

Any Qualified Provider (AQP): an update

The implementation of AQP is well underway; with the extension of patient choice for the selected priority services scheduled to commence from October 2012.

The aim of AQP is to enable patients who are referred (by their GP or other authorised referrer) for a particular service to choose, where appropriate, from a range of qualified providers and select the one that best meets their needs e.g. people with hearing problems may prefer to visit a provider on the High Street or a mobile clinic rather than go to hospital.

Following on from engagement events, with patients and stakeholders from the emerging CCG groups, the three local community services where a choice of provider will be offered are:

- **Adult Hearing Services**
- **Musculoskeletal Services for Back and Neck Pain (MSK)**
- **Continence Services for Adults and Children.**

These were chosen as priority treatment areas within Southampton, Hampshire and Portsmouth, from a national list of services.

Following national adverts for each of the services, applicant providers have undergone a three stage evaluation process. The first stage was completed by the Department of Health, stage two by a nationally appointed Qualification Centre and stage three by local commissioners - assessing against national and local criteria.

Each provider must have met this range of criteria to be qualified as an AQP provider.

Commencement of AQP services within the Southampton, Hampshire and Portsmouth area is due to begin from October 2012. Qualifying providers have now been confirmed, and result letters have been sent to all applicants.

Successful providers have qualified subject to the agreement and signing of contracts with commissioners and that process is now taking place. Once providers are qualified and hold a signed contract, their names and details will be posted on a National Register by the Department of Health. This will be available to the public and is expected to go live from 1 October 2012. Plans for mobilisation of services are now underway, and the SHIP AQP project team will supply updates of service go live dates from the providers once these are available.

Extending patient choice of provider is instrumental in empowering patients and carers, improving their outcomes and experience and promoting service innovation.

Further details of AQP can also be found at the Supply2Health site:

<https://www.supply2health.nhs.uk/AQPResourceCentre/Pages/AQPHome.aspx>.

21 September 2012