CQC reg fees – just when will we know?

With just two weeks before registration with the Care Quality Commission goes live, when will dental practices find out the cost?

With D-Day for practices registering with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) approaching, practices are still waiting for the answer to the question – just how much is this going to cost us anyway?

The profession has been waiting for guidance on registration fees since October 2010, when the consultation on the provision of a fee scheme for all registrants of CQC was published. The consultation ended January 17, 2011.

In the consultation, the CQC stated: ‘We do not underestimate the impact on providers of paying fees, especially in the current economic climate. We have looked carefully at our costs and will continue to do so. We have a responsibility to collect fees from those we regulate and to demonstrate we are an efficient and effective regulator. The benefit of that for providers is related to the public assurance that being registered provides, and the access to information about providers’ compliance that we make available to those who use services, the wider public and commissioners of services. There is also the reassurance of knowing that we will tackle poorly performing and unregistered providers to ensure that standards overall are maintained.’

We will consult every time that we propose any changes to fees, and we will provide enough detail so that our plans can be scrutinised and challenged openly. We have no interest in setting fees higher than they need to be: our overall income is capped by the Department of Health, so that every pound paid in fees is returned to the government that we would otherwise receive from central government.

With the potential for fees starting from upwards of £1,500, practice owners have been calling for clarification of costs to enable them to include the costs in their budget planning.

The British Dental Association (BDA) has been campaigning for clarity in the CQC’s fee structure; also arguing for no fees being charged to dental practices to be registered.

Dr Susie Sanderson, Chair of the BDA Executive Board, said: ‘It is staggering that dentists are still in the dark about CQC fees so close to the deadline for registration. We call on CQC to make an announcement on this issue immediately so that practices have the information they need to plan effectively for the new financial year.’

‘The BDA has made a strong case for no fee being charged for registration and we hope the delay means that CQC has been able to reflect on responses to its consultation and will draw a sensible conclusion that reflects the economic circumstances and the resources dental practices have invested in becoming registered’.

A CQC spokesperson said: ‘We will announce the fee structure for dental providers next week. These providers will start to be invoiced in April.’