

AQP – An introduction

November 2011

What is it?

AQP stands for 'any qualified provider' and is part of the government's commitment to increase choice and personalisation in NHS-funded services.

Patients already have a choice of provider for routine elective care and AQP extends the services.

Providers wishing to provide services identified by commissioners will need to meet NHS service quality requirements, prices and normal contractual obligations.

Timescales

By October 2011, PCT clusters will have identified at least three community or mental health services to offer as an AQP service. The services should be prioritised by clinical commissioning groups while engaging patients and professionals in selecting which services are opened up to any qualified provider.

Between April and September 2012, PCT clusters will implement AQP in those services agreed locally.

Key principles

Providers qualify and register to provide the service.

Commissioners set local pathways and referral protocols, which providers must accept.

Referring clinicians must offer choice at the point of referral.

Competition is based on quality not price – providers are paid a fixed price determined by a national or local tariff.

What services?

DH provided a list of potential services for priority implementation although other services with higher local priorities may be implemented if there is a clear case to do so.

Services identified

- Musculoskeletal services for back and neck pain
- Adult hearing services in the community
- Continence services (adult and children)

- Diagnostic tests closer to home such as some types of imaging, cardiac and respiratory investigations to support primary assessment of presenting symptoms
- Wheelchair services (children)
- Podiatry services
- Venous leg ulcer and wound healing
- Primary care psychological therapies (adults)

A further list of services is being developed for implementation in 2013/14 and these may include:

- Maternity – antenatal education and breastfeeding support
- Speech and language therapy
- Long Term Conditions self management support
- Community chemotherapy, including home chemotherapy
- Primary care psychological therapies (CAHMS)
- Wheelchair services (adults).

Provider qualification

The qualification process will ensure that all providers offer safe, good quality care. The providers should be registered with CQC and licensed by Monitor (from 2013) where required or meet equivalent assurance standards.

They will meet the terms and conditions of the NHS standard contract having regard for the NHS Constitution, relevant guidance and law.

Further guidance will be published in due course.