

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Registration of primary medical care providers

Friday 17 June 2011

The Minister of State, Department of health (Mr Simon Burns): I wish to inform the House of a proposal that the Department is today publishing a consultation to defer the registration of NHS GP practices with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) until April 2013.

CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. All providers of a regulated activity are required to register with the CQC. In order to be registered and to remain registered, providers are required to comply with a set of registration requirements that establish the essential levels of safety and quality.

Where a registered provider fails to meet these registration requirements the CQC has a range of enforcement powers that it can use to bring about improvements. In the case of persistent and/or serious failings the CQC has the power to stop providers operating.

The role of registration with CQC is central to the Government's plans for the future delivery of health care and adult social care in England. It forms the foundation on which high quality services can be built.

Since April 2010, the CQC has registered around 20,000 health and adult social care providers. This has been a major programme of work which the CQC has carried out well.

In April 2012, providers of primary medical care are due to enter the registration system. This covers providers of primary medical care services for the NHS including GP practices, out of hours primary care services and NHS walk-in centres. This final wave comprises registration of around 8,000 providers.

We have reconsidered the timing of the registration of primary medical services providers for the NHS and believe there are strong reasons to move the start date for the registration for most of these providers to April 2013.

Postponing the registration of most primary medical services providers for the NHS will afford the opportunity to ensure that, when it does go ahead, the CQC's systems, tools and processes will have been refined in the light of the experience of the earlier registration rounds and piloting with primary medical services providers.

A pause will also allow for the further development of accreditation schemes for primary medical services providers to be used as evidence of their compliance with the registration requirements.

For these reasons, we are seeking views on a proposal that the registration of most primary medical services providers should be deferred until April 2013.

The Government has made a commitment to bring out of hours providers into registration at the earliest opportunity. I am therefore proposing that the registration of dedicated providers of out of hours care should go ahead as planned in April 2012 together with registration of NHS walk-in centres which do not provide primary care to a list of registered patients.

I believe that in phasing the registration of NHS providers of primary medical services will strike the right balance between protecting the safety of patients and making the registration process more streamlined for both providers and the CQC