CQC fee consultation finally hits the headlines

CQC dominates profession and politics as consultation opens and questions are asked in Westminster

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has launched a consultation on the fees it proposes to charge providers of health and adult social care. These fees intend to cover CQC’s work in registering providers and monitoring their compliance with essential levels of safety and quality.

The British Dental Association (BDA) has warned that the proposed fees for registration with the CQC will hit practices and patients hard, adding financial concerns to the worries already expressed about the administrative burden CQC registration will create. The consultation sets out proposals to simplify fees and put in place a single long-term scheme that will cover all providers registered now and those who will be registered from April 2011. It proposes a framework for how fees will be charged based on principles such as fairness, simplicity and proportionality.

The consultation document outlines our three main proposals for:
• categories and bandings for fees, including fee amounts
  • a single annual fee that incorporates registration and variation fees
  • streamlining the payment date for annual fees

The announcement of the proposed fees comes just months after figures from the NHS Information Centre revealed that dentists’ expenses are increasing by 7.6 per cent a year and soon after the General Dental Council revealed significant increases in its fees for registration.

John Milne, Chair of the BDA’s General Dental Practice Committee, said: “Dental practices are already facing soaring expenses. Registration fees at the levels set out in this consultation will serve only to exacerbate the problems dentists across England are already facing.

The ability of practices to invest in the staff and equipment that deliver patient care will be further harmed by the imposition of such exorbitant fees.”

Word in Westminster

The consultations, however, are not being accepted quietly. Dentists across the country have been canvassing MPs to scrap CQC registration and in Parliament this week a series of questions on CQC were raised in the House of Lords.

Questions on the functioning of the CQC were voiced by Lord Colwyn, Conservative Peer and Vice-Chair to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Dentistry towards Earl Howe, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for dentistry, and further questions were targeted with regards to the assessment the CQC have made of the benefit to the public.

Responding to the written questions, Lord Howe stated that the CQC’s role of regulating safety is not covered in full by other regulatory bodies. He also noted that it is up to the CQC to determine whether recently redundant Dental Reference Officers have a role to play in the regulation of dental practices, and whether the fees set by the CQC must be approved by the Secretary of State for Health.

The consultation runs until January 2011. A further consultation will be carried out in 2011 before providers of NHS primary medical services.

Smile-on are organising a webinar on the issue of CQC hosted by Raj Rattan on December 1st. More information is available from smile-on.com.