Local councils are to have a say in how NHS dental services are commissioned and run. Whilst primary and secondary dental services are to be commissioned by the NHS Commissioning Board, and local dental committees will ensure that patients’ needs are addressed as services are commissioned.

According to Paul Burstow, Minister of State for Care Services, local authorities will have the power to require information and attendance at scrutiny meetings of any provider that is funded by the NHS. This includes the scrutiny of GP practices, dentists, pharmacists, and independent and voluntary sector providers.

An NHS dentist from South East London, who does not wish to be named, has said that Councils “will not be perceived as having enough knowledge or expertise in the dentistry arena to be able to pass judgment on healthcare professionals. High street general dentistry is still mainly delivered by independent practices, run by principal dentists as small businesses, and it is likely that they will not be happy having local authority council calling the shots.”

Dr Sanderson has said that: “This Bill must answer those questions.”

While the exact details of the relationships between the NHS Commissioning Board, GP consortia and local council authorities are still to be clarified, a spokesperson for the Department of Health has said that: “The NHS Commissioning Board will commission both hospital and primary dental care services to ensure integrated dental services.”

However, the Department of Health has not revealed what extra funding, if any, Councils will need in order to be able to meet their new obligations under the new bill. It is also unclear how much budget has been allocated for the commissioning of dental services.

The NHS reforms require an involvement of experts such as consultants in dental public health, dental practice advisers and local dental committees in order to be able to meet their new obligations under the new bill. It is also unclear how much budget has been allocated for the commissioning of dental services.

Dental Tribune’s Maria Anguita takes a closer look at the recently published Health and Social Care Bill.