

New primary care contracts – what they mean for nurses working with general practice

Introduction

New contracts for primary care come into effect from April 2004.

The new arrangements are a key element of the Government's plans to deliver more and better quality primary care services to patients. They are backed by significant new investment.

Under the new arrangements, PCTs

will enter into contracts with practices and other providers. In the past, they have been able to enter into direct contracts with GPs under Personal Medical Services (PMS) arrangements. However, the majority of GPs have operated to a national contract – the General Medical Services (GMS)

contract – over which PCTs have had no say.

This factsheet explains what the new contracts mean for nurses and outlines practical ways in which they can get the most out of the opportunities created by the new contracting arrangements.

What the changes mean

The new primary care contracting arrangements will affect the whole of the practice team – and especially nurses. They will mean:

- Increased opportunity to improve the quality of care patients get and their health outcomes
- Better employment conditions, such as access to CDP and professional advice, which will ensure greater safety for patients
- More services provided locally with more doctors and more nurses in primary care.
- Incentives for PCT-employed and practice-employed nurses to work more closely together to improve the quality of patient care.
- Greater freedom for practices to decide how to design their services, including the option to transfer responsibility of non-compulsory services (known as 'enhanced' services) such as out-of-hours provision.
- Flexibility and incentives for GMS practices to provide more services for patients, including those traditionally provided in hospital. PMS contracts have always offered these.
- Practices will be resourced and rewarded on the basis of how well they care for patients as well as the number of patients they treat. GMS practices will have the option of taking part in the Quality Outcomes Framework (QOF) and PMS contractors on the basis of a locally-devised system which will typically be based on QOF.
- Better use the skills of the whole team, especially nurses, with greater career development, more control over workload and more say in decisions about their services.
- New opportunities for a wider range of nurses to work in general practice.
- Better employment conditions for nurses which will ensure greater safety for patients

Specific implications for nurses

Under the new arrangements

- Nurses will be key to delivering the QOF set out in the new GMS contract.
- Nurses can become partners in GMS practices, just as they currently can in PMS practices.
- Nurses can fill posts previously held by GPs.
- Nurses can become providers of the additional and enhanced services where practices transfer responsibility to PCTs, such as out-of-hours
- There are measures to improve the employment of nurses, including better recruitment and selection, access to clinical supervision, training and professional development and appraisal.
- Nurses and the PCT professional lead should be involved in decisions about nursing services in practices.
- Greater skill mix and flexibility is encouraged so that nurses can extend their roles to meet needs of patients, be freed up to use their skills most effectively and have better career opportunities.
- More collaborative work with nurses in the acute sector.

How to maximise the benefits of the new contracts

Get involved with the discussions your practice has about their contract. You have useful information to contribute and need to be part of the decision-making process if the potential benefits of the contract are to be delivered.

Nurses working in general practice need to focus on the following:

For patients

- Ensure that nurses receive feedback in a similar way to doctors, and act on it.
 - Ensure the changes taking place in nursing are reflected in the practice leaflets.
 - Understand your professional accountability and what the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) code of conduct means in general practice – and be able to explain to others!
 - Check that your NMC registration is up to date as this is required by all contracts.
 - When developing new roles for yourself or others, talk to the PCT lead nurse and be clear about competencies needed, the patient safety implications and your responsibility as a registered professional.
 - Think about how clinical governance frameworks can help to support your work.
 - Design new roles around needs of patients and the skills needed to meet patients' needs
- Use existing initiatives such as 'nurses with special interests', nurse

consultants, nurse prescribing, chief nursing officer's 10 key roles and the NHS University First Contact Care Programme. You can find out more from: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/AboutUs/HeadsOfProfession/ChiefNursingOfficer/fs/en>
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/MedicinesPharmacyAndIndustryServices/Prescriptions/fs/en>
www.nhsu.co.uk

For the practice

- Get to know and understand the new contract arrangement that your practice has contracted to provide.
- If it is a GMS contract, pay particular attention to paras 4.19 & 4.20 on pg 28 of Investing in General Practice, The New Medical Services Contract and Part 4 of the NHS England [General Medical Services Contracts] Regulations, paras 51, 52, 54, 56, 58 & 59, pgs 63 & 64. You should also read Chapter 3, paras 3.1 – 3.12, pgs 17-19 about the Quality Outcomes Framework, and Annex A: Quality Indicators – Summary of Points. All relevant documents can be found at http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HumanResourcesAndTraining/ModernisingPay/GPContract/s/GPContractsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4055212&chk=/DLj38
- If a PMS contract applies, the most relevant information is in Sustaining Innovation Through New PMS Arrangements which is

at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/PrimaryCare/PersonalMedicalServicesPilots/fs/en>

- Get involved in practice decision-making and discussions.
 - Get involved in contract reviews and monitoring – after all you will be helping to deliver the contract
- For your development (clinically and professionally)
- know what your skills are, where the gaps are and have an up to date personal development plan
 - make links across the PCT with other nurses in general practice and community nurses
 - make sure you have a job description that reflects your current role
 - think about where you want to get to in your career
 - if you are interested in becoming a partner or delivering out of hours services, talk to the PCT GMS lead or the lead nurse
 - become familiar with the principles of Agenda for Change and the skills and knowledge framework. Find out more from <http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HumanResourcesAndTraining/ModernisingPay/AgendaForChange/fs/en>
 - Talk to the practice, the PCT lead nurse, other nurses and the LMC about Agenda for Change
 - compare your terms and conditions with others

Where to go for more information

- Supporting documents:
 - http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HumanResourcesAndTraining/ModernisingPay/GPContracts/GPContractsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4068601&chk=6d6f3H
 - <http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/PrimaryCare/PersonalMedicalServicesPilots/fs/en>
 - www.natpact.nhs.uk
 - www.npdt.org
 - Agenda for Change:
 - <http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HumanResourcesAndTraining/ModernisingPay/AgendaForChange/fs/en>
 - Nurse prescribing:
 - <http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/MedicinesPharmacyAndIndustryServices/Prescriptions/fs/en>
 - Nurses with special interests:
 - www.natpact.nhs.uk/specialinterests
 - Liberating the Talents:
 - http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4070100&chk=h1nBxL
 - The MA will be supporting nurses to contribute to the successful implementation of the new GMS and PMS contract in a number of different ways. To launch this programme of work, two conferences are to be held on nursing and new GMS and new PMS to raise awareness about the content of these two new contracts and their potential implications for nurses and nursing. These events will be held in London on 10 March and in York on 18 March 2004. For further details please log onto www.natpact.nhs.uk/events There is no charge to attend these events.
 - Further workshops for nurses are planned across the nine NatPaCT areas between May and September.
- More information about these events will be available on the CNO, NatPaCT and MA websites in due course.
- For information on the full programme of support to implement these new contracts please refer to the prospectus of support available to download from www.natpact.nhs.uk/primarycarecontracting
 - The MA (NatPaCT) programme is supported by Nicola Walsh, Senior Nurse Advisor working across the primary care contracting programme, and by Primary Care Contracting Advisors providing local support. Contact details for the Primary Care Contracting Advisors are in the prospectus.