



Greater Choice and Control – NHS and Any Qualified Provider (AQP)

Government Reponse 19 July 2011

The Government has issued a response to the NHS Reforms *Greater Choice and Control* consultation late last year, which describes how the AQP system will work, with next steps outlined. 617 groups or individuals submitted views including the Optical Confederation.

Key Points

The response closely follows the next steps outlined in the Listening Exercise, and echoes much of what was outlined in there, e.g. competition should be based on quality, not price.

The Government agrees that AQP is not appropriate for all types of care, e.g. A&E, and will therefore focus AQP initially on selected community services that they believe need more choice (see list below).

The Government believes that AQP will not make it more difficult to promote integrated services but that local groups should work together to resolve specific problems. AQP providers are to have a contractual duty to cooperate (undefined) so that patient care is safe, transfers are coordinated properly and patient experience does not suffer. Tendering will be on the basis of quality, not price.

As national prices could take some time to develop, local prices can be agreed under national guidance.

The Government will also give more thought to supporting smaller providers (the Optical Confederation will circulate details when published).

The Government is committed to developing over time an AQP directory to show which providers operate locally, and will take views into account when designing this. The Optical Confederation will of course feed in comments.

Operational Guidance depending on local needs, the Government wishes commissioners to focus on the following services for AQP:

- back and neck pain management
- adult hearing care
- continence services
- diagnostic tests
- wheelchair services for children
- podiatry
- leg ulcer and wound healing
- primary care psychology services

PCT clusters should consult locally and select three of these services (or may choose to substitute a different local service for one of the three with good reason) for implementation in their area. The Department of Health will establish a national qualification process to minimise transaction costs for all parties.

Implementing choice in these services is seen as the beginning of extension of choice for all users of NHS services. The Government hopes to learn by doing and will review the extension of AQP to other areas in due course.

Optical Confederation

August 2011