Fact Sheet 5 – Primary Care Co-commissioning

Primary care co-commissioning is one of a series of changes set out in the NHS Five Year Forward View (2014):

“The foundation of NHS care will remain list-based primary care. Given the pressures they are under, we need a ‘new deal’ for GPs. Over the next five years the NHS will invest more in primary care, while stabilising core funding for general practice nationally over the next two years. GP-led Clinical Commissioning Groups will have the option of more control over the wider NHS budget, enabling a shift in investment from acute to primary and community services.”

“In order to support these changes, the national leadership of the NHS will need to act coherently together, and provide meaningful local flexibility in the way payment rules, regulatory requirements and other mechanisms are applied. We will back diverse solutions and local leadership, in place of the distraction of further national structural reorganisation.”

From this document was the proposal to change the remit of CCGs. When CCGs became Statutory Bodies (April 2013) their remit was to plan, commission and monitor for quality.

- Planned hospital care
- Rehabilitative and continuing care
- Urgent and emergency care [including out of hours service]
- Community services
- Maternity, mental health and learning disability services.

The CCGs were not responsible for primary care services such as dental care, ophthalmology or GP services; this commissioning and quality monitoring role was led by NHS England.

The proposal for primary care co-commissioning was to encourage the need to increase the provision of out of hospital care and to break down barriers of how care was delivered. It was suggested that co-commissioning would give the CCGs the option of having more control of the wider NHS budget, enabling a shift in investment from acute to primary and community services. It was also thought there would be a greater opportunity to develop more affordable services through efficiencies.

In 2014, CCGs were invited to take an increased role in NHS commissioning. The initial scope was the provision and monitoring of general practice. Other areas of provision were outside the invitation as they were seen as being more complex with differing legal frameworks.

Co-commissioning was offered at differing levels of commitment:

- Level 1 – Greater involvement in Primary care decision making NHS England continuing to take the lead.
• Level 2 – Joint commissioning allowing a sharing in the debate and decision making [NHS England retain a veto].
• Level 3 – Delegated commissioning with the CCG taking the lead on all decision making.

April 2015 saw 70% of CCGs taking on an extra co-commissioning role. East Riding of Yorkshire CCG agreed to move forward with joint delegation (level 2). This change in commissioning duties required agreement from the Council of Members, changes to the CCG constitution and the establishment of a Primary Care Joint Commissioning Committee. Membership and terms of reference are based on the ‘NHS - Model terms of reference for Joint commissioning’, the lay member/vice chair taking on the role of chairing this group.

Co-commissioning has the potential for GPs as members of CCGs to have greater influence over the commissioning of services including the enhancement of funding and provision of services from GP Practices. It is therefore vital that any Conflicts of Interest are managed clearly and decisions made without favour. There is also a need for sensitive matters such as quality and contract issues, breach of contracts and termination of contracts to be carefully managed.

Self Check

• Do you understand your role in terms of joint co-commissioning?
• Do you know who the lead officer is for day to day application of the joint commissioning role?
• Do you fully understand how Joint co commissioning impacts on the CCG business?
• Do you know how to manage the “What if” and “Conflict of Interest” question?

Useful Resources

• The Kings Fund - http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/audio-video/primary-care-co-commissioning
• https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/
• www.bma.org.uk

Further Information

For further information about this fact sheet, please contact one of the Lay Members through ERYCCG.ContactUs@nhs.net, 01482 672156.

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