

Extending Patient Choice through Any Qualified Provider (AQP) Update on NHS Tees Proposals March 2012

Background and National Context

Since 2010, the Government has been committed to increasing choice and personalisation in NHS-funded services, and has specifically committed to extending patient choice of Any Qualified Provider for appropriate services. By choice of Any Qualified Provider (AQP) we mean that when patients are referred (usually by their GP) for a particular service, they should be able to choose from a list of qualified providers who meet NHS service quality requirements, prices and normal contractual obligations.

Extending patient choice of provider is intended to empower patients and carers, improve their outcomes and experience, enable service innovation and free up clinicians to drive change and improve practice.

Informed by national engagement activity, the Department of Health identified a list of potential services for priority implementation and asked Primary Care Trusts, including NHS Tees, to identify three community or mental health services in which to implement patient choice of Any Qualified Provider in 2012/13.

Local Context

Following consideration of responses to the engagement activity undertaken in September and NHS Tees' position in terms of contractual timescales and service review intentions, the first three areas chosen by NHS Tees for implementation of AQP were:

- Adult Hearing Services – for which NHS Tees is responsible for developing a national standard specification;
- Primary Care Psychological Therapies (adults);
- Wheelchair Services.

Update

Following further scoping work and discussions with clinical colleagues, the decision has been made to not pursue Wheelchair Services under AQP. This decision has been based on the good service already operating regionally and that a separation of the service would be detrimental to patients.

In deciding not to pursue Wheelchair Services and selecting an alternative service for implementation of AQP, consideration has been given to the national service lines, responses to recent engagement activity, NHS Tees' current position in terms of

contractual timescales and service review intentions, and the significantly shorter timeframe left with which to implement a third area.

For these reasons, Lymphoedema Services has been selected by clinical colleagues as the third area for initial implementation of AQP. The following points support the reasons for the selection:

- A Service Review in 2010 (which included patient engagement) highlighted a need to commission a consistent service for patients, rather than a fragmented one currently delivered through non-contracted activity;
- There is a market available for providers to qualify and from which to offer choice to patients;
- A revised and improved service specification is already in development for Tees which can be built on to ensure quality and outcomes are strengthened

Communication and Engagement

During September 2011, NHS Tees sought the views of patients, carers, the public, staff, partners and stakeholders on extending patient choice through offering the option of Any Qualified Provider. The report of this activity is available at www.tees.nhs.uk by choosing one of the four localities and following the links to MY NHS.

In order to inform service mobilisation, further engagement activity will take place in May-June 2012. This will include seeking views from service users, carers and the public around information, communication and accessibility. Further information, including invitations to participate, will follow in due course. The Communication Plan will include Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), voluntary and community groups as well as local media and online information.