

For the attention of:
NHS England Directors of
Commissioning Operations

Clinical Leaders and Accountable
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Groups

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Copy:
NHS England Regional Directors
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Dear Colleagues

RE: Extension of the RCGP Peer Support Programme

I am writing to confirm we have extended the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) programme providing expert peer advice and support to GP practices placed in special measures by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

This means NHS England will continue to be able to offer up to six months turnaround support to GP practices entered into special measures following a first inspection rating. This will ensure equitable treatment with GP practices inspected earlier by CQC who were offered support.

This extension is time-limited and will end with the introduction of CQC's new risk-based inspections from October 2017. Support for practices entered in to special measures following a second inspection rating will need to be considered by local commissioners which may include prioritisation through the General Practice Resilience Programme, with support procured locally. This will mean local commissioners have flexibility to secure more seamless support for practices.

Funding change for remainder of programme

The direct costs of RCGP practice support (max. £10k per practice) have previously been funded by local commissioning teams. These direct costs will now be met and funded centrally for all GP practices taking up RCGP support from 1 April 2017.

Local commissioners will still remain responsible for engaging with practices/RCGP and must ensure that an MOU with the practice is signed.

Eligibility

Other than in exceptional circumstances, all practices placed in special measures prior to the new risk-based inspection arrangements (i.e. prior to a second CQC

inspection) should be offered timely access to RCGP support.

Where there is a contractual notice consideration, the following principles apply:

- Each case should be considered on its individual merits - remedial or breach notices alone should not prevent practices eligibility to an offer of support.
- Notice of Termination (issued or in process of being issued) renders practices ineligible for support. Where practices in special measures have not made sufficient improvements and face a further 6 months in special measures the following principles apply:
 - Where the practice has not previously taken up the support offer, the practice is eligible for support.
 - Where the practice is already receiving support and there is funding remaining this may be rolled over into the second 6 month period of special measures to continue delivery of the agreed (or any amended) improvement plan.
 - Where the practice has received the maximum level (£10k) of support in the first 6 months period, eligibility for further support is discretionary, but in general local commissioners would want to support a practice where there is evidence that the practice has properly engaged and progress is being made.

In all circumstances above, if there is evidence of significant previous investment in the practice failing to result in improvement, local commissioners may consider this as evidence that further investment is unlikely to be cost effective. In these incidences, local commissioners may decline central funds to further support, but should discuss their concerns with the RCGP and ensure there is clear document the rationale for the decision.

Next steps

This extension works to conclude NHS England's centrally commissioned support offer for GP practices entered into special measures following a first inspection, and timed to coincide with CQC introducing a new risk-based approach to second inspections.

NHS England and RCGP will host regional workshops later this summer open to all local commissioning colleagues involved in supporting GP practices to share learning, aid evaluation and help with the development of the General Practice Resilience Programme locally. Dates will be shared as soon as they are available [here](#).

Best Wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Geddes', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Dr David Geddes
Head of Primary Care Commissioning