underway in area teams across the country to develop these networks.

5. What involvement has the dental profession had in developing Securing Excellence?

There has been input from Consultants in Dental Public Health, as well as a number of dental clinicians themselves. The Chief Dental Officer has also played a key role. The NHS CB has also met with British Dental Association to share the document and seek their input into the next important phase – the development of care pathways.

6. Who will be managing the GDS/ PDS contracts?

NHS CB area team primary care teams will become the main local point of contact in relation to contractual and commissioning matters for primary dental care contractors. The NHS Dental Services Division of the NHS Business Services Authority will continue to process claims and contract payments.

7. The document refers to the development of national policies for dental contracts. What is the position on these policies?

From 1 April 2013, there will be one national organisation commissioning all primary care services including dental services. This means a consistent, fair and transparent process and set of policies is needed so that all contractors are treated in an equitable way. Currently, there is variation across the country in the way PCTs manage contracts but the 27 area teams of the NHS CB will need to adhere to a single operating model and its policies.

Policies are being drafted at the moment on the key areas of dental contract management and there is an eight stage process through which all draft policies will travel. This includes checking with Department of Health policy colleagues that the drafts are in line with legal regulations as well as sharing the drafts with the British Dental Association and other professional groups. Once they have been through this process, policies will be signed off by the NHS CB.